



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, February 12, 2017

Volume 8, Issue 07

This-N-That

Effective March 14 Veterans Affairs will consider presumptive disability compensation to Veterans suffering from the following conditions caused by exposure to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, N.C., between 1953 and 1987: kidney cancer, liver cancer, Non-Hodgkin lymphoma, adult leukemia, multiple myeloma, Parkinson's disease, aplastic anemia, bladder cancer, and other myelodysplastic syndromes.

To all those who are affected by the water contamination at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina, now is the time to put the pressure on your elected members of Congress. We post the numbers in every newsletter for your convenience.

This is your chance to help make the law changes needed

to insure you and your families are taken care of, please don't make excuses not to make the calls, and call often, say once a week until congress pays attention and takes the appropriate action!

Before I go any further, I do want to thank those who have corresponded with me on many issues they have had to deal with personally, and I do promise to address each one in future newsletters, so please don't think I have forgotten you!

This week the one thing I would like to cover are medical/dental appointments.

I know the weather in many locations across the country has been bad, and in some places just flat out unbearable making travel to and from a VA facility or clinic unsafe and impossible.

But when you have an appointment please do your best to keep it, and if weather is not permitting be sure to call as far in advance as you can to cancel the appointment as someone closer might be able to be squeezed in vs. waiting two or three months down the road to be seen.

The one complaint I get most is the time it takes to get an appointment, some having to wait 2-3 months to be seen. And when you don't show up, don't call to cancel, then someone else in need can't be seen earlier than had been scheduled, and that person could be in pain and could easily have been seen to fill your appointment.

So all I ask is please be considerate, call and cancel or reschedule your appointment if you can't get there due to weather or other health conditions.

I've been preaching on the Homeless Veterans and Veteran Suicides for many months. And I've also told about how many small organizations have popped up creating Veteran Villages across the country with mini homes.

If you live in an area that has gone to this extent to help our Veterans, please write to me and tell me as much as you can, we'd like to start a small database of possible available mini homes that we can direct those who call us looking for shelter and programs to help them.

We already have a database started of shelters and soup kitchens, food pantry's, etc. but we're looking to expand that to include any "Veteran Villages" who have programs to help Veterans beside providing them a place to live, so we could use your help in gathering information we can pass on.

We have continued to keep busy faxing members of Congress on many issues, and it seems to be working in that we're getting some attention on some of the issues. This is very encouraging as we're not having to pound on their doors.

Beginning next weeks newsletter we will start providing some of the issues we're contacting them over so we can ask for your help to address an issue by asking you to call

your reps to help put a push on each of the issues to gain more attention and hopefully they will take the needed action to help make corrections and changes to the VA Healthcare System!

Further down in a section titled Support Blue Water Vietnam Veterans please click on the link and send your message to congress asking for their support to help your fellow Veteran who served on the waters.

Again, we're asking for your continued support in sending your message to your Senators and Congressman asking they support legislation to help all those who served on the water to gain their badly needed medical care and benefits they have been so wrongly denied for too long!

On behalf of our Volunteers nationwide and myself, we wish you and your family good health!

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org

TREA participates in House Roundtable on VA Healthcare

Last Wednesday the House of Representatives' VA Health Subcommittee held a roundtable with between 10 and 15 VSOs TREA was represented by the Washington Office's Executive Director Deirdre Parke Holleman. All the

members of the new Subcommittee were there. The roundtable was chaired by the new Chair of the Subcommittee, Rep. Brad Webstrup (R-OH) and new Ranking member Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA). Joining us was also the Chairman of the full VA Committee Rep. Phil Roe (R-TN) and Ranking Member Rep. Tim Waltz (D-MN). The time spent and lively discussion showed that the members of this Subcommittee have real hopes of improving VA healthcare in this year's session of Congress.

It is also clear that having 2 doctors in leadership, Rep. Roe and Rep. Webstrup who are also leaders in the House Doctors Caucus means that we are dealing with knowledgeable people on how the VA must create an atmosphere where medicine can be practiced in a skilled and efficient way. This year the Choice Act (which allows veterans, when necessary, to get medical care in the civilian sector) will need to be reauthorized and improved. We spoke, at length, about some of the failings of the early Choice program which was started on the fly to react to the scandal at the Phoenix VA (and many other VA facilities) of crippling waits for VA medical care and the fraudulent hiding of the medical delays. Members on both sides of the aisle wanted to hear veterans' individual experiences.

If you have had an experience at the VA concerning medical care which you think could show an improvement that should be included in the new law and "Request for Proposal" (contract) please e-mail me at dholleman@treadc.org. This should not be limited to wait times. It may be something that should be but is not now

covered; improvements in how the VA cares for women veterans; experience of medical personnel or anything else that you think could help your fellow veterans.

Source: TREA

Support Flag Desecration Amendment (HJRes. 61)

Rep. Steve Womack (Ark.) has introduced a proposed constitutional amendment (H. J. Res. 61) to allow Congress to pass a law to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States. Many brave men and women who serve and have served in the Armed Services feel deeply about the honor and dignity of “Old Glory,” and the physical desecration of this symbol of democracy and freedom is an affront to them and the memory of those who died in the defense of this Nation.

Please click [HERE](#) to ask your Representative to support this proposed constitutional amendment.

Support Blue Water Vietnam Veterans

Rep. David Valadao (Calif.) has introduced the “Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act” (H.R. 299) that would clarify that service members serving off the coast of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam conflict have a presumption for filing disability claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for ailments associated with exposure to the Agent Orange herbicide. FRA believes Congress should recognize that so-called “Blue water” veterans were exposed to Agent Orange herbicide and authorize presumptive status for VA disability claims associated with this exposure.

Please use the [Action Center](#) to ask your Representative to support this important legislation.

New Tax Law that Could Impact Vets

There are two new tax laws some veterans need to know about this year. One is the 'Combat-Injured Veterans Tax Fairness Act of 2016.' Under federal law, Veterans who suffer combat-related injuries and who are separated from the military are not supposed to be taxed on the one-time lump sum disability severance payment they receive from the Department of Defense (DoD). More than \$78 million is owed to an estimated 14,000 Veterans. This law corrects this problem by instructing DoD to identify Veterans who were taxed in order for them to file an amended return to receive their money back.

Commissary Price Change Benchmarks: 3 Things to Know

You may have heard that the commissary is about to welcome in some big changes, but what are the major takeaways you should know about these changes? For the full details, see this [Spousebuzz](#) post.



Space-Available Air Travel

On January 12, 2017, Senator Dean Heller of Nevada introduced S.116. This bill would permit veterans who have service-connected, total and permanent disabilities to travel on military aircraft in the same manner and to the same extent as retired members of the armed forces are entitled to such travel.

This bill would afford priority to totally disabled veterans for transportation on scheduled and unscheduled military flights within the continental United States and on scheduled overseas flights operated by the Air Mobility Command, on a space-available basis. This measure is in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 121, which seeks the enactment of legislation to extend space-available air travel aboard military aircraft to all service-connected veterans entitled to receive compensation at the 100-percent rate.

Please use the prepared e-mail or draft your own message to request that your Senator support this important bill and ask that the measure be brought to the floor for a vote and passed as soon as possible.

Thank you for all you do for ill and injured veterans and their families.

Click [HERE](#) and send your message.

**\$0 Out of Pocket & Rx Costs with a
TRICARE Supplement**



Doctor and hospital bills are expensive even when you're covered by TRICARE. Help minimize or even eliminate out-of-pocket expenses with the TRICARE

[Insurance Supplement Plan.](#)

To Contact your Members of Congress

To Call your Representative: 202-225-2305

To call your Senator: 202-224-3841 or 202-224-3553

To call different members of Congress: 202-224-3121

Toll FREE Number: 866-272-6622

Art Academy Offers NJ Vets Free Tuition

Àni Art Academy America provides a tuition-free, comprehensive art education and even the art supplies are free. Àni is committed to empowering veterans that have sacrificed so much defending freedom and justice. The academy believes that a fine arts education can be life changing and will help veterans develop a rewarding career that they can take great pride in. Àni Art Academies is a global, non-profit organization that delivers a comprehensive, multi-year drawing and painting education to aspiring Artists around the world. To learn more, visit the Àni Art Academy [website](#).

TREA Talks With Commissary Officials About Changes That are Coming

Last week TREA's Legislative Director Larry Madison and Deputy Legislative Director Mike Saunders spoke with senior Defense Department officials regarding changes that are coming to the commissary system. The officials highlighted two changes in particular.

First, they discussed the new methodology they have instituted for measuring customer savings at commissaries. For years we have been told that commissary patrons save an average of 30 percent over what they'd pay at a commercial grocery store. With their new methodology it turns out that the savings actually averages around 20 percent nationwide. However, the savings vary by region of the country, which has always been the case, and with their new methodology they will know the amount of savings in each region.

Second, we were informed that beginning in May commissaries will begin their own private label for a number of products. Food items will be sold under the label "Freedom's Choice," while non-food items such as paper products will be sold under the label of "Home Base." The official said it will take several months to stock all of the different private label products they intend to offer.

Source: TREA

Operation Mail Call

Operation Mail Call
needs your help! We

need cards and letters to send to our troops currently serving on foreign soil.

Our men and women in uniform often go months without hugging their children, walking through the park with a

significant other or enjoying Mom's home-cooked Sunday dinners.

Ask them where they'd go if they had a free plane ticket anywhere in the world, and the overwhelming majority would say, "home."

Of course, we can't replace the hugs, the love or the secret family chili recipe – but with your help, we can provide them a connection to their fellow Americans who are grateful for their service.

Now, we're hoping you'll take your support to the next level by sending more cards and letters. Hand made cards by your children, or class mates are a terrific means of putting smiles on their faces even if only for a moment.

Cards and Letters of encouragement to help boost moral and let them know we sincerely appreciate the job they are doing and look forward to they day they are all brought home. Your card or letter will show your appreciation and



help thousands more American heroes feel connected to the people they love and the country they serve.

Please help us to make a powerful expression of how much their fellow Americans care about them.

Thank you so much for all you're doing to show our service men and women they are appreciated missed and loved.

If you're a school teacher, please contact me at my E-Mail address at the top, our troops love to hear from kids too!

For more information, visit: <http://veterans-for-change.org/5439-operation-mail-call-2>

Step One to VA Claims Appeals

If you disagree with the decision the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) made on your disability compensation claim, your first step is to file the Notice of Disagreement (VA-Form [21-0958](#)) that was included with your claim decision. If you do not feel confident enough to do this on your own, your Veterans Service Organization (VSO) can help you. The NOD form contains blocks for each issue of contention (the medical conditions for which you filed the claim). The most important section is the narrative to explain why you feel VA incorrectly decided your claim.



Government Accountability Reports

- 1) Capitol Police Board: Fully Incorporating Leading Governance Practices Would Help Enhance Accountability, Transparency, and External Communication.
 - 2) Capitol Police Board: Fully Incorporating Leading Governance Practices Would Help Enhance Accountability, Transparency, and External Communication.
 - 3) Capitol Police Board: Fully Incorporating Leading Governance Practices Would Help Enhance Accountability, Transparency, and External Communication.
 - 4) Critical Infrastructure Protection: Additional Actions by DHS Could Help Identify Opportunities to Harmonize Access Control Efforts.
 - 5) Drug-Free Communities Support Program: Agencies Have Strengthened Collaboration but Could Enhance Grantee Compliance and Performance Monitoring.
 - 6) Drug-Free Communities Support Program: Agencies Have Strengthened Collaboration but Could Enhance Grantee Compliance and Performance Monitoring.
 - 7) Federal Disaster Assistance: FEMA's Progress in Aiding Individuals with Disabilities Could Be Further Enhanced.
 - 8) Federal Disaster Assistance: FEMA's Progress in Aiding Individuals with Disabilities Could Be Further Enhanced.
 - 9) U.S. Postal Service: Key Considerations for Restoring Fiscal Sustainability.
 - 10) Veterans Affairs Information Technology: Management Attention Needed to Improve Critical System Modernizations, Consolidate Data Centers, and Retire Legacy Systems.
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Free Legal Clinics for Vets in Knoxville

The Knoxville Bar Association will offer free legal advice to veterans at a clinic Wednesday, Feb. 8, at the Knox County Public Defender's Community Law Office on Liberty Street. The clinic will be open from noon--2 p.m. Clinics will continue for the rest of 2017 on the second Wednesday of each month. Veterans who attend can ask questions and get general legal advice. Those who qualify may be referred for free continued legal service from Legal Aid of East Tennessee. For more information on free legal clinics, call Lawyer Referral and Information Service Executive Director Marsha Watson or Administrator Tracy Chain at 865-522-7501. [Find where to Get free legal assistance near you.](#)



**Free Tax Software, Support Available
for Military, Families**

By Lisa Ferdinando

DoD News, Defense Media Activity

WASHINGTON, Feb. 1, 2017 — With the tax season upon us, service members and their families can access free tax-filing software and consultations to help them navigate the task of submitting their annual taxes.

Military members and their families can visit the Military OneSource website or call 1-800-342-9647 for the no-cost "MilTax" software, explained Erika Slaton, a program analyst with Military OneSource.

The Defense Department recognizes military members and their families have unique filing situations with deployments, relocations and various deductions and credits, she said. The MilTax software, previously known as "Military OneSource Tax Services," was created with the military situation in mind, Slaton said.

Expert Tax Consultants Ready to Help

Tax consultants are available via phone through Military OneSource, Slaton said. In-person tax filing assistance can be accessed at military installations at a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance location.

The tax consultants can inform eligible users about the unique tax benefits available to service members and their families, Slaton said.

Tax laws change each year, Slaton pointed out, adding

MilTax consultants are experts on the nuances of the law and can help users get the tax credits they earned and deserve.

"That's why it's such a great program because it is a program that is specifically designed for those unique military tax situations," she said.

Confidential, Secure Resources

MilTax is confidential and secure, Slaton said. The online filing program allows users to submit a federal return and up to three state tax returns, she said.

Those eligible for MilTax include members of the Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines and National Guard. Coast Guardsmen serving under Title 10 authority are entitled to the services as well. Retired and honorably discharged members are authorized for up to 180 days past their separation. Spouses, dependent children and survivors are able to use the free services as well.

Calculations are backed by a 100-percent accuracy guarantee, Slaton said.

The deadline to file taxes this year is Tuesday, April 18. The traditional tax deadline day is April 15, but it falls on a Saturday this year, and the following Monday, April 17, is Emancipation Day, in the District of Columbia -- a legal holiday -- according to the IRS.

Call, Click, Connect

Slaton wants the military community to know about the range of services and resources available at no cost through the Defense Department-funded Military OneSource, including related to health, family relationships, education, employment, financial issues, deployments and transitions.

Military members and their families, she said, can "call, click and connect today" to access these services.

"We encourage service members and their families to learn more about Military OneSource, MilTax and all of the services that are available because it is a benefit that they deserve," she said.

Source: TREA

Veteran Crisis Resources

Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1

Military Crisis Line 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans

1-877-4AID-VET (424.3838)

VA Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274

Navy Blended Retirement App

The U.S. Navy has released a new app for mobile devices that provides the latest info on the Blended Retirement System (BRS), which goes into effect in 2018. The app is also designed to provide Sailors with anytime, anywhere access to both training and resources that will help them make informed decisions about their financial future. The app also serves as a valuable tool for Navy family members. Users will be able to explore issues like managing their credit, building a spending plan, home buying, moving, as well as how to navigate survivor benefits, insurance and the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), among many other topics. The Navy Financial Literacy mobile application is available for download from the iTunes and Google Play online stores. To find the free app, search "Navy Financial Literacy" in the app stores or in your Web browser.

Tax Return vs. Tax Refund

It's income tax season, and people are looking for answers, but make sure you're asking the right questions. What's the difference between a tax return and a tax refund, for instance? For more details, see this [Paycheck Chronicles post](#).

Veterans-For-Change Web Site

The Veterans-For-Change website has been under construction since day one back in 2009 and every day since then. The looks pretty much stay the same, but in the background constant improvement and change is being done to make our website the most user friendly “One-Stop-Shop” website to find almost everything you might have tried to find searching the internet.

Almost a hundred people have been involved; collecting web links to documents now houses on the VFC website, collecting thousands of web links for various issues, illnesses and benefits. Creating forums for all eras of service and two forums one just for men and one just for woman where you can go question, comment, share medical and personal concerns, what ever you'd like it to be.

We also have a forum with a licensed Mental Health Worker, again where you can seek help or just ask questions.

We average 1,700 hits per day, and downloads average 1,000 per day with a total 3,166,186 visitors as of Friday.

If you subscribe you will have full access to the entire website and best of all it's FREE of charge! You just need a valid E-mail address so the system can send you a confirmation E-Mail. Once received, click on the link to be authorized automatically.

www.veterans-for-change.org

- Documents Library with over 15,905 documents on-line
(Updated: 12/12/16)
- FAQ's with more than 1,600 FAQ's and answers
- Multiple Forums
 - o Afghanistan Veterans
 - o FMP - Foreign Medial Program
 - o Gulf War & Desert Storm Veterans
 - o Iraq Veterans
 - o Korean Veterans
 - o Men Veterans Forum
 - o Mental Health for Veterans
 - o Political Issues
 - o Suggestion Box
 - o The Mess Hall
 - o VA Hospitals and Medical Centers
 - o Veteran Affairs
 - o Vietnam Veterans
 - o Welcome Mat
 - o Women Veterans Forum
 - o WW II Veterans
- Job Postings
- Memorial Pages (Updated: 10/10/16)
- News (Articles On-Line: 6,331)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than 3,541, Added 46 New Links
(Updated: 12/28/16)

If you have a submission for the memorial pages, E-Mail:

Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org



<https://twitter.com/Veterans4Change>

Links to Other Stories

- 1) 'Veterans Experience' would help facilitate healthcare delivery needs
- 2) Isakson: Secretary of Veterans Affairs Must Improve Accessibility to Health Care
- 3) Latest data show Tomah VA hospital improving in opioid prescriptions, Veteran satisfaction
- 4) VETERANS AFFAIRS: VA compensation considered for exposure to contaminated water

You can help VFC by reading articles posted and commenting at the bottom and rate the articles. If you don't have an account, sign up today, it's FREE. Your comments and rankings tell us what type of information you want most.

Check us out today: www.veterans-for-change.org

**Paycheck Chronicles Mailbag:
Veterans Services Officers**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has many great benefits and programs, but sometimes it's hard to know which programs are right for you, as a veteran. For an answer to this pressing question, read this Paycheck Chronicles [post](#).



Are you seeking employment? Been looking and not found the right job?

Well Veterans-For-Change is working hard to bring you more information on Job Fairs and Job postings available across the country.

<http://veterans-for-change.org/documents-library/category/167-job-fairs-job-postings>

If you're an employer and have a job to post, send and E-Mail to: Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org

Tax Prep Centers to Open on a Base Near You

Tax centers at military bases around the country are opening soon. The Tax Center provides free tax preparation and electronic filing services to active duty, reserve and guard on active duty orders, dependents and retirees. National Guard members and their eligible dependents must be on Title 10 Orders in order to receive tax assistance. If the taxpayer is deployed to a Combat Zone, Persian Gulf, Hazardous duty area of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Albania, the Adriatic Sea and the Ionian Sea north of 39th parallel, or Afghanistan, they have 180 days from the last day they were in the combat zone, or the last day of continuous qualified hospitalization for injury from the combat zone to file their return. For more information, contact your base's tax center.

VA to Recognize Tribal Organizations

For veterans living within or near tribal communities, it can sometimes be difficult to receive representation for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefit claims. VA has tried to help with this through [a rule change](#) in the Code of Federal Regulations (38 CFR 14.628). This change will allow eligible tribal organizations to become accredited by VA. It is believed that accredited tribal organizations can provide Veterans with better, more culturally competent services. VA invites all interested tribal organizations to consider beginning the process of becoming a VSO. For more information, read the VA Vantage Point [Blog](#) and visit the VA [website](#).



Veterans Choice Update

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently issued a statement about Office of Inspector General review of implementation of the Veterans Choice Program. The statement is available on the Department of Veterans Affairs [website](#).

**~We Proudly Support our
Military Personnel & Families~**

Veterans Benefits Administration Top Achievements for Veterans, their Families, and Survivors

Compensation

- Paid nearly \$74B to 4.66M beneficiaries in FY16
- 1.3M claims completed in FY16 – seventh year in a row of more than 1M claims!
- Completed 5.76M issues in FY16
- Consistently completed more than 100K claims per month, every month of FY16
- Reduced inventory 55.8% from 884K peak in July 2012 to 389.9K
- Issue-based quality is 95%
- Average days to complete a Veteran's claim is 119.4 days – a 228.6-day reduction from 348-day peak in Sept. 2013
- Now processing nearly 100% of disability compensation claims electronically via VBMS
- Completed over 6.89M rating and non-rating claims in VBMS and nearly 5.7M rating decisions in VBMS since inception
- Completed 3M non-rating and administrative action end products in FY16 – already completed 964K through end of Dec. FY17
- In FY16, 1 in 4 Veterans submitted their dependency requests online and 63% received payments in under 1 day
- Reduced dependency claims inventory from 269K peak in August 2014 to 101.9K – only 1.9K left to hit our FY17 agency priority goal of 100K

Appeals

- VBA completed 202K appeals actions (including full grant, SOC resolution, and certified/recertified to the Board of Veterans Appeals) in FY16 – a 20% increase over FY15 – 72K already completed through Jan. 2017
- From the end of FY16 through end of January FY17, VBA has increased the number of certifications to the Board, lowering the Substantive Appeal (VA Form 9) pending inventory from 50,157 to 46,564. That is a 7.2 percent decrease in inventory in FY17.
- Overall, VBA resolved 113,197 appeals in FY16 – over 15,627 more appeal resolutions compared to FY15

Access

- Nearly 6.26M registered eBenefits users
- National Call Centers (NCC) answered 4.1M calls in FY16
- Average call wait time at NCCs is 1:32 minutes, and 100% of those calls are getting through: reduced the blocked call rate from 59% in FY15 to 0% through Jan. 2017!
- Provided more than 14K VA Benefits Briefings through the Transition Assistance Program to an estimated 378,000 transitioning Servicemembers and family members in FY16

If you received this newsletter as a courtesy or a forward from a friend or relative, you can sign up to receive in your E-mail every week.

<https://gem.godaddy.com/signups/193302/join>



Veterans-For-Change, Inc.

Riverside County, CA

Visit our website today

www.Veterans-For-Change.org

Serving those who served!

Please pass on to all your Veteran Friends and Family

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Express Mail	144,711
Boston	74,626
Courtesy Copies	3,500
Department of VA	12,365
DoD	29,322
Face Book Pages	3,467
Google	28,166
Los Angeles	134,208
Microsoft	9,410
National Guard	3955
New York	150,813
Other Social Media	40,841
San Francisco	77,254
Twitter	37
US House of Reps & Staff	984
US Senators & Staff	104
University of So. California	4,948
US Air Force	24,776
US Army	63,909
US Marines	27,335
US Navy	36,500
Veterans	19,076,790
Washington DC	139,539
Yahoo	134
	20,087,694

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Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org

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