

DAV

We Are The DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS



Building Better Lives for America's
Disabled Veterans and Their Families.

DEPARTMENT OF PENNSYLVANIA
OF
THE UNITED STATES

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SERVICE BULLETIN APRIL, MAY, JUNE 2012

RELAXATION OF PRIORITY GROUP EIGHT (8)
ENROLLMENT RESTRICTIONS

Public Law 110-329 provides VA additional funding to allow expanded enrollment opportunity for certain Priority Eight (8) Veterans who may have been previously denied enrollment in VA's health care system because their income exceeded VA's National and Geographic PG & 8 Relaxation Income.

VA SECRETARY ANNOUNCES NEW HOTLINE
FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the establishment of a new telephone hotline to provide emergency support and resources to homeless veterans. He made the announcement as he toured the facility at the VA Medical Center in Canandaigua. "It data system unacceptable for a single Veteran to spend the night on the streets of America," said Shinseki. The hotline of the new National Call Center for Homeless Veterans will provide homeless Veterans with caring, timely assistance and coordinated access to VA and community services." Family members and workers at community agencies and non-VA providers also may call the hotline at 1-877-4AID VET (877-424-3838) to find out about the many programs and services available to assist homeless veterans. Well-trained expert responders will staff the hotline 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They will join other responders who staff VA's Suicide Prevention Hotline at Canandaigua. Responders are cross trained to handle calls at either call center. Whole a responder will know which type of call is incoming. All Veteran callers will receive a brief suicide screening. A officials recognize that homeless Veterans are in need of food and shelter, clothing, financial assistance, and treatment for medical conditions. Additionally, many require access to permanent housing, Veterans benefits, and vocational resources. VA assistance is available for homeless Veterans who may have mental health issues, substance abuse, depression, traumatic brain injury, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The responders operating the new hotline will ensure Veterans receive the help they need and deserve. The hotline, which began service on March 1, has received 1,846 calls. Call volume is expected to grow as awareness of the service increases. The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans is the latest in a series of initiatives to help homeless Veterans. Last year, Shinseki launched a campaign to eliminate homelessness among Veterans through enhanced collaboration with other federal, state, faith-based, Veterans were served by VA's specialized homeless programs. This is an increase of 15 percent from the previous year.

BURIAL IN VA NATIONAL CEMETERIES

Burial in a VA National Cemetery is available for eligible Veterans, their spouses and dependents at no cost to the family and includes the grave-site, grave-liner, opening and closing of the grave, a headstone or marker, and perpetual care as part of a national shrine. For Veterans, benefits also include a burial flag (with case for active duty) and military funeral honors. Family members and other loved ones of deceased Veterans may request Presidential Memorial Certificates. VA operates 131 National Cemeteries, of which 71 are open for a new casketed interments and 19 are open to accept only cremated remains. Burial operations are limited to those available at a specific cemetery but may include in-ground casket or interment of cremated remains in a columbarium, in ground, or in a scatter garden. Contact the National Cemetery directly, or visit our web site at: www.cem.va.gov/ to determine if a particular cemetery is open.

Amendment to Restrict Agent Orange Claims Fails

DAV members rallied in opposition to an amendment offered during Senate debate on the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill (H.R.2055). The amendment proposed a significant change in the way presumptive Agent Orange-related disabilities are determined. Offered by Senator Tom Coburn (Okla.), the amendment would have required Vietnam veterans to prove a “causal relationship” between Agent Orange exposure and one of more of the 15 presumptive illnesses that the VA now recognizes. The proposal was tabled by a vote of 69-30 and readers can see how their senators voted on the amendment at the FRA Action Center by scrolling down to “Bills of Interest” and then scroll down to “Key Votes Senate”.

Thanks to the nearly 2,000 shipmates who sent e-mails to their senators on short notice in response to the FRA Action Alert on this issue. These efforts paid off and helped halt further consideration of the amendment. VN VETS (Viet Nam Vets) acknowledged FRA’s efforts to successfully table this onerous amendment on its website.

DAV continues to advocate for enactment of the “Agent Orange Equity Act” (H.R. 812), sponsored by Rep. Bob Filner (Calif.), that would amend the VA’s definition of Vietnam service to include those veterans who served off-shore. Many of these “Blue Water” veterans are not eligible to receive VA benefits for health problems associated with Agent Orange exposure. Members are also urged to use the Action Center to ask their elected officials to support this initiative.

VA Reaches out to Female Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) initiated a program to solicit input from women veterans on ways to enhance the health care services VA provides to them.

FRA’s Director of Membership Development Penny Collins participated in a recent VA National Training Summit on Women’s Veterans in Washington, D.C. Approximately 700 female veterans heard VA secretary Eric K. Shinseki and others speak about the VA’s priority effort to continue expanding services and outreach for the 1.8 million women vets who’ve served. The event also included a broad range of workshops and panel discussions on healthcare options and other services available specifically for women veterans.

Additionally, employees at VA’s Health Resource Center (HRC) are calling women veterans all over the country, asking them to share their experiences with VA and suggest potential enhancements that will further VA’s mission to provide the best care possible. The HRC callers are also informing female veterans about the services VA offers and quickly connecting them with appropriate departments if they have questions or concerns about VA care. For more information about VA programs and services for women vets, please visit: www.va.gov/womenvet and www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth.

Report Recommends Drastic TRICARE Fee Increases and More

Senator Tom Coburn (Okla.) Released a 614 page report, entitled “Back in the Black”, detailing suggestions for reducing the federal deficit by \$9 trillion over 10 years. NOTE: *This is only a report and these suggestions are examples of issues being discussed with regard to balancing the budget and have NOT been introduced as legislation.*

Recommendations include:

- Requiring all military retirees to take TRICARE Standard and increasing annual enrollment fees to \$3,500 for families/\$2,000 for individuals,
- Increasing co-pays for prescription drugs from \$3 to \$15 for generic and from \$9 to \$25 for brand-name drugs,
- Making TRICARE Prime available only for active duty personnel and their dependents.
- Creating an annual \$550 co-pay for TRICARE for Life (TFL) and requiring beneficiaries to pay half of the cost of expenses not covered by Medicare, up to \$3,025,
- Consolidating commissaries and exchanges,
- Eliminating Department of Defense (DoD) schools, and Eliminating DoD tuition assistance programs for active duty service members.
- Eliminating DoD tuition assistance programs for active duty service members.

The plan also suggests the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) assess a \$250 annual fee for veterans in Priority Groups 7 and 8 who seek VA health care and increase prescription co-pays for these vets to \$15 (currently \$9) for a 30 day supply of medicine.

The report is an example of cost saving proposals associated with growing pressure to reduce government spending. FRA continues to monitor the legislative process and alert its membership about proposals to balance the budget that will negatively impact pay, health care and benefits for those currently serving and those who’ve served in the past.

Read Tom Philpott’s “Military Update” column (8-4-11) at www.fra.org/news to learn about other potential impacts of the proposed cuts.

CENTER FOR WOMEN VETERANS

Congress passed legislation in 1994 authorizing the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to establish a Center for Women Veterans.

The Center collaborates with other federal and state agencies on issues related to women Veterans, disseminates materials on VA benefits programs and health care services, and conducts outreach to make women Veterans aware of these services.

The Center’s Web site: www1.va.gov/womenvet, offers women Veterans direct access to the Center where they can express concerns, ask questions, and provide feedback about VA benefits and services. The Director of the Center serves as primary advisor to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on all matters related to programs, issues, legislation, and initiatives for and affecting women Veterans.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to ensure that:

- Women Veterans receive benefits and services on par with male Veterans
- VA programs are responsive to gender-specific needs of women Veterans
- Outreach is performed to improve women Veterans' awareness of services, benefits, and eligibility criteria
- Women Veterans are treated with respect and dignity by VA service providers

Our goals:

- To promote and provide education activities
- To develop collaborative relationships with other federal agencies
- To foster communication between VA and the women Veteran's community
- To coordinate outreach activities on VA benefits and services
- To promote research activities
- To assure VA policies, practices, and programs are responsive to the needs of women Veterans

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WOMEN VETERANS **(Created pursuant to Public Law 98-160 in 1983)**

The fourteen (14) members of VA's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans are actively involved in Veterans' issues in their communities. The Committee consists of women and men, civilians, enlisted, and officer ranks from different parts of the country. They represent different ethnic and racial backgrounds and professional areas.

The members are appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for a two (2) or three (3) year term. The Director, Center for Women Veterans, serves as the Designated Federal Official for this Committee.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This guide presents answers to the twenty-five (25) most frequently asked questions from women Veterans. The questions and answers can also be found on the Center's Web site: www1.va.gov/womenvet. The information is also available in Spanish.

"These twenty-five (25) questions are the ones we hear most often," says the Director of the Center for Women Veterans. "Too many women Veterans don't know that they are eligible for the full range of VA benefits. Too many are unaware of special programs for them."

The Director of the Center for Women Veterans notes that the information may be helpful to male Veterans as well. Topics include services available to women Veterans; information about gender-specific services (including Pap care), evaluations for nursing home care, and employment options for women veterans.

GENERAL INFORMATION

What services are available to women Veterans?

- A full continuum of comprehensive medical services including health promotion and disease prevention, primary care, women's gender-specific health care: e.g. hormone replacement therapy, breast and gynecological care, maternity and limited infertility (excluding in-vitro) fertilization), acute medical/surgical, telephone triage, emergency and substance abuse treatment, mental health, domiciliary, rehabilitation and long term care. VA researchers at many VA facilities also conduct medical research on women's health.

How do I access the system for health and benefits services?

- Veterans can apply for VA health care enrollment⁶ by completing VA Form 10-10EZ, "Application for Health Benefits." The 10-10EZ may be obtained by visiting, calling or writing any VA health care facility or Veteran's benefits office.

You can also call the VA Health Benefits Call Center toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS(8387) to determine your eligibility, or access the form from the Health Administration Eligibility Reform Web site: www.va.gov/elig.

For VA benefits, refer to Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents at

www.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.htm.

Additional information and application forms can be obtained at VA's Web site: www.va.gov.

The Veterans Online Application (VONAPP) <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>, allows you to complete and submit application forms online.

You may also call the VA nationwide toll-free number, 1-800-827-1000, for specific benefit information.

Are VA services authorized for women Veterans, who were involuntarily discharged from the military for pregnancy prior to May, 1974? If not, how does one get this issue addressed?

- The provision of health care services to Veterans is established by certain eligibility criteria and discharge status requirements. To determine your eligibility for services, contact your nearest VA health care facility.
- Women Veterans involuntarily discharged may also be eligible for compensation and pension, vocational rehabilitation and employment, home loan guaranty, and burial benefits.
- Children born to Veterans who served in Vietnam may also be eligible for monthly monetary benefits, medical care and vocational training if they have certain birth defects linked to their mother's service. Contact the nearest VA Regional Office on the nationwide toll-free number 1-800-827-1000, for benefit information and eligibility requirements, or visit VA's home page at www.va.gov.

How can I receive gender-specific services, including Pap smears, mammography, prenatal and childcare?

- Apply for VA health care enrollment by completing VA Form 10-10EZ which may be obtained by visiting, calling, or writing any VA health care facility or Veterans' benefits office. You can also call toll-free 1-877-222-VETS(8387) or access the form on the Internet at www.va.gov. The provision of health care to non-Veteran children is limited to those instances where specific authority is given to VA by law.
- Contact your local VA health care facility and ask to speak with the Women Veterans Program Manager (white pages of the telephone directory under U.S. Government, Department of Veterans Affairs).

How can I obtain emergency assistance with payment of my delinquent utility bills, rent, mortgage, etc.?

- Your state Department of Veterans Affairs can best assist Veterans in this situation. You can find the number for your state's Department of Veterans Affairs in the blue or white pages of your local telephone directory. Also, local Veterans service organizations, churches and community organizations may be able to assist Veterans in need.

How do I get a clinic appointment when the waiting list is six (6) months for an initial appointment?

- If you experience an urgent or emergent medical condition, you can contact your local VA health care facility telephone care program or visit their walk-in (urgent care) clinic or emergency room.
- Non-acute problems will be scheduled on a next-available appointment basis.

Where can I get inpatient psychiatric care as a women Veteran?

- Most VA Medical Centers have inpatient mental health programs. Contact your VA Primary Care Provider or the local Mental Health Program office for assistance. If you already have a therapist and need inpatient care, please discuss your concerns with your therapist.
- If you have urgent or emergent needs, you can contact your local VA health care facility telephone care program or urgent care clinic.

Where can I get Military Sexual Trauma treatment?

- You may enroll and receive counseling and treatment for any emotional or physical condition as a result of sexual trauma experienced while on active duty at any VA health care facility or Vet Center in the continental United States without regard for your service-connected rating or length of military service.
- The Women's Trauma Recovery Program (WTRP), located at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System, is a sixty (60) day residential post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and military sexual trauma (MST) treatment program for women Veterans. The WTRP is part of the National Center for PTSD and serves women who are coping with the aftermath of trauma. The program serves women of all eras and is open to women from across the country. Additional information about this program can be found at www.womenvetsPTSD.va.gov.

Where are the special PTSD treatment centers?

- Women Veteran Stress Disorder Treatment Programs have been established at the following VA sites: Boston, MA, Brecksville, OH, Loma Linda, CA and New Orleans, LA.

How do I get evaluated for nursing home care?

- If you have never been seen at a VA health care facility, you must first enroll for benefits. Then you must enroll in a primary care clinic and ask for an evaluation for nursing home care. The evaluation will be done either by the primary care provider or a geriatrics care team.

What is the process of getting quality of care issues addressed?

- Contact the Women Veterans Program Manager at your local VA health care facility (white pages under U.S. Government, Department of Veterans Affairs.)

How do I get my disability compensation claim reevaluated?

- You may request a reevaluation of your claim anytime that you believe your condition has changed or worsened. Submit the request to reopen or reevaluate your claim to the VA Regional Officer by either letter or statement or on VA Form 21-4138, "Statement in Support of Claim," www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/21-4138.pdf.
- Your request should include the following information: Name, VA claim number, Service Number or Social Security Number, Day and evening contact information, Current "Address, Statement explaining change requested and any new and pertinent medical evidence that supports your request.
- A Women Veterans Coordinator is available at each VA regional office to assist women Veterans.

How and where do I apply for home, business, or car loans?

- VA Home Loan Guaranty Program provides loan guaranties to service members, Veterans, reservists, and un-remarried surviving spouses for the purchase of homes, condominiums and manufactured homes, and for refinancing loans.
- Some of the ways a VA loan guaranty can be used include: Buy a Home, Buy a residential condominium, Build a home, repair, alter, or improve a home, refinance an existing loan, buy a manufactured home with or without a lot.
- You must complete VA Form 26-1880, "Request for a Certificate of Eligibility for VA Home Loan Benefits," www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/25-1880.pdf and submit it to one of the VA Eligibility Centers along with acceptable proof of service as described on the instruction page of the form.
- The Center for Veteran Enterprise partners with the Department of Labor and the Small Business Administration to provide information, assistance, and mentoring for Veterans who would like to start their own business. See www.vetbiz.va.gov for additional information.

- VA does not provide assistance for automobile purchases except for certain Veterans and service members who need special adaptive equipment. To apply, contact a VA regional office 1-800-1000 or a VA medical center.

I have been out of the military for more than ten (10) years. How do I get an extension to my GI Bill educational benefits?

- Montgomery GI Bill (Chapter 30) Benefits end ten (10) years from the date of your last discharge or release from active duty. If your benefits expire mid-term, your benefits are extended to the end of the term or semester. Example: Your benefits expire in November but the course ends in December. You will be paid for December.
- The delimiting date can be extended past your ten (10) year period if you were prevented from attending classes due to: A service-connected disability, A medical condition existing before active duty, Hardship, or A reduction in force.
- If your benefit eligibility is based on two (2) years of active duty and four (4) years in the Selected Reserve, you have ten (10) years from your release from active duty, or ten (10) years from the completion of the four (4) year Selected Reserve obligation to use your benefits, whichever is later. For more information, you may visit www.gibill.va.gov.

HOMELESS SERVICES

How do I contact a coordinator for options for women Veterans who are homeless with children?

- Contact the local VA homeless coordinator or point of contact, Social Work Services department, or Women Veterans Program Manager at your local VAMC. There are homeless women Veteran and homeless women Veterans with children pilot programs located at eleven (11) designated VA facilities as well, and the Women Veterans Program Manager can discuss what options are available in your area.

BURIAL BENEFITS

Am I eligible for burial at Arlington National Cemetery? What are my options?

- Arlington National Cemetery is just one of nearly 200 national or state Veterans cemeteries across the country. Eligibility at Arlington is restrictive. For information, call 1-703-607-8000 and select (press) "4" or visit www.arlingtoncemetery.org.
- Burial in VA national cemeteries is available for Veterans, spouses and dependent children. Generally, all that is required is some active duty service, other than Reserve AT (active duty for training), with a discharge other than dishonorable. Retired Reserve and National Guard members and some others are eligible. State cemeteries may also require residency. For more information visit www.cem.va.gov/eligible.htm or call 1-800-827-1000.

LOCATING MILITARY RECORDS

How do I locate my military records or those of a relative?

- To obtain copies of your military records and/or "Report of Separation from Active Military Service" (DD Form 214 or equivalent), you must submit a "Request Pertaining to Military Records" (SF 180) to the records custodian of your branch of service. Addresses for each service' records custodian are found page 2 of the SF 180. The SF 180 requires a signature and must be submitted either by mail or fax. Contact the National Personnel Records Center Military Personnel Records, 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63132-5100, or fax request to 1-314-801-9195. The website is www.archives.gov/research_room/vetreac/index.html.

REFORMING THE VETERANS' BENEFITS CLAIMS PROCESSING SYSTEM

Far too many veterans file claims for benefits, particularly disability compensation, but must wait long periods and navigate many bureaucratic hurdles, only to receive decisions that are often inaccurate. Although VBA processed more than a million claims last year - its highest-ever total production - the volume of new and reopened claims grew even more. As a result, there were 830,131 claims for disability compensation and pensions pending on January 11, 2012, an increase of 282,790 from one year ago. Overall, 313,007 claims are pending longer than VA's own measurement, the reported accuracy of disability compensation rating decisions was only 83 percent for the 12-month period ending May 31, 2011; and VA's Office of Inspector General found even more errors left unreported.

Over the past two years, VA Secretary Shinseki has focused the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) on "breaking the back of the backlog" of pending claims. However, DAV believes the backlog itself is not the core problem, but only a symptom. If VBA is allowed to focus simply on reducing the backlog as its ultimate goal, it will neither sufficiently address the underlying problem nor prevent the backlog from eventually reappearing in an even worse form. To achieve real and lasting success, VBA must focus on reforming itself into a modern, paperless system designed to "decide each claim right the first time."

One of the major causes of VBA's problems is its use of outdated information technology. To remedy this dilemma, VBA is developing an electronic Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) the deployment of which would process claims in a paperless environment using a rules-based decision support system. Currently, VBGA is field testing the VBMS with full deployment scheduled for 2012. VBA is also pilot testing dozens of business process improvements aimed at reducing waiting times and increasing production. However, given the impetus to reduce the backlog, VBA may focus only on IT and process reforms to increase speed and production, rather than improve quality and accuracy. We believe quality and accuracy are the essential cornerstones for reform in VBA.

To effectively reform the veterans' benefits claims processing system, Congress must: The best 5 ways to complete this is as follows:

- Shift VBA's approach so that the primary goal is "deciding claims right the first time," not only "reducing the backlog;"
- Provide aggressive oversight of VBA's myriad pilots to ensure that best practices are adopted and integrated to improve quality and accuracy;
- Ensure that the new Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) system is provided sufficient timely and resources to develop into a comprehensive, paperless, and rules-based platform;
- Ensure that VBA's employee performance standards and work credit system create adequate incentives for quality and accuracy, not only speed or production; and
- Ensure the VBA provides sufficient training to employees, and tests all employees, including coaches and managers, on the skills, competencies, and knowledge required to do their jobs.

Questions Link Between Camp Lejeune Contaminated Water and DoD Commissaries

When North Carolina Senator Richard Burr, ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs (VA) Committee, introduced the "Caring for Camp Lejeune Veterans Act" (S.277), FRA endorsed the measure. The proposal would authorize VA health care for veterans and military family members who are suffering from the effects of a contaminated water supply at Camp Lejeune between 1957 and 1987.

To comply with House "pay cut" rules, the Senate VA Committee recently voted to change the bill, without notice or hearing, to fund the care by eliminating the federal subsidy for military commissaries and directing consolidation of all Department of Defense (DoD) commissaries and exchanges, known collectively as the military resale system. Hill sources characterize this as one funding option and note that the Senate Armed Services Committee, which has primary jurisdiction over the resale system, may identify another funding source in conjunction with the legislation.

If approved, the plan would negatively impact access to the resale system and result in significantly higher costs for products offered in jointly operated combined commissary/exchange stores. The House and Senate Armed Services Committees have consistently rejected similar plans based on Congressional Budget Office options over the past few decades to consolidate the services' resale programs.

FRA continues to advocate for benefits for those impacted by contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, but opposes funding the benefits in a way that would negatively impact access to commissaries and exchanges, the cost of products in both systems and reduced MWR program support.

Korea DMZ Vets Eligible for Agent Orange Compensation

In January, VA issued its final regulations regarding eligibility for compensation related to herbicide exposure. Here are the dates and units. By Tim Dyhouse

Some 40 years after the fact, VA has acknowledged that even more veterans were exposed to Agent Orange while serving on Korea's demilitarized zone (DMZ).

On Jan 25, 2011, VA announced via a regulation published in the Federal Register-that it now presumes that veterans who served along the DMZ between April 1, 1968, and Aug. 31, 1971, were exposed to the herbicide. Previously, the cutoff date was July 1969.

VA and the Pentagon have identified the specific units (see box below) that qualify for this new ruling. Possibly 30,000 vets who served in Korea's DMZ during the new 3 1/2-year time frame could be eligible for benefits.

VA originally estimated that benefits would cost some \$89 million for vets who served through July 1969. The new ruling could easily double that figure.

Currently, VA counts 15 diseases as being caused by Agent Orange exposure (see "Washington Wire," January 2010 VFW magazine.) The new ruling means eligible Korea DMZ vets do not have to prove an association between their illness and their military service.

"This 'presumption' simplified and speeds up the application process for benefits and ensures that veterans receive the benefits they deserve according to VA's statement announcing the new regulation.

VA encourages vets who served in the qualifying units and have medical conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure to submit applications for benefits "as soon as possible" so it can begin processing their claims.

Veterans who want more information about Agent Orange-diseases and possible birth defects associated with exposure-can access www.publicheava.gov/exposures/agentorange.

For more information on filing a claim for Agent Orange exposure access www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/AO/clherbicide.htm.

Veterans of the following units who were assigned to them between April 1, 1968, and Aug 31, 1971, are eligible to apply for compensation based on exposure to herbicides.

| 2 nd Infantry Division (Combat Brigade) | | 7 th Infantry Division (3 rd Brigade) | |
|---|---|--|---|
| Regiment | Battalions | Regiment | Battalions |
| 72 nd Armor | 1 st , 2 nd | 73 rd Armor | 1 st |
| 12 th Artillery | 1 st | 10 th Cavalry | 2 nd |
| 15 th Artillery | 1 st | 13 th Eng. Combat Bn. | |
| 17 th Artillery | 7 th | 17 th Infantry | 1 st , 2 nd |
| 37 th Artillery | 6 th | 31 st Infantry | 1 st , 2 nd * |
| 38 th Artillery | 5 th | 32 nd Infantry | 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd * |
| 7 th Cavalry | 4 th Sqdn | Other Units | |
| | Counter Agent Co. | U.N. Command Security Battalion- | |
| 9 th Infantry | 1 st , 2 nd | Joint Security Area | |
| 23 rd Infantry | 1 st , 2 nd , 3 rd | Crew of the USS Pueblo | |
| 31 st Infantry | 2 nd * | *Service records may show assignment to either the 2 nd or 7 th Infantry Division. | |
| 32 nd Infantry | 3 rd * | | |
| 38 th Infantry | 1 st , 2 nd | | |

PERIOD OF ELIGIBILITY

Benefits generally end the day a reservist or National Guard member separates from the military. Additionally, if in the Selected Reserve and called to active duty, VA can generally extend the eligibility period by the length of time on active duty plus four months for each period of active duty. Once this extension is granted, it will not be taken away if you leave the Selected Reserve. Eligible members separated because of unit deactivation, a disability that was not caused by misconduct, or otherwise involuntarily separated during October 1, 1991, through December 31, 2001, have fourteen (14) years after their eligibility date to use benefits. Similarly, members involuntarily separated from the Selected Re3serve due to a deactivation of their unit between Oct. 1, 2007, and Sept. 30, 2014, may receive a 14-year period of eligibility. Payments: The rate for full-time training effective Oct. 1, 2010, is \$337 a month for 36 months. Part-time benefits are reduced proportionately. For complete current rates, visit www.gibill.va.gov/. DOD may make additional contributions.

TRAINING

Participants may pursue training at a college or university, or take technical training at any approved facility. Training includes undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate courses; State licensure and certification; courses for a certificate or diploma from business, technical or vocational schools; cooperative training; apprenticeship or on-the-job training; correspondence courses; independent study programs; flight training; entrepreneurship training; remedial, deficiency or refresher courses needed to complete a program of study; or preparatory courses for tests required or used for admission to an institution of higher learning or graduate school. Accelerated payments for certain high-cost programs are authorized effective January 28, 2008.

WORK-STUDY

Participants who train at the three-quarter or full-time rate may be eligible for a work-study program in which they work for VA and receive hourly wages. Students under the work-study program must be supervised by a VA employee and all duties performed must relate to VA. The types of work allowed include:

1. VA paperwork processing at schools or other training facilities.
2. Assistance with patient care at VA hospitals or domiciliary care facilities.
3. Work at national or state Veterans' cemeteries.
4. Various jobs within any VA regional office.
5. Other VA-approved activities.

MGIB

Selected Reserve work-study students may also assist with an activity relating to the administration of this education benefit at DOD, Coast Guard, or National Guard facilities. Educational and Vocational Counseling: Refer to Chapter 10, "Transition Assistance", for detailed information on available services.

RESERVE EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (REAP)

This program provides educational assistance to members of National Guard and reserve components - Selected Reserve and Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) - who are called or ordered to active duty service in response to a war or national emergency as declared by the President or Congress, Visit www.gibill.va.gov for more information.

- **Eligibility:** Eligibility is determined by DOD or the Department of Homeland Security. Generally, a service member who serves on active duty on or after September 11, 2001, for at least ninety (90) consecutive days or accumulates a total of three or more of years service is eligible.
- **Payments:** Reserve or National Guard members whose eligibility is based upon continuous service receive a payment rate based upon their number of continuous days on active duty. Members who qualify after the accumulation of three or more year's aggregate active duty service receive the full payment allowable.

RESERVE EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE RATES

| Active Duty, Reserves & National Guard | Monthly Payment Rate for Full-Time Students |
|--|---|
|--|---|

| | |
|---|------------|
| Ninety (90) Days but less than one (1) year | \$570.40 |
| One (1) year but less than two (2) years | \$855.60 |
| Two (2) or more continuous years | \$1,140.80 |

*Effective Oct. 1, 2010

- **Training:** Participants may pursue training at a college or university, or take technical training at any approved facility. Training includes undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate courses; state licensure and certification courses; courses for a certificate or diploma from business, technical or vocational schools; cooperative training; apprenticeship or on-the-job training; correspondence courses; independent study programs; flight training; entrepreneurship training; remedial, deficiency, or refresher courses needed to complete a program of study; or preparatory courses for tests required or used for admission to an institution of higher learning or graduate school. Accelerated payments for certain high-cost programs are authorized.

STATE SERVICE OFFICERS

National Service Officers

Supervisor, Scott Hope, Pittsburgh, PA Regional Office:

Phone: 412-395-6241

- * Jonathan Falk
- * Kevin Noel
- * Josh Galiyas

Supervisor, Robert McClellan, Philadelphia, PA Regional Office:

Phone: 215-381-3065

- * Timothy Grossman, Assistant Supervisor
- * Jeff Petheridge
- * Daniel Henry
- * Heather Roman

Department Service Officers

- * Howard Foht / Erie / Phone: 814-860-2503
- * James Blystone / Butler / Phone: 724-287-4781 (Ext 4478)
- * Michael Hallas / Wilkes-Barre / Phone: 570-821-2521
- * Susan Price / Coatesville / Two (2) Days Per Week
- * Susan Price / Philadelphia / Three (3) Days Per Week

State Headquarters:

- * John Richards / Camp Hill - Volunteer / 717-761-4060
- * Carl Van Curen / Erie - Volunteer / 814-860-2503
- * Carmen DeSanti / Harrisburg - Volunteer / 717-761-4060

DATES OF EVENTS

- 2012** *Department State Convention - June 12-16, 2012
Double Tree Hilton, Greentree, Pittsburgh, PA
Phone: 412-920-8400
- 2012** *Department Executive Committee Meeting - October 19 and 20, 2012
Holiday Inn, New Cumberland, PA Off Route I-83
Phone: 717-774-2721
- *Commander Frieda Shenk Testimonial - April 19-20, 2013
Holiday Inn, New Cumberland, PA Off Route I-83
- *Department State Convention - June 18-22, 2013
Holiday Inn, New Cumberland, PA Off Route I-83
- 2013** *Department Executive Committee Meeting - October 18-19, 2013
Holiday Inn, New Cumberland, PA Off Route I-83
- *Commander Samuel Blow Testimonial - April 11-12, 2014
Double Tree Suites, Plymouth Meeting, PA
- *Commanders State Convention - June 17-21, 2014
Double Tree Suites, Plymouth Meeting, PA



DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

Building Better Lives for America's Disabled Veterans

TO: All Departments
All Chapters

FROM: Arthur H. Wilson, National Adjutant

SUBJECT: Warning Regarding Donations and Activity from Veterans Support Organization

DATE: March 19, 2012

In recent months, we've received numerous emails, letters and telephone calls regarding suspected fraudulent organizations who claim to be raising funds in the name of our Organization, or claiming to support DAV and our programs. The organization most commonly referred to is the "Veterans Support Organization", claiming the ironic acronym "VSO".

Veterans Support Organization has been the target of many investigative reporters from major metropolitan television news stations, to small community weekly print publications. It is hard to conduct a generic internet search using the text "Veterans Support Organization" without finding related articles which include words such as "scam" or "fraud". Veterans Support Organization operates by going into any given city and setting up shop in local malls or camping out at the entrances of large retail stores, supermarkets or convenience stores. They have even been known to stand on traffic islands in major intersections with a bucket in their hand. Their purpose? To raise money in the name of veterans with little or no intention at all of providing any meaningful service to their supposed cause. The following links are just a sampling of two investigative reports which truly expose the shady dealings of the Veterans Support Organization:

<http://www.myfoxny.com/dpp/news/shame/veterans-support-organization-20110203>

<http://www.newschannel5.com/story/12039178/newschannel-5-investigates-veterans-fundraiser-group>

These suspect organizations make it more difficult for DAV entities, at every level, to conduct legitimate fundraising programs which are truly designed to benefit disabled veterans and their families. Not only does Veterans Support Organization and others like them directly compete with our Organization for funds, it taints the mindset of citizens who would otherwise give to our Organization, but feel angered or betrayed because they may associate our Organization with those similar to Veterans Support Organization.

The problem? Veterans Support Organization has recently made small donations to two (2) DAV chapters (that we are aware of), in an insincere effort to substantiate their claim to support DAV. Of course, the donations made were minimal, and I suspect, represents a very small fraction of a percent of the total monies donated to their group. It is difficult to claim that Veterans Support Organization, and others like it, do not support DAV when they make meaningless donations to local chapters.

What can we do? Do not accept donations of money, items or services from Veterans Service Organization. Prior to accepting donations from an unknown group, do your research. Use the internet to search for the organization by name. In this day and age, when someone is scammed, they turn to the internet to report the questionable activities. And much like in the case of Veterans Support Organization, it becomes quite clear that this is a group with whom we do not wish to have our name associated with in any way. Be aware of other legitimate veteran's organizations in your local communities. If you witness an individual, or a group of individuals soliciting funds outside of stores or other locations, ask questions, but do not become confrontational. Ask for literature or website information. If you run across representatives of Veterans Service Organization, or others like them collecting money in your communities, inform the store manager of the group's history and ask that they be removed. Feel free to contact the media in your area and inform them of your personal knowledge of this group and ask that they follow up. Typically, once the group feels like they've been exposed, they pack up and move to the next city. Most often, the solicitation of funds by Veterans Support Organization and other organizations like them are not necessarily illegal, but the pretenses of their solicitations are not truthful.