

### **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, January 05, 2020

Volume 11, Issue 01



#### This-N-That

I'd like to wish everyone a belated Happy New Year with hope and expectation of more and better benefits to come and more claims and appeals will progress and be approved more quickly.

I've spent roughly 90+ hours to do some intense research on benefits by state nationwide. I feel that if there are benefits out there that you might qualify for, then why not apply for them.

I've changed the category "Benefits" in both web links and documents library so that there is one major category called Benefits, then inside each of those are two more categories, one labeled "VA" and one labeled "State" in the hopes it will make it easier and not forcing you to dig to find what you want.

Under the "State" sub-category you will find each state listed and the benefits those states offer.

And although it's not completed yet there has been a good start on them.

There are still a little more than 950 more links that need to be added, and roughly between 50-100 documents to be added by state.

So please stop by the website, check the web links and the documents library under the benefits category, look for your state and see what you might be able to qualify for! Why not reach out and grab all you can, our country does owe you and not everything you might qualify for comes from the VA.

In doing my homework on this area the one thing I

found which almost all states offer is a reduction in property taxes for homeowner Veterans, and this is one huge benefit. You could receive a deduction of up to \$3,000.00 on your annual property taxes. Another is reduced or free DMV fees on both vehicle registrations and drivers licenses and many states offer Veteran Preference noted on your drivers license card. Than in turn can also bring you discounts in many places you shop.

So please give it a shot, and follow up again next week and the following week as more will be being added.

On another note, Homeless Mini Home Villages seems to be an issue with some.

One issue seems to be the amount of "control" by those who run these Mini Home villages. Some Veterans aren't interested in control. Well the control is designed to be able to offer you a place to live, but yes, there are restrictions, all meant to help get you back on your feet, become more independent and self sufficient.

It's not meant to be nor were they designed to be a permanent "gift". You do need to keep certain requirements such as attending group mental health meetings, that you must remain clean and sober of any drugs and alcohol, some have job retraining programs which you must attend one of your choosing, that you must be available for random drug and alcohol screening.

In my humble opinion, these "requirements" are not a lot to be asking in order to provide you a place to live and to learn to become self sufficient and independent again. And many of these programs go from six months to two years, all dependent on your personal level of need for help.

And once you've moved on, that opens up a slot for the next Veteran in need. And most of these Mini Home Villages are being supported by civilian donors, not the Veterans Affairs, however, the VA could take a serious lesson from these private groups.

West Los Angeles VA is a prime example, and has been for well over the past eleven years.

They've leased out Veteran Land to private parties, they have 12 historic buildings that could be easily renovate and cleaned up from asbestos and house no less than 24 Vets per building, plus there is a huge amount of land available to construct more buildings with mini apartments, or even build mini homes.

In my opinion mini homes are the best route to take as there are many companies out there who are constructing these mini homes for about \$5,000 each, and this also means they come with furniture.

I've been following the homeless Veteran crisis for years, fought on many levels on this issue and no matter what the VA says their continual touting of false information such as there are only 40,000 homeless Vets needs to stop especially when the total still hovers right around 1.5 million.

So as much as I hate to say it, if you're a homeless Veteran, and you refuse to be "controlled" by their rules, please don't complain. Nothing in this life is free, especially when it's meant to help you and they're being provided by

every day taxpayers making donations to ensure you're taken care of.

On behalf of our Volunteers nationwide and myself, we wish you and your family a very Happy New Year and good health!

Respectfully,
Jim Davis
Founder
Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org



### VA Grants Herbicide Benefits for Some (But Not All) Vietnam Veterans

After a two-decade battle in Congress and in the

courts, the Department of Veterans Affairs has finally begun to adjudicate benefits for some - but not all - veterans who served in waters offshore Vietnam. In a new change to their adjudication manual, the VA will now grant benefits to those veterans who serve in the bays, harbors and territorial sea of Vietnam.

"This may be a good start," said Col. Rob Maness (USAF, Ret.), Executive Director of the Louisiana-based Military-Veterans Advocacy (MVA), "but the battle continues. The new policy specifically exempts those veterans who flew close air support missions and those who served outside of the territorial sea."

MVA led the fight for benefits for these veterans, known as "Blue Water Navy," sailors. In January 2019, MVA won a landmark court case in the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, Procopio v. Wilkie, which interpreted the Agent Orange Act of 1991 to include the territorial sea. Congress acted soon after by passing the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019. The law allowed for a stay of benefits, which the VA imposed. MVA went back to court to force an end to the

stay effective Jan. 1, 2020.

"The VA has chosen to interpret the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act too narrowly," said Commander John B Wells, (USN, Ret), MVA's chairman of the board and director of litigation. "The Congressional action was poorly worded and provided ambiguities seized on by the VA to limit coverage. Although the Act did not replace the original law and did not supersede Procopio, the VA's constricted reading effectively does so."

Wells also noted that the legislative history of the Act eliminated coverage for those who flew over Vietnamese territorial sea, but that the VA policy restricts those who flew low-level missions in South Vietnam.

"Often these Air Force and Navy pilots flew through clouds of Agent Orange to perform their mission," Maness noted. "They should be covered."

The policy changes also addressed bases in Thailand where Agent Orange was used on the perimeter. Under the new provision, veterans who

had duties on the perimeter were covered but others were not.

"This policy is way too narrow," said Bill Rhodes, a retired Marine Staff Sergeant and Thailand veteran who joined MVA as Director of Thailand Veterans. "Many of the barracks backed up to the perimeter and personnel who did not have duties on the perimeter slept there. Yet they are not covered. Additionally, vehicles and personnel would track the herbicide into the base interior, increasing the exposure."

Rhodes also noted that the Army Field Manual governing herbicide exposure required a buffer area of 500 meters from spraying. Personnel serving in that buffer area are not covered by the new policy.

Although the policy addressed Johnston Island, it virtually excluded military personnel stationed there. "Although contractors handled the storage," said Brian Moyer, MVA Director of Central Pacific Islands, "military personnel were in the area covered. Johnston Island is a small atoll and the leakage from the steel barrels, stored in the open

salt air, resulted in the exposure of military personnel in the area."

Not covered in the policy change was the island of Guam, where testing has shown the presence of herbicides as late as 1980. MVA currently has a Rulemaking request for Guam pending at the VA.

"We are reviewing our options," said Wells, "and may seek judicial review of this policy."

**VA to Reach Out to New Veterans** 

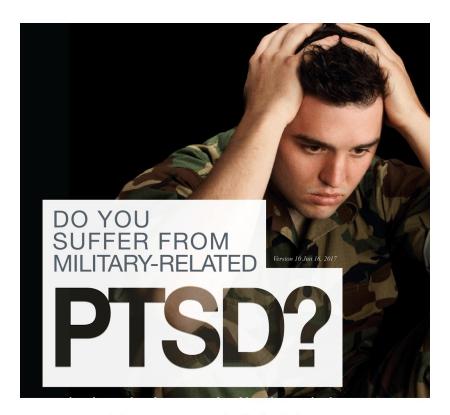
The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is launching a new program called the Solid Start Program. It will inform new veterans about benefits and support services at the VA in an effort to ease transition issues. The VA believes this will help with suicide prevention. These veterans will get three phone calls from the VA. The first call, expected within 90 days of separation from the military, will include an indepth conversation with veterans about their goals and challenges, to better target what VA services may be of use to them. This program is expected to reach out to more than 200,000 veterans. Subsequent phone calls will check on the veteran's transition progress and answer any questions they may have about available VA benefits and services. Among the programs the callers will discuss, are the free VA mental health resources available for all separating service members during their first year of post-military liferegardless of discharge status or service history.

### Links to Other Stories

- 1. Military investigates possible white power signs flashed by students during Army-Navy telecast
- 2. Lying by Bush and Obama over Afghanistan is this era's Pentagon Papers
- 3. Honoring Veterans at Sackets Harbor Military Cemetery
- 4. Military families in line for tens of thousands in benefits under plan to dump the 'widows tax'
- On Battle of the Bulge's 75th anniversary,
   WWII Vets return to celebrate and pay tribute
- 6. Disabled Vietnam Veteran's dream car found, best friend's motorcycle still missing after theft
- 7. Navy fixes GI Bill error that forced student to leave DePaul and left her with \$20K debt
- 8. Special Counsel Alerts White House and Congress of 'Significant Financial Mismanagement' at VA
- 9. Family of injured Veteran gets shockingChristmas gift: 'I felt like I was gonna drop dead'
- 10. Here's how much more Veteran households earn annually than non-Veteran households
- 11. Lawmakers seek answers on rising military and Veterans suicide rates

- 12. Veterans launch association, workshop to get more Vets in newsrooms
- 13. These Air Corps pilots' actions at Pearl Harbor made them among the first heroes of World War II
- 14. Tuskegee Airman celebrates 100th birthday with flight
- 15. Pearl Harbor Vet's interment to be last on sunken Arizona

Check us out today: www.Veterans-forchange.org



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

Listen to New TRICARE Beneficiary Bulletin Podcast #534 Listen to this latest podcast to hear about:

- Updating Information in DEERS
- Expanded Coverage
- Gaining or Losing Other Health Insurance

Visit the Multimedia Center for this podcast and previous podcasts.



The Veterans-For-Change website has been around since 2009. 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 for Mental Health and are currently seeking a new Licensed Mental Health Worker, where you can seek help or just ask questions.

We average **3,482** hits per day, and downloads average **6,092** per day with a total **5,695,932** 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

 Documents Library with over 18,330 documents in 171+ Libraries, added 28 documents on-line (Updated: 01/02/19)

- FAQ's on-line with 1,790 FAQ's on 101 topics!
   (Updated 08/29/19 128 NEW)
- 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: 10/30/18) (37 Added)
- News (Articles On-Line: 9,309)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than 6,031, Added 144 New

Links (Updated: 12/31/19)

If you have a submission for the memorial pages, E-Mail: Jim.Davis@Veterans-for-change.org



Below are links to all currently active pre-written E-Mails to many pieces of legislation. We ask that you go to each one, and send the pre-written E-Mails, and to also call your Reps or Senators and ask for their support on a weekly basis!

You don't need to be Active Duty or a Veteran, in fact we ask all Veteran friends to also help!

- 1. Allow Active Duty to Sue Military for Medical Malpractice (H.R. 2422)
- 2. H.R. 1527, the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act
- 3. H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act
- 4. H.R. 2359, the Whole Veteran Act
- 5. S. 514, the Deborah Sampson Act to Improve VA Services for Women Veterans

- 6. H.R 445, Help Hire Our Heroes Act
- 7. S. 2022, Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019
- 8. H.R. 96, to Provide Dental Care for All Veterans Enrolled in Veterans Health Care
- 9. S. 555 and H.R. 1377, Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act
- H.R. 840, the Veterans' Access to Child Care
   Act
- 11. S. 179/H.R. 712, Legislation Calling for Clinical Trials to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Medical Cannabis for Chronic Pain and PTSD
- 12. S. 980, the Homeless Veterans Prevention Act of 2019
- 13. H.R. 2201, Include Military Installations in Thailand as exposed to Agent Orange
- 14. H.R. 444, Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act of 2019
- 15. S. 2216, Transparency and Effective Accountability Measures for Veteran Caregivers Act
- 16. H.R. 2200, the Keeping Our Promises Act
- 17. H.R. 553, Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act
- 18. Senate Bill Introduced to Protect Active Duty from Medical Malpractice

- 19. H.R. 1182, Veterans' Access to Acupuncture Services
- 20. S. 374/H.R. 1092, the Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act of 201921. H.R. 2568, the Vietnam Veterans Liver Fluke Cancer Study Act
- 22. Urge Congress to Pass the Retired Pay Restoration Act
- 23. Protect Bankrupt Disabled Veterans from Losing Benefits
- 24. S. 318, the VA Newborn Emergency Treatment Act
- 25. S. 785, the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act 26. H.R. 713, Provide Beneficiary Travel Funds to Veterans Seeking Specialized Treatment for Military Sexual Trauma
- 27. Urgent Action Needed to End "Widow's Tax"
- 28. S. 154, VA CLEAR Act of 2019
- 29. H.R. 663/S. 191, Burn Pits Accountability Act
- 30. S. 1392, the Support for Suicide Prevention Coordinators Act
- 31. S. 1881 and H.R. 3356, Veterans Expedited TSA Screening Safe Travel Act
- 32. H.R. 1963, Expanding Care for Veterans Act
- 33. NDAA and Spending Bills

- 34. H.R. 4137, Healthcare for Open Air Burn Pit Exposure Act
- 35. H.R. 2982, Women Veterans Health Care Accountability Act
- 36. H.R. 4451, Support Our Services (SOS) to Veterans Caregivers Act
- 37. H.R. 3036, Breaking Barriers for Women Veterans Act
- 38. S. 2950, the Veterans Burn Pits Exposure Recognition Act of 2019
- 39. H.R. 2200, Keeping Our Promises Act
- 40. HR 5028, Protect Individual Unemployability for Disabled Veterans

#### **DoD Announces BAH Rates for 2020**

The Department of Defense has released the 2020 Rates for Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), Basic Allowance for Subsistence and Basic Pay. These rates took effect Jan. 1, 2020. BAH rates will increase an average of 2.8 percent. An estimated \$22 billion in BAH payments will be provided to approximately one million service members. The fiscal 2016 National Defense Authorization Act decreased payment to cover

only 95 percent in 2019. The FRA opposed these cuts to BAH payments and is working to restore BAH to 100 percent of housing costs. The FRA also wants to reform enlisted housing standards by allowing E-7s and above to reside in separate homes, track BAH to ensure it is commensurate with actual housing costs, ensure adequate housing inventory and that housing privatization programs are beneficial to service members and their families. BAH rates vary by grade and dependency status.

Housing cost data are collected annually for more than 300 military housing areas in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii. Basic Allowance for Housing rates are then calculated for each pay grade, both with and without dependents. For more information on Basic Allowance for Housing, including the 2020 Basic Allowance for Housing rates and 2020 Basic Allowance for Housing rate component breakdown, go online.

Service members can calculate their BAH payment by using the Basic Allowance for Housing calculator online.

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Follow us on MEWE! The support staff at MEWE is responsive, open to suggestions and works very hard to protect your personal information.

We hope you will join us on this new site.

**VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE** 

HOMELESS HEROES PROGRAM OF VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE

**AMVETS GROUP** 

**VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP** 

**(USAVET) SUPPORTING GOD & ALL WHO SERVED OUR GREAT NATION** 

**AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY** 

These Veterans Can Now Have Full-Honor Burials at Arlington Medal of Honor recipients and prisoners of war are entitled to burial with full honors at Arlington National Cemetery, regardless of rank, under the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act signed into law recently by President Donald Trump. The previous rules restricted full honors at Arlington inground burials to officers, warrant officers, senior noncommissioned officers and service members killed in action. Read more here.



New VA Suicide Prevention Strategy: Talk to Vets 3 Times in First Year Out of Uniform

The Department of Veterans Affairs launched a new suicide prevention outreach program earlier this month to contact the more than 200,000 troops who leave the military annually. The goal is to reach out to each at least three times in the first year of transition to civilian life to inform them of the availability of VA mental health services. Veterans in the first year of transition are particularly vulnerable, and the stress "can lead to challenges or unmet health care needs," VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said in remarks announcing the launch of the "Solid Start" program for new veterans. Read more here.

## 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

## **Explore Career Opportunities at Hubbell Incorporated**

Hubbell values the experience and sacrifices made by military veterans and their families. We know that veterans bring valuable experience, leadership, work ethic, and dedication to our company. For these reasons, we are committed to hiring veterans and offering them challenging career opportunities. Search jobs now.

### Office of Inspector General

1. VA Real Property: VHA Should Improve Activation Cost Estimates and Oversight

Aging Bombers, Benghazi Heroism and a Brand-New Bullet: Our Best Reporting of 2019

In addition to reporting on breaking news from all military services and the veteran and spouse community, Military.com reporters went deep in 2019 -- probing emerging trends, asking difficult questions, and uncovering years-old mysteries. In the process, the team won awards, broke site records and prompted congressional inquiries and intervention, as well as changes to military policy. Read more here.



**DOL-VETS Boss Approved** 

John Lowry III was recently confirmed by the Senate to be Assistant Secretary of the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL-VETS). Lowry's nomination was approved unanimously by the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. His nomination also was ratified by the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. DOL-VETS provide resources and expertise to assist and prepare veterans to obtain meaningful careers, maximize their employment opportunities, and protect their employment rights.

Honorary Promotions Authorized for Tuskegee Airman, Doolittle Raider

Two distinguished veteran aviators are about to receive honorary promotions thanks to recent legislation. The Fiscal 2020 National Defense Authorization Act gives President Donald Trump the authority to promote retired Air Force Col. Charles McGee of the famed Tuskegee Airmen to brigadier general. It also authorizes the president to promote Richard "Dick" Cole, of Doolittle Raiders' fame, from lieutenant colonel to colonel posthumously. Read more here.

## TRICARE Deductibles and Catastrophic Caps Reset Jan. 1

Did you know your TRICARE deductible and catastrophic cap reset every Jan. 1? As always, TRICARE costs depend on who you are as well as your health plan (for example, TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select). So take a few minutes to refamiliarize yourself with the deductible and catastrophic cap associated with your plan.

To learn more, read the full article.



Here's the VA's Dependency Indemnity Compensation Rates Increase for 2020 The Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefit paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs to survivors of certain deceased veterans will be increasing by 1.6% for 2020. DIC is a monthly benefit paid to eligible survivors of certain deceased veterans. There are two main types, one for surviving spouses and one for surviving parents. The surviving spouse DIC is a congressionally mandated monthly benefit which is adjusted annually based on the Cost-of-Living. Parent DIC is based on the parent's income. Typically, only those parents whose income is below a certain level are eligible. Read more here.

### Pentagon Ordered to Add Blast Exposure to Troops' Medical Histories

Congress has directed the Pentagon to document troops' blast exposures in combat and training and include the information in their medical histories to help determine whether they are eligible for treatment and service-connected benefits. According to language in the \$738 billion defense bill signed into law recently by President Donald Trump, the histories will also "inform future blast exposure risk mitigation efforts of the Department of Defense." Numerous reports and studies by the DoD, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and others have pointed to links between blast exposure and traumatic brain injury and posttraumatic stress. Read more here.

# Pagan Nevada Guard Soldier Gets Waiver to Grow Beard; More May Follow

The Nevada Army Guard's first religious accommodation waiver granted a Norse Pagan soldier permission to grow a beard. Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Hopper of the Nevada Army Guard's 3665th Ordnance Company has grown a Norse beard, or Skegg, which he sees as a "sacred and defining feature of masculine men." Now, the Guard is considering two similar requests from Pagan soldiers, according to a recent Army news release. Read more here.



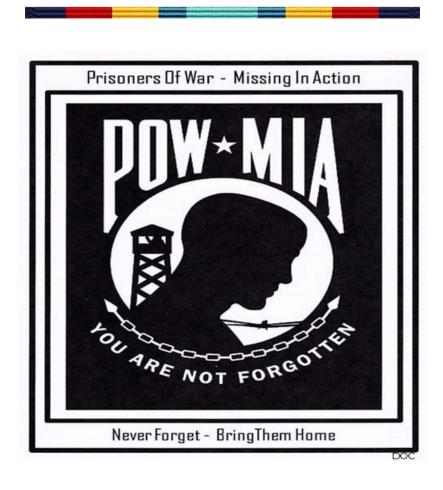
# Pentagon Leaders Tell Troops to Stop Using Mail-In Genealogy DNA Kits

U.S. troops are being advised to steer clear of popular genetic-testing kits over what Pentagon leaders say is a growing concern that the personal information could be exploited or tracked. Top military brass received a memo recently warning them that some genetic testing companies are encouraging Defense Department personnel to buy genetic-ancestry or health-information products by offering military discounts. Read more here.



This Retired Navy Nurse Left Millions to a Military Charity

The Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society received its largest-ever donation in May. The gift didn't come from a wealthy benefactor or from the proceeds of the previous year's Army-Navy Game. It was bequeathed by a former Navy nurse -- and it was the largest in the charity's 115-year history. Retired Cmdr. Helen Maznio never married and had no children. She considered the Navy and Marine Corps to be her family. Read more here.

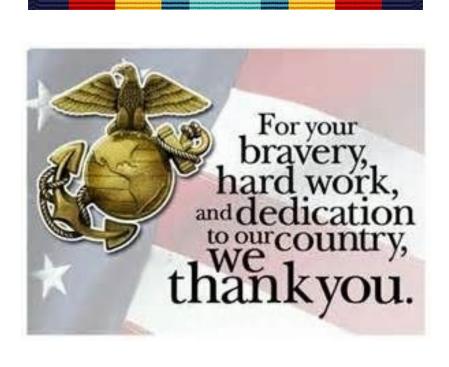


# USS Arizona and USS Oklahoma to Sail Again, Navy's Acting Secretary Says

Navy ships named USS Arizona and USS
Oklahoma will return to active duty with the
announcement by Acting Navy Secretary Thomas
Modly that two new Virginia-class attack
submarines will be named after American heroes
of the greatest generation who perished on the
famed Pearl Harbor battleships. The move brings
back into service the hallowed ship names 78
years after both were badly damaged in the
surprise Japanese attack on Dec. 7, 1941. Most
of the Navy casualties that day came from losses
on those two ships. Read more here.

Millennial Veterans Saving, Earning More Than Those in Their 50s and 60s

About one in five veterans in their 50s and 60s is making less than \$25,000 a year, while almost a quarter of veterans younger than 40 years old are earning at least \$50,000, a recent survey of veterans from all branches found. The Veterans Financial Preparedness Report 2019, produced by the Legionnaire Insurance Trust (LIT) for the Departments of The American Legion, surveyed about 1,500 veterans on financial confidence and retirement planning, breaking down the results by age. Read more here.



This Paid Internship Can Help Vets Find New Careers in the Wilderness

A new partnership gives nature-minded veterans a shot at an internship in America's National Forest system. Thanks to the program, the forest can now be boot camp for veterans who want a career working with America's natural resources.

VetsWork Environment is a new initiative between Tongass National Forest and the Mt. Adams Institute providing career training in natural resources and public lands. The program connects candidates with a mentor in the Forestry Service who will help them develop valuable professional skills as they work on real-life management and forestry programs over the course of 11 months. Read more here.

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.







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Riverside County, CA

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Please pass on to all your Veteran Friends and Family!

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