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VA May Accept Applications for New Identification Card in September

M Aug 01, 2015 | by Bryant Jordan

The Veterans Affairs Department could start processing applications for the new veteran identification card by the second half of September.

Created by an act of Congress last month, the card is intended as a way for veterans to prove they served in the military without having to carry around and present a DD-214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty.

Card details and costs -- the law permits the VA to set a fee for the ID -- have yet to be established.

"The working group is addressing several aspects of the new ID cards, from design to cost estimates, etc., so I don't think we yet know what they will look like or what to expect the costs to be," VA spokesman Randy Noller said on Friday.

President Obama signed the legislation on July 20 with the changes slated to go into effect on Sept. 20.

The new veteran ID had broad support among lawmakers and passed both the House and Senate by wide margins.

Support for the card has not been universal, however. After it was passed in July the VFW called the move unnecessary, pointing out that many states will include veteran's status on a driver's license.

Veterans made the case that producing a DD-214 in order to prove veteran's status was more than a hassle, but also created wear and tear on the valuable paper document. The document is needed when applying for federal benefits, not only from the VA but when applying for federal job and claiming veteran's preference.

There is also commercial value to the document, however, which Congress recognized in pushing for the new ID.

House Majority Leader Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-California, noted that the card would ensure veterans have timely access to proper identification "so that [they] can prove their service and capitalize on service-related discounts in the marketplace."

In emails to Military.com, several veterans said they don't like carrying around the DD-214 to get a sales discount and that state-issued veteran's IDs are not always recognized as proof of service once you've crossed to another state.

"I have a Virginia issued ID card," one veteran wrote. "In the state of South Carolina national chain stores such as Home Depot, Lowe's do not always accept [it]." A federally issued card valid in all states would remedy that, he said.

The VA already issues identification cards to veterans receiving agency health care.

Those cards include the veteran's name and photo, VA number and the health care plan in which they are enrolled.

But the ID also includes information that Albert A.L. Hockaday, a retired Air Force colonel who served as a chaplain, would like to see on the new card. This includes the veteran's service branch, identified by the appropriate emblem, and space beneath the photo to list several military awards and decorations.

"I do think that the kind of information that's presently included on the VA Health Care ID card - minus the 'Plan ID' info - is something I'd like to see on the new card," he said.

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<http://www.military.com/daily-news/2015/08/01/va-may-accept-applications-for-new-identification-card-this-fall.html>