

United States Senate

February 13, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

The Honorable Chad Wolf
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2801 Nebraska Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf:

I write to express my concern about your failure to respond to my letter regarding the administration's policy to permit deported Veterans entry into the United States to attend their citizenship interview with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

In my letter dated on August 8, 2019, I requested the Departments of State and Homeland Security (DHS) provide information regarding the specific guidelines used to grant parole to deported Veterans seeking entry to attend citizenship interviews. Public reports indicated that former U.S. Marine Sergeant Roman Sabal was denied entry, causing him to miss his scheduled USCIS citizenship appointment. I am further concerned by reports that Sergeant Sabal is likely one of several Veterans facing challenges re-entering the country for naturalization interviews.

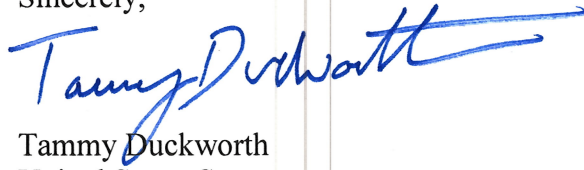
The Department of State responded to my letter citing they do not have specific guidance regarding processing visa requests from deported Veterans. The agency explained that deported Veterans are subject to the same requirements as all other visa applicants. In addition, the agency also clarified that DHS has sole jurisdiction in adjudicating parole applications, and the Department of State has no involvement in processing or approving parole petitions.

Your agency neglected to respond to my letter and to explain how USCIS, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) adjudicate such parole requests from deported Veterans at the border. Veterans should not have to waste valuable time and money traveling to a port of entry to then have to cross their fingers and hope that the agency that approved and prescheduled their citizenship interview will also grant them parole to attend said interview. Sergeant Sabal and other Veterans who complete the naturalization application for citizenship must be allowed to finish the final steps of the naturalization process.

As a United States Senator and Army Veteran, I urge you to use full discretion when considering deported Veterans parole applications to attend citizenship interviews. We owe noncitizens who risk their lives to serve the United States full support and assistance in attaining citizenship. I write again urging you to act immediately and establish clear policies that allow deported Veterans to receive parole to attend their naturalization interviews. Additionally, if Veterans are denied parole, USCIS must make accommodations and conduct naturalization examinations at a port of entry, U.S. embassy or consulate in the country where they reside.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Duckworth". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator