



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, April 22, 2018

Volume 9, Issue 16



## **This-N-That**

Our condolences go out to the Bush family and we are deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Barbara Bush. She was among the few of the most graceful and respected first ladies in the White House.

The topic of privatization has come up on many occasions. And while there are many reasons that may suggest it should be done, there are countless others that would say no it should not.

But when the VA says we approve this or that emergency surgery and yes you can go to a private

doctor or we recommend this doctor and this hospital and no problem we will pay the bill, then don't.

I wonder what makes all Veterans that feel privatization is the answer? The VA is still going to hold the purse strings, and if they do go privatization it would give them far more chances to deny bills being sent in for treatments, doctor visits, emergencies, etc. to all be denied.

One Veteran needed a colonoscopy and the VA wanted he and his wife to drive two hours each way to get this procedure done vs. sending him to an Air Force hospital 45 minutes from his home, or to one of several civilian hospitals close to his home to have the procedure done.

One way or the other, the VA will still have all the power to deny medical care and most just don't see this.

Yes they changed the "CHOICE" program, but I still wonder just how many have used it, then bang received bills for services and treatment rendered that the CHOICE program was supposed to cover and didn't!

Seems our society as a whole doesn't really care what goes on in our country, how we treat our Military,

Veterans, Seniors and handicapped. If they did, the phone lines in DC would be constantly flooded with calls, E-Mail boxes would be overflowing with messages, and fax machine always running out of paper.

I still believe and always will that if WE THE PEOPLE begin to stand up to Congress, we would begin to see some truly serious change for the better. But I have been trying for nearly twelve years to make this a reality, and I know I personally, nor any of the other organizations out there will be able to accomplish a thing on our own.

As they say "The Squeaky Wheel gets the Grease!"

Over the past couple of weeks I've read where a few people have resigned "high ranking" positions in the VA!

I don't think this is any great loss, personally I think it's a good thing, draining the swamp of those who do not need to be in position of any kind within the Government and most especially within the VA healthcare system.

This "self cleansing" just saves time, aggravation and unnecessary frustration to terminate those people. As well as it opens the door for someone more qualified,

willing to get the job done and isn't out to find a way or a means to line their own pockets on the backs of Veterans and their families!

I know last week I briefly touched on Parkinson's and ALS, I just happened to recall several studies I had read several years ago and decided to do a quick search this morning.

Those studies proved beyond a doubt that those who serve in the Military are 70% more likely than not to be diagnosed with either ALS, Parkinson's or some other form of illness in this family of illnesses.

As there is no test to determine if this is something you have and it could take a very long time for someone to connect the dots I wanted to give you a heads up as to beginning signs so that if you are experiencing things of this nature you can begin to take immediate action to be tested and for a determination to be made if you do or don't have these illnesses.

Falling or tripping more than usual, dropping things, sometimes difficulty swallowing and breathing. These are all things we take for granted and often shrug it off as no big deal.

As I said there is no specific test, but they do test you for everything else under the sun to rule those out and

finally come back with the determination that you have [Parkinson's](#) or [ALS](#). And if it is caught early on then you and your family will have time to decide, and prepare. Once a diagnoses is reach and if early enough life expectancy if approximately 5 years.

I know with my dad, we weren't as fortunate. Dad was finally diagnosed in September 2005 and he passed in April 2006.

I know this kind of information is not pleasant, nor something anyone wants to discuss, but I do want you all to be informed and to know what to look for, and please don't shrug off these signs.

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)



**Some Troops, Families Could  
Owe Thousands to Keep Tricare**

Troops and family members who missed monthly Tricare premium payments due to a contractor swap Jan. 1 must make up missed payments, as well as pay one to two months in advance to reinstate coverage, Tricare officials confirmed. For more details, see this [article](#).



## **Register for TRICARE Webinar on Maternity and Newborn Coverage**

Having a baby or adopting? Or, maybe you already have a newborn or newly adopted child. Join us on Monday, April 30, from 1 to 2 p.m. (ET) for the "TRICARE Program Options for Maternity and Newborn Care Coverage" webinar. This webinar will cover TRICARE health care coverage options for you and your growing family.

Read the [full article here](#).



REMEMBER THOSE WHO SERVED



ALL GAVE SOME, SOME GAVE ALL



## Riverside National Cemetery Memorial Day Program Time Change

**What:** The Riverside National Cemetery Memorial Day Ceremony Time Change

**When:** May 28, 2018am 12:00 pm

**Where:** Riverside National Cemetery, Amphitheater-  
parking is free

The Riverside National Cemetery's Memorial Day Ceremony time will change from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm on Monday May 28th, to ease the traffic flow between

the West Coast Thunder Memorial Day Ride parade route and Riverside National Cemetery. The West Coast Thunder ride begins at 9:11 am on May 28, 2018 downtown Riverside.

**Background:**

West Coast Thunder commemorates each Memorial Day with the largest motorcycle parade west of the Mississippi river. Over 6,000 riders come together for one day and support the cause to honor our Veterans. WCT has been donating funds since 1999 for Cemetery enhancement and beautification. Riverside National Cemetery is one of the most active Veteran Memorial Cemeteries in the United States. With the financial support from Riverside Harley-Davidson in Riverside, California, the tradition grew in stride from just 8 riders the first year. To date, West Coast Thunder and has donated over \$900,000 to the Riverside National Cemetery Support Committee.

West Coast Thunder has been the major contributor of funds to the Riverside National Cemetery via the Support Committee. Completed projects include construction of the National POW/MIA Memorial (dedicated in 2005), repairs to the Medal of Honor Memorial, financial support to the RNC Memorial Honor Detail, funding cemetery projects to include needed equipment, purchase flower cones and honor

an average of 30 indigent and unaccompanied, homeless Veterans buried each month with a full military honors ceremony, placement of a bouquet of flowers and an American flag on their final resting place.



## **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 **2,100** hits per day, and downloads average **1,200** per day with a total **4,020,074** 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 **16,387** documents on-line (Updated: 02/20/18)
- 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

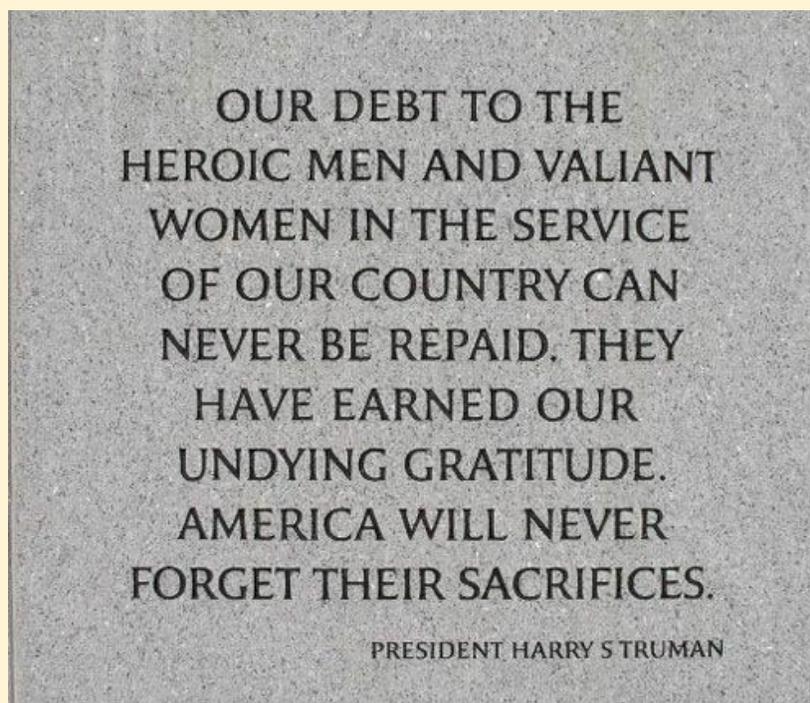
- o Suggestion Box
- o The Mess Hall
- o VA Hospitals and Medical Centers
- o Veteran Affairs
- o Vietnam Veterans
- o Welcome Mat
- o Women Veterans Forum
- o WW II Veterans
- Job Postings
- Memorial Pages (Updated: 01/11/18)
- News (Articles On-Line: **7,286**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **3,633**, Added **8** New Links (Updated: 04/19/18)

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



## **Full Rundown on Veteran Family Benefits**

Do you know your veteran family benefits? This new guide from Military.com spells out veteran family programs and entitlements from the Department of Veterans Affairs including health insurance, education benefits and payments. For more details, visit the [Benefits section](#).



## **The Enlisted Association Supports Bill to Help Service Members and their Families with Taxes**

Bill will create exclusive communication lines at IRS for service members and their families to answer

questions about taxes

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Ahead of Tax Day, U.S. Representatives Tim Walz (MN-01) and Ron Kind (WI-03) introduced the Military Taxpayer Assistance Act (H.R. 5479), which establishes a year-round dedicated toll-free IRS telephone line to answer questions military taxpayers and their families have about their taxes.

"Helping our warriors and their families navigate their uniquely complex tax issues is the least we can do for those who sacrifice so much for our country," said Rep. Tim Walz. "This commonsense bill will help provide our service members and their loved ones the peace of mind they deserve when working to meet their tax obligations."

"The brave men and women that serve in our armed forces often face unnecessary challenges when completing their taxes," said Rep. Ron Kind. "We need to set our military members and their families up for success, and provide every possible resource to them ahead of tax day."

The Retired Enlisted Association also voiced support for the bill:

"Filing taxes is complicated. It becomes even harder once you come down on orders," said Michael

Saunders, Deputy Legislative Director for The Retired Enlisted Association. "There are over 30 different types of orders that members of the National Guard and Reserves can receive; each one can have different types of tax implications. Having a dedicated phone number to call where somebody can quickly answer your questions would go a long way towards simplifying a process that some people hate more than going to the dentist. It is long overdue that the IRS become more user-friendly for our men and women of the seven Uniformed Services. 'I don't know' is not an acceptable answer, and neither is antiquated information on the IRS website."

There are about 1.3 million active duty service members and over 800,000 Reserves and National Guard personnel in the United States. Currently, the IRS does not have employees assigned exclusively to assist service members or dedicated telephone lines for military taxpayers to call with questions. Because of the unique tax issues and challenging situations they face, members of the military and their families often need specialized assistance in meeting their tax obligations.

The bill will also create a special unit within the IRS, staffed by veterans, to develop and conduct outreach, create education materials, and provide assistance to

current service members, including National Guard and Reservists.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the Military Taxpayer Assistance Act.

Source: TREA



## LT Bobby Ross



April's Featured Song

LT is #1 Singer in World

LT's #1 Song in 2017

LT's #2 Song Honoring Native Americans

Autistic Farmers Of America (AFOA)

LT Bobby Ross

**PATRIOTIC MUSIC**

Remember this site is an Internet Adventure. All you need do is click on the pictures and any highlighted word, and you are launched to another world in Cyberspace. Try it! So much fun!



## **Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System "2018 Veteran's Open House Event"**

Employment Resource Fair for All Veterans.

From: Calvin Payne, Outreach and External Affairs, VA  
Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System

We would like to invite your department to the Greater Los Angeles Healthcare Systems Veteran's Open House event. We serve thousands of veterans throughout our California service area.

Our Veteran's Open House events include many components such as medical services, **employment** and **vocational training**. We are inviting you to join with the VA at this event, in making all our veterans aware of the employment opportunities available to them. There will be **no charge** for your participation.

This year we are requesting all vendors if possible to bring the following:

(1) Canopy (1) Table (2) Chairs

The event is scheduled as follows:

VA Greater Los Angeles – Veteran's Open House Events, Employment/Job Fair

Saturday April 28, 2018 - Location: Gardena CBOC – 1149 W. 190 St. Gardena, CA 90248

Saturday May 5, 2018 – Location: East LA CBOC – 5426 E. Olympic Blvd City of Commerce, CA 90040

Wednesday May 9, 2018 – Location: Oxnard CBOC –

1690 Universe Circle Oxnard, CA 93033

Wednesday May 16, 2018 – Location: LAACC – 351  
E. Temple St. Los Angeles, CA 90012

Wednesday May, 23, 2018 – Location: Sepulveda  
ACC – 16111 Plummer St. North Hills, CA 91343

**All events are from 10AM – 2PM**

If you would like to participate in these events, please contact us as soon as possible so that we can plan for your display. We appreciate your efforts to help us better serve our Veterans. If you have any questions and/or you would like to reserve a space for the event, please contact me at 424-214-8341.

You may also contact me via email at  
[calvin.payne@va.gov](mailto:calvin.payne@va.gov).

We will be providing more detailed information updates as we get closer to the date of the event.

Sincerely,  
Calvin Payne  
Calvin Payne  
Outreach and External Affairs, Veteran's Open House  
Committee



## **DoD Once Again Seeks to Make Retirees Pay More**

Back in 1811, our young nation made a "Promise" to care for its older and disabled veterans. This would be repayment for their sacrifices in defending liberty.

In 1811, the US Navy urged Congress to pass legislation to create a Home in Philadelphia "for destitute Navy sailors and Marines". An interim Naval Hospital opened in the former country mansion of the renowned Pemberton family in Philadelphia. This Hospital offered state-of-the-art care to our former

seamen.

The permanent Naval Asylum opened in 1834.

"Inmates" at the Naval Home were expected to work to earn their keep. Many had light duty jobs in machine shops. With permission many would ship off on leave for months at a time.

For 142 years this facility served America's former sailors. In 1976 the Naval Home relocated to Gulfport, MS on about 40 acres of prime waterfront land sitting on the Mississippi Sound. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina destroyed the AFRH-G building, and the Residents were transferred to the Washington community. Plans for a new building were soon approved with the support of the US Congress. By October 2010 a modern new complex opened to hundreds of residents.

By 1851 momentum had grown to fund a Soldiers' Home in Washington, D.C.. General Winfield Scott was a hero in the Mexican-American War. He was paid reparations in lieu of ransacking Mexico City. So, Scott promptly paid off his troops and gave the rest to Congress-petitioning it to open a home for old and infirm soldiers.

The Old Soldiers' Home began with just one "inmate". Before long, more soldiers moved in, and they outgrew that cottage. So a larger "Scott" dormitory was built.

Inmates were expected to work to earn their keep. The Soldiers' Home had a 300-acre dairy farm, so inmates could cultivate food and remain self-sufficient. In the 20th Century, the Home evolved with the times as the focus shifted away from work toward leisure. As the military evolved, the Soldiers' Home would go on to admit airmen-and women. And, the cow pastures became a nine-hole golf course and resident gardens.

Both asylums were self-sufficient in the 1800s. All inmates were expected to work and contribute to the daily operation of farms that supplied all their needs. Uniforms were issued, reveille was called at 0500, and inmates marched to supper. Through the 1900s and after World War II, the two Homes evolved with the times with an emphasis on leisure and recreation. In 1991 both Homes joined forces and became the AFRH.

That would be a nice story to tell, except that like almost all other things related to military personnel now days, and specifically military retirees, it has been decided that military retirees don't pay enough of their retirement costs.

Active duty military enlisted members and warrant officers contributed \$6.8 million to the AFRH in 2015 through paycheck deductions of 50 cents per month.

However, that does not cover the cost of operating the homes.

So now many residents at the [AFRH](#) — particularly those with higher incomes— will begin paying higher monthly fees in October as [officials](#) look to cover more of their operating costs, shore up [AFRH finances](#) and decrease the need for taxpayer dollar bailouts.

According to an email TREA has received from a resident in the Gulf Port home, "For independent residents, on October 1, 2018 it has been announced the fee will increase 50% to 100% !!! From 40 to 60 % of gross income with a maximum of \$3,054 from a maximum of \$1,458 (over 100% increase))."

And those increases will not be phased in, they will jump immediately.

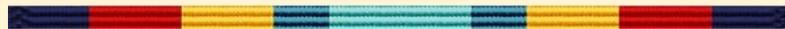
Now we want to be clear. Living at one of the AFRH homes was not promised to every military retiree. However, the possibility of living there was available to every retiree.

But just like so many other things involving military retirees these days, politicians and military leaders trip all over themselves to praise veterans and military personnel, except when it comes to supporting them financially because, well - they're just too expensive.

"They don't pay enough for what they get, whether it's prescription drugs or other medical services, or for using the commissaries, and now, for living in one of the AFRH homes" seems to be the prevailing attitude.

This is outrageous and TREA is continually fighting to stop these benefit cuts. We will be looking into what is happening at AFRH and see if there is any way of changing this new policy.

Source: TREA



## **Military Leaders Pledge to Keep Standards High as Ranks Grow**

The Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps plan to grow their active-duty ranks as part of their proposed fiscal 2019 budgets. Rep. Mike Coffman, R-Colorado, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee's personnel subcommittee, said he was "very concerned ... with the lowering of standards." Not to worry, say military personnel officials. For more details, see this [article](#).



**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)



**TRICARE Offers Vision Coverage  
and More**

Beginning with the 2018 Federal Benefits Open Season (Nov. 12 to Dec. 10, 2018), beneficiaries enrolled in a TRICARE health plan will be eligible to enroll in the [Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program \(FEDVIP\)](#). Coverage will start Jan. 1, 2019. Beneficiaries enrolled in or are eligible for the [TRICARE Retiree Dental Program \(TRDP\)](#) will also be able to enroll in one of the FEDVIP dental options for 2019 coverage. TRDP will end on Dec. 31, 2018. FEDVIP offers 10 dental and four vision carrier options. If you are currently enrolled in the TRDP plan, you will not be automatically enrolled in a FEDVIP plan for 2019. Benefits and costs may change each year.



## **Two Categories of Veterans Not Eligible for New Veterans' ID Card**

Two categories of honorably discharged veterans cannot apply for a new, free ID card from the Department of Veterans Affairs because their service branches aren't listed on the application.

Those who served in the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) or as commissioned officers of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are considered veterans by law and are entitled to all veteran benefits, including health care through the VA

and burial at national cemeteries.

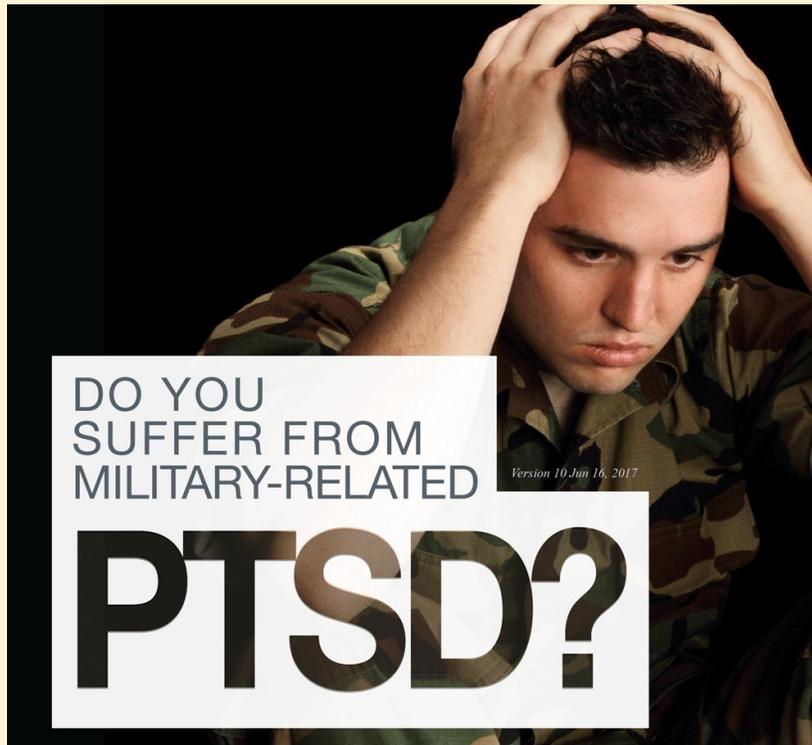
But the new veteran ID card ordered by Congress in 2015 does not include the USPHS or NOAA on a list of service selections. The electronic card application cannot be submitted unless a service is selected.

While there are five Armed Services, TREA: The Enlisted Association has consistently advocated for the inclusion of all seven of the Uniformed Services (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, Navy, Public Health Service and NOAA) to receive all of their earned benefits due to their honorable service to this country.

The card is meant to function as proof of service at private businesses and to save veterans the trouble of carrying around DD-214 forms to show they served. About 74,500 veterans had applied for the card as of late last month.

Source: TREA





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



## **Maryland Man Convicted of Bribing VA Official**

On Monday a Maryland man pleaded guilty to bribing an official at the Department of Veterans' Affairs to steer more than \$2.2 million from the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) program to a fraudulent information technology school with services for disabled veterans, according to the Washington Post.

Albert S. Poawui, 41, of Laurel, owned Atius Technology Institute, a non-accredited information technology school, the Department of Justice said in a statement.

In 2015, Poawui and a vocational counselor at VA agreed Poawui would pay a 7 percent cash kickback for VA payments to Atius, ostensibly for vocational training for disabled veterans, the statement said.

Between 2015 and 2017, VA paid Atius more than \$2.2 million, according to the statement, for inflated invoices that showed veterans attending classes for 32 hours per week when the program offered only six hours weekly.

One VA counselor received more than \$155,000 for participating in the kickback scheme, prosecutors said, and another was involved as well. Another employee of Atius also helped Poawui conceal the scheme after VA initiated an audit, according to prosecutors.

In a statement, Curtis Cashour, a VA spokesman, said the agency "does not tolerate this sort of behavior, and any employee found to have engaged in any such activities will be held swiftly accountable."

"The VA employee at the center of these allegations has been fired for reasons unrelated to this investigation," the statement said. "The second

employee referenced no longer works for VA. VA has cooperated fully throughout this investigation."

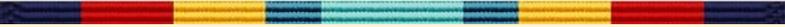
The kickback was made to a program counselor with the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program at VA, prosecutors said. As described in the case against Poawui, the program aids disabled veterans with education and employment-related services, and program counselors advise veterans about which schools to attend and facilitate payments for tuition and necessary supplies.

According to the Post, the federal investigation is ongoing.

TREA: The Enlisted Association will keep you updated on any new information.

Source: TREA





## Legislation to Revamp DFAS Introduced in the House

Rep. Mac Thornberry, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee (R-Texas), has introduced legislation to reform the Department of Defense. One of the proposals aims to speed decision making and enhance agility by reforming 28 quasi-independent agencies within DOD. Included among those is DFAS - the Defense Finance and Accounting Services.

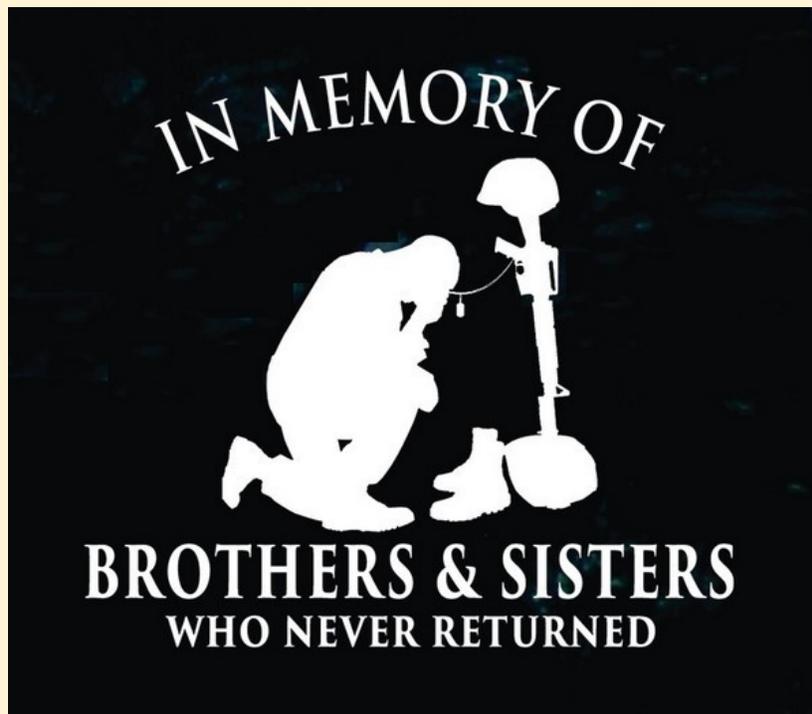
According to information released by the House Armed Services Committee, DFAS would be "streamlined" but not eliminated like he is proposing to do to several other agencies.

If passed, his legislation would direct that not later than March 1, 2020, the Chief Management Officer and the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) would submit to the congressional defense committees a plan to streamline, reduce duplication, and make more effective the operations of the Defense Finance and Accounting Services.

Then, not later than January 1, 2021, the Chief Management Officer and the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) would implement those plans.

What all of this would mean for military retirees and others is not clear and we will have to wait to see if the legislation is passed, and if it is, then what the DoD officials come out with. We will be watching closely and report on developments as necessary since so many military personnel, including retirees and their dependents, are affected by the activities of DFAS.

Source: TREA



**SGLI/VGLI Enough? Get \$100k  
Coverage from Only \$7 a Month**

Would your family survive if something happened to you? Get coverage customized to your family's needs. Get \$100,000 coverage from only \$7 a month. Because tomorrow is never guaranteed, start [protecting your family today](#).



## **Camp Lejeune Community Assistance Panel (CAP) and Public Meetings**

**Contaminants in the Water August 1953 through December 1987**

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) invites the public to hear from the scientists who conducted public health activities to understand the impact of exposure to contaminants in the drinking water at U.S. Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Veterans Affairs representatives will also discuss VA health benefits available to Veterans and family members, and disability benefits for Veterans who were stationed or lived on the base for at least 30 days from August 1953 to December 1987.

**Dates/Times:** Community Assistance Panel (CAP)

Business Meeting:

April 27, 2018, 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Public Meeting:

April 28, 2018, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

**Location:** DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Pittsburgh –  
Green Tree

[500 Mansfield Avenue](#)

[Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15205](#)

**Online:** Link to livestream of meeting will be available  
the day of the meeting

<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune/capmeetings.html>

**Background:** The contamination of drinking water at Camp Lejeune started in the early 1950s and ended in 1985. ATSDR has been assessing the health risks from hazardous substances in drinking water at Camp Lejeune since the 1980s. ATSDR has published several health studies that have linked exposures to the drinking water with a number of diseases and health conditions.

Additional Information

[ATSDR health studies and other work related to Camp](#)

Lejeune.

Veterans Affairs Health and Disability Benefits

Courtesy: Paul Sutton



## **Reduce Your Rx & Out of Pocket Costs for 2018**

Get a Tricare supplement that pays your cost shares and can pay 100% of covered excess charges. Get [valuable coverage](#) now.

## **Ruling on 'Undiagnosed Pain' Case May Benefit Veterans**

For years, the non-profit National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) screened [Board of Veterans' Appeals](#) decisions, seeking a case involving denial of disability compensation to a veteran suffering from chronic service-related pain but due to a condition that doctors couldn't diagnose. Such a case has arisen, and its outcome, if it stands, could benefit thousands of veterans who have had VA compensation claims for pain denied for lack of a medical diagnosis. For more details, see this [article](#).



## **Direct Deposit of Pay and Benefits: What You Need to Know**

If you are one of the 99 percent of the people who get your government payments by direct deposit or Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), you may wonder just how to change your bank account information in case you move or change banks. We have all the information you need right [here](#).



## **Two Veteran Categories Excluded from VA ID Card**

Veterans of the U.S. Public Health Service and those who were commissioned officers with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration should qualify for the Department of Veterans Affairs new ID card, but are unable to apply because their services are not listed on the drop down menu. For more details, see this [article](#).



## 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

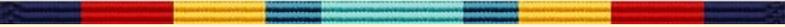
1-877-4AID-VET (424.3838)

VA Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274



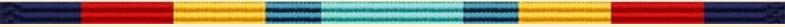
## Beware of Tax Scammers

Scammers and cyber thieves continue to use tax scams. Be wary of phone calls or automated messages from someone who claims to be from the IRS. In most cases, an IRS phishing scam is an unsolicited, fake email that claims to come from the IRS. Some e-mails link to sham websites that look real. The scammers' goal is to lure victims to give up their personal and financial information. If you receive a query that appears to be a scam, contact the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration using TIGTA's '[IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting](#)' webpage. Also, report the incident to the Federal Trade Commission using the '[FTC Complaint Assistant](#)'. Add 'IRS Telephone Scam' to the comments of your report.



## Changes Made to Navy-Wide Advancement Exam

The Professional Military Knowledge (PMK) section of the Navy-Wide Advancement Exam (NWAE) will transition to a stand-alone, once-per pay grade, electronically-delivered eligibility exam starting in October 2018. Sailors will only have to pass that exam once per pay grade. The PMK information will be removed from the NWAE starting with the September 2019 Cycle 244 (E-4/5/6). This change enables Sailors preparing for the NWAE to concentrate exclusively on job-specific knowledge. PMK-EE will serve as an additional eligibility requirement for advancement to pay grades E-4/5/6/7. For more information, visit the Advancement and Promotion webpage on the My Navy Portal [website](#).



### Links to Other Stories

- 1) [“Prescribed to Death” opioid memorial raises awareness of prescription drug crisis](#)
- 2) [Acting VA Secretary Wants Congress to Act on Choice Reform](#)

- 3) Exposures and Military Bases in the United States
- 4) Four-hour drive for a colonoscopy? What VA privatization warnings ignore
- 5) Helping Veterans respond to an opioid overdose
- 6) Lost in Battle, Found by Amateur Sleuths: An 'Unknown' Marine
- 7) Michael Ryan dies at 72; vet raised awareness of Agent Orange effects
- 8) School Owner Pleads Guilty to \$2 Million Bribery Scheme Involving VA Program for Disabled Military Veterans
- 9) The New RAMP Program
- 10) Tomah program prepares Veterans for careers
- 11) Understanding the Criteria and Rating of PTSD
- 12) VA loses its CIO, creating further uncertainty for EHR modernization
- 13) VA Updates and Improves Assistance Program for Transitioning Service Members

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## Braille and Talking Book Program for Vets

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently partnered with the Library of Congress to promote the Braille and Talking Book Program for Veterans, which is already being used at many VA facilities across the country. The program offers books in a number of formats: Braille, audio, mailed to your door, or instantly downloadable. Eligible veterans are those with an honorable discharge, blind, have low vision, or have a physical disability that prevents them from reading regular print materials. Veterans interested in applying for this service should fill out [the application](#), and submit the application to the nearest talking library available in their state. For more information, read the [VA Vantage Point Blog](#).

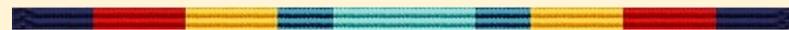


## VA Benefits for Your Child

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers several benefits for the children of veterans: (1) education benefits — servicemembers may transfer the GI Bill to their dependent children before leaving service; (2) health care — CHAMPVA provides coverage to eligible dependent children; (3) life insurance — family coverage is available to members insured under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI); and (4) memorial benefits — minor or unmarried adult children may be eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery. Also, specific benefits are available for children of servicemembers who died or were seriously injured in the line of duty. For more information, visit the Spouses, Dependents, and Survivors [webpage](#).



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## WWI Movie Debuts

The movie [Journey's End](#) has opened across the U.S. this month. Journey's End tells the story of Captain Stanhope and his British regiment during World War I. The regiment of about 120 soldiers goes back to a front line with knowledge of an enormous upcoming attack and the knowledge that they will likely be on the front to face it. The film portrays how these men wait as time tick by until the attack and the ways in which each of these individuals deals with their fear. Learn more about the movie on the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission [website](#) and this [article](#).



## **Veterans Outreach in San Francisco**

The American Legion is sponsoring a veterans outreach effort April 19-21 in the San Francisco area. The effort will take place from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. April 19-20 and 9 a.m.-noon April 21 at Redwood City American Legion Post 105, 651 El Camino Real, Redwood City. A veterans service officer will be available all three days to assist with Department of Veterans Affairs-related questions and other veterans benefits issues. All wartime veterans are invited to the event to learn about veterans benefits.





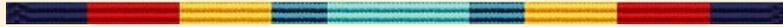
## **VA Looking to Improve Prosthetic Services**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently implemented a rapid response team to increase communication directly with veterans and improve the processes to reduce the backlog of pending requests for prosthetic items and services. Enrolled patients at VA medical centers can now schedule appointments directly with amputation care and wheelchair clinics without having to first see a primary care provider. [VA Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service](#) currently averages 638,000 new requests monthly for artificial limbs and bracing, wheeled mobility and seating systems, sensory-neural aids (e.g., hearing aids, eyeglasses), and implants and devices surgically placed in the Veteran (e.g., hips and pacemakers).



## **WWI Memorials Awarded Grants**

The U.S. World War I Centennial Commission and the Pritzker Military Museum and Library announced the final 50 WW1 Memorials to be awarded grants and honored with the official national designation as 'WW1 Centennial Memorials'. Now the selected memorials, which each will receive a \$2,000 matching grant, towards the restoration, conservation and maintenance of these local historical treasures, are hard at work on bringing their respective memorials up to top condition. Read more about the final fifty selectees, and where 100 Cities / 100 Memorials goes from here on the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission [website](#).



U.S. Government Accountability  
Office Reports

- 1) Defense Health Care: TRICARE Select Implementation Plan Included Mandated Elements, but Access Standards Should Be Clarified
- 2) DOD Needs to Continue Improving Guidance and Plans for Effectively Managing Investments
- 3) DOD Should Address Challenges with Communication and Mission Changes to Improve Future Base Realignment and Closure Rounds
- 4) Improvements Needed in the Bureau of the Fiscal Service's Information System Controls
- 5) Information on Recovery Housing Prevalence, Selected States' Oversight, and Funding
- 6) Program Should Take Steps to Ensure Manufacturing Readiness



## **S. 2402, Support Increased Use of Women Peer Specialists in VA Health Care**

S. 2402 would increase the number of women hired as peer counselors for the Department of Veterans Affairs

(VA) suicide prevention program to specifically address the special needs of women veterans.

Women veterans face unique challenges reintegrating into their communities after wartime deployments. In general, they are more likely to divorce, lack a social network, and be single parents. They are also more likely to be unemployed and live in poverty, despite higher educational attainment than their male peers. Exposure to military sexual trauma and abuse of alcohol are complicating factors that also make them more prone to homelessness and suicide.

Women comprise a small, but growing portion of the veteran population using VA services. Unfortunately, many clinical providers are not knowledgeable about their duties and experience in military service. Peer specialists have been shown to be especially useful in engaging VA users in accessing needed mental health care. Ensuring that culturally competent women peer specialists are available will ensure increased understanding of women veterans most frequently cited needs such as child care, legal assistance and assistance with job placement or training and in identifying appropriate resources within and outside of VA to assist them.

We support this bill in accordance with DAV Resolution Nos. 225 and 245, which call for support of

improved services for women veterans and enhanced mental health services, including increased use of peer specialists.

Please use the prepared letter to urge your Representative and Senators to support and cosponsor S. 2402.

[Take Action](#)



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Military Personnel & Families”**

## **Support H.R. 5397, the Veterans Residential Care Choice Act**

Representative Rosa DeLauro (CT) introduced The Veterans Residential Care Choice Act (H.R. 5397) a bill that would allow the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to pay for eligible veterans to live at residential care facilities such as assisted living facilities licensed or certified by the State if the cost of care is lower than it would be at other care sites including VA hospitals, nursing care or community nursing home facilities.

Currently, VA may help veterans find a residential care facility to live in, but veterans and their families have to pay for it.

The bill would also require any facility receiving VA payments to enter into an agreement with VA to ensure the facilities are adequate to serve the needs of veterans.

DAV Resolution 227 calls on Congress to expand the types of long-term care services and supports VA provides to veterans with service-related disabilities. DAV believes H.R. 5397 would add to the continuum of service options available to meet the long-term care needs of eligible veterans and therefore supports this legislation.

Please use the prepared letter below to contact your representative and urge them to cosponsor H.R. 5397, the Veterans Residential Care Choice Act.

[Take Action](#)



## **VA Offers Adoption Reimbursement**

Veterans with a service-connected disability that results in infertility will now be able to receive reimbursement for adoption expenses as a result of a new rule recently approved by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). For these veterans, VA may provide reimbursement for qualifying expenses in the adoption of a child under 18 years of age. For expenses to be reimbursable, adoptions must be arranged by a qualified adoption agency as defined in [DoD Instruction 1341.9](#). The application for reimbursement must be submitted no later than two years after the adoption is final or two years after the date a certificate of United States citizenship is issued. For more information, read the [VA Vantage Point Blog](#).



- 1) [24-Hour Multi-Patient Use Endoscope Connectors: Letter to HealthCare Providers and Healthcare Facilities - Risk of Cross-Contamination](#)
- 2) [Certain Implantable Cardiac Devices by Abbott \(formerly St. Jude Medical\): FDA Safety Communication - Battery Performance Alert and Cybersecurity Firmware Updates](#)
- 3) [Certain Kratom-Containing Powder Products by Viable Solutions: Recall -Possible Salmonella](#)

## Contamination

- 4) Coastal Meds to Recall All Products Marketed as Sterile
- 5) Epic Products, LLC, Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of All Lots of Euphoric Capsules Due to Presence of Undeclared Sildenafil and Tadalafil
- 6) K9 Natural Ltd Voluntarily Recalls K9 Natural Frozen Chicken Feast Raw Pet Food 2.2lb And 11lb Bags Because Of Possible Listeria Monocytogenes
- 7) Nutrizone Recalls Various Lots of Multiple Dietary Supplements Because of Possible Salmonella Health Risk
- 8) 'Rhino 69 Extreme 50000' Recalled due to Presence of Active Ingredient 'Tadalafil'
- 9) Rose Acre Farms Recalls Shell Eggs Due to Possible Health Risk
- 10) Seacrest Foods Recalls l'Explorateur Soft Ripened Cheese Due to Possible Health Risk
- 11) Superior Foods Company Voluntarily Recalls 487 lbs. of Smoked Salmon Spreads
- 12) TruPet LLC Recalls Boost Me Mighty Meaty Beef Topper Meal Enhancer Because of Possible Salmonella Contamination
- 13) Urgent: Voluntary Product Recall of Vuse Vibe Power Units
- 14) Viable Solutions, LLC Recalls Certain Kratom-Containing Powder Products Because of Possible Health Risk

15) Vitakraft Sun Seed Recalls of Sunseed Vita Prima Sugar Glider Food Due to Possible Salmonella Health Risk

16) World's Best Cheese Recalls l'Explorateur Soft Ripened Cheese Due to Possible Health Risk



## Decision Ready Claims

Considering submitting a claim for an increase in your disability compensation? VA's new Decision Ready Claims (DRC) program delivers decisions within 30 days. DRC also covers certain claims related to direct service, presumptive service and secondary service connections. Surviving spouses can file certain claims under DRC, and transitioning servicemembers can use DRC to file pre-discharge claims less than 90 days from leaving the military. To file a DRC, Veterans must work on the submission with an accredited Veteran Service Organization (VSO). For more information and to apply online, visit the [VA Disability Compensation webpage](#).





## **S. 1333, the Tribal HUD-VASH Act of 2017**

Senator John Tester introduced S. 1333, the Tribal HUD-VASH Act of 2017. This bill would allow Native American veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to receive rental assistance through the HUD-VASH program.

Legislation enacted in October 2015 required the Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) to set up a

demonstration program to allow Native American tribes entry into the HUD-VASH program. 26 of the 567 federally recognized Native American tribes received HUD-VASH vouchers under the current Tribal HUD-VASH pilot, which expired last year.

The Tribal HUD-VASH Act of 2017 will re-authorize the program and ensure that at least five percent of all HUD-VASH vouchers are set aside for Native American tribes and tribal housing authorities to address veteran homelessness. The measure would require HUD and the VA to modify the initiative through tribal consultation to better guide available resources to homeless Native American veterans. The bill also directs the Indian Health Service (IHS) to provide any assistance requested by HUD or the VA to implement the initiative and directs both agencies and the IHS to conduct a review of the initiative every five years.

This bill is in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 229, which directs DAV to support the rights and benefits earned by service-connected Native American and Alaska native veterans and Resolution No. 239, which urges Congress to continue to authorize and appropriate funds for competitive grants to community-based and public organizations, including HUD to provide health and supportive services to homeless veterans placed in permanent housing.

Please use the prepared letter to ask Senators to cosponsor and support passage of S. 1333, the Tribal HUD-VASH Act of 2017. Thank you for your efforts and support of the Commander's Action Network.

## Take Action



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