



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, March 10, 2019

Volume 10, Issue 10



This-N-That

Over the past few months we've received numerous E-Mails from Veterans on the issue of travel pay reimbursement.

This topic has been a hot one for several years now, and if memory serves me right without having to do a ton of back newsletter research pay was reduce at one point, then it was changed again but members of Congress get a reimbursement at a higher value than Veterans do, and this too is not acceptable.

We have a team of very knowledgeable Veterans working on a letter which once done, all edits completed we will distribute both via the Newsletter, all our groups on MEWE, and several other outlets where we can reach as many Veterans as possible.

Then you will be able to copy and paste into a letter or E-Mail and send off to your Reps in DC. In addition we will upload a PDF version to our website so others can download and do the same thing, and again you don't have to be a Veteran to help and participate.

Due to limitation of space in the Newsletter, we can't go into a lot of detail, but the proposed change in the use of the VA ID card will help make the process a lot easier, simpler and faster. No forms to fill out, no VA Staffer to deal with, just scan your VA ID card as you do now in the Kiosk, and boom all done.

This will also greatly reduce the chances of fraud which we've all seen in the past dozen or so years.

Down in various locations in this newsletter there are several calls to **TAKE ACTION** on several pieces of legislation and we sincerely encourage

everyone, please send out these prewritten letters to your Reps in DC.

It only takes a couple of minutes of your time, and again even civilians can do this as well to help all our Veterans.

Two of sincere need to be brought to the floor, voted on and passed is HR 303 Retired Pay Restoration Act and the second is HR 553 Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act.

These two bills would reverse a long time practice of the Government actually STEALING benefits from our Veterans and Widows alike amount to thousands annually for each.

And I'd also like to ask you to refer back to prior newsletters for the last two months, and call your Reps in DC on those bills too!

In future newsletters we will try and keep a running list of active bills needing desperate attention so you can remind your Reps about those needing to be brought to the House floor, passed, sent to the Senate floor, passed and then signed by President Trump!

With your help, we can make change, but in order for this to happen, we need thousands upon thousands of Veterans and civilians alike to hound our Reps constantly, as they say the squeaky wheel gets the grease, so lets make one hell of a lot of noise!

In following up on the trained medical care staff shortage of 49,000 within the VA, it doesn't seem like Secretary Wilkie is taking much action there, and no foreseeable signs of any action to be taken to correct this deficit.

Over the years I've heard and seen all kinds of excuses, none of which make any sense, and have no ground to even be considered acceptable. They'd rather waste twice as much money sending you to private doctors and clinics, only for Veterans to find out their spinning their wheels and not getting any where.

VFC has been taking aggressive actions to resolve this problem as well, and we will keep you updated as best we can, and advise if action is needed on the part of all our readers!

As announced over month ago that we've officially closed all our Face Book Pages and are now

officially on MEWE.COM for everything. So if you're interested in following us on any of the various pages, all the links further down in the newsletter will take you there.

We hope you will join us to help stay informed, share information and advice to your fellow Veterans, and not have to worry about a Gestapo style Social Media outlet.

One a final note, it's tax time again. So if you've not already done your taxes, not even prepared, or don't know what all you need in order to get your taxes done and help to provide the best outcome, go to this link [Tax Deduction Finder and Problem Minimizer](#) and click on the GREEN download button.

This will provide you a rather detailed list of items to take with you to your tax preparer.

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



Purple Heart Recipients Will Move to Front of Line for VA Claims

Purple Heart recipients will soon take priority in the queue for Department of Veterans Affairs claims adjudication, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie announced Feb. 26. The change is in "recognition of wounds taken in battle," he said. Starting April 1, veterans who have earned the Purple Heart and are submitting initial disability compensation claims will be added to the existing list of categories that receive priority processing within the Veterans Benefits Administration. The change is among the many improvements the department is making as part of the claims and appeals modernization effort. The VA [launched a new process for handling compensation claims appeals](#) Feb. 19. Read more about the announcement [here](#).



TWENTY TWO SOLDIERS

By Brian Crandall

Twenty two soldiers died today
Their mind overwhelmed with fear
Flagged casket lowered into the ground
While loved ones shed a tear

www.LoveOurVets.org

Twenty two soldiers died today
Their thoughts filled with despair
I wish they'd found another way
I wish they knew how much we care

Twenty two soldiers died today
Keep fighting, yes they tried
Too many souls are lost this way
Each one a victim – of Suicide

Please help spread awareness that there is help and hope.
Love Our Vets - PTSD Family Support



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 for Mental Health and are currently seeking a new Licensed Mental Health Worker, where you can seek help or just ask questions.

We average **2,190** hits per day, and downloads average **1,930** per day with a total **4,777,751** 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 **16,925** documents on-line (Updated: 02/11/19)
- 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 (*Counselor Needed*)
 - 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: 10/30/18) (37 Added)
- News (Articles On-Line: **8,271**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **4,701**, Added 16 New Links (Updated: 02/20/19)

If you have a submission for the memorial pages,
E-Mail: Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org



Fred Dupont

It is with great sadness that I must inform our Veteran community of the passing of our beloved brother and comrade, Fred Dupont. Fred has been in declining health for the past several months and passed away Tuesday afternoon at 5:15 PM at Flagler Hospital.

Funeral services are incomplete at this time. I will notify everyone as soon as we have plans for his service. I know each of you will want to attend and pay your respects.

William Dudley

Chairman

Veterans Council of St. Johns County

anuday00@aol.com

904-806-4712



**Free and Discounted Tax Preparation
for Military**

Tax season is here again. And while filing for tax returns can be tricky for the average family, it can get even more complicated for military families. Thankfully, military personnel and their families have access to a variety of tax preparation and filing services for free or discounted prices. Whether you choose to file taxes yourself online or you prefer some outside assistance from a trained professional, there are several free and discounted options from which to choose. Read more about tax preparation discounts [here](#).



**~Veterans-For-Change Made Social
Media Change from Face Book to
MEWE~**

We had been on Face Book for many years and

have moved to MEWE.com for a number of reasons.

IMAGINE A SOCIAL NETWORK WITH ALL THE FEATURES YOU LOVE AND NONE OF THE BS.

Where you are the customer to serve and not data to sell.

Where you share your real life and celebrate, not censor, diversity.

We know most people don't like change, however, this new Social Media Site, MEWE.COM has no advertisers, truly respects privacy and protects your security far better than Face Book ever could. They also have a fantastic customer service group who actually does respond to your messages, suggestions, ideas and more!

We hope you will join us on this new site.

VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE

www.mewe.com/join/veterans-for-change

HOMELESS HEROES PROGRAM OF VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE

www.mewe.com/join/homelessheroesprogramofvet

erans-for-change

AMVETS GROUP

www.mewe.com/join/amvetsgroup

VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP

www.mewe.com/join/veteranssocialgroup

{USAVET} SUPPORTING GOD & ALL WHO SERVED OUR GREAT NATION

www.mewe.com/join/usavetsupportinggodallwhoserveandserve

AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY

www.mewe.com/join/americansforsovereignty



H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act

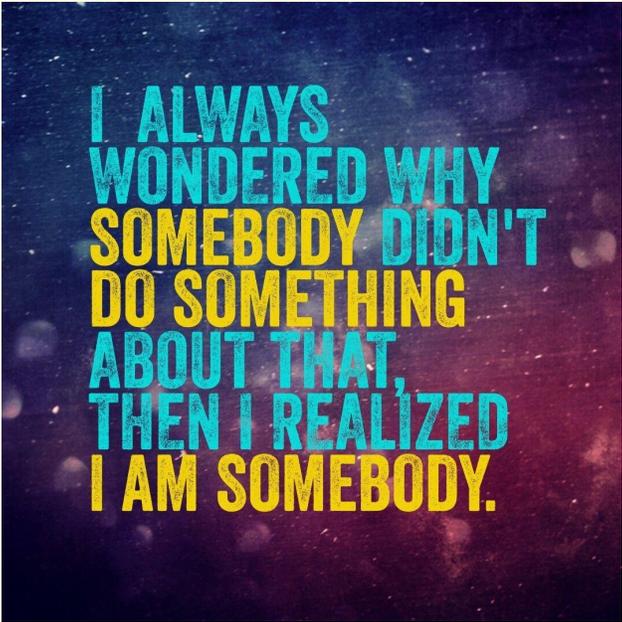
On January 8, 2019, Representative Gus Bilirakis (FL) introduced H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act.

This bill would extend concurrent receipt authority to longevity retirees with service-connected disabilities rated less than 50 percent disabling. Under current law disabled veterans with longevity retirement from active military service who are also in receipt of a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability determination of 50 percent or higher may retain both military retirement pay and their compensation.

DAV strongly supports H.R. 303 as it would end the unfair policy of forcing many military longevity retirees to forfeit some of their retired pay in order to receive equal amounts of disability compensation from the VA. This legislation is in accord with DAV Resolution No. 104 and would eliminate concurrent receipt for all longevity retirees.

Please use the prepared electronic letter or draft your own to urge your Representative to support and cosponsor H.R. 303. As always, we appreciate your support for DAV and your grassroots activism in participating in DAV CAN. Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.

Take Action



**Judge Rules Men-Only Military Draft
Unconstitutional**

A federal judge has ruled that a men-only draft is unconstitutional, but he stopped short of ordering the Selective Service System to register women for military service. The Houston judge sided with a San Diego men's advocacy group that challenged the government's practice of having only men sign up for the draft, citing sex discrimination in violation of the Fifth Amendment's equal protection clause. The ruling does not order the federal government to change its policy on who must register, nor does it make any recommendation to Congress, which would have to change the laws governing the Selective Service System to require women to sign up. Read more about what the policy means [here](#).



March's Featured Song

JACK

By

LT Bobby Ross

LT Bobby Ross - Voice Of America

Previous Featured Songs



DoD/VA EHR Update

Still Working Out How to Create Single HER: The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs are still trying to figure out how to best align their agencies' respective plans to create a common Cerner electronic health record system. Speaking on 13 FEB at the HIMSS19 conference in Orlando, DoD and VA program officials said coordinating their activities to ensure interoperable EHR systems is a work in progress, emphasizing that the agencies continue to discuss an optimal organizational design that will facilitate coordinated decision-making and oversight when it comes to governance.

Toward that end, the DoD and VA Interagency Program Office is working to establish joint EHR modernization governance bodies to foster coordination and improve communication between the departments. “We can’t talk enough about the work that the Interagency Program Office has done to ensure that the DoD and VA are aligning around commercial standards and to also be able to provide a consolidated input between basically the two largest federal healthcare providers,” Stacy Cummings, program executive officer for Defense Healthcare Management Systems, told a HIMSS audience.

Cummings noted that late last year Defense Secretary James Mattis and VA Secretary Robert Wilkie signed a joint statement committing to the implementation of a single, seamlessly integrated EHR that “maximizes commercial health record interoperability” by sharing data between the two agencies as well as community healthcare providers. The purpose of the document signed by Mattis and Wilkie was to “demonstrate the commitment of both the DoD and the VA to the success of this electronic health record deployment,” according to Cummings. To make decisions and execute them jointly, she added that

the agencies have put together a working group to create synergies and efficiencies. “We’re making great progress—we’re looking at risk and technical and programmatic functions,” she said. “Having greater synergy will reduce the risk to both of our programs.”

While DoD and VA have “spent a lot of time” sharing information and lessons learned, Cummings acknowledged that the two agencies “can benefit from being even closer than we are today.” Last year, the VA awarded Cerner a \$10 billion EHR modernization contract—one of the largest IT contracts in the federal government—to replace the agency’s decades-old Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture. In 2015, DoD awarded a \$4.3 billion contract to prime contractor Leidos to modernize the military’s EHR system with Cerner’s Millennium platform. According to Cummings, the two agencies will share a data center hosted at Cerner’s Kansas City headquarters in a “single instance” enclave, with the VA taking advantage of investments DoD has already made in that commercial data center.

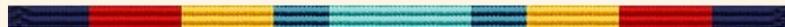
DoD’s Cerner system—called MHS GENESIS—has so far been deployed at four military sites in the Pacific Northwest . The VA’s planned acquisition

calls for aligning, as much as possible, the deployment and implementation of its EHR system with ongoing DoD rollout activities in order to achieve efficiencies. “In our deployment schedules, we’re looking to be as coordinated as possible where it makes sense,” said Cummings. “But, at the same time, I don’t think either one of us is interested in slowing down our plans to deploy on our timelines.” In December, DoD authorized MHS GENESIS to proceed with six “waves” of deployment, starting in the fall of 2019. Wave 1 sites include Naval Air Station Lemoore, Travis Air Force Base, Mountain Home Air Force Base and the U.S. Army Health Clinic Presidio—all of which are the first military facilities to field the standard baseline of MHS GENESIS.

Cummings observed that one of the biggest lessons learned from DoD’s deployment of MHS GENESIS to initial operational capability sites was that “this is not an IT implementation—this is a change management program.” “DoD has already gone live at facilities—we are still educating our clinicians, and that’s a tough chore,” said John Windom, executive director of the VA’s Office of EHR Modernization, at the HIMSS19 conference. “We want to make sure we’re judicious in the way

we move forward such that our change management strategies that we're both employing will take hold as appropriate. This is about the end user—the person that's required to use Cerner Millennium.”

“It's a hard sell because people are used to what they're used to, regardless of how arduous it may be to use or how cumbersome,” added Windom, referring the VA's legacy VistA system which is popular with the agency's clinicians. At the same time, Windom pointed out that DoD and VA have “two different patient populations” that the agencies are trying to both serve using a single, seamlessly integrated EHR. “That's a tremendous challenge that we don't take lightly,” he concluded.



Wounded Warriors Can Become Forensic Investigators for Free

Battlefield vets wounded in the line of duty are now able to continue their mission by training to become forensic investigators through an innovative free program with the National Association to Protect Children, U.S. Special Operations Command and the Department of Homeland Security. It's called the Human Exploitation Rescue Operative (HERO) program. The HERO Child Rescue Corps is a force in the global battle against child exploitation and abuse, and it is looking for disabled veterans to continue its mission to help keep America safe. To learn more or to apply to the program, visit [HERO Corps](#). Read more about the HERO program [here](#).



VA Loan Benefit: \$0 Down, Low Rates & No PMI Ever

Your VA loan benefit is now worth up to \$484k financing. Take advantage of this great benefit and lock in a low rate for as little as \$0 down, plus no PMI ever. [Use your VA loan benefit today.](#)





H.R 445, Help Hire Our Heroes Act

On January 10, 2019, Representative Julia Brownley introduced H.R. 445, the Help Hire Our Heroes Act. This bill would amend the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 to make permanent the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP).

The VRAP was started in 2012 to provide training assistance to unemployed veterans between the ages of 35 and 60 who are no longer eligible for the

GI Bill. It provided up to 12 months of training benefits at community colleges and technical schools in occupations that the Department of Labor has identified as "high demand." Since funding for this program expired in March 2014, the VA has not been able to enroll new veterans in VRAP. This program gap means that thousands of older, qualified veterans have been unable to access the resources which could help them find work.

This bill would strike the end dates of the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program and would replace it with year to year authorizations. This bill is in accord with DAV Resolution No. 190 which seeks adequate funding and permanency for veterans' employment and training programs.

Please use the prepared letter to write to your Representative to cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 445, the Help Hire Our Heroes Act. Thank you for your efforts and support of the Commander's Action Network.

Take Action



Commissary Curbside Delivery Adds Location, Service Fee

The commissary's curbside grocery pickup program started its expansion to new locations Friday, while also announcing the closure of the three current locations — and adding a service fee. The program, known as Click2Go, has been available for free through a pilot program at three commissaries — at [Fort Lee](#), Virginia; [Offutt Air Force Base](#), Nebraska; and [Travis Air Force Base](#), California — since 2013. Now, the system has added its first new location: [Fort Eustis](#), Virginia. But at the same time, officials announced that the Fort Lee, Offutt and Travis locations will be shuttering June 1. And although the service at Eustis will be free for a promotional period through the end of March, shoppers there will pay a \$4.95 service fee per order starting April 1, officials said in a release. Read more about the changes [here](#).



Owning Marijuana Company Stocks Could Endanger Your Security Clearance

Do you invest in the stock market? Do you invest in mutual funds, index funds, or Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs)? If the answer is yes, and you have a security clearance, you should be careful what you invest in. According to an email some military personnel report receiving from their commands, if your clearance is reviewed and you are found to own marijuana stock, you could lose your clearance (and quite possibly your job). You would have no recourse. Read more about the crackdown [here](#).



**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



**Gulf War Memorial Moves Forward with
Site Dedication**

The dedication of a first-of-its-kind national memorial to veterans of the first Gulf War on Feb. 26 in Washington, D.C., drew dignitaries including former Vice President Dick Cheney, who oversaw Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield in his role as defense secretary. The Pentagon lists 383 U.S. troops as having been killed in action in Desert Shield/Desert Storm. The site is on the National Mall, off Constitution Avenue and by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Read more about the dedication [here](#).



VA Asks for Comment on Proposed Access Rules

The VA's proposed new access standards were published in the Federal Register late last month. The period for public comment continues until March 25. With the proposed rules, the wait-times standards would be 20 days for primary and mental health care, and 28 days for specialty care, from the date of request. The new rules would also be based on drive times rather than mileage. Veterans would be eligible for private care if they faced a 30-minute drive to the nearest VA facility. The drive times go up to 60 minutes, and the wait times to 28 days, for certain types of specialty care. [Veterans can comment by visiting the Federal Register website](#). Read more about reaction to the proposed rules [here](#).





AMERICAN SOLDIERS

**WILLING TO DIE FOR THE COUNTRY
THAT ISN'T WILLING TO PAY THEM!**



**Veterans Have Ordered 1.1 Million Items
from Online Exchange**

In the 15 months since they became eligible to shop military exchanges online, honorably discharged veterans have ordered more than 1.1 million items by shopping online with the Army & Air Force Exchange Service, Marine Corps Exchange, Navy Exchange Service Command and Coast Guard Exchange. Veterans shop tax-free for life with military-exclusive pricing at ShopMyExchange.com, myNavyExchange.com and ShopCGX.com. Veterans have had access to the online-only benefit since Veterans Day 2017. [A measure in the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act](#) (NDAA) extends on-base shopping to all service-connected disabled veterans starting in 2020.



Employer Spotlight: Esterline & Computershare are Hiring Veterans Now

Esterline recognizes the benefit of incredibly talented people with military backgrounds whose leadership and training experience can challenge us as an organization to be better and do better.

[View Jobs.](#)

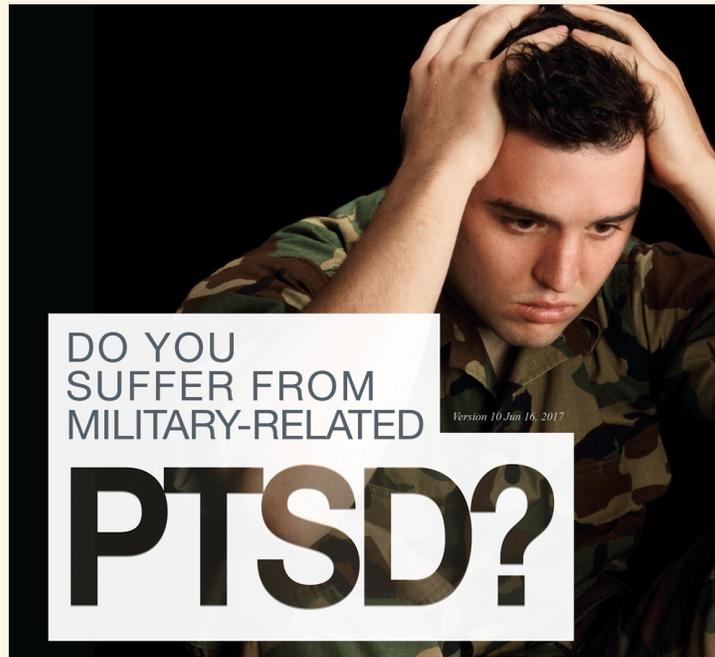
At Computershare, we offer opportunities for veterans and transitioning service members to reach their civilian career potential. Join our team of 4,000 employees across the U.S. [View Jobs.](#)



How to Get a Historic M1 Rifle and Other Military Surplus Weapons

The Civilian Marksmanship Program is sold out of surplus 1911 .45 caliber pistols for this year, but the nonprofit still has M1 rifles to sell. The U.S. Army allowed [8,000 1911s to be transferred to the CMP for sale and distribution](#) as part of the Fiscal 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA. The program caps the number of 1911 transfers at 10,000 each year, and the CMP has already received 19,000 orders. Ordering information can be found on the [CMP's M1 information page](#). Read more about ordering military surplus weapons [here](#).





**Veterans Crisis Line:
1-800-273-8255 & Press 1
Ntl Call Center for Homeless Vets
1-877-424-3838**



Look what happened overnight at the VA....

While you were sleeping last week, the VA did this:

NOTE: As of February 14, 2019,* , both VA Form 21-526, Veterans Application for Compensation and/or Pension, and VA Form 21-526b, Veteran's Supplemental Claim for Compensation, will be discontinued from use. These forms will be removed from VA forms websites and will no longer be accepted by our intake centers. If these forms

are received after February 14, 2019, send a VA Form 21-526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits, to the claimant to be filled out accordingly and returned.

It's all part of the changeover from the old Legacy VA Appeals process to the new "Modernized" Appeal Process.

It would have been nice if they put that up on their website, right?

I'm sure they have by now, but I'll be darned if I can find any post about a topic so critical to so many veterans.

I am just hopeful that this is not the way this new appeal system will be rolled out...in secret overnight changes.

So what do you use now that VA Form 21-526-b is dead? VA Form 21-526ez.

And, in today's post, I am going to show you all the ways that you can use VA Form 21-526ez now that VA Form 21-526b has been retire.

[Click here to read all the ways you can use a VA](#)

Form 21-526ez.



Is VGLI Too Much? Get \$400k Coverage from Only \$29 a Month

Protect your family's future for less than you think.
Get \$400,000 in life insurance coverage from just
\$29 a month.



The VA just closed your claim to reopen without telling you

The VA promised us that Appeals Modernization would fix the broken appeals system.

By now, though, we should know that when the VA tells us they are going to fix something, it usually means taking something from veterans.

And claims to reopen are no different.

If you had a claim to reopen filed before February 19, 2019, which the VA has not yet decided, it is closed.

It automatically became a supplemental claim under the new "modernized system" and many of you lost your earlier effective date arguments before you could even make them.

Find out if this VA "fix" affects you by [clicking here](#) and reading today's post.





H.R. 444, Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act of 2019

On January 10, 2019, Representative Julia Brown (CA) introduced H.R. 444, the Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act of 2019.

Currently, veterans with service-connected disabilities or other employment handicaps are able to receive career development services through VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment

program up to 12 years after they separate from military service. H.R. 444 would remove the limiting 12-year-period for eligibility.

In agreement with DAV Resolution No. 310, we support this legislation to eliminate the 12-year-period of eligibility. By removing the limited eligibility period, H.R. 444 will provide veterans the flexibility to receive the support they have earned and deserve throughout their lifetime and thus help reduce unemployment for service-connected veterans.

Please use the prepared electronic letter or draft your own to urge your Member of Congress to support and cosponsor H.R. 444.

Standing up for veterans is vital and we thank you for your advocacy. Your actions help make DAV a highly influential and effective organization in Washington. Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.

Take Action



Get Your Co Pays & Cost Shares Covered with a Tricare Supplement

Co pays & cost shares covered 100% with a Tricare supplement. [Get valuable coverage now.](#)



National Guard Tests Threat Response System

Troops with the Maryland and Delaware National Guard are testing a new system for threat response that can be dispatched to potential contamination sites, according to an Army release. The Analytical Laboratory System Increment 1 A1 is designed to be moved via C-5 or C-17 cargo transport aircraft, and from ships to the shore by a landing craft air cushion vessel, or LCAC. The system is supposed to detect and identify a number of toxins; current testing is intended to determine whether its technologies are "effective, suitable and survivable on the modern battlefield." The five-day test will allow soldiers to take various chemical and biological samples and run them through the system's analyses. The samples will then be processed off-site, with analysis and mitigation information provided to the incident commander. Read more at [Army.mil](https://www.army.mil).





We will always be our
Brothers Keeper!



Health Initiative Targets Guard Members

A new National Guard Bureau initiative is intended to better provide behavioral health care to members of the Guard living in remote locations. The Veteran Center Outreach Initiative will create opportunities for counseling to those who live far from military medical facilities, according to a release. Mobile vet center staff members belonging to the Department of Veterans Affairs' Readjustment Counseling Service will visit full-time and part-time Guard members during training as part of the effort to offer services at convenient times. The counselors coordinate with Guard behavioral health representatives at state and unit levels to offer services. The initiative has been under development since 2016; it is set to be fully implemented in April. Read more at [Army.mil](https://www.army.mil).





Tuskegee Airman Posthumously Honored after Decades MIA

One of the famous Tuskegee Airmen who has been missing in action since December 1944 will finally get a burial in Arlington National Cemetery after his remains were identified months ago. Capt. Lawrence E. Dickson's plane crashed in Europe during service in World War II, according to a recent release. His remains were identified using DNA tests; officials said he was the first identified out of more than two dozen Tuskegee Airmen MIA during the war. Dickson, a P-51D pilot with 100th Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group, had departed Ramitelli Air Base, Italy, for a reconnaissance mission over Prague when his aircraft suffered engine failure and went down. His remains were recovered when a crash site excavation was conducted more than seven decades later. He is set to be buried at Arlington on March 22. Read more at [Army.mil](https://www.army.mil).





H.R. 553, Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act

On January 15, 2019, Congressman Joe Wilson introduced H.R. 553, the Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act. This bill would eliminate an unfair offset placed on many surviving spouses of service members who pass away during active duty or spouses of retirees who die of a service-connected disability.

Currently, purchased Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities are offset by the amount of any benefit payable under the VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) program. SBP is not a government gratuity benefit; rather, it is a type of insurance purchased out-of-pocket by military retirees for their survivors while DIC is a VA benefit intended to provide spouses of veterans who died from a service-connected condition some semblance of financial security. Thousands of survivors of military retirees are adversely affected by this unfair offset between SBP and DIC benefits.

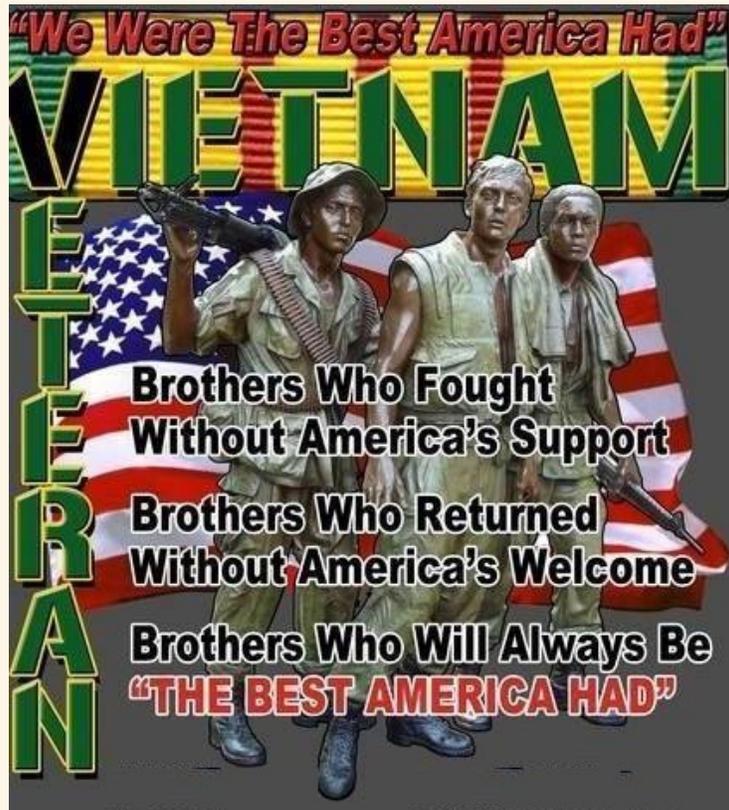
Upon the retiree's death, the SBP annuity is paid monthly to eligible beneficiaries; however, if a surviving spouse is also entitled to DIC, the SBP benefit is reduced by the amount of the DIC benefit (currently \$1,283.11 per month). In general, when DIC benefits are payable but the monthly rate is equal to, or greater than, the monthly SBP payment amount, beneficiaries lose the entire SBP payment.

This bill would eliminate the offset and allow surviving spouses to receive both the purchased SBP annuities and their earned DIC benefits. This bill is in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 014, which calls for Congress to repeal the offset between SBP annuity payments and DIC payments.

Please use the prepared letter to write your Representative to cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 553, the Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act. Thank you for your efforts and support of the Commander's Action Network.

Take Action





Links to Other Stories

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.

1. [86-Year-Old Korean War Vet on a Mission To Find Purple Heart Lost 6 Decades Ago](#)
2. [A Expands Vets' Access To Private Care But](#)

Gives No Plan To Pay For It

3. Agent Orange effects being seen in grandchildren of Vietnam War Veterans
4. Bible at center of dispute over display at Manchester VA Medical Center
5. Cannon Air Force Base water contamination shuts down Clovis dairy
6. Double amputee shoots doctor, ER staff member at Florida VA medical center
7. Harry F. Miller recalls Battle of the Bulge – Part 1 of 5
8. Harry F. Miller recalls Battle of the Bulge – Part 2 of 5
9. Harry F. Miller recalls Battle of the Bulge – Part 3 of 5
10. Harry F. Miller recalls Battle of the Bulge – Part 4 of 5
11. Harry F. Miller recalls Battle of the Bulge – Part 5 of 5
12. Helping Vets deal with chronic pain without opioids
13. How Obstructive Sleep Apnea Can Affect You
14. Introduction of the Behavioral Health Technician Work Group
15. Iwo Jima Monument in South Texas
16. Keesler Medical Center sees efficiencies, improved care under Defense Health Agency

17. Local Veterans continue push for healthcare
18. New VA Appeals Process: What to Expect in 2019
19. Purple Heart recipients will get top priority for their claims, VA announces
20. Soldiers: Disgraceful housing conditions at Texas Army post
21. Supreme Court to decide if giant cross is religious symbol or secular memorial to war dead
22. Ten things most Veterans don't know about VA home loans
23. VA's proposed rules for Veteran community care now open for public comment
24. Vietnam War Veterans' kids say Agent Orange impact 'a nightmare'

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National Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End Veteran Suicide

On Tuesday, VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence joined President Donald J. Trump at the White House for the signing of an executive order that commissions an inter-agency Veteran Wellness, Empowerment, and Suicide Prevention Task Force. The task force will develop a

“Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide” that enables cooperation between nation, state, and local services to integrate services for veterans. “Suicide is a serious issue,” said VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence. “We must do everything possible to save the 20 veterans who take their own lives every day, as well as encourage the 14 of every 20 who are not enrolled in the VA to get enrolled. The VFW agrees that addressing this issue takes a collaborative effort among federal agencies and applauds the creation of a taskforce for that purpose,” he said. “The answer to the veterans suicide crisis is not in Washington, but through increased federal funding and community partnerships everyone can have an impact. Through the VFW Mental Wellness Campaign, VFW Posts throughout the world have been helping to destigmatize mental health by educating veterans and their families on the signs of emotional distress and informing veterans of resources in their local communities. The VFW stands prepared to assist in every way possible.”

[Read the executive order.](#) [Watch the signing ceremony.](#)





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DOD 'Tenant Bill of Rights'

On Thursday, the three service secretaries and the Joint Chiefs testified before the Senate Committee on Armed Services. The hearing focused on accountability to provide safe military housing and other building infrastructure to service members and their families. To ensure service members and their families have safe and adequate living conditions and proper legal protections, the service secretaries have created a Tenant Bill of Rights. It would provide a major overhaul of the military's two-decade old housing privatization program. Key provisions include: requiring the military to renegotiate contracts with the real estate companies and bondholders who back the deals; will impose new controls on the landlords operating on military bases; allow military base tenants to withhold rent payments from landlords if housing troubles persist; and guarantee tenants' access to housing advocates when they dispute landlords, or allow them to move, at no cost, to "suitable lodging" if repairs aren't made. [Watch the hearing](#). [Read a draft](#) of the Tenant Bill of Rights.





Transition of Service Members and Veterans into the Merchant Marine

On Monday, President Donald J. Trump signed an executive order to “promote employment opportunities for United States military veterans while growing the cadre of trained United States mariners available to meet United States requirements for national and economic security.” The executive order requires the United States Committee on the Marine Transportation System, DOD, and the Department of Homeland Security to streamline credentialing and transition of service members into the Merchant Marines. [Read the executive order.](#)





What is a TRICARE Qualifying Life Event?

Every year during TRICARE Open Season, you can enroll in or change your TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select health plan. But did you know that outside of TRICARE Open Season, you can only enroll in or make changes to your TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select plan following a Qualifying Life Event (QLE)? A QLE is a certain change in your life, such as marriage, birth of a child, change of address, or retirement from active duty.

[Read the full article here.](#)



Office of Inspector General

1. Federal Programs Intended to Help Beneficiaries Adjust to Economic Disruption
2. Medicaid: CMS Action Needed to Ensure Compliance with Abortion Coverage Requirements
3. Substantial Efforts Needed to Achieve Greater Progress on High-Risk Areas
4. Veterans Health Administration: Greater Focus on Credentialing Needed to Prevent Disqualified Providers from Delivering Patient Care



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**Commissaries, Exchanges Plan Ways to
Cross-Promote Sales**

The commissary and military exchange systems plan to work together more on planning and promoting joint sales, according to a release. In the past, the two systems have not worked together to promote each other. The systems, which are separate, are funded and operated under different structures. The commissary receives taxpayer funding to cover the bulk of its operation costs, including employees, while the exchange system is run by four companies under a partnership with the Defense Department. A measure in a recent National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) ordered the systems to combine some behind-the-scenes business processes. Read more about the new marketing plans on [Commissaries.com](https://www.commissaries.com).



1. American Health Packaging Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Valsartan Tablets Due to the Detection of NDEA (N-Nitrosodiethylamine) Impurity
2. Apotex Corp. Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Drospirenone and Ethinyl Estradiol Tablets, USP, 28x3 Blister Pack/Carton Due to Possibility of Missing/Incorrect Tablet Arrangement
3. McDaniel Life-Line LLC Issues Voluntary Worldwide Recall of Life-Line Water
4. RVO 2.0, Inc. Recalls Raindrop Near Vision Inlay Due to Risk of Increased Risk of Corneal Haze
5. Sunstone Organics Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Select Kratom Products Due to Potential Contamination by Salmonella
6. UPDATE -- Zoll LifeVest 4000 Wearable Cardioverter Defibrillator - Software Update for Potential Lack of Treatment (Shock) Delivery Due to Device Failure: FDA Safety Communication
7. Updated: Torrent Pharmaceuticals Limited Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Losartan Potassium Tablets, USP and Losartan Potassium /Hydrochlorothiazide Tablets, USP





SURVIVAL IS FUN



Desert Storm Memorial Site Dedication

The VFW joined with hundreds of veterans and officials to dedicate the site of the new National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial last week at the corner of 23rd Street and Constitution Ave., NW, in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial and near the Vietnam Wall. Special guest speakers were former Vice President and then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, retired Air Force Gen. Chuck Horner, former U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait Ed Gnehm, and current Kuwait Ambassador to the U.S. Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Representing the VFW on the dais were the Memorial Foundation President/CEO Scott Stump, a Life member of the VFW Department of North Carolina, and Kentucky Lt. Gov. Jenean Hampton, a Life member of VFW Post 4075 in Frankfort, Ky. More about the memorial [here](#).





VA Secretary Rejects Push for Gender-Neutral Motto

[Department of Veterans Affairs](#) Secretary Robert Wilkie said his reverence for the majestic language of Abraham Lincoln will not permit a change to the department's iconic motto to make it more gender neutral. The motto should never be interpreted to mean the department is not committed to equality of service, Wilkie said at a hearing on Capitol Hill. Advocacy groups have recommended another version: "To care for those who shall have borne the battle and their families and survivors." Read more about Wilkie's statements [here](#).



Tax & Credit Information



1. Be vigilant against phone scams Annual 'Dirty Dozen' list continues
2. Here's how a name change affects a tax return
3. Identity theft remains on IRS' 'Dirty Dozen' list despite progress
4. IRS issues proposed regulations on deduction for foreign-derived intangible income and global intangible low-taxed income
5. Job opportunities at the IRS, Tax Exempt & Government Entities
6. Tax Time Guide: Seniors who turned 70½ last year must start receiving retirement plan payments by April 1
7. Taxpayers can zip over to IRS.gov for answers to many tax questions
8. Taxpayers should be ready to verify their identity when calling the IRS
9. IRS: Choose tax preparers carefully Tax return preparer fraud makes IRS' 2019 'Dirty Dozen' list of tax scams
10. Taxpayers must report health care coverage on 2018 tax return
11. February 2019 Recap
12. IRS extends April 15, other upcoming deadlines for Alabama storm victims, provides other tax relief



MIA Update

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced 16 new identifications. Returning home with full military honors are:

Mr. Edward J. Weissenback an employee of Air America Incorporated, was piloting an Air America C-123K from Udorn Airfield, Kingdom of Thailand, headed for Xienhom District, Xaingnabouli Province, Laos. The aircraft was on a routine resupply mission for the U.S. Agency for International Development and was last heard from when they were northeast of Sayaboury, Laos. Search and rescue efforts were continued through Dec. 31, 1971, but no sign of the aircraft or the four crewmembers were found. Weissenback was subsequently reported missing. Interment services are pending. [Read about Weissenback.](#)

Mr. Roy F. Townley an employee of Air America Incorporated, was piloting an Air America C-123K from Udorn Airfield, Kingdom of Thailand, headed for Xienhom District, Xaingnabouli Province, Laos. The aircraft was on a routine resupply mission for the U.S. Agency for International Development and was last heard from when they were northeast of Sayaboury, Laos. Search and rescue efforts were

continued through Dec. 31, 1971, but no sign of the aircraft or the four crewmembers were found. Townley was subsequently reported missing. Interment services are pending. Interment services are pending. [Read about Townley.](#)

Mr. George L. Ritter an employee of Air America Incorporated, was piloting an Air America C-123K from Udorn Airfield, Kingdom of Thailand, headed for Xienhom District, Xaingnabouli Province, Laos. The aircraft was on a routine resupply mission for the U.S. Agency for International Development and was last heard from when they were northeast of Sayaboury, Laos. Search and rescue efforts were continued through Dec. 31, 1971, but no sign of the aircraft or the four crewmembers were found. Ritter was subsequently reported missing. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ritter.](#)

Army Cpl. John G. Krebs, was a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. On July 11, 1950, his unit was engaged in combat operations against the North Korean People's Army south of Chonui, South Korea, when he was declared missing in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about Krebs.](#)

Army Master Sgt. Charlie J. Mares was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division when his unit engaged in combat against the Korean People's Army. Mares was reported missing in action following a battle fought near Kwonbin-ni, South Korea, on July 31, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Mares.](#)

Navy Reserve Seaman 2nd Class Deward W. Duncan was assigned to Aviation, Construction, Ordnance, Repair, Navy Fourteen, Standard Landing Craft Unit 4, when a Japanese air raid on Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands, dropped a bomb near his tent. Duncan was killed Jan. 12, 1944, and was reportedly buried the same day in Cemetery #33. Interment services are pending. [Read about Duncan.](#)

Marine Corps. Cpl. Claire E. Goldtrap was assigned to Company A, 2nd Amphibian Tractor Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were

wounded. Goldtrap died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943, during the first wave of the assault. Interment services are pending. [Read about Goldtrap.](#)

Navy Reserve Aviation Machinist's Mate 1st Class John O. Morris was a member of Carrier Aircraft Service Unit (CASU) 17. In November 1943, American units landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands, in an attempt to secure the island. On Dec. 16, 1943, Morris was killed during the test-firing of a machine gun. The weapon accidentally discharged, killing Morris. He was buried on the island, in Cemetery #33. Interment services are pending. [Read about Morris.](#)

Army Sgt. Cread E. Shuey was a member of Battery G, 60th Coast Artillery Regiment, serving in the Philippines, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands. Shuey was among those reported captured, and one of the thousands who were eventually moved to the Cabanatuan POW camp. More than 2,500 POWs perished in this camp during the remaining years of the war. Interment services are pending. [Read about Shuey.](#)

Navy Fireman 1st Class Angelo M. Gabriele was

stationed aboard the USS West Virginia, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The ship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly sink, but not capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 106 crewmen, including Gabriele. Interment services are pending. [Read about Gabriele.](#)

Navy Seaman 1st Class Ernest R. West was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including West. Interment services are pending. [Read about West.](#)

Navy Ensign Charles M. Stern, Jr. was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Stern. Interment services are pending. [Read about Stern.](#)

Navy Seaman 1st Class Hale McKissack was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including McKissack. Interment services are pending. [Read about McKissack.](#)

Navy Fireman 1st Class Billy J. Johnson was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Johnson. Interment services are pending. [Read about Johnson.](#)

Navy Seaman 1st Class Oris V. Brandt was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen,

including Brandt. Interment services are pending.

[Read about Brandt.](#)

Navy Fire Controlman 3rd Class Victor P.

Tumlinson was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Tumlinson. Interment services are pending. [Read about Tumlinson.](#)



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