

Date: November 01, 2016

To: Stephanie Tatham, OMB Desk Officer
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget

Through: Cynthia Harvey-Pryor, Acting VA Clearance Officer
Office of Privacy and Records Management
Office of Information Technology (005R1B)

From: Nancy Tucker, IT Specialist
Enterprise Applications Support (EAS)
Office of Information & Technology, VA Enterprise Applications, (005F4),
Department of Veterans Affairs

Subj: Request for Emergency Extension (EE) of OMB Control Number

1. The collection of information:

VA is submitting a request for a 60-day "Emergency Extension" of OMB control number 2900-0619, the Inquiry Routing & Information System (IRIS) automation, designed for all users of the VA web site to submit questions, complaints, compliments, and suggestions online.

There are more than 479 routing destinations in the IRIS with involvement of more than 2715 VA staff members across VA, (Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration, National Cemetery Administration), and numerous program offices. IRIS is a secure database and submitted information is used to locate claims information, benefits information or other data that responders use to provide adequate responses to inquiries about benefits received, pending claims, medical care services, etc. As of 2016, the number of monthly inquiries through IRIS is approximately 35,000 and rising due to the expansion of benefit-eligible entitlements, the growing number of veterans needing services, and the use of the system by call center staff to enter inquiries on behalf of callers.

I. Data collection is needed prior to the expiration of time periods established in this Part; and

The emergency extension of this collection of information is needed before the expiration date of November 30, 2016 in order to complete the standard 60 and 30-day Federal Register public notice and comment periods established under the Paperwork Reduction Act (150 days total) including OMB's review. A 60-day Federal Register Notice was published on 10/04/2016 (FR Doc No: 2016-23964). VA is requesting an additional 60 days for an OMB control number extension until January 31, 2017 to complete the 30-day FRN and OMB review.

II. Data collection is essential to the mission of the agency

There is currently no other comprehensive system that collects and tracks this information on a department-wide basis. The IRIS crosses all administrations and business lines in VA and also includes many program offices. The Frequently Asked Questions Knowledge Base inside the IRIS is approximately 500,000 per month, which demonstrates the utility and necessity of the IRIS.

2. The agency cannot reasonably comply with the normal clearance procedures under this Part because:

- I. The unanticipated departure of VA's Clearance Officer and agency transition led to a misunderstanding of the status of the data collection. It was anticipated that the ICR was to be submitted into ROCIS, along with publication of the Federal Register 60-day notice, by the agency Clearance Officer. It was later determined that the PRA package was still attached in the former Officer's email correspondence with the , Program Office and was never acted upon. With this discovery, the time frame for submission to the Federal Register does not allow time for 30-day FR review.
- II. The use of normal clearance procedures is reasonably likely to disrupt the collection of information. The number of inquiries an individual makes controls the frequency. The Internet has become the method of choice for thousands of Veterans and others who wish to communicate with VA. Therefore, VA would not be responsive to the needs of its customers if information were collected less frequently or in such an efficient manner..

(a) Requested time period within which OMB should approve or disapprove the collection of information.

VA is requesting to extend the data collection period for an additional 3 months (November 30, 2016 until January 31, 2017). If granted an emergency extension, VA will immediately and appropriately submit a 30-day Federal Register Public Comment period, following the conclusion of the current 60-day Notice.

Please contact Acting VA Clearance Officer, Cynthia Harvey-Pryor, with any questions at 202-461-5870 or email at Cynthia.harvey-pryor@va.gov.

Sincerely,

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