



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, August 19, 2018

Volume 9, Issue 33



## **This-N-That**

I know for a very long time Blue Water Navy Veterans have been fighting hard to get what should have been done more than 5 decades ago, and the fight continues on.

And further down in this newsletter is your chance to step up and help them by signing the petition and making calls to both your Senators asking for their support! And to make it crystal clear you do not need to be Active Duty or a Veteran to sign or make the calls, anyone can, and why we ask that this

information be shared with your family and friends.

There was a court case filed against Monsanto by DeWayne Lee Johnson regarding Round-Up which many of us have been saying for a long time contains some of the exact same chemicals as many of the rainbow agents used in Vietnam and Korea.

Well the jury sided in Mr. Johnson's favor, and his attorney has ask for \$39 million in compensatory damages and an additional \$373 million in punitive damages for his client.

Several articles have been posted to the Veterans-For-Change website as well as many Social Media Pages which might be of interest to many.

I'm not an attorney, but, maybe this will help with many Veterans in the coming future!

It seem's the VA now has another battle on their hands with AFGE filing a complaint that one of Trump's Executive Orders violates their ability to conduct union business during VA Business hours, but to me seems like it would be the right thing to do as all they're out to do is protect their income via means of union dues.

They (AFGE) has protected many an employee who needed to be terminated for various reasons, and they were never terminated or even re-assigned. And in my opinion many are there for a paycheck, not to provide care or services.

As updates become available on this, we will certainly pass them on to you.

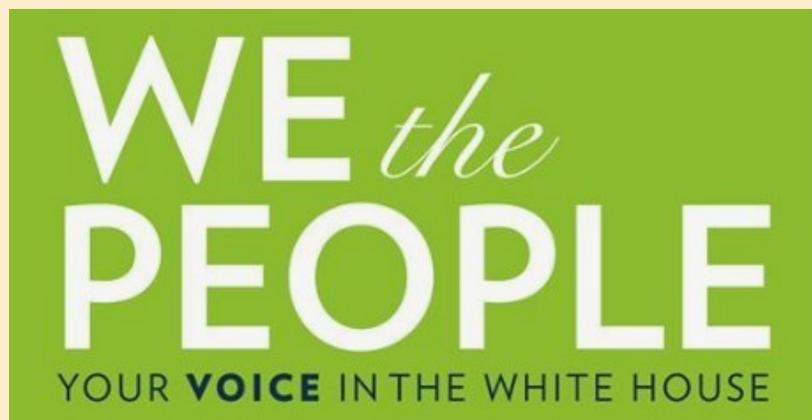
On behalf of our Volunteers nationwide and myself, we wish you and your family good health!

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

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



**BWN Needs Your Help!**

The United States government, through its agency the Veterans Affairs, has a DUTY to TREAT medical problems associated with military service; COMPENSATE veterans (or their families) for early death or disability associated with their service; and MONITOR and DOCUMENT the effects of government policy and MISTAKES that created a higher health risk. For 50 years, VA has FAILED to monitor and document the effects of Agent Orange on military members that served in the "Blue Water Navy" during Vietnam. Congress is attempting to "fix" this dereliction of duty - and VA Officials oppose the change. We the people support treatment and compensation for these medical issues; and believe monitoring and documenting these issues should be the responsibility of VA, not the individual veterans.

Please sign, share on your page, copy and paste web link into an e-mail and send out to your entire e-mail address book and ask all your friends and family to sign, and forward on to their entire e-mail address book too!

You don't have to be active duty military, or a veteran, civilians can sign too. 98,000 signatures are needed

Click [HERE](#)



## **FATE OF AGENT ORANGE-AFFECTED NAVY VETERANS IN SENATE'S, ISAKSON'S HANDS**

Six weeks after the House of Representatives unanimously passed the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, restoring benefits to sailors who served in the bays, harbors and territorial seas of South Vietnam, the fate of the bill is in the hands of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, chaired by Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-GA).

On June 25, the House passed the long-sought bill 382-0, restoring benefits that had been authorized by Congress in 1991 but later stripped by administrative decision in the Department of Veterans Affairs. As a result, thousands of Navy servicemen who served aboard ships during the Vietnam War lost coverage for conditions caused by exposure to Agent Orange.

Since that decision, the VA has denied claims to sailors on the basis that they never set foot on Vietnamese soil, although several significant

studies have shown that runoff from Agent Orange-impacted areas flowed into the harbors where U.S. ships were stationed. It was subsequently ingested into shipboard distillation and purification systems, where it was actually enriched and made more potent. Countless U.S. Navy personnel were not only exposed to the toxin, but bathed in it, drank it, and ate food that was cooked in it.

Last week, a VA undersecretary testified that science did not support the claims of exposure, contradicting testimony Veterans Service Organizations, hydrologists and Navy experts. The bill has now been tabled in the committee, with limited days left for the Senate to act. If the bill is not passed before the next Congress takes office in January, supporters of the bill, including the Louisiana-based Military-Veterans Advocacy, will have to start from scratch.

“We initiated this bill, we drafted the initial language, and we have advocated – even begged – for Congressional action for years,” said Cdr. John Wells (USN, Ret.), executive director of the organization. “I have made countless trips to Capitol Hill in support of this legislation. Former Secretary Shulkin gave it his support. The House finally passed it – with not a single ‘no’ vote – in

June. Now, the bill is in danger because of testimony from an undersecretary who is either uninformed or ill-informed. I have reached out to current VA Secretary Robert Wilkie and asked for his renewed support of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act.

“While we have waited – and while we continue to wait – literally thousands of Navy veterans are suffering without needed care,” Wells said. “I am confident there are enough votes in the Senate to pass the act decisively. We need only move it through the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and to the Senate floor. I implore Sen. Isakson and other committee members to act swiftly on this legislation, giving so many veterans the long-overdue benefits they deserve.”

Commander J. B. Wells U. S. Navy (Retired)  
Attorney at Law  
Executive Director  
Military-Veterans Advocacy, Inc.





## **New DoD Policy Bans Fitness Trackers**

Deployed servicemembers are going to have to eliminate their 'geolocation devices' in response to a new memo from the Department of Defense. This includes physical fitness aids, applications in phones that track locations, and other devices and apps that pinpoint and track the location of individuals. Effective immediately, **Defense Department personnel are prohibited from using geolocation features** and functionality on government and nongovernment-issued devices, applications and services while in locations designated as operational areas. Deployed personnel are in 'operational areas,' and commanders will make a determination on other areas where this policy may apply.



## **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 **3,000** hits per day, and downloads average **1,990** per day with a total **4,292,420** 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 16,468 documents on-line (Updated: 07/30/18)
- 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: 7,606)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than 3,660, Added 6 New Links (Updated: 07/14/18)

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



## **VA Adds 15 'Forever GI Bill' Benefits**

On Aug. 1, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) implemented 15 more provisions of the 'Forever GI Bill'. Some of the provisions include: (1) recipients of a Purple Heart awarded on or after Sept. 11, 2001 are now eligible for full Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for up to 36 months; (2) military and veteran families who have lost a family member can now reallocate transferred Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits; (3) post-9/11 GI Bill students may now receive monthly housing allowance for any days they are not on active duty; and (4) the expansion of the [Yellow Ribbon Program](#) now covers more students. Get more details, read the full article [HERE](#).



## **Forever GI Bill Expands VA Educational Benefits**

Effective Aug. 1, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) implemented 15 more provisions of the Harry W. Colmery Educational Assistance Act of 2017, also referred to as the Forever GI Bill.

These provisions, in addition to the 13 implemented since the law was signed less than a year ago, will have an immediate and positive impact on Veterans

and their families using VA benefits to pursue their educational goals.

"We are excited to get the word out about implementation of the provisions," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "From the day the Forever GI Bill was signed into law, VA, in collaboration with Veterans service organizations, state approving agencies and school certifying officials, has taken an expansive approach to ensure earned benefits are provided to Veterans in a timely, high-quality and efficient way."

Some of the provisions that began Aug. 1 include:

Recipients of a Purple Heart awarded on or after Sept. 11, 2001, are now eligible for full Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits for up to 36 months, if not already entitled.

Military and Veteran families who have lost a family member can now reallocate transferred Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits.

Additional Guard and Reserve service now counts toward Post-9/11 GI Bill eligibility.

Post-9/11 GI Bill students may now receive monthly housing allowance for any days they are not on active duty, rather than having to wait until the next month; and

Expansion of the Yellow Ribbon Program, which makes additional funds available for GI Bill students, now covers more students.

More provisions are scheduled related to science, technology, engineering and math benefit extensions; increased benefit levels; a pilot program for high-technology training geared toward "upskilling" Veterans to enter the workforce quickly; and another expansion of the Yellow Ribbon Program, which will be implemented by Aug. 1, 2022.

For more information, visit then [Forever GI Bill - Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act page](#)

Source: TREA





## August's Featured Song

[Back to Blue Jeans Again](#)

By

**LT Bobby Ross**

[LT Bobby Ross - The Voice of America](#)  
[Previous Featured Songs](#)

We are living in trying times. Our nation seems to be dividing more and more each day. American [hunters](#) and [fishermen](#) make up a large part of my 30 year old LRRP Network. It is my duty to make my AFOA a stunning example of how Veterans and [autistic folks](#) can work together to keep our American farms safe and secure, and support those who believe in our 2nd Amendment. For those of you interested, please feel free to contact me at this E-Mail Address: [ltbobbyr3@gmail.com](mailto:ltbobbyr3@gmail.com)



**[Your Opinion Matters: Take a Quick Survey](#)**

Your feedback is important to us. In our continued effort to serve the needs of our members, Military.com invites you to rate your current experience with us. [Take the survey now.](#)



## **Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation Program helps Children of the Fallen go to College/Trade School Debt Free**

If you know a young person who has lost a parent either in line of duty or due to a service connected disability you should tell them to look at the Children of Fallen Patriots Foundation. They say they serve "the families of servicemembers from all branches of the armed forces who have died as a result of combat casualties, military training accidents, service-related illnesses, suicide, as well as other duty-related deaths as ruled by the Department of Veterans Affairs."

In addition to those on active duty they cover Pre- and Post- 9/11 veterans and they support all post-secondary education including trade schools. The children who qualify for help include biological, adopted children as well as step and foster children. Once they reach college age they can

receive aid and there is no maximum age to enroll.

After VA and other aid (which they will help families find) the foundation will cover all the additional costs including college application costs; registration fees, tuition, room and board, a living stipend of \$1750 a semester, a computer stipend of \$1,000, books, tutoring, study abroad and all other miscellaneous expenses. Students may even be able to get retroactive funding for already paid out of pocket college related expenses.

This year they are giving \$1.6 million to 305 students across the country who are attending 218 different schools. Twenty one of those students will be are graduating this year.

If you know someone who would qualify for help by this program go to [www.fallenpatriots.org](http://www.fallenpatriots.org). They can enroll in just a few minutes.

Source: TREA





## **Ending Veteran Homelessness: Partnerships & Promising Practices**

As the new executive director of VHA Homeless Programs, I am honored to serve alongside the dedicated VA employees and partners who have helped achieve a nearly 50 percent reduction in Veteran homelessness since 2010. I know that by working together, we can ensure that every Veteran has a safe, stable place to call home. This is why I am excited to introduce the VA Homeless Programs Quarterly Newsletter, developed to keep you—our valued partners—informed and our collaborations active. Each quarter, this newsletter will highlight partnerships and innovative strategies that are generating positive results for homeless and at-risk Veterans and provide valuable

resources, program updates, and information on upcoming events.

Staying connected with you is essential to giving Veterans the hand-up they deserve. I hope you will find this newsletter informative and encourage you to use it as a resource for best practices and strategies that can be replicated and tailored to your community or business. Because all of us—the Homeless Programs' staff and partners alike—are motivated by creative ideas and constructive feedback, we ask that you share both with us through the “Contact Us” button on the VA Homeless website ([www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless)).

I look forward to hearing from you and welcome you to the first VA Homeless Programs Quarterly Newsletter!

Monica Diaz, Executive Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office



**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)



**How to Choose or Change Your  
TRICARE Provider**

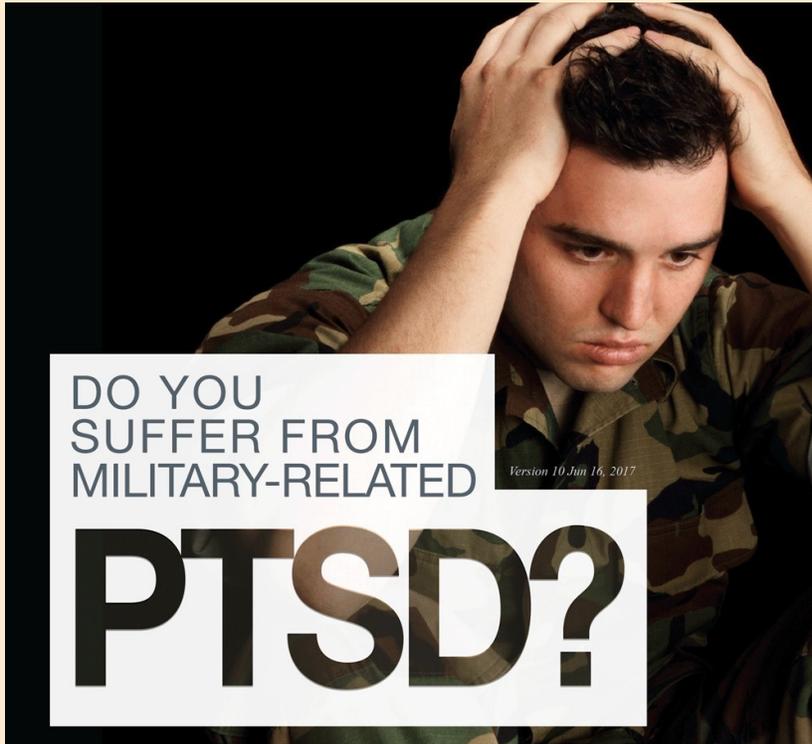
Whether you're looking to change your primary care manager (PCM) or find a specialty care provider, you have options with TRICARE. With directories at your fingertips, you can take command of your health and your TRICARE benefit. When you enroll in TRICARE Prime, you either choose or get assigned a PCM who will manage all of your routine, non-emergency, and urgent health care.

Read the full article [here](#).



## **VSOs Divided Over Plans to Change GI Bill Transferability**

Defense officials have said that, starting in July 2019, eligibility to [transfer GI Bill benefits to family](#) will be limited to service members having fewer than 16 years total service — active duty, drilling reserve or a combination of the two. Two of the nation's largest veteran service organizations hold opposing views on the Defense Department's plan to tighten rules next year on the transfer of [Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits](#) to service members' spouses and children. Read the full [article](#).



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



**Exchange Offers Wi-Fi Service**

Servicemembers who subscribe to Boingo Wi-Fi service through the Army & Air Force Exchange Service or the Marine Corps Exchange can now use their MILITARY STAR® card for payment. Subscribers can update their payment method by visiting [Boingo's Self Care](#) login page. Boingo has no contracts, hidden fees or cancellation charges, and no installation or special equipment is necessary. The MILITARY STAR credit program does not charge annual, late or over-limit fees.



## **Military OneSource Is Now Available to Veterans and their Families for a Full Year After Separating from the Military**

The Department of Defense announced today it will extend eligibility for Military OneSource benefits from the current 180 days to 365 days after separation or retirement from military service to ensure all service members and families have access to comprehensive support as they transition to civilian life. This change goes into effect today in accordance with the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2019.

Military OneSource provides information, resources

and support for active-duty, National Guard and reserve service members, their families and survivors. Provided at no cost, Military OneSource gives exclusive access to programs, tools, and benefits designed to help ensure service members and their families are mission-ready and able to thrive in both their military and post-military lives.

Military OneSource services are accessible 24/7, service members and family members can call Military OneSource at 800-342-9647 or go to [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil). To explore additional benefits that may be available through the Department of Veterans Affairs, go to <https://explore.va.gov/>

Source: TREA





## **TRICARE Beneficiary Bulletin #462**

Listen to this week's podcast to hear about:

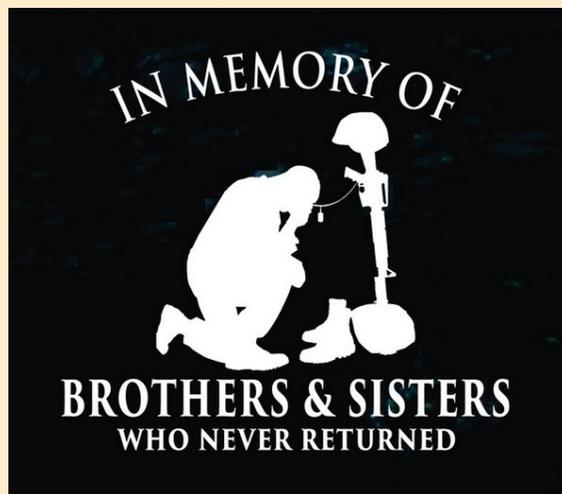
- Other Health Insurance
  
- Preventive Health Month
  
- Ask TRICARE Webinar

Visit the TRICARE Media Center for this and previous podcasts at [www.tricare.mil/podcasts](http://www.tricare.mil/podcasts).



## Exchange Sweepstakes

The Exchange is offering commissary shoppers the MILITARY STAR's Hard Work Pays Off Sweepstakes. 100 winners will each receive a \$100 exchange gift card, a \$100 commissary gift card and a \$50 entertainment gift card or Exchange food court gift card (which can also be used at Reel Time Theaters), for a **total prize value of \$250**. Shoppers automatically earn an entry with two purchases at their local commissary plus two purchases at military exchange locations with their MILITARY STAR® card from Aug. 1 through 31. For more information, visit the [Military Star Car website](#).





## **TRICARE Users May Have Received Contaminated Drug**

On July 13, 2018, the Food and Drug Administration issued a [voluntary recall of valsartan](#), which is used to treat high blood pressure. Express Scripts identified 8,400 TRICARE beneficiaries who received the contaminated product through the mail order network. Another 17,200 TRICARE beneficiaries received a potentially contaminated product from retail pharmacies. The Department of Defense sent letters to all beneficiaries who received the product. Compare the information on your prescription bottle with the information in the recall list. If your medicine is included in the recall, contact your pharmacist or physician. For more information, visit the [FDA website](#).



## **DoD Exempts Wounded Warriors from Separation Policy**

Servicemembers wounded in combat will now be exempt from the new Department of Defense policy to be deployable in 12 months or face separation from the military. According to [DOD Instruction 1332.45](#) (Retention Determinations for Non-Deployable Servicemembers), those servicemembers whose injuries were the result of hostile action, meet the criteria for awarding of the Purple Heart, and whose injuries were not the result of their own misconduct are approved for retention. Servicemembers who are not exempted are slated to be processed for administrative separation beginning Oct. 1. For more details, see [this article](#).



## Summer Tip: Beware of Lyme disease

The best way to prevent Lyme disease is by avoiding ticks. Wear long pants and socks, especially when walking through the woods. If you spend your day outside, check your skin for ticks. For extra protection, use an [Environmental Protection Agency-registered insect repellent](#) when outdoors. The most [common symptoms of Lyme disease](#) are fever, headache, fatigue, or a bull's eye shaped rash around a tick bite. If you observe any symptoms or think you have been bitten, contact your primary care manager or [Military Health System Nurse Advice Line](#). For more tips to prevent tick bites, visit the [Centers for Disease Control website](#).



### 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



## **Upcoming Military Health Symposium**

The Naval Health Research Center, San Diego has the most presentations ever for the Military Health System Research Symposium (MHSRS) Aug. 20-23. The MHSRS is the Department of Defense's premier scientific meeting. It provides a venue for presenting new scientific knowledge from military medical research and development. Some of the research topics to be presented at the conference are studies on deployment health, to include PTSD, combat injuries and rehabilitation relating to amputee care, logistical mapping through data-driven science, and family deployment readiness. For more information and to register, visit the [MHSRS website](#).



### Links to Other Stories

1. [At least three towns being considered for relocation of Talihina Veterans Center](#)
2. [Construction company swoops in to help former](#)

Army paratrooper

3. Home-health provider cuts off services to Veterans when the VA fails to pay its bills
4. Jury rules Monsanto liable in weed killer case
5. Largest Federal Employee Union Files Grievance Against VA
6. Mix-up leaves former Guardsman stuck with \$14,000 VA hospital bill
7. Monsanto 'bullied scientists' and hid weedkiller cancer risk, lawyer tells court
8. Monsanto's Herbicide Expert Has Bad Day in Court
9. National League of Cities finds what works to help more Veterans secure housing: strategic landlord engagement
10. Oklahoma program helps Veterans exit homelessness with options for housing, food stability
11. Plaintiff's Lawyer Asks Jurors for \$412M Verdict Against Monsanto
12. Report: Michigan Military Base Water May Have Caused Cancer
13. Surgery Snafu: Veteran prepped for surgery stopped from having operation
14. Trial Begins Over Claim That Roundup Causes Cancer
15. Trial Set to Open in Case Linking Monsanto's

## Roundup to Cancer

16. VA Announces Leadership Changes

17. VA Shuffles Leadership; Former Acting Secretary Retained as Senior Adviser

18. VA's VITAL program helps student Veterans

19. Veteran groups divide over tighter transfer rules for GI Bill

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)



## Thrift Savings Plan Overview

The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) is somewhat like the highly popular 401K plans offered at many civilian jobs, but is actually better. Like the 401K, the TSP is a way for income to grow tax-deferred. Unlike other plans, there are no management fees and TSP contributions reduce taxable income. It has also had a strong performance record over the years. Perhaps the biggest advantage of TSP is that the government will match a Soldier's contribution, up to 5 percent. Also, TSP can be customized to meet the Soldier's individual needs. For more information, speak with a Personal Financial Manager at Army Community Service who can help you customize where your TSP funds are invested. For more resources and tips on TSP, see the [Military.com TSP section](#).



*CLICK HERE TO JOIN US ON TWITTER*



## Exchange Sponsors Sweepstakes

The Army & Air Force Exchange Service is giving away \$5,000 in Exchange gift cards. Authorized Exchange shoppers 18 and older can enter the [Mars/Hershey Back to School Sweepstakes](#) from Aug. 1 through Aug. 22 at on the [ShopMyExchange website](#). Prizes include 10 \$500 Exchange gift cards. No purchase is necessary to enter or win. Entrants need not be present to win.



### **\* RED ALERT \***

**Everyone Call The Senate Committee  
On Veterans Affairs Members Ask  
Them To Support and Vote to pass  
HR 299 Blue Water Navy  
Vietnam Veterans Act Of 2018 to the  
Full Senate for a Vote!**

**Jon Tester (D - MT)202-224-2644-Tony  
Murray, Patty (WA)202-224-2621-Ryan  
Sanders, Bernie (VT)202-224-5141-Matt  
Brown, Sherrod (OH)202-224-2315-Anna  
Blumenthal, Richard (CT)202-224-2823-Ethan  
Hirono, Mazie (HI)202-224-6361-Adam  
Manchin, Joe (WV)202-224-3954-Emily**

**Please Ask everyone to Make The  
Calls and Share this with  
Everyone!**

**Thank You Michael F Kvintus  
Sr. BWNVVA  
National Vice Commander**





## **Changes to the VA Choice Program**

There has been recent changes to the VA Choice Program. The VA Mission Act of 2018 enables us to continue our mission of providing quality health care through partnership with community providers. There are many changes in progress to include how we handle authorizations for services.

As we transition, we are working diligently to expand our workforce and to reduce the authorization time to under six weeks.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we make significant improvements to our program.

If it has been six weeks since you were referred to community care and have not received an authorization, please contact our Community Care Customer Service line at 352-548-6000 extension 3755.

Thank you for your Service.



**Guard, Reserve Can Transfer GI Bill Benefits**

The 'Forever GI Bill' allows certain members of the National Guard and Reserve to transfer into the Post-9/11 GI Bill after they lost their educational benefits in 2015. The Forever GI Bill, passed into law last August, made several changes to veterans' educational benefits. One of the changes restored eligibility to those who were eligible for the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) but lost it due to the sunset of the program. Those who lost eligibility may now use that eligibility under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. If you think you are eligible and did not receive a letter from VA, you can apply by submitting a VA [Form 22-1990](#).



## **Office of Inspector General**

1. [Action Needed to Ensure Workforce Diversity Strategic Goals Are Achieved](#)
2. [Agency Faces Ongoing Challenges Filling Provider Vacancies](#)
3. [Efforts to Help Ensure Health Center Compliance with Prohibitions on the Use of Federal Funds for Certain Abortions](#)



## Blue Water Veteran Testimony

American Legion Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Division Director Chanin Nuntavong recently testified before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. During his testimony, Nuntavong highlighted the importance of providing Blue Water Vietnam veterans with the same benefits provided to those who served on land and in Vietnam's inland waterways by the Agent Orange Act of 1991. Watch a video of the hearing on the U.S. Senate Committee on [Veterans Affairs website](#).



**“We Proudly Support our  
Military Personnel & Families”**



## Navy Provides Voting Assistance

Every Navy command has a Voting Assistance Officer (VAO) who can assist those who are unsure of what they need to do to exercise their right to vote Nov. 6. Besides accessing the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) [website](#), voters can speak directly with a voting assistance officer who acts as the resource for all voting-related questions. It is not too late to register to vote. Registration for all states can be handled at the FVAP [website](#). U.S. Citizens over the age of 18 who wish to vote in their state of residence can fill out the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) to register and also request their absentee ballot for the election. For more information, contact your local VAO.



## **H.R. 5693, the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act**

Congressman Clay Higgins introduced H.R. 5693,

the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act. This bill would provide veterans who are no longer capable of living independently an alternative to nursing home care, in which the veteran would continue to receive the care that they need in an intimate home-like environment through VA's Home-Based Primary Care program, and the Medical Foster Home (MFH) attendant program. Medical Foster Homes are a type of Community Residential Care by which veterans with serious chronic disabling conditions requiring nursing home level care and coordination of services are able to receive these services in a non-institutional setting.

Currently, the administrative costs for VA per veteran in the MFH program, including the cost of Home Based Primary Care, medications and supplies average less than \$63 per day. However, veterans who qualify for nursing home care fully paid for by the government, must pay the full cost for room, board, and personal assistance out of their own pocket, which averages to be about \$110 per day to live in a MFH.

Veterans who wish to reside in a Medical Foster Home but are unable to pay approximately \$1,500 to \$3,000 per month are not able to avail themselves of this benefit, so many are placed in

nursing homes at much greater cost to VA. This measure would address this inequity by giving VA a three-year authority to pay for veterans, who would qualify for VA-paid nursing home care placement, so they can reside in a VA-approved MFH.

As the veteran population continues to age, the need for long-term care services will continue to grow. Home-based community programs like MFHs will enable VA to meet the needs of aging veterans in a manner closer to independent living than institutionalized care. With the passage of this bill, veterans would have the option of care that more closely aligns with their independence while maintaining their quality of life.

This bill is in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 085, which calls for legislation to improve the comprehensive program of long-term services and supports for service-connected disabled veterans regardless of their disability ratings.

Please use the prepared letter to write your Representative to cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 5693, the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act. Thank you for your efforts and support of the Commander's Action Network.

## Take Action



1. Arkon Anesthesia Delivery System recalled due to unexpected failed state while in use or idle
2. Camber Pharmaceuticals, Inc. Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Valsartan Tablets, USP, 40mg, 80mg, 160mg and 320mg Due to The Detection of Trace Amounts of N-Nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA) Impurity, Found in an Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API)
3. Marsee Baking Issues Allergy Alert On Undeclared Peanuts In Cookies Sold At Café Yumm! Restaurants
4. Temporary Total Artificial Heart Companion 2 Driver System by SynCardia Systems: Letter to Health Care Providers - Risk of Mortality and Stroke
5. Westminster Pharmaceuticals, LLC. Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Levothyroxine and Liothyronine (Thyroid Tablets, USP) Due to Risk of Adulteration

6. World Organix, LLC Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Blissful Remedies Red Maeng Da 100% Mitragyna Speciosa, Blissful Remedies Red Maeng Da Liquid Kratom Mitragyna Speciosa, Blissful Remedies 4 Hour Chill Slow Motion Blend, Due to High Microbial Loads Contamination

7. World Organix, LLC Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Blissful Remedies Red Maeng Da 100% Mitragyna Speciosa, Blissful Remedies Red Maeng Da Liquid Kratom Mitragyna Speciosa, Blissful Remedies 4 Hour Chill Slow Motion Blend, Due to High Microbial Loads Contamination

8. Zakah Life Recalls Kratom Because Of Possible Health Risk



## **VR&E participants, sign up for text appointment reminders!**

**Attention Veterans enrolled in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program**

Did you know that you can now get appointment reminders via text? At VA, we keep modernization at the forefront of what we do to ensure we provide you with the best service.

If interested, we encourage you to contact your Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) as soon as possible, and ask him or her set you up to receive text message appointment reminders on your mobile device!

Things to remember:

- Opting in to receive text message appointment reminders is voluntary.
- Your VRC has been provided with instructions on setting you up to receive text message appointment reminders.
- You can expect your reminder on:
  - o Monday (if your appointment is on Tuesday or Wednesday)
  - o Wednesday (if your appointment is on Thursday or Friday)
  - o Friday (if your appointment is on Monday)
- NO personally identifiable information (name, date of birth, SSN, disability information, etc.) will appear in your text.

We are invested in increasing communication between you and your VRC, and ensuring you are kept informed of your appointments. If you have any questions, please contact your local VRC.

Thank you for your service to our great nation!

-VR&E Staff

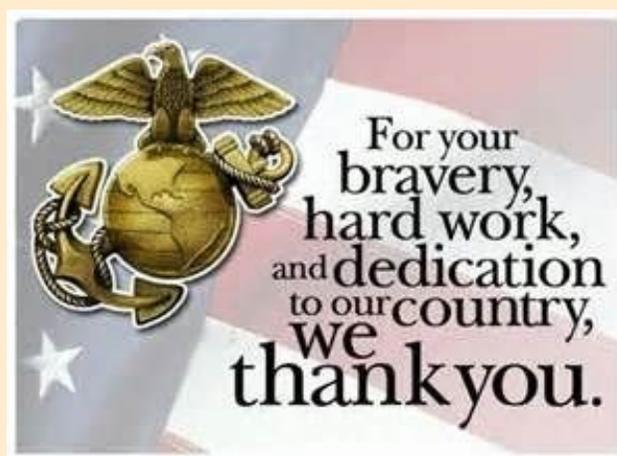


**SURVIVAL IS FUN**



**Bells of Peace**

More than sixty community participants have already joined the US World War I Centennial Commission's initiative, "[Bells of Peace](#)". Americans across the nation will toll bells on November 11, 2018 at 11:00 AM, in honor of the service and sacrifice of the nation's World War I veterans, led by tolling at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC. Joining the national bell tolling is an easy way for you to honor those who fought and died in World War I. Read more about how you and your church, school, community organization, veterans group, firehouse, or anyone else with a bell to ring can participate in this growing national commemoration event on November 11, 2018 at this [site](#).



## **Senate Returns to Work This Week**

August is usually a slow month in Washington because Congress traditionally is in recess for the entire month. While the House is following that tradition again this year the Senate will shorten their recess and return to Washington this week. One of their main tasks will be to continue its work of passing appropriations bills for fiscal year 2019 while also chipping away at judicial nominations.

The chamber may combine the Defense and Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bills into one package according to one report. They will also be working on passing the bill that funds the Department of Veterans Affairs, which has been slowed down because of the need to find a way to pay for the VA Mission Act, which deals with veterans' health care and which we've written about in the past.

Source: TREA



## **Tester, Rounds Call for VA to Expand Rural Veterans' Access to Appeal Hearings**

Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and U.S. Senator Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) are fighting to make it faster and easier for rural veterans to appeal their claims for disability benefits within the VA.

Tester and Rounds are calling on the VA and Board of Veterans' Appeals to make sure that rural veterans are able to appeal their disability rating using video hearings in local VA facilities when they can't travel hundreds of miles to be at their hearing in person or at a video hearing at a VA Regional Office.

Under the Senators' bipartisan Veteran Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act, which guarantees veterans have a speedy and thorough appeal of their disability rating, veterans can take advantage of video hearings at certain VA facilities. For veterans in rural states this often means still traveling great distances to a Regional Office when there are other VA facilities that are closer but do not currently offer video hearings.

"Not all veterans have the ability to travel and appear at the Board of Veterans' Appeals in person when they believe that a detrimental mistake has been made on their claim," the Senators wrote.

"Unfortunately, in many rural states, like Montana and South Dakota, veterans are still forced to drive a considerable distance to a qualified location for video hearings. Traveling a great distance for a video hearing or a greater distance for an in person hearing are not acceptable options when it comes to veterans' right to a fair and speedy appeal. The VA has a duty to dedicate considerable effort to finding solutions to this issue that will better serve the needs of rural veterans."

In a letter to Board of Veterans' Appeals Chairwoman Cheryl Mason, the Senators urged her to work with the VA to identify facilities in addition to VA Regional Offices that are suitable to hold video hearings, such as Community-Based Outpatient Clinics, Vet Centers, or field offices.

Source: TREA





1. Got a big tax refund? Use IRS Withholding Calculator to boost take-home pay in 2018
2. IRS tells taxpayers who got a big refund to do a “paycheck checkup”
3. IRS urges taxpayers with high income, complex returns to check withholding
4. Key tax change affects taxpayers with dependents; IRS urges workers to check withholding
5. Taxpayers who support dependents should check their withholding now



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