

Veterans and their families should have an easier time accessing military service records, now that the National Archives and Records Administration has eliminated a pandemic-era backlog of requests.

The agency has announced that it finally cleared its years-long backlog of Veteran records requests.

The backlog at NARA's National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, Missouri peaked at more than 600,000 unprocessed requests at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The reason the NARA's gave for the backlog was that the pandemic-era building occupancy limits led to the backlog, and constrained the agency's ability to send employees back into the facility and access the mostly paper records.

National Archivist Colleen Shogan told Federal News Network in an interview Friday that NPRC employees who put in extra hours on holidays and weekends were essential to driving down the backlog over the last two years.

"Their willingness to go the extra mile to eliminate this backlog was really what made the difference," Shogan said. "There was not a federal holiday that went by where we weren't also allowing people to come in, to work away and chip away at the backlog. Over time, this was optional, and people chose to want to do it, so that they could be part of this effort to eliminate the backlog."

Congress gave the NARA an additional \$60 million to help clear the records backlog in the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act.

The Technology Modernization Fund in May 2022 also [invested \\$9.1 million in NARA](#) to support short and long-term records modernization efforts.

"The Technology Modernization Fund was critical, because that helped to improve the application on everybody's computers that processed the requests coming in from Veterans, and enabled more requests to be handled in any given hour of any given day. It increased the bandwidth and the power of that application, which allowed the backlog to be eliminated much quicker than it would have been otherwise," Shogan said.

By tapping into these funds, NARA generally stayed on track with its timeline of [eliminating the backlog by December 2023](#).

“We had projections for every week, and if we were off the projection for any reason, I would inquire why, and if there were ways in which I could help, then I did. So, it was a lot of vigilance from our leadership,” Shogan said. “But once again, it was the people who actually do the work — the people who fill those requests, our archivists and our archivist technicians — who actually came in and did the extra work and got it done.”

NARA expects that it will now be able to fill most requests from veterans — especially simple requests for their military service records — in a week or less. The agency is also on pace to respond to almost all requests, including complex requests, within 20 days.