Hello, everyone.

I’m Ray Tellez of VBA, and I welcome you to the Managing VBA Performance and Results webcast for Quarter 4 and fiscal year 2020.

Thank you for joining us.

I’m pleased to introduce Dr. Paul Lawrence, our Undersecretary for Benefits.

Hello.

I’m pleased to be here to report on VBA’s performance in the 4th quarter of FY20 and overall FY20.

And tell you how we are raising targets for FY21.

I’ll also report on how VBA met the challenge to have our #BestYearEver.

First, let me remind you about VBA.

We are a nationwide organization, comprised of more than 25,000 employees—most of whom are Veterans.

In Q4 we distributed more than $32B in benefits.

We continue to act on my 3 priorities:

1. Providing benefits to Veterans with excellent customer service;
2. Fiscal stewardship; and
3. Strong collaboration.

These priorities are at the heart of everything we do.
Within VBA, we have 8 business lines that you see on the slide.

Each business line is led by a senior executive who is responsible for the results I will highlight shortly.

COVID-19 continued to affect our work in Q4.

Restrictions limited our ability to complete C&P exams, gather records, and collect other evidence.

As such, I adjusted certain targets for Compensation, Pension, and VR&E.

And added new targets focused on what Veterans expect from us.

As a result, for these business lines, I am reporting on how they performed against COVID-19-modified targets.

Heading into Q4, we needed an outstanding performance in order to complete our #BestYearEver.

To align and engage our team to close out the fiscal year strong, I initiated the Columbus Day Challenge.

It was an all-for-1, 1-for-all effort that required each of VBA’s business lines to meet outstanding targets for the quarter.

This would complete our #BestYearEver.

As you can see on the chart, all of our business lines exceeded their outstanding targets.

We achieved the Columbus Day Challenge.

Great work to everyone on Team VBA.

With our outstanding performance in Q4, we met our targets for FY20.

Principal Deputy Under Secretary Margarita Devlin likes to say that resilience is in the DNA of VBA.
• Our ability to adapt this year and continue to deliver benefits shows how true this statement is.

• Thank you to each and every 1 of our staff.

• Now, let’s go through the business lines.

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• As you can see, we exceeded our modified claims completed target.

• When COVID-19 impacted our ability to complete rating claims, we pivoted to non-rating claims.

• Non-rating claims include benefit adjustments, reviews, and correspondence for Veterans already receiving disability compensation or pension.

• We beat targets for non-rating claims by 16%.

• We also completed more FOIA requests than we ever have.

• This means we are getting Veterans more of the information they’re asking for.

• When Veterans get claims completed quickly and accurately, it increases their confidence and trust in VA and provides critical support for daily living.

• Let’s turn to Administrative Review, or OAR.

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• OAR beat targets in both of VBA’s decision lanes—Supplemental Claim and Higher-Level Review.

• For FY20, we reduced remand inventory by 43%.

• This means more Veterans are getting the closure they need.

• Thank you to the OAR team.

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• Now, let’s discuss Veterans Pension and Dependency Indemnity Compensation, or DIC.

• It’s a key part of VBA’s mission to care for our Veterans in financial need through the Veterans Pension program.

• DIC is available for survivors of Veterans, whose cause of death was service-connected.
• We exceeded targets for claims completed and timeliness in both Veterans Pension and DIC.

• We also expanded state plot claim automation capabilities, resulting in 33% more state plot claims completed over last year.

• More efficient, faster services means Veterans and families can get help they need without delay.

• Next, let’s talk about Fiduciary.

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• VBA is committed to protect the most vulnerable Veterans and their benefits from fraud and abuse.

• In Q4 we completed more than 28,000 field exams, exceeding our target by 12%.

• And we launched the Fiduciary Accounting Submission Tool which improves the speed and accuracy of the accounting review process.

• Veterans shouldn’t have to worry that their benefits could be misused, and our work prevents it.

• Let’s talk about Insurance.

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• VA’s Life Insurance program continues to provide financial security to Veterans and families.

• In Q4, we provided more than $1.2T in coverage to 5.6M people.

• Notably, in FY20, Insurance surpassed the target to locate Hard-to-Find Beneficiaries by 258%.

• Thank you, Insurance team, for your hard work.

• We’re giving Veterans the added financial security and protection they want and peace of mind to face life’s uncertainties.

• Let’s turn to Education.

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• We continue to process Education claims quickly and with high quality, beating targets for timeliness and accuracy
• In Q4, we paid $4.3B to more than 875,000 Veterans or dependents.

• We implemented Section 105 of the Colmery Act, which increased Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to some Student Veterans.

• We continue to protect resident rates for students if college courses covert to an online format during the pandemic.

• We’re creating stability for student Veterans even in the current uncertain environment.

• Let’s move to VR&E.

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• When changes to the law limited our ability to report positive outcomes, VR&E pivoted to help Veterans find jobs.

• Job Placement reflects the number of participants VBA has assisted in obtaining suitable employment.

• VR&E beat the Job Placement target by more than 150%.

• More Veterans with jobs means greater financial security to weather economic challenges and provide for themselves and their families.

• Now, let’s talk about Home Loan Guaranty.

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• Our Home Loan Program had a record year—guaranteeing over 1.2 million loans in FY20.

• Importantly, we also identified unlawful advertising aimed at Veteran borrowers.

• Our teams reported the activity to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, resulting in more than $2.6 million in civil penalties and protecting Veteran homeowners from bad actors.

• Combatting the potential loss of essential cash and equity for Veteran homeowners remains a high priority.

• Let’s move on to Transition and Economic Development.

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• The Office of Transition and Economic Development (or OTED) administers several programs including the Transition Assistance Program (or TAP), which provides information on VA benefits and services.

• OTED received 2 Platinum Hermes Creative awards for its redesigned VA Benefits and Services Participant Guide, which is used in TAP.

• OTED is also responsible for Solid Start.

• Solid Start counselors have contacted Veterans in the crucial first year of separation from service, with high success rates.

• Improving transition success is about connecting Veterans with benefits and services that can improve economic stability and reduce stress.

• Congratulations to the OTED team.

• Before we move on, I want to once again thank VA Chief Information Officer Jim Gfrerer and his entire team.

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• At VBA we rely heavily on VA’s IT team—especially so this fiscal year, as remote work challenged and stretched both VBA and OIT.

• Thank you to OIT for your partnership.

• Your work enables all of VBA to continue to serve Veterans quickly and efficiently.

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• When the pandemic started, I began conducting telephone townhalls with Veterans in each state.

• By the end of Q4, I completed 90 tele-town halls and connected with 3.8M Veterans.

• Serving Veterans is my mission—to get them answers to their questions and take action on their claims.

• I talked to a homeless Veteran, who called from a shelter.

• We were able to move her claim along, and pay her a large retroactive benefit that enabled her to reunite with her son in another state.
• I talked to a recently widowed spouse, confused about the benefits her husband’s service provided her.

• We explained those benefits and helped her file a claim.

• And I took a call from a Veteran in crisis, threatening to harm himself.

• Our team jumped on this immediately and police went to his home to ensure he was safe.

• Through this, my definition of customer service for VBA has changed.

• I initially thought Veterans expected us to be fast and consistent.

• Now, I have added empathy—to walk in their shoes as they go through our process.

• And awareness—of how important our interactions with Veterans are.

• Hearing from Veterans directly on these tele-town halls has given me a fresh and personal perspective on our mission.

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• A year ago, I challenged all of VBA to make FY20 our #BestYearEver.

• As I just reported, our performance in FY20 was outstanding.

• It truly was our #BestYearEver.

• Our teams delivered outstanding results across all business lines.
  o The Colmery Act – completed on time.
  o The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act – implemented on-time.
  o Solid Start – implemented on-time.
  o Legacy appeals – eliminated.
  o FAST—implemented.
  o We beat targets to locate Hard-to-Find Beneficiaries,
  o We helped more Veterans find jobs,
  o And we guaranteed more than 1.2 million home loans, a record.

• A big, virtual high-5 to all VBA teams.

• You continue to work hard, be creative and innovative, and stay focused on serving Veterans.

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• At the end of FY20, we raised our performance targets. And we exceeded them.
• We know that Veterans have high expectations for VBA.
• They expect us to continue to improve.
• Consequently, for the second year in a row, we are ready to raise the bar on our performance.
• We are raising the targets in 5 of our 8 business lines.
• OTED will increase successful Solid Start Calls from 15% to 40%.
• Home Loan will now issue 80% of Certificates of Eligibility in just 1 day, an increase over last year.
• Insurance will add a new target to pay Service-Disabled Veterans Life Insurance benefits in 9 days.
• Pension will add a new target to complete burial plot claims in 55 days.
• And Education will process original claims in 24 days—a reduction of 4 days, and supplemental claims in 12 days—a reduction of 2 days.

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• To summarize, we delivered an outstanding performance in Q4 and in FY20, exceeding all our targets.
• We had our #BestYearEver.
• Today I am announcing our new campaign for FY21 - #FasterBetterTogether
• Let me explain:
  • Faster – is how Veterans want their benefits.
  • It highlights our focus on speed in processing and eliminating time we spend waiting for records or exams, or other evidence we need to grant benefits.
  • Better– is our quest to continually improve quality, remaining empathetic and aware of Veterans’ needs.
  • Together – as team VBA, with those who also advocate for Veterans – states, counties, VSOs, and Congress and OMB. And most importantly, together with Veterans.
• Nothing upsets me more than when I hear Veterans say “I am fighting with VBA” because that is not the way we want it to be.

• And that is certainly not the kind of organization I want to lead.

• When the system works the way it should, we are all on the same team. And we should be fighting for Veterans.

• My vision for #FasterBetterTogether focuses on VBA’s continuous improvement and unites our team and stakeholders.

• Our goal is to collaborate to meet Veterans’ expectations for speed and quality of benefits delivery.

• So, join us in FY21 in our quest to support Veterans.
  o Let’s be Faster.
  o Let’s be Better.
  o And let’s continue to work together.

• #FasterBetterTogether.

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[Ray Tellez Speaking]

• Thank you, Dr. Lawrence.

• Please stay tuned for the After Show, a “best of” video compilation of FY20 highlights at VBA.

• This completes the webcast on Managing VBA Performance and Results for Quarter 4 of Fiscal Year 2020.

• Don’t forget: we invite you to connect with VBA through our channels.

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• A recording of today’s presentation will be available at benefits.va.gov/stakeholder.

• For VA customer service, you may call: 1-800-827-1000.

• To learn more about VA Benefits, visit: benefits.va.gov.

• Until next time.