



# Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, June 04, 2017

Volume 8, Issue 23

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## **This-N-That**

As many of you know, President Trump has released his budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2018 and Fiscal Year 2019.

And while the increase in budget is very much appreciated by most Veteran Service Organizations, VFC included, we still feel it falls short of what is needed to ensure service-disabled veterans have timely access to quality health care, benefits, and the ability for VA to modernize its health care and benefits systems, infrastructure, replacement of its IT systems and other priorities of the Administration.

We're also very strongly opposed to cuts in two areas of the budget. Individual unemployability (IU) ratings and rounding down of cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) for veterans' disability compensation benefits.

Further down in this newsletter there is an action item and we kindly

ask that you please help all the Veteran Service Organizations as well as you and your fellow Veterans and take the action and send the pre-written E-Mails off to your Reps in DC.

We seriously need a strong showing in order to prevent these actions from being taken! And I would also strongly encourage all our readers to take an additional step, pick up the phone and CALL your reps and voice your concerns to them.

President Trump has also fulfilled one more of his campaign promises, and that was to open up a hotline where Veterans can call in and voice their concerns, issues and problems. This information is further down in this newsletter with the phone number and hours of operation.

I would also encourage our readers to use this hotline and call. BUT, please be respectful and polite as the phone lines are being manned by volunteers who are Veterans, Spouses of Veteran and Widows of Veterans and they all want to talk to you, listen to you and help however they can!

I don't know how many people will be manning phone lines in the beginning, but we're told eventually it might go 24/7/365, and this will be your chance to tell your story, and they might be able to assist with your specific problem, and if so, they will ask for personal information to further assist.

This is the first time anything like this has ever been done, and it's just starting up, so don't expect "perfection", but know the people on the other end of the line do know, understand, appreciate, and want to help you!

Two weeks we put the call out to everyone for stories they would share with us to send to members of Congress.

We've received over 600 stories and have been blast faxing to all members of Congress since two weeks ago Sunday non-stop.

It's not too late, so if you'd like to share your story and help put faces

on the problems that you face in your everyday life in dealing with the VA, please send them on to my e-mail address.

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

On behalf of our Volunteers nationwide and myself, we wish you and your family good health!

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

[Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org](mailto:Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org)

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## White House Veterans Complaint Line

During the 2016 Presidential election campaign, then Presidential candidate Donald Trump pledged to create a White House complaint line for veterans. The phone line is now available and the number is **855-948-2311**. It is intended to "collect, process and respond to the complaints of individual veterans in a responsive, timely and accountable manner," according to Department of Veterans Affairs officials.

VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin has described the initial rollout of the line as a soft launch, with "live-answer agents" receiving and processing some of the calls. He promised that by August 15, the hotline will have continuous coverage from a live operator 24 hours a day, every day of the week. Calls to the hotline will be kept confidential, but information will be shared with VA officials. In some cases veterans will be asked to give personal information for responses to specific problems.

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## VA Disability Appeals Reform Passes

The House and Senate approved the "Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act" (H.R.2288), sponsored by Rep. Mike Bost (Ill.) that addresses the growing backlog of disability appeal cases. Currently, there are more than 470,000 cases awaiting appeal.

The bill would create three "lanes" for veterans' appeals, and would give the Secretary the authority to test the new system prior to full implementation. As well as, allow some veterans, already going through the appeals process, to opt-into the new system. It would require the VA to provide a comprehensive plan for processing legacy appeals-appeals filed before the effective date of the bill.

The bill now goes to President Trump to be signed into law.



**Support SBP/DIC Offset Repeal Legislation**

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

[Take Action!](#)

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## **Bipartisan Agreement Reached on Accountability of VA Employees**

Top lawmakers have apparently reached a bipartisan and bicameral agreement on how the Department of Veterans Affairs should have a more streamlined process for dismissing dishonest employees. The "Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act" (S.1094), sponsored by Senator Marco Rubio (Fla.) reforms the VA by allowing the secretary to dismiss bad employees and ensure appropriate due process protections for whistleblowers. The VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin and the two top members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Chairman Rep. Phil Roe (Tenn.) and Ranking Member Tim Walz (Minn.) support the legislation. The bill has been approved by the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and is awaiting consideration on the Senate floor.

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**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](http://www.veterans-for-change.org)



## **Help VA Hold Wrongdoers Accountable!**

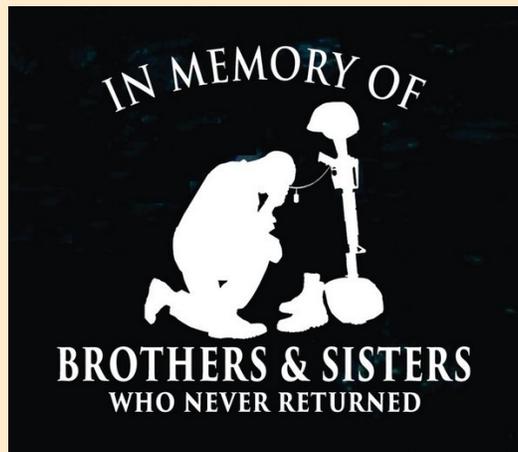
**Background:** For far too long, underperforming employees have been allowed to continue working at VA, simply because the processes for removal are so cumbersome. Secretary of Veterans Affairs David J. Shulkin must expeditiously remove or demote VA employees who endanger the well-being of veterans. Senator Marco Rubio has introduced the bipartisan S. 1094, Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017, with the support of VA Committee Chairmen Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.) and Rep. Phil Roe, M.D. (R-Tenn.) and their ranking members, Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Tim Walz (D-Minn.). This bill will grant Secretary Shulkin the authority to swiftly terminate employees who do not deserve to work at VA.

Take Action: Contact your Senators and tell them to support S. 1094,

Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017. Let them know this bill is vital to ensure VA is a strong and accountable organization.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO TAKE ACTION!

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## HVAC Budget Hearing

National President Donald Larson and Assistant Director of Veterans Program Brian Condon attended a House Veterans Affairs Committee hearing to review President Trump's proposed FY2018 budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin explained the administration's priorities for the next fiscal year that includes expanding the VA Choice Program, modernizing VA disability claims process, improving suicide prevention and programs tailored to meet the special needs of women veterans.

As mentioned in last week's Newsbytes the proposed budget also eliminates the Individual Unemployability benefit payments to retirement-age disabled veterans. Under current policies, the Individual Unemployability program allows the VA to award payouts at the 100-percent disabled rate to veterans who cannot find work due to service-connected injuries, even if they are not deemed 100-percent disabled. The Administration has proposed stopping those payouts once veterans are eligible for Social Security retirement benefits. This

cut would impact more than 225,000 veterans currently receiving this benefit.

Veterans receiving benefit checks from the VA would also have their annual cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) reduced or "round down" to the nearest dollar.

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## **U.S. Government Accountability Office Reports**

- 1) [2015 Electronically Controlled Pneumatic Brake Rule: Comparison of DOT Forecasts for Selected Data Points for 2015 and 2016 to Preliminary Data for Those Years.](#)
- 2) [H-2A and H-2B Visa Programs: Increased Protections Needed for Foreign Workers](#)
- 3) [Immigration Courts: Actions Needed to Reduce Case Backlog and Address Long-Standing Management and Operational Challenges.](#)
- 4) [Information Security: FDIC Needs to Improve Controls over Financial Systems and Information.](#)
- 5) [Medicare Advantage: CMS Should Use Data on Disenrollment and Beneficiary Health Status to Strengthen Oversight.](#)
- 6) [Military Personnel: Observations on the Department of Defense's Career Intermission Pilot Program.](#)
- 7) [Missile Defense: Some Progress Delivering Capabilities, but Challenges with Testing Transparency and Requirements](#)

Development Need to Be Addressed.

8) **Missile Defense: Some Progress Delivering Capabilities, but Challenges with Testing Transparency and Requirements Development Need to Be Addressed.**

9) **Passengers with Disabilities: Air Carriers' Disability-Training Programs and the Department of Transportation's Oversight.**

10) **Small Business Research Programs: Most Agencies Met Spending Requirements, but DOD and EPA Need to Improve Data Reporting.**

## **Veteran Crisis Resources**

**Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**

**Military Crisis Line 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

**National Call Center for Homeless Veterans**

**1-877-4AID-VET (424.3838)**

**VA Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274**

## **Veterans-For-Change Web Site**

The Veterans-For-Change website has been under construction since day one back in 2009 and every day since then. The looks pretty much stay the same, but in the background constant improvement and change is being done to make our website the most user friendly “One-Stop-Shop” website to find almost everything you might have tried to find searching the internet.

Almost a hundred people have been involved; collecting web links to documents now houses on the VFC website, collecting thousands of web links for various issues, illnesses and benefits. Creating forums

for all eras of service and two forums one just for men and one just for woman where you can go question, comment, share medical and personal concerns, what ever you'd like it to be.

We also have a forum with a licensed Mental Health Worker, again where you can seek help or just ask questions.

We average 1,700 hits per day, and downloads average 1,000 per day with a total 3,318,834 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](http://www.veterans-for-change.org)

- Documents Library with over 16,034 documents on-line (Updated: 5/18/17)
- FAQ's with more than 1,600 FAQ's and answers
- Multiple Forums
  - o Afghanistan Veterans
  - o FMP - Foreign Medial Program
  - o Gulf War & Desert Storm Veterans
  - o Iraq Veterans
  - o Korean Veterans
  - o Men Veterans Forum
  - o Mental Health for Veterans
  - o Political Issues
  - o Suggestion Box
  - o The Mess Hall
  - o VA Hospitals and Medical Centers
  - o Veteran Affairs
  - o Vietnam Veterans
  - o Welcome Mat
  - o Women Veterans Forum
  - o WW II Veterans
- Job Postings

- Memorial Pages (Updated: 10/10/16)
- News (Articles On-Line: 6,489)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than 3,587, Added 38 New Links (Updated: 05/26/17)

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

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## **Oppose Benefit Cuts to Retirement Age Disabled Veterans Don't Reduce Disabled Vets Benefits**

The Trump Administration's FY 2018 budget request reduces some VA benefits.

The proposed budget eliminates the Individual Unemployability benefit payments to retirement-age disabled veterans. Under current policies, the Individual Unemployability program allows VA to award payouts at the 100-percent disabled rate to veterans who cannot find work due to service-connected injuries, even if they are not deemed 100-percent disabled. The Administration has proposed stopping those payouts once veterans are eligible for Social Security retirement benefits. This cut would impact more than 225,000 veterans currently receiving this benefit.

Veterans receiving benefits checks from the VA would also have their annual cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) reduced or “round down” to the nearest dollar.

Use the [Action Center](#) to ask your legislators to oppose these benefit cuts.

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<https://twitter.com/Veterans4Change>

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## Links to Other Stories

- 1) [Do sleep apnea and PTSD have overlapping factors?](#)
- 2) [Drug thefts at VA hospitals are still at epidemic levels](#)
- 3) [EXCLUSIVE: The Investigation Into Water Contamination At Camp Lejeune May Reopen Soon](#)
- 4) [Jet Fuel Exposure causes Hearing Loss??](#)
- 5) [Nurse exposes VA hospital: Stolen drugs, tortured Veterans](#)
- 6) [Rating Knee Disabilities – Flexion vs. Extension](#)
- 7) [The American Legion slams White House VA Budget](#)
- 8) [Trump Budget to Cap Next Raise, Hike Retiree Fees, Slam “IU” Vets](#)
- 9) [Trump Fired A Corrupt VA Official. Then The VA Stepped In And Said Not So Fast](#)
- 10) [Trump’s Budget Calls For Cuts To VA Benefits As Tradeoff For Extending Choice Program](#)
- 11) [VA and Healing Powers of Nature Rescue Vet](#)
- 12) [VA head seems chill with the idea of Veterans smoking pot](#)
- 13) [Veteran Affairs Secretary: VA is ‘still in critical condition’](#)
- 14) [Veterans Affairs chief David Shulkin promises to turn VA into the department Veterans 'deserve' and can take pride in](#)
- 15) [Veterans Affairs chief vows to fix 'broken' agency procedures](#)

You can help VFC by reading articles posted and commenting at the bottom and rate the articles. If you don't have an account, sign up today, it's FREE. Your comments and rankings tell us what type of information you want most.

Check us out today: [www.veterans-for-change.org](http://www.veterans-for-change.org)

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

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## **Please Remember These Women Who Died During June While Serving Our Country in or During War Times**

1 Jun 2009: USAF SrAirman Jessica Tarver, 24, rare disease, Brooke Army Hospital, TX

1 Jun 2012: USMC L/CPL Hollye K Meeks, 26, died in Houston, TX

2 Jun 2016: USA SPC Christine F Armstrong, 27, vehicle accident/drowning in TX

2 Jun 2016: USA PVT Eddy Raelaurin Gates, 20, vehicle accident/drowning in TX

2 Jun 2016: USA PVT Tysheena L James, 21, vehicle accident/drowning in TX

4 Jun 2008: USMC CPL Ebony P Cooper, 25, fell from hotel in Phuket, Thailand

4 Jun 2011: USA SGT Devin Snyder, 20, insurgent attack, AFGHANISTAN

5 Jun 2005: IDARNG SPC Carrie Lee French, 19, IRAQ

5 Jun 2006: USNR HM2 Class Jaime S. Jaenke, 29, IRAQ

6 Jun 2004: USA PFC Melissa J. Hobart, 22, IRAQ

7 Jun 1943: WASP Jane Dolores Champlin, WW II

8 Jun 1969: USA ANC 1LT Sharon Ann Lane, 25, VIETNAM

8 Jun 2013: USA MAJ Jaimie E Leonard, 39, AFGHANISTAN

9 Jun 2011: USAF A1C Kelsey S Anderson, 19, possible suicide, GUAM

10 Jun 2010: USA PVT Elizabeth Lynch-Gonzalez, 19, suicide, NYC, NY

11 Jun 1944: WASP Dorothy Mae "Dottie" Nichols, WW II

11 Jun 2007: USA SPC Crystal D Bolling, 22, motor pool accident, Ft Campbell, KY

12 Jun 2002: USAF SSG Anissa A. (Shuttleworth) Shero, 31, AFGHANISTAN

13 Jun 1944: WASP Marjorie Doris Edwards, WW II

15 Jun 1999: USN PRAN Misty Dawn Warren, 24, parachute failure, China Lake, CA

18 Jun 2013: SPC Ember M. Alt, 21, AFGHANISTAN

19 Jun 2008: USA SPC Megan L Touma, 23, found in motel room murdered by  
  
US soldier, Fayetteville, NC

19 Jun 2014: USN BM SM Yeshebel Villot-Carrasco, 23, possible suicide at sea, USS James E Williams

20 Jun 1944: WASP Gleanna Roberts, WW II

21 Jun 1944: WASP Lea Ola McDonald, WW II

21 Jun 2007: USA SPC Karen N Clifton, 22, IRAQ

23 Jun 2005: USMC L/CPL Holly A. Charette, 21, IRAQ

23 Jun 2005: USMC CPL Ramona M. Valdez, 20, IRAQ  
23 Jun 2005: USNR CS1 Class Regina R. Clark, 43, IRAQ  
24 Jun 2014: SDANG COL Tamara "Tami" Mielke, 50, suicide  
25 Jun 2007: USA SGT Trista L Moretti, 27, IRAQ  
29 Jun 1944: WASP Bonnie Jean Alloway Welz, WW II  
29 Jun 2013: USA SSG Catherine "Cathy" Oatman (Ret), result of Agent Orange complications, Pinellas Park, FL  
30 Jun 2011: USAF Airman Basic Megan J. Victory, 22, sudden illness, Lakeland AFB but died at Fort Sam Houston, TX

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If you received this newsletter as a courtesy or a forward from a friend or relative, you can sign up to receive in your E-mail every week.

**[Subscribe Here](#)**

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## **Support our Services to Veterans Caregivers Act**

Congressman Raul Ruiz introduced H.R. 1618, the Support Our Services (SOS) to Veterans' Caregivers Act. The bill would amend the law to allow VA to assist caregivers who are supporting the needs of veterans with serious illnesses related to military service. Such illnesses of veterans might include amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease), cancer or other devastating illnesses that can leave veterans completely dependent upon others for help.

Caregiver assistance has been critical for supporting family members

of post 9/11 veterans who have turned their lives upside down to address the often constant care demands of gravely injured veterans. Under the current program, caregivers are provided assistance with training and technical support to manage their loved ones' care needs. Even more importantly, VA is authorized to provide health care coverage and counseling for the caregiver, at least 30 days of respite care, and a small stipend for the caregiver so they are not impoverished by the commitment they have made to meet their loved ones' needs.

Ruiz views his legislation as a correction for an unintentional oversight that has left the needs of thousands of caregivers assisting veterans with serious illness, rather than injury, unaddressed. It would also require VA conduct an annual multidimensional assessment to measure the impact of caregiving on the overall health and wellness of caregivers.

DAV Resolution No. 131 supports comprehensive assistance for caregivers of veterans with wounds, injuries or illness from all eras of service.

Please write your Representative asking him or her to cosponsor and support the final passage of H.R. 1618. Thank you for your participation in the Commander's Action Network.

Click [HERE](#) and send your message!



**Veterans-For-Change, Inc.**

**Riverside County, CA**

Visit our website today

[www.Veterans-For-Change.org](http://www.Veterans-For-Change.org)

Serving those who served!

Please pass on to all your Veteran Friends and Family!

Distribution	
Express Mail	144,825
Boston	75,205
Courtesy Copies	3,500
Department of VA	12,853
DoD	30,140
Face Book Pages	3,534
Google	28,794
Los Angeles	135,313
Microsoft	9,732
National Guard	4144
New York	152,864
Other Social Media	43,076
San Francisco	79,008
Twitter	41
US House of Reps & Staff	989
US Senators & Staff	109
University of So. California	5,271
US Air Force	26,274
US Army	67,258
US Marines	28,667
US Navy	38,123
Veterans	19,089,007
Washington DC	142,759
Yahoo	132
	20,121,618

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