



LOCAL 520
PO BOX 1778
COLUMBIA, SC 29202

May 8, 2012

General Allison Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits
Office of the Under Secretary
810 Vermont Ave NW
WASH DC 20420

Dear General Hickey:

This letter is to express serious concerns from American Federation of Government Employees Local 520.

On January 13, 2012, Local 520 raised our concerns with the Southern Area Director in an email with a copy furnished to you concerning the six newly Challenge trained RVSRs who were placed on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) and the high RVSR performance standards at the Columbia VARO.

Since this time, there have been a total of 11 newly Challenge trained RVSRs who have been placed on a PIP and four newly Challenge trained RVSRs who voluntarily returned to their former VSR position to avoid a PIP.

Furthermore, the Quick Start Team is comprised of 11 newly Challenge trained RVSRs with less than one year of experience and 9 journeymen with 5 serving as mentors.

Despite your words, "Remember what it's like to attend a training class only to return home to a supervisor/coach who said, "forget what you learned –we do it differently." Please avoid any temptation to change their approach or processes because "we don't do things this way." This is the approved standard." *Hey VBA, Vol.1, Issue 7, dated Sept. 22, 2011*, employees were instructed to follow local procedures and disregard the training received in Challenge training and given work that was way beyond their level of experience.

As a matter of fact, the majority of journeymen RVSRs at the Columbia VARO are not meeting the production element of their performance standards.

For example, there are 12 RVSRs (11 Journeymen and 1 GS11) on Rating Team III. An information request reveals that since February 2012, their production has decreased. The average daily production for the team was 1.93 for the month of April compared to 2.41 for February. The average accuracy rate was 96.6 for February 2012 compared to 89.1 for April 2012.

The bottom line is every Rating team has shown a decrease in production since February 2012. If SNL was supposed to increase production, it has not worked at Columbia thus far.

The issue has been raised many times about the RVSR production standards. How can an employee who rates one issue get the same credit as an employee who rates seven issues? How can VARO's be measured if they have different RVSR performance standards?

During the pilot program, the Union at Indianapolis raised the issue of the RVSR points system as regard to the Transformation Lanes. Now, that Transformation Lanes are being implemented at different stations, the Union is raising the same issue.

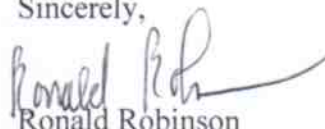
Despite the fact that the Michael Walcoff, Associated Deputy Under Secretary for Field Operation at the time, testified before the US House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on September 13, 2006 and told Congress there were National performance standards for RVSRs, the RVSR performance standards continued to be different from VARO to VARO. (Attached)

However, it is obvious why VBA continues to allow this to happen. VBA benefits when employees are forced to do more and get the same pay.

The Department and the Union agree that a constructive and cooperative working relationship between labor and management is essential to achieving the Department's mission and ensuring a quality work environment for all employees... Therefore, the parties agree to work together using partnership principles, Labor-Management Forums, and the Master Agreement to identify problems and craft solutions, enhance productivity, and deliver the best quality of service to the nation's Veterans. Really?

Employees should not have to work in an environment that they are subjected to fear of reassignment, demotion, or removal because of the VBA's failure to manage its workload. It is impossible for employees to work under these hostile conditions.

Sincerely,



Ronald Robinson

AFGE Local 520

President

(803) 239-7682

rbnsnrnld@yahoo.com

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