



FULFILLING OUR PROMISES
TO THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVED



January 2017
Volume 3
Number 1

The Tallahassee Chapter #5
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New VA Medication Co-Payment Set

VA issued regulations effective February 27, 2017, changing current copayments structure for each 30-day or less supply of medication & how future copayment amounts & annual caps are calculated. Veterans who are currently exempt from medication copayments remain exempt. Priority Group (PG) 2-6 veterans must pay \$8 for each 30-day or less supply of medication and PG 7-8 veterans must pay \$9. Under the new rule, VA will assign three categories for medication & associated copayments for 30-day supply: Tier 1 - preferred generics - \$5 copayment; Tier 2 - non-preferred generics - \$8 copayment; and Tier 3 - brand name drugs - \$11. In addition, current copayment costs for veterans in PG 2-6 is limited to a \$960 annual copayment cap & PG 7-8 veterans have no protections afforded by a cap. Under the new rule, VA will reduce the annual copayment cap to \$700 for all veterans.

F4 Phantom



The Air Force held a "final flight" retirement ceremony at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, where the last F-4s are still flying for the U.S. military. The ceremony will celebrate

the airplane's rich military history as the jet was a mainstay during the Vietnam War and used for decades for reconnaissance missions and anti-missile electronic jamming.

Combat-Injured Veterans Tax Fairness Act

On 11/16/2016, H.R. 5015, the Combat-Injured Veterans Tax Fairness Act of 2016 became Public Law. This new law provides veterans medically separated, or retired from the military due to combat-related injuries another opportunity to recoup the taxed portion of their severance payments. The law requires the Department of Defense (DOD) to identify veterans medically separated from military service due to combat-related injuries that were issued severance payments after January 17, 1991, & withheld amounts for tax purposes.

Physical Disability Board of Review

The Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR) has a mission to help veterans who separated from the Armed Forces to ensure accuracy & fairness in their disability ratings. Those who separated with disability severance pay from the military between **Sept. 11, 2001 & Dec. 31, 2009**, are eligible to apply. PDBR reviews cases of veterans who have received less than 30% disability rating at no cost/risk to the individuals applying. When the Department of Defense identified 77,000 veterans who were eligible for review by the board, the Department of Veterans Affairs joined forces to contact most

of those veterans by letter. In 2014, PDBR partnered with the VA Homeless Veterans Taskforce to track down as many homeless/at-risk veterans as possible & help them submit an application for review. So far, the board has recommended 19% of the applications to be changed to disability retired, which would allow those veterans to receive retroactive benefits. A review by PDBR cannot hurt a veteran's existing rating. Those who apply but are not granted a review or a change in status can still continue receiving services from the VA. To start the process, a completed DD Form 294 must be mailed to Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas.

Pre-Need Burial Determination Eligibility Program

Tallahassee National Cemetery announced the launch of the Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility Program for Veterans & their families. This new program improves burial planning for individuals who can now learn of their eligibility for burial or memorialization in VA national cemeteries in advance of need. The details of this new program are at the following website: <http://www.cem.va.gov/CEM/pre-need/>.

Invasive Melanoma

A medical study found 1 in 54 Americans will develop invasive melanoma in his/her lifetime. The findings, based on US melanoma trends beginning in 2009, also showed a compound annual growth rate of about 1% for melanoma incidence, a 3% annual increase for in situ melanoma diagnoses and a 1.5% increase per year in melanoma deaths.

Twelve Healthy Reminders for 2017

1. Get A Health Checkup
2. Eat Healthy
3. Get Active
4. Quit Smoking
5. Limit Your Alcohol Drinking
6. Fight the Flu!
7. Know Your Blood Pressure
8. Watch Your Cholesterol
9. Manage Your Diabetes
10. Stay Safe
11. Guard Your Eyes
12. Help Others

Potential Hazardous Exposure at Fort McClellan



U.S. Army Fort McClellan was an Army installation in Alabama from 1917-1999. Some members of the U.S. Army Chemical Corp School, Army Combat Development Command

Chemical/Biological/Radiological Agency, Army Military Police School & Women's Army Corps, among others, may have been exposed to one or more of several hazardous materials, likely at low levels, during their service. Potential exposures could have included, but are not limited to, the following: Radioactive compounds (cesium-137 & cobalt-60)

used in decontamination training activities in isolated locations on base. Chemical warfare agents (mustard gas & nerve agents) used in decontamination testing activities in isolated locations on base. Airborne polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from the Monsanto plant in the neighboring town. Although exposures to high levels of these compounds have been shown to cause a variety of adverse health effects in humans & laboratory animals, there is no evidence of exposures of this magnitude having occurred at Fort McClellan. From 1929-1971, an off-post Monsanto chemical plant operated south of Fort McClellan in Anniston. PCBs from the plant entered into the environment, & the surrounding community was exposed. In 2013, the Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry completed an assessment of the potential health risks caused by airborne PCBs in Anniston & concluded the concentrations found were "not expected to result in an increased cancer risk or other harmful health effects in people living in the neighborhoods outside the perimeter of the former PCB manufacturing facility." Fort McClellan closed as part of the Army Base Closure & Realignment Committee (BRAC) program. The BRAC required the environmental cleanup of Fort McClellan prior to its transfer to the public. Oversight of parts of the base have since been transferred to several federal agencies & the Anniston community. Veterans who are experiencing health issues they associate with their service while at Fort McClellan should see their primary care provider/contact their local Environmental Health Coordinator. See the following web site: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/fort-mcclellan>

Decreased Infections Associated With VA Initiative

The Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Health Administration's campaign to limit healthcare facility-associated infections of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) continues to make significant progress. The new study, by the Veterans Health Administration, found that between October 2007 & September 2015 monthly hospital infection rates dropped 87% in intensive care units (ICU), 80% in non-ICUs, & 80.9% in spinal cord injury units (SCIU) nationwide. In long-term care facilities rates fell 49.4% during the period of July 2009 to September 2015 nationwide.

How to Get A Good Night's Sleep

Being older doesn't mean you have to be tired all the time. You can do many things to help you get a good night's sleep. Here are some ideas: Follow a regular sleep schedule. Go to sleep & get up at the same time each day, even on weekends or when traveling. Avoid napping in the late afternoon or evening. Naps may keep you awake at night. Develop a bedtime routine. Take time to relax before bedtime each night. Try not to watch television or use your computer, cell phone, or tablet in the bedroom. The light, as well as the content, from these devices may make it difficult for you to fall asleep. Keep your bedroom at a comfortable temperature & as quiet as possible. Use low lighting in the evenings & as you prepare for bed. Exercise at regular times each day but not within 3 hours of your bedtime. Avoid eating large meals close to bedtime—they can keep you awake. Stay away from caffeine late in the day, because caffeine (such as soda, coffee, tea & chocolate) can keep you awake. Remember—alcohol won't help you sleep. Even small amounts make it harder to stay asleep.

Top TEN Degrees/Jobs for Veterans

1) Criminal Justice – Just about any position in the military will smoothly translate to civilian law enforcement, and a criminal justice degree can be an extremely useful extra tool. 2) Engineering – If you have any kind of technical aptitude or talent with math, engineering may be the right path for you. 3) Nursing – Nursing is the type of profession well-suited to veterans. All military personnel receive basic medical knowledge which can serve as a foundation for obtaining a degree in nursing. 4) Network Administration – The world runs in part on digital networks, and network administrators are always in demand. Considering that new digital technologies are constantly being introduced into the military, many servicemembers have some experience in running or troubleshooting networks. 5) Physical Therapy – Combat boots, pounds of gear, and tough training lend a servicemember's body to constant stress and strain. Everyone in the military knows first-hand the effects of strenuous exercise and chronic injuries. 6) Computer Science – There are plenty of occupations within the military that require extensive computer use, and this experience can help lead to a degree in computer science. Programmers, coders, and developers all earn relatively high incomes, and their jobs are generally some of the most secure in the job market. 7) Information Security – As digital attacks become increasingly sophisticated, the need for information security professionals has grown. Often this requires firsthand knowledge of hacks and cracks, and many in this industry are known as white-hat hackers or penetration testers. 8) Teaching – All military careers are about teaching as much as they are learning. Even if you never become a sergeant or an officer, bringing fresh recruits up to speed provides first-hand teaching experience. 9) Emergency Medical Technician/Paramedic – Military service prepares you for dealing with emergency situations; you know what it's like to let training kick in when your brain wants to panic or freeze. Emergency medical technicians and paramedics are under constant pressure to respond to emergency situations in an effective and timely manner, so just about all veterans will have a leg up on the competition when applying for this career. 10) Fire Engineering/Fire Science – Just like a criminal justice degree aids in applying to law enforcement jobs, fire engineering and fire science degrees help in becoming a firefighter. Veterans are already physically and mentally capable of performing these jobs, and securing extra knowledge in a classroom will only help qualify you further for these positions.

New Presumptive Conditions Approved for Camp Lejeune

The new regulation presumes the following conditions were caused by the contaminated water exposure for people who served there:• kidney cancer,• liver cancer,• Non-Hodgkin lymphoma,• adult leukemia,• multiple myeloma,• Parkinson's disease,• aplastic anemia & other myelodysplastic syndromes, &• bladder cancer. Veterans who were at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days (consecutively or non-consecutively) between Aug. 1, 1953, and Dec. 31, 1987, and who have been diagnosed with one or more of these conditions may receive presumptive service connection for their disability. Veterans must file a VA disability claim in order to receive the benefits. The new rule will also be applied to any claims currently pending before the VA. -