

SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR VA FORM 26-8937
VERIFICATION OF VA BENEFITS
(2900-0406)

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection of information.

Since March of 1982, as a result of OMB's approval of VA's Debt Collection Plan, lenders authorized to make VA-guaranteed home or manufactured home loans on the automatic basis have been required to determine through VA whether any benefits-related debts exist in the veteran-borrower's name prior to the closing of any automatic loan. This requirement is one of the measures utilized to effect repayment of such debts pursuant to 38 U.S.C. 5314(c) (exhibit A).

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purposes the information is to be used; indicate actual use the agency has made of the information received from current collection.

VA has instructed lenders that they may not close any proposed loan until they have evidence from VA that there is no debt, or if a debt exists, an acceptable repayment plan has been agreed to by the veteran, or payments under a plan already in effect are current.

VA Form 26-8937 is designed to assist lenders and VA in the completion of debt checks in a uniform manner. The form restricts information requested to only that needed for the debt check and also eliminates unlimited versions of lender-designed forms.

Lenders ensure the completion of the upper portion of VA Form 26-8937, including the veteran's authorization for release of the information, and forward it to the appropriate VA Officer. VA personnel perform the debt check, complete the balance of the form, and return it to the lender, who considers any repayment terms in evaluating the veteran's creditworthiness. Following the closing of any loan, the lender submits the form with the loan report and related documents to the applicable Loan Guaranty Office of Jurisdiction if the file is identified for past closing review. The form is reviewed by a loan examiner to ensure that debt check requirements have been observed in each case.

The form also provides information advising the lender whether or not the veteran is exempt from paying the funding fee which must be collected on all VA home loans unless the veteran is receiving service-connected disability compensation. This benefits the lender by streamlining the procedure to verify the veteran's receipt of compensation. It also eliminates the possibility of the lender making an incorrect determination that the veteran is exempt from the funding fee. VA Form 26-8937 also cites specific instances when a lender must submit a veteran's loan application to VA for prior approval processing.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g. permitting electronic submission of

responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

Use of improved information technology is applicable as lenders can download this form on the Internet. We have Right Fax capability at our field stations which will allow lenders to send the completed form by fax to a VA employee's workstation. VA also requires lenders to utilize the Credit Alert Interactive Voice Response System to search for outstanding Federal debts. This is a HUD-maintained system which lenders now access via the Internet. VA has also enhanced the online Certificate of Eligibility function, so it now shows, in most cases, whether the veteran is exempt from the VA funding fee.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.

Program reviews were conducted to identify potential areas of duplication; however, none were found to exist. There is no known Department or agency which maintains the necessary information, nor is it available from other sources within our Department.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities, describe any methods used to minimize burden.

Small organizations are generally not involved. VA Form 26-8937 is distributed to holders and information collected is the minimum needed to compute the holder's claim.

6. Describe the consequences to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

This information collection is not a recurring or repetitive report. It is accomplished on a one-time basis per applicant.

7. There any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted more often than quarterly or require respondents to prepare written responses to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it; submit more than an original and two copies of any document; retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three years; in connection with a statistical survey that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study and require the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB.

There are no special circumstances that require the collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.6.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the sponsor's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the sponsor in responses to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

The Department notice was published in the Federal Register on March 13, 2019, volume 84, number 9214, pages 9214-9215. No comments were received.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.

Decisions to provide any payment or gift to respondents does not apply.

10. Describe any assurance of privacy, to the extent permitted by law, provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

Loan Guaranty Home, Condominium and Manufactured Home Loan Applicant Records, Specially Adapted Housing Applicant Records, and Vendee Loan Applicant Records - VA (55VA26) are contained in the Privacy Act Issuances, 2014.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature (Information that, with a reasonable degree of medical certainty, is likely to have a serious adverse effect on an individual's mental or physical health if revealed to him or her), such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private; include specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

No questions of a sensitive nature are contained on the form.

12. Estimate of the hour burden of the collection:

Estimate of Information Collection Burden

- a. Number of respondents is estimated at 120,000 per year.
- b. Frequency of response is generally one time.
- c. Annual burden is 10,000 hours.
- d. The estimated burden of 5 minutes per transaction has been determined by lenders to be an average time spent to report the information requested and no wide variance is likely.
- e. The respondent population is composed of Lenders/Appraisers on behalf of Veterans. VBA cannot make further assumptions about the population of respondents because of the variability of factors such as the educational background and wage potential of respondents. Therefore, VBA used the mortgage industry loan officers cost to estimate the respondents' costs associated with completing the information collection.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) gathers information on full-time wage and salary workers. According to the latest available BLS data, the median weekly earnings of full-time wage and salary workers are \$1,466.80. Assuming a forty (40) hour work week, the mean hourly wage is \$36.67 based on the BLS wage code – “13-2072 Loan Officers. This information was taken from the following website: (<https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes132072.htm>, May 2018).

Legally, respondents may not pay a person or business for assistance in completing the information collection and a person or business may not accept payment for assisting a respondent in completing the information collection. Therefore, there are no expected overhead costs for completing the information collection. VBA estimates the total cost to the Federal government an estimated \$366,700 (10,000 hours x \$36.67 per hour).

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection of information. (Do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in Items 12 and 14).

This submission does not involve any recordkeeping costs.

14. Estimated Annualized Cost to the Federal Government

Grade	Step	Burden Time	Fraction of Hour	Hourly Rate	Cost Per Response	Total Responses	Total
11	6	10,000	1.00	\$34.79	\$34.79	120,000	\$ 347,900.00
Overhead at 100% Salary							\$ 347,900.00
12	6	5000	0.50	\$41.70	\$20.85	120,000	\$ 104,250.00
Overhead at 100% Salary							\$ 104,250.00
13	6	2500	0.25	\$49.59	\$12.40	120,000	\$ 31,000.00
Overhead at 100% Salary							\$ 31,000.00
Processing / Analyzing Costs							\$ 483,150.00
Printing and Production Cost							\$ 0.00
Total Cost to Government							\$ 483,150.00

15. Explain the reason for any burden hour changes since the last submission.

There is no change in burden hours or respondent time.

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

Information collection is not for tabulation or publication use.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

We are not seeking approval to omit the expiration date for OMB approval.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19, "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions," of OMB 83-I.

There is no exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19, "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions," of OMB Form 83-1.

B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

1. The Veterans Benefits Administration does not collect information employing statistical methods.