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U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Baldwin, Senate colleagues want answers after reports that Pentagon is holding up info to veterans and advocates

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin today asked the heads of all U.S. Military branches for answers following media reports that they have stopped releasing vital information about Military Discharge Review Board Decisions that can help veterans change or contest their discharge status and access earned benefits and resources.

Earlier this month, the Associated Press reported that veterans and their advocates who seek to change their discharge statuses currently lack access to thousands of decisions that would help them successfully argue their cases. Without access to this information, veterans and the advocacy groups working on their behalf are left in the dark about their current discharge status and veterans may not be receiving the full military benefits they are owed. The law requires the services to publicly post past decisions as well as render all decisions within 18 months, a standard which is not currently being met.

"These decisions are of critical importance to veterans who received less-than-honorable or otherwise stigmatizing discharge characterizations from the military and who seek to upgrade or correct that characterization. However, it is our understanding that since April 2019, the public database of decisions and ability to search those decisions has not been available," **wrote the Senators in their**

letter.

The Senators continued, *"We recognize that important reforms by the Department of Defense, including reviews of discharges following the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' and the Department's 'liberal consideration policy' for veterans who experienced mental health conditions or Military Sexual Trauma during their service may be contributing to an increase in applications for the Boards' consideration and additional analysis of applications. But, as you know, veterans' access to crucial and sometimes life-saving veterans' benefits often depend on the nature of their discharge. Every day that a board decision is delayed is a day that a veteran may be without access to benefits they have earned."*

In addition to Senator Baldwin, Senators Jon Tester (D-MT), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Bob Casey (D-PA), Gary Peters (D-MI), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Tim Kaine (D-VA) have also joined the letter.

The full letter is available here.

An online version of this release is available here.