



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, August 20, 2017

Volume 8, Issue 34



This-N-That

There are so many things I would like to talk about today, but there just isn't enough time or space to do that. But the top items on my list are Homeless Veterans, Veteran Suicides, VA Staff not following protocol when it comes to cleaning instruments and equipment to prevent cross contamination of others, lack of benefits for those who served, and the long delays in reviewing claims and getting them approved. And the past three Sec VA's holding the power to approve illnesses and coverage for those who have been fighting the system for so long.

The VA has dumped billions into grant programs to help the homeless Veterans but there is no accountability, nor any real solid signs let alone proof they are helping any.

Not long ago Secretary Shulkin announced he was going to close down or sell off properties and buildings that had little or no use. Well there is a need for them and a good use for them, but I need your help to make that point.

I need for everyone who reads this to send an E-Mail to Secretary Shulkin at david.shulkin@va.gov and ask that he not sell off or close any facility, to please convert them to housing for homeless Veterans. Conversion is less costly than shelling out billions to private agencies who have no proof they have accomplished their task. And each facility can provide an on site manager, and psychologist or psychiatrist or both. And the entire process would save billions of dollars, provide the much needed housing and onsite care.

Veteran suicides won't stop until the VA does their job. They in my personal opinion need to take all claims for PTSD seriously, process claims quickly and make sure our Veterans get the immediate attention and care needed.

I've posted a story about Jesse Bird, who played by the VA Rules, filed his claim and begged for help for eighteen months before he finally made the hardest and worst decision of his life, that was to take his own life.

For a very long time now, many sources and media outlets have touted the number 22, well that's been well over a year now and I'm more and more convinced it's upwards of 40+ per day now, and no not all Veteran suicides are reported to the VA so their numbers can't possibly be accurate or even close for that matter.

Maybe while writing to Secretary Shulkin, you might also ask he set orders to expedite all PTSD claims to help reduce that number drastically. ONE life is just ONE life too many! In fact there is a pre-written E-Mail you can send off for free, just takes a couple minutes of your time:

Support Faster Veterans Benefits

Blue Water Navy Veterans too have had a truly hard time as they've been denied since day one for not having "Boots on the Ground!"

But with Commander John Wells and many others mostly including BWN Veterans, legislation has been written and presented and there are many in Congress whom have signed on, but they still need help to push the legislation further to passage and being signed into law.

Here is a link to a pre-written E-Mail we are asking everyone to please go

send them, doesn't cost you anything but time.

Support Blue Water Vietnam Veterans

And if you have a few minutes and even though many don't believe you're being listened to, PLEASE, call your Congressman and both Senators and remind them that Veterans need their support, and that their voting constituency is comprised of 6-8% Veterans and that very same 6-8% can also make or break their bid for re-election.

And if you share our newsletter with friends and family, they too can send off the letters and make the calls, they don't have to be a Veteran or a family member of a Veteran, anyone can send the E-Mails and make the calls in support of all Veterans.

We continue to receive more stories and have been blast faxing to all members of Congress since fourteen weeks ago Sunday non-stop.

It's not too late, so if you'd like to share your story and help put faces on the problems that you face in your everyday life in dealing with the VA, please send them on to my e-mail address.

Only rules are no last names, no social security numbers, no phone numbers, only first name, city and state. All other information would be redacted and isn't needed so we can insure the protections of everyone.

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

Senate Face Fight to Increase TRICARE Fees

Senators propose that TRICARE beneficiaries pay higher co-pays for drug prescriptions not filled on base. Also, with removal of simple

"grandfathering" language, current retirees, and currently-serving members who eventually retire, would see higher [TRICARE fees and deductibles](#). However members of the Military Coalition are lining up against the Senate bill, pressing to educate its own members on details to pressure the full Senate or, if need be, House-Senate conferees tasked with shaping a final defense bill, to reject the most impactful changes for housing allowances, TRICARE plans and the next pay raise. Read the full [article](#).

Smart Devices for Disabled Veterans

For veterans with disabilities, adding smart devices to their homes can make a meaningful impact on the quality of everyday life. The best place for most veterans to start is to make inexpensive upgrades to the parts of the home they interact with on a daily basis. For most, that is common items like light switches and thermostats. You can tie the smart devices in your home together into a smart hub. Smart hubs are inexpensive devices that plug into your wireless router (the device that provides wireless Internet throughout your home). Also, many hardware companies and service providers now offer voice control technology. For more information, read the VA [VAntage Point Blog](#).

Judge Says Contractor Not Liable for 'Burn Pits'

A federal judge has dismissed a major lawsuit against a defense contractor by veterans and their family members over burn pit operations in Iraq and Afghanistan that plaintiffs said caused them chronic and sometimes deadly respiratory diseases and cancer. In the decision, U.S. District Court Judge Roger W. Titus wrote that the company, KBR, could not be held liable for what was essentially a military decision to use burn pits for waste disposal. The dismissal is a major blow to the more than 700 veterans, family members and former KBR employees who brought the suit. The plaintiffs plan to file an appeal to the Fourth Circuit. Read the [full story](#).



Support SBP/DIC Offset Repeal Legislation

Senator Nelson (FL) has introduced legislation (S. 339) and Congressman Joe Wilson (SC) has introduced identical legislation in the house (HR 846) that repeals the SBP/DIC offset for survivors, sometimes referred to as the "Military Widows Tax.". Please use this action center contact your legislators to ask them to support this important legislation.

Take Action!

Please, even if you have already sent this pre-written E-Mail, do it again, and forward the link to your friends, family, etc via an E-Mail and ask them too, to please sign and forward on to their address book.

We need to take care of our widows too! Current, past and future!



FREE RESUME REVIEWS For VETERANS

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At the War Memorial Center

Doris Appelbaum

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<http://www.appelbaumresumes.com>.

Plan for Military Oath Against Suicide Could Backfire, Experts Say

A congressman who served in Afghanistan is championing an idea to request departing service members sign an oath not to harm themselves, as a method to deter veteran suicides. But some suicide prevention experts contend the plan is likely to do the opposite. For more details, see this [article](#).



Veterans' Bills Passed by Congress; Now on to

the President

Three important veterans' bills were passed by Congress last week and sent to the President for his signature. One improves the VA's appeals procedures; another improves the VA education benefits and the third continues to fund the CHOICE healthcare program.

H.R.2288 As Amended: Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act for 2017 is intended to speed up the appeals process at the VA and cut the appeals present waiting list. If a veteran disagrees with the VA's decision on the question of service connection or disability level, he/she has an absolute right to appeal. However, the backlog for appeals between FY2015 and FY2017 has grown by more than 20% from 380,000 cases to 470,000 cases. If nothing is changed it is calculated that it will take 5 years for presently pending appeals to be decided.

This law creates 3 lanes for appeals to move through: "Local Higher Level Review Lane", "New Evidence Lane" and "Board Lane". By creating this system, it is believed that the cases will move at their speed and not hold back other pending cases. A similar system has greatly improved the backlog for initial determinations. To read the full bill click [HERE](#).

The Harry W Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 is named for the man credited with writing the first draft of what became known as the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, more popularly known as the G. I. Bill of Rights. This law improves the present Post 9/11 GI in several ways. It will:

- Remove the present 15-year delimiting timeline for future service members so they will be able to use it their entire lives (for servicemembers entering after January 1, 2018)
- Provide 100% eligibility for all Post 9/11 Purple Heart recipients
- Improve and extend education benefits for veterans' survivors and dependents
- Improve funding and benefits for Reservists and National Guardsmen.... and more.

To read the bill please click [HERE](#).

S. 114, the "VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017," which, as

described by the White House "authorizes and appropriates \$2.1 billion to the Veterans Choice Fund, extends certain authorities as a partial offset for this appropriation, authorizes 28 major medical facilities leases, and changes a number of VA authorities related to personnel." It allocated \$3.9 billion. \$2.1 billion to keep the CHOICE program would continue to run and \$1.8 billion to hire more VA medical staff, improve existing VA facilities and opening 28 additional VA clinics throughout the United States. President Trump signed this bill on Saturday, August 12th to read the full bill [HERE](#).

Trump Renews Push for Military Transgender Ban

President Donald Trump said Thursday he is "doing the military a great favor" by proposing a ban on transgender personnel in the military. "It's been a very difficult situation, and I think I'm doing a lot of people a favor by coming out and just saying it," Trump said, referring to his [July 26 Twitter comment](#) that the government would no longer "accept or allow transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. military." For more details, see this [article](#).

U.S. Government Accountability Office Reports

- 1) [Federal Reports: OMB and Agencies Should More Fully Implement the Process to Streamline Reporting Requirements.](#)
 - 2) [Foreign Military Sales: Expanding Use of Tools to Sufficiently Define Requirements Could Enable More Timely Acquisitions.](#)
 - 3) [Military Bands: Military Services Should Enhance Efforts to Measure Performance.](#)
 - 4) [Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications: Update on Air Force Oversight Effort and Selected Acquisition Programs.](#)
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VA Extends Funding to Groups Impacted By Grant and Per Diem Program Changes

WASHINGTON — Today, VA Secretary David J. Shulkin announced an extension of funding to organizations that applied for Fiscal Year 2018 grants under VA's Homeless Providers' [Grant and Per Diem Program](#), but would be found ineligible due to new program guidelines.

The extension will give those organizations a chance to improve the effectiveness of their programs and an opportunity to apply for funding under an upcoming "notice of funding."

In a Dec. 23, 2016, [Federal Register notice](#), VA announced it would end per diem payments for all grantees that received awards from VA for fiscal years 1994 to 2016, and that all interested grant programs would have to reapply under updated requirements and acceptance criteria included in the notice. The change allows VA to update its two-decades-old program, which relied on transitional housing for homeless Veterans, to one that equips homeless Veterans with what they need to find permanent housing and independence.

"Our previous Grant and Per Diem Program offered Veterans temporary shelter," Dr. Shulkin said. "We want our Veterans to have a permanent home. To do that, our homeless programs staff is dedicated to making sure the services and grants we provide to prevent Veteran homelessness are appropriate and based on current needs and approaches."

A letter will be sent shortly to programs affected by the new guidelines. The letter will provide a randomly generated number, so applicants may review their score in relation to the scores of all other applications, while offering them a one-year extension that allows them to continue operations and improve their application for future Grant and Per Diem Program funding. The Fiscal Year 2018 Grant and Per Diem Program awards to successful grantees will be made in September.

Information about the Grant and Per Diem Program may be found at <https://www.va.gov/homeless/GPD.asp>. Information about the changes to the program may be found here. Information about VA's homeless programs is available at www.va.gov/homeless.

**CONTACT YOUR
MEMBERS OF CONGRESS!**

To Call your Representative:

202-225-2305

To Call your Senators:

202-224-3841 or 202-224-3553

To call Different Members of Congress:

202-224-3121

TOLL FREE: 866-272-6622

PLEASE... STOP Making Excuses!

www.veterans-for-change.org

Free Childcare for VA Appointments?

If you're a veteran family who is lucky enough to use one of a handful of VA hospitals around the country, you've had access for a few years to drop-in childcare during VA appointments. Not only does that mean your veterans can be on kid-duty and attend his or her medical appointments, but it removes a barrier to you attending, too. Now a proposal included in recently passed VA legislation would vastly expand that child care program to not only all VA locations, but also give the VA the ability to reimburse for childcare instead of having it on site. For more details, see this [Spousebuzz 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 2,200 hits per day, and downloads average 1,200 per day with a total 3,492,078 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 16,142 documents on-line (Updated: 8/12/17)
- 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: 6,694)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than 3,608, Added 17 New Links (Updated: 08/12/17)

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

Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org

Some More Legislation We Are Working On This Month

A few days ago TREA's legislative director Larry Madison was contacted by staff members from Senator John Tester's office. Tester is the Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee.

We were asked for TREA's support for legislation Tester has introduced that would give currently serving personnel the full pay raise authorized by law.

The President proposed a 2.1 percent pay raise active duty service members. That is also the amount in the Senate Armed Services Committee's version of the fy2018 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for service members, which has not yet been passed by the full Senate. But it is 0.3 percentage points below the Employment Cost Index (ECI) for private sector wages, which is the formula for military pay increases that is in the law.

Tester's legislation is an amendment to the fy18 NDAA that would require a pay increase equal to, or greater than, than the ECI. We, of course, said we support the legislation.

However, then the Senator's staff member asked if we would help them get support from other military and veterans' associations that are members of The Military Coalition (TMC), of which TREA is one of the leading members. We said, "absolutely."

Legislative Director Madison then contacted the proper leaders of the TMC to begin the process of getting approval from over 32 other associations that are members. As this is written, that process is underway and we expect it to be completed within the next few days.

Another issue Legislative Director Madison has been involved with is to protect the rights of members of the Guard and Reserve.

There is a law known as SCRA - the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act. This law provides certain protections from civil actions against servicemembers who are called to Active Duty. It restricts or limits actions against these personnel in the areas of financial management, such as rental agreements, security deposits, evictions, installment contracts, credit card interest rates, mortgages, civil judicial proceedings, income tax payments, and more.

However, more and more, forced arbitration clauses are buried in the fine print of nonnegotiable financial agreements utilized by most major banks; they are not utilized by community banks or credit unions. These clauses apply to everything from credit cards and checking accounts to prepaid cards and payday loans, effecting tens of millions of consumers. With the use of forced arbitration, banks block lawsuits, including all class actions, from proceeding in court. Because forced arbitration is private, there is no public record, no meaningful appellate process, and no requirement that arbitrators enforce state and federal laws.

Forced arbitration is routinely used by major banks and in effect, it strips servicemembers of their rights under federal law, actively circumventing protections enacted to ensure servicemembers financial well-being while on active duty. This issue was first recognized by the Department of Defense in 2006, which concluded that "Service members should maintain full legal recourse against unscrupulous lenders. Loan contracts to Service members should not include mandatory arbitration clauses or onerous notice provisions, and should not require the Service member to waive his or her right of recourse, such as the right to participate in a plaintiff class. Waiver isn't a matter of 'choice' in take-it-or-leave-it contracts of adhesion."

This situation has come before the federal Consumer Financial Protection Board (CFPB) and the board ruled in favor of DoD's 2006

recommendations for servicemembers and the need to ensure their ability to enforce their rights under federal law.

The final rule does two simple things:

1. Restores targeted, private enforcement power to Americans against law-breaking banks, eliminating the need for industry-wide government regulations and burdensome compliance costs.
2. Maintains the right of banks to force individuals into arbitration, but for the first time imposes

new
transparency
requirements
on
arbitrations
to
better
inform
the
banking
public.

The final rule will codify Senator Lindsey Graham's Servicemember Civil Relief Act (SCRA) Rights Protection Act.

However, there is a bill in Congress to overturn the CFPB's ruling. Unfortunately, the House of Representatives passed the bill. The action now turns to the Senate where we are hopeful we have a better chance of saving the rule.

Legislative Director Madison has been helping to coordinate efforts within The Military Coalition to rally the opposition of over 30 military and veterans associations to oppose the legislation.

Awards for Retiring Guard and Reserve Members

Retiring Airmen in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve are entitled to receive a United States (U.S.) Flag, Retirement Certificate, Spouse Certificate of Appreciation (if applicable), Presidential Certificate of Appreciation, Presidential Letter (if eligible), and Retirement Lapel Pin. When completing your online retirement request using the virtual Personnel Center (vPC), Airmen should indicate the date of the retirement ceremony ensuring HQ ARPC provides timely delivery of the flag and retirement certificates. Airmen who retired or were discharged before Oct. 5, 1999, are not authorized to receive a flag at the government's expense. However, a flag can be ordered at their own expense through their U.S. Senator or Representative. For more information, contact the Total Force Service Center at 1-800-525-0102.

Forever GI Bill

Dear Fellow Veterans and Colleagues,

The President just signed into law the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, also known as the “Forever GI Bill,” named after the American Legion national commander who wrote the original GI Bill language in 1944. This legislation contains 34 new provisions, the vast majority of which will enhance or expand education benefits for Veterans, Servicemembers, Families and Survivors.

Most notably, Veterans who transitioned out of the military after January 1, 2013 will not be limited to the 15-year deadline to use their GI Bill benefits – hence the bill’s nickname, “Forever GI Bill.” This law also restores benefits to Veterans, who were impacted by school closures since 2015, and expands benefits for our reservists, surviving dependents, Purple Heart recipients, and provides many other improvements.

We see Congress’s overwhelming bipartisan support and the President’s signing as a major accomplishment for our nation’s Veterans. The original GI Bill has long been considered an enormous success by historians, politicians and economists for its impact on the post-war economy and capital investment in our “Greatest Generation.” The passage of this bill ensures that generations to come will continue to walk in that greatness.

As you can imagine, VA has a lot of work ahead of us in order to ensure successful implementation of this new law, and as we roll out each provision, we’ll keep you updated and informed on our progress.

Thank you all for your continued support of our nation’s Veterans, Servicemembers and their families.

Regards,

Curtis L. Coy
Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Opportunity
Veterans Benefits Administration



Online Network Connects Veterans and Spouses with Professionals

Veterati allows business professionals to directly connect with veterans and military spouses. The network is intended for transitioning veterans and spouses looking for advice, guidance and answers to common questions related to employment, education and entrepreneurship, as well as businesspeople looking to give back to the military community. The service is free, and mentors and mentees sign in using a LinkedIn account. Mentors fill out a few basic questions and set up their schedule to book one-hour calls with mentees. The average mentor books 5 mentee sessions and can spread the dates apart as they see fit. Mentors can do one call per week, every two weeks or even just once a month. It is really up to the mentor. Mentees can look for the appropriate mentors by industry, expertise, or by companies. For more details, visit veterati.com or email Veterari at Evan@veterati.com.

VA Extends Funding for Homeless Programs

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin has announced an extension of funding to organizations that applied for Fiscal Year 2018 grants under VA's Homeless Providers' [Grant and Per Diem Program](#), but would be found ineligible due to new program guidelines. A letter will be sent shortly to programs affected by the new guidelines offering them a one-year extension that allows them to continue operations and improve their application for future Grant and Per Diem Program funding. Information about the Grant and Per Diem Program is available on the [VA Grant and Per Diem Program website](#). Information about the changes to the program may be found is available online. Information about VA's homeless programs is available at the [VA Homeless Veterans webpage](#).



VA Resumes Family Caregivers Program

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is resuming full operations of the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. The resumption follows an April 17 decision to temporarily suspend certain clinical revocations from the program to conduct a strategic review aimed at strengthening the program. The [caregiver program website](#) has been redesigned and now includes a section linking caregivers and veterans of

all ages to resources and home- and community-based services available through VA's Geriatrics and Extended Care programs. For more information, visit the [VA Caregiver Support website](#).

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

Links to Other Stories

- 1) [America Already Has A Single-Payer System, And It's Killing Veterans Like Me](#)
- 2) [Buffalo VA: Instruments used in over 500 colonoscopies at VA may not have been properly sanitized](#)
- 3) [Congress Moves to Improve Pay for PAs in the Veterans Administration](#)
- 4) [Execute Your Post-Military Career Search and Transition](#)
- 5) [GAO: Did \\$1.5 billion in military music boost morale?](#)
- 6) [Investigation discovers staff ignored hole in roof for years at VA hospital in Spokane](#)
- 7) [Jesse Bird warned Veterans' Affairs he could become suicide statistic days before his death](#)
- 8) [My father and the dysfunctional, broken VA](#)
- 9) ['Parking Lot' Suicides Roil VA Hospitals](#)
- 10) [Trump signed the 'Forever GI Bill.' Here are 11 things you should know.](#)

- 11) [Trump signs bill allowing more Veterans to see private doctors](#)
- 12) [Trump signs emergency bill to add \\$2.1 billion into Veterans medical care](#)
- 13) [Undo the Wrapper – Military Transition](#)
- 14) [VA staffing new White House VA Hotline Principally with Veterans](#)
- 15) [Veteran Shares Green Thumb Hobby with Fellow Vets](#)
- 16) [What America Owes Its Veterans](#)
- 17) [Will Court Reversal Of VA Director Termination Expose Deeper Scandal?](#)

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

Barstow Veterans Home Jumps to Four-Star Rating

Barstow, CA -- The Veterans Home of California – Barstow today received a “Four-Star” rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), a two-star increase from its previous rating. CMS created the Quality Rating System, from one to five stars, to help consumers and their families compare nursing homes.

“Having CMS increase the rating for our Barstow veterans home by two steps is the latest proof that our efforts to provide the absolute best care to our veterans are paying off,” said Coby Petersen, Deputy Secretary for Veterans Homes, at the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet). “The dramatic improvements we have seen in our CMS results across the board are a reflection of our entire agency’s commitment to providing the level of service our veterans deserve.”

The annual and periodic surveys conducted by the Department of Public Health for this determination evaluate compliance with Medicare health and safety standards for acute and continuing care providers, including

nursing homes, with respect to health inspections and data on registered nurse staffing, support staffing, and quality measures, healthcare inspection and overall quality. These four categories are then combined into an overall quality rating of one to five stars.

“We are pleased that this CMS rating reflects the significant quality-improvement efforts we’ve made over the past several years that put the home in the top 20 percent in quality as judged against America’s 13,000 nursing homes,” said James Sullivan, Administrator at the Barstow Veterans Home. “We will continue to focus on providing the highest quality of care, and quality of life, for our residents.”

Opened February 1996, VHC - Barstow is a 220-bed facility providing options for independent living for senior and disabled veterans, intermediate care, and skilled nursing care. It is one of eight homes operated by CalVet, with other homes located in Yountville, Fresno, West Los Angeles, Redding, Ventura, Lancaster and Chula Vista. See all of the homes and learn more about CalVet at www.calvet.ca.gov.



WWII Veterans Chemical Exposure Bill

The U.S. Senate has passed a bill that will make it easier for World War II veterans exposed to chemical weapon agents to receive VA benefits. The Arla Harrell Act, S. 75 addresses an unfortunate and little known chapter in American history when more than 60,000 American troops had participated in chemical weapons tests. As many as 4,000 troops were subjected to extreme, full-body exposure to chemical agents. According to some accounts, as many as 60,000 enlisted men were enrolled in this secret test program. Because these programs were classified, doctors did not record

servicemembers exposure to these extremely toxic chemicals. Read the Act on [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov).



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

Notifying DFAS About Former Spouse SBP

While divorce is essentially a civilian matter, there are certain benefits and issues that are unique to military divorces, particularly if the parties were married for a long time. This week's [Paycheck Chronicles mailbag](#) question highlights one of the most important things to know if you are divorcing from someone in the military.

TREA Works on Tax Issues for Veterans, Guard and Reserve, Military Families

TREA: The Enlisted Association has been working on expanding and

making permanent the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) to help unemployed veterans, military spouses and members of the Guard and Reserve be more competitive in the labor market.

Deputy Legislative Director Mike Saunders has spearheaded this effort in an attempt to make the WOTC permanent. Currently, the WOTC sunsets in 2021. It is important to make the tax credits permanent so that employers can make long-term plans around hiring veterans. Predictability is crucial when it comes to making long-term business plans. TREA has joined with a group called the WOTC Coalition, a group of corporations that wish to make sure the employment-related tax credit programs continue into the future and aren't subject to future budget showdowns.

TREA also wants to amend the law so that military spouses, who often suffer from chronic under-employment compared to their education levels (due to constant changes of duty station) and members of the Guard and Reserve (who have unemployment rates that are multiples of their civilian counterparts) are covered under the WOTC. Strengthening military families and the Operational Reserve force are two long-standing goals of TREA, as well as The Military Coalition (TMC). Mr. Saunders is the co-chair of TMC's Tax and Social Security Committee.

In addition to the WOTC, TREA is pushing HR 1317 and S 492. These identical bills, sponsored by Congressman Sam Johnson (R-TX) in the House and Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) in the Senate would lift the cap on TSP contributions for members of the Guard and Reserve. Under current law, if a Guardsman or Reservist maxes out their employer-provided TSP plan, they would not be able to contribute to their military retirement. This would blunt the intent of the new blended retirement system and the servicemember would be harmed in the long run.

While it is true that mainly cyber-security professionals, doctors, lawyers and pilots would be able to benefit from this change, failure to get it through Congress this year it could negatively affect retention in these critical skill occupations.

More work remains: if you want to help, please call your congressional representatives (especially in the Senate, as we only have two cosponsors on that side) and let them know that HR 1317 in the House and S 492 in the Senate need to be passed this year.

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.



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!

Please do not reply to this E-Mail, this is an unattended E-Mail address, please send all correspondence to:

Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org

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Boston	75,810
Courtesy Copies	3,500
Department of VA	12,957
DoD	30,383
Face Book Pages	3,573
Google	29,024
Los Angeles	136,407
Microsoft	9,809
National Guard	4280
New York	154,099
Other Social Media	45,020
San Francisco	79,644
Twitter	45
US House of Reps & Staff	991
US Senators & Staff	109
University of So. California	5,356
US Air Force	26,647
US Army	67,797
US Marines	29,072
US Navy	38,664
Veterans	19,091,470
Washington DC	143,911
Yahoo	135
	20,133,671

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