



Veterans-*For*-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, December 13, 2015
Volume 6, Issue 50

This-N-That

What is accountability? According to Webster's dictionary accountability is the state of being accountable, liable, or answerable.

But where is this in the Veterans Affairs, let alone government? It's non-existent as far as I can see.

Two years ago a VA Nurses aid, Fredrick Kevin Harris was charged with the beating of a 70 year old Veteran whose care was in the hands of the Veterans Affairs which resulted in the death of the Veteran two weeks later.

The coroners report clearly stated the Veteran's death was caused by blunt force trauma, however, Fredrick Kevin Harris was put on a weeks paid leave so he could "recover" from the incident, and was later absolved of all wrong doing and allowed to return to work!

The issue is similar to a recent shoving incident at Tomah VA between a mentally handicapped patient who was not defending himself and VA employee working as a nursing assistant. That VA employee was charged with disorderly conduct. Tomah VA is still looking into the matter in its internal investigation.

Then Sloan Gibson has the nerve to stand before Congress and lecture them on accountability when the VA themselves can't even hold their own accountable.

And prior to this two other VA employees were found guilty of fraud against the VA and these two not only were allowed to keep their jobs, but all the funds they obtained fraudulently.

Prior to this a bill was passed by both the House and Senate and sent to Obama for signature to allow the VA easier terms on which they could terminate employees of the VA and Obama vetoed the bill saying it was "unfair!"

So far to date, I've not seen one press release, not one article and absolutely no word from any of the Nationally Chartered Veteran Service Organizations demanding justice let alone immediate action to correct these issues.

Why is that?

And according to many news articles, Obama has taken \$2 BILLION dollars from the VA to help pay to bring all his Syrian Refugee's to the United States, again, absolutely no word from any of the Nationally Chartered Veteran Service Organizations demanding the funds be returned.

Why is that?

Where is the accountability when it comes to Veterans Claims too?

Most if not all of the Nationally Chartered Veteran Service Organizations hire only Veterans to be trained as Service Officers. I know this first hand as back in 2006 I asked to be sent to school to be trained, offered to not only work for free, but to also pay for my own training and was refused.

Most of these organizations only pay for 10-40 hours worth of training when the actual training program is a two year program through the Veterans Affairs. But most of these organizations either won't or can't pay for housing, transportation, food, and training but they allow most who get the minimal training to process claims unchecked.

And this is a huge part of why claims are denied, maybe not the largest reason of all why claims are denied, but it sure does add to the problem.

And while I will admit there are a lot of Service Officers who truly do care, get through the program, and continue to educate themselves and put forth a huge amount of effort to make sure the claims they process are completed to the best of their abilities.

But many others will do the bare minimum if that, earn their points and bonuses, and some even get promoted.

And what I will never understand is why those who process the claims with minimal work can live with themselves doing what they do against their fellow Veteran.

Then to add to that I want to know how these very same organizations can allow this to happen and certainly don't put much effort forward to strive for better work quality and more claims approvals.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Volunteers nationwide, we wish you and your family good health!

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

New TRICARE Reimbursement Rates

Many TRICARE beneficiaries diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) receive Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) care under the Autism Care Demonstration. Beginning spring 2016, TRICARE reimbursement rates for ABA providers under the Demonstration will change to become more consistent with national prevailing rates. The current ABA reimbursement rates will be replaced with rates for each geographic location, similar to how all other TRICARE rates are established. TRICARE also recently changed ABA cost shares to be consistent with other cost shares under TRICARE Prime and Standard. These changes resulted in a significant benefit improvement by applying the beneficiary's cost-share for ABA services towards the annual TRICARE catastrophic cap. For more information on Autism Care Demonstration, visit the [TRICARE website](#).

VA to Revamp Private Care

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently unveiled a wide-reaching plan to Congress to merge and expand its unwieldy networks of private doctors. The goal of the New Veterans Choice Program, which would combine seven of the agency's existing private health-care arrangements into a single system, is to eliminate gaps in care. The plan would overhaul the system that allows veterans to use private doctors at government expense if they live too far from a VA hospital or need a specialist. VA officials provided details of their strategy at a recent hearing before the House Veterans Affairs Committee. A video of that hearing and statements from witnesses are available on the [House Committee on Veterans Affairs website](#).

TRICARE and Maintenance Drugs

This December, TRICARE beneficiaries can take action to avoid paying more for some prescription drugs. If you fill a prescription for a [select brand name maintenance drug](#) at a retail pharmacy, you may need to move your prescription to either a military pharmacy or TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery. If not, you may have to pay full cost of your

prescription. Beneficiaries can move their prescriptions by contacting the TRICARE pharmacy contactor, Express Scripts (ESI) at 1-877-363-1303 or by using ESI's [secure online portal](#). If you are taking an affected drug, you should have received several notifications from ESI. You can also check by calling ESI at 1-877-363-1303. For more information about this change to TRICARE's pharmacy benefit, visit the [TRICARE website](#).

Government Accountability Office (GAO) Reports

Medicaid Financing: Questionnaire Data on States' Methods for Financing Medicaid Payments from 2008 through 2012 (GAO-15-227SP, March 2015), an e-supplement to GAO-14-627. <http://www.gao.gov/products/gao-15-227SP>

Climate Information: A National System Could Help Federal, State, Local, and Private Sector Decision Makers Use Climate Information. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-37>

Aviation Finance: Observations on the Effects of Budget Uncertainty on FAA. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-198R>

GAO Again Named a "Best Place to Work" in Government. December 8. http://www.gao.gov/press/best_places_2015.htm

Emergency Preparedness: Opportunities Exist to Strengthen Interagency Assessments and Accountability for Closing Capability Gaps. <http://www.gao.gov/products/gao-15-20>

Nuclear Weapons Sustainment: Improvements Made to Budget Estimates Report, but Opportunities Remain to Further Enhance Transparency. GAO-16-23 <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-23>

Defense Transportation: DOD Needs to Improve the Evaluation of Safety and Performance Information for Carriers Transporting Security-Sensitive Materials. GAO-16-82 <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-82>

Army Corps of Engineers: Actions Needed to Improve Cost Sharing for Dam Safety Repairs. GAO-16-106 <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-106>

Pedestrians and Cyclists: Cities, States, and DOT Are Implementing Actions to Improve Safety. GAO-16-66 <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-66>

GAO Bid Protest Annual Report to Congress for Fiscal Year 2015 <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-270SP>

Veteran Unemployment Hits 7-Year Low

For years, it's been no secret that veteran unemployment rates were usually higher than the civilian population. But now, they've officially crossed the threshold to the other side. Reported by [CNBC](#), according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate is down to 3.9 percent since October. Not only is that the lowest point in seven years, it's better than the nations average of 5 percent. Veterans have been going stronger than the civilian population for 23 uninterrupted weeks.

New Bill: PROMISE Act on Vet Pain Meds

Legislation has been introduced in Congress recently that would change how the VA manages veterans in pain, with particular focus on prescription opioids. Introduced by Representative Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), H.R. 4063, the Promoting Responsible Opioid Management and Incorporating Scientific Expertise Act (PROMISE Act) is intended to help Veterans by promoting safety, patient advocacy, and better access to quality care. The PROMISE Act has companion legislation in the U.S. Senate, where both bills are currently in committee. The legislation has gained support from a variety of veterans groups. Read the bill on the [Library of Congress website](#).

Veterans fought for us; we continue to fight for our veterans!

VFC Website Update

If you've not visited our website, maybe you should visit today! Since going on-line on 10/28/12 we have been averaging between 2,100 and 3,000 visitors per day and have had **2,491,201** visitors to date.

Visit today and subscribe, it's 100% **FREE** of charge to all! Just be sure to use a valid E-Mail address so the system can send you an authentication E-Mail. Becoming a subscriber will show you all the various forum's, added libraries, and more.

We have the largest One-Stop-Shop Veterans website available that is user friendly, offers a host of information on many topics, Several forums, Frequently Asked Questions and Answers, a massive Documents Library with more than 12,900 documents, various VA and DoD forms.

www.veterans-for-change.org

- Documents Library with over **140** different libraries and over **14,417+** documents
- FAQ's (**1,567** on-line now) (**Updated 04/05/15**)
- Forums (**with Licensed Mental Health Worker Moderator**)
- Job Postings and Job Fairs (Updated 12/05/15 **40** New Jobs and **0** New Job Fair)
- Memorial Pages (**Updated 04/19/14**)
- News (Updated almost daily, **5,373** articles on-line)
- Web Links (**1,590** Active Links)(**Updated 12/09/15**)

The documents library has many different categories and contains more than 55 million pages of information and forms.

There are forums for all Eras of service and one just for Women Veterans, which is locked to use by women only. Another for Men Veterans which is also locked to men only.

In the documents and forums we provide information pertaining to women and the ability speak freely in the forums to other women about the same issues and problems you face.

The Memorial Pages are open, and if you have a loved one or a buddy you've lost and would like for them to be added to our Memorial Pages, please send a photo, First and Last Name, Rank, Branch of Service, DOB and DOD, and allow us 2-3 days to install on the proper page. (Send to: Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org)

You also have the ability to comment and rate all NEWS articles which would be very helpful for us so we know the types of information you'd like to see on our website.

State of Emergency in Washington State due to Flooding

The governor of Washington has declared a State of Emergency due to flooding.

Emergency prescription refill procedures are in place from December 10, 2015 through January 9, 2016.

Emergency Refills

To get an emergency refill, take your prescription bottle to any TRICARE retail network pharmacy. To find a network pharmacy:

- Call Express Scripts at 1-877-363-1303
- Search the [network pharmacy locator](#)

If possible, visit the pharmacy where the prescription was filled.

- If you use a retail chain, you can fill your prescription at another store in that chain.
- If your provider is available, he or she may call in a new prescription to any network pharmacy.
- You can request assistance at another pharmacy, but it's at that pharmacy's discretion to help you.

Emergency prescription refill procedures are in place from December 10, 2015 through January 9, 2016.

DeCA Reminds You to Watch the Orange Tags

Commissary patrons are finding they can save money when they locate the orange tags denoting Value Brands. The Commissary Value Brands program provides savings on national name brand items comparable to low-cost store brand or private label items in commercial stores. On average, Commissary Value Brands save patrons about 20 percent when compared to the commercial retail stores' brand and private label items and about 38 percent against national brands. Currently, near 500 items are available. A list of Value Brands items is on the [DeCA website](#). For more information, watch the video on [YouTube](#).

Toys for Tots

Toys for Tots has impacted the lives of more than 216 million children and provided more than 469 million toys after nearly 70 years, but the need continues. You can contribute to your local Toys for Tots campaign in several ways. You can donate a toy at one of the area toy drop locations, host a Toys for Tots event at your home, office or other venue and collect toys for Toys for Tots, or volunteer at the local warehouse. You can find your local Toys for Tots campaign on the national [Toys for Tots website](#). From the dropdown menu, select the state, then the city/county closest to you to find your local Toys for Tots website, which has information about your local Toys for Tots campaign.

Women Veterans Suicide Crisis Prompts Legislation

Representative Julia Brownley introduced H.R. 2915, the Female Veteran Suicide Prevention Act. If enacted, this bill would identify mental health and suicide prevention programs that are the most effective with the best outcomes among women veterans at risk. The bill would require VA to report the results of this analysis to the Congressional Veterans' Committees.

Recent data reveals the suicide rate of women veterans is nearly six times higher than women in general; for women ages 18-29, the risk is even higher, at nearly 12 times the rate of women in general. These findings have prompted clinicians and policy makers at VA to develop a number of outreach initiatives and clinical approaches to enable VA to better deal with this health care crisis.

VA experts are examining the many reasons suicide rates among women veterans are higher. According to VA's suicide prevention office, a history of military sexual assault may be a major contributing factor.

Enactment of Mrs. Brownley's bill would improve VA's evaluative efforts in this challenging area.

Please write your Representative today to urge co-sponsorship and passage of H.R. 2915. As always, thank you for your active participation in the Commander's Action Network.

Click the link below to log in and send your message:

<https://www.votervoice.net/BroadcastLinks/9cKKGeuaGjU8qzdHLPcCgg>

TRICARE Webinar on Pharmacy Benefits

If you are interested in learning more about the TRICARE pharmacy benefit, you could listen to the upcoming TRICARE pharmacy webinar, featuring Dr. George Jones, chief of Pharmacy Operations at the Defense Health Agency. [Tune in](#) on Wednesday, December 9 at 12 PM, EST. The webinar does not require prior registration. TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery is a safe, convenient and low cost option to get maintenance drugs. You will save up to \$176 a year for each brand name drug you switch from retail to Home Delivery. If you want to use a [military pharmacy](#), make sure to check first to see if they carry your prescription.

Follow Veterans-For-Change on Twitter



<https://twitter.com/Veterans4Change>



Are you seeking employment? Been looking forever and not found the right job?

Well Veterans-For-Change is working very hard to bring you more information on Job Fairs and Job Postings available across the country.

Click on the link below, and find all the jobs available, Job Fairs coming up, locations, details, etc.

<http://veterans-for-change.org/documents-library/category/167-job-fairs-job-postings>

If you have a job position open, and are willing to hire a Veteran, please send an E-Mail to: JIM.DAVIS@VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE.ORG there is never any fee involved, this is a 100% free service in order to help thousands of Veterans nationwide to gain full time employment.

To be updated by 8pm PST 12/12/15

Can I Transfer GI Bill Benefits?

A Military.com member has written in, asking if her late husband, who served in the U.S. Army from 1989 until 1992 and paid \$100 per month for 12 months for the GI Bill, can have his benefits transferred to their children. Are GI Bill funds that were funded prior to 9/11 no longer available? For a closer look at this issue, see the latest [Questions and Benefits post](#).

VA Expands Choice, Seeks Dollars for Outside Care

An additional 160,000 veterans became eligible Dec. 1 to receive VA-paid medical care from civilian health care providers, the result of changes to the Choice Act of 2014 voted several months ago as Congress seeks to ease the flood of complaints still swirling around that poorly-designed law. Meanwhile, VA officials have unveiled a costly, complex and phased plan to consolidate the Choice program with a "patchwork" of other purchased care initiatives enacted over the years, even as VA hospitals continue their own referral agreements with local community providers.

Links to other Stories

- 1) [‘Slap On The Wrist’ For VA Employees Caught Sleeping, Having Sex At Work](#)
- 2) [Americans are being asked to Sponsor-A-Veteran for this Christmas 2015](#)
- 3) [Buddy Smith Home Provides Supportive Housing For Homeless Veterans In Fort Smith](#)
- 4) [Danger in the drink: Stricken Vets fight VA over Camp Lejeune water poisoning](#)
- 5) [Health Affairs DASD addresses DoD global health engagement at Federal Health 2015](#)
- 6) [Homeless face extra hurdles from new local laws](#)
- 7) [ImageWare To Continue Supporting Dept. of Veterans Affairs](#)
- 8) [New nonprofit Fox Hole Homes has a hairbrained scheme to house homeless Veterans-- and so far, it's working](#)
- 9) [New Test Finds Depleted Uranium 20 Years After Exposure](#)
- 10) [Risk of death nearly doubled for Vietnam veterans with PTSD](#)
- 11) [Top VA Watchdog Resigned After Being Caught Masturbating On The Job](#)
- 12) [VA Employee Charged With Beating Elderly Patient To Death Still Employed At VA](#)
- 13) [Veterans Affairs Official Lectures Congress On ‘Accountability’](#)
- 14) [Veterans Affairs Pittsburgh hospital reopens intensive care unit](#)
- 15) [Veterans denied treatment due to improper medical testing](#)
- 16) [Veterans have 9/11-linked diseases, advocacy groups say](#)
- 17) [Will wrongdoers at VA ever be held accountable? Lawmakers to press top brass.](#)

You can help Veterans-For-Change by reading the articles posted, and comment at the bottom and rank the article. If you don't have an account, sign-up today, it's **FREE**. Your comments and rankings help us to better determine the type of information you'd like most to see.

Check us out today: www.veterans-for-change.org

Fit to Fight, Fit to Hire

On June 21, 2016 at the prestigious New York Athletic Club, General David Petraeus and ultramarathon-man Dean Karnazes will speak on the subjects of running, fitness, and the state of the world as it relates to veteran hiring. The duo will be joined by sports psychologists, senior HR professionals and veterans to share their findings and experiences in using health & wellness programs to help create a veteran friendly environment and improve retention rates for civilian employers. All veteran employers are welcome to attend, [learn more and register](#). Proceeds support US Military Endurance Sports (USMES).

New Mental Healthcare App for National Guard

The Guard Ready app, which has listings for mental health providers and other specialists, was initially fielded in a limited capacity about a year ago but has been retooled over the past few months with listings in all 54 states, territories and the District of Columbia, said Army Capt. Brian Pennington, the Suicide Prevention Program coordinator with the National Guard Bureau. "They put their home state into the app and they select local resources and it connects them to maybe a behavior health counselor in their area," he said. "No matter where they are, it's just one click away to get help." For more details, see [this article](#).

To Contact your Members of Congress

To Call your Representative:	202-225-2305
To call your Senator:	202-224-3841 or 202-224-3553
To call different members of Congress:	202-224-3121
Toll FREE Number:	866-272-6622

Military Holiday Mailing Deadlines

Time is running out to send holiday packages to deployed Soldiers. Dec. 10 is the deadline for sending packages to most areas by Priority Mail and also for sending letters or cards by First Class Mail. After that, the only way to get it there in time for the holidays is by the premium Priority Mail Express Military Service (PMEMS). The deadline for PMEMS is Dec. 17 for most overseas locations. The deadlines are simply "to make sure people get it before Christmas." Another way to ensure timely delivery is by completing the online customs form before taking packages to the post office. The online customs form can be found at the [U.S. Postal Service \(USPS\) website](#).

Inside the Veterans Crisis Line

The Veterans Crisis Line is a free, confidential resource for veterans and Service members in crisis, as well as their family members and friends, and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Since its creation in 2007, the veterans Crisis Line has responded to nearly 2 million calls, more than 250,000 chats and 44,000 texts, has made more than 320,000 referrals, and initiated the dispatch of emergency services to callers in crisis over 53,000 times. For more on what the crisis line does, see [this video](#).

~ We Proudly Support Our Military Personnel & Families ~

Military Sexual Assault Victims Empowerment Act

The American Legion recently presented written and oral testimony during a congressional hearing. LaRhanda Holt, assistant director for women and minority veteran outreach, testified before the House Committee on Veteran Affairs Subcommittee on Health regarding the Military Sexual Assault Victims Empowerment Act. Intended to amend the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014, the bill aims to improve the private treatment of veterans who are MST survivors. Through this piece of legislation, MST victims could potentially be eligible for non-VA health care under the Veterans Choice Program. Statements from and a video of the hearing are available on the [House Committee on Veterans Affairs website](#).

VA Makes More Changes to Veterans Choice Program

VA has made changes to the Veterans Choice Program that it says will expand eligibility for the program. Effective immediately, staff at a veteran's local VA medical facility will work with him/her to determine if he/she is eligible for treatment with a civilian doctor under the Veterans Choice Program. For more on the new factors that will be taken into consideration when determining eligibility for the program, as well as other changes, see [this Military.com article](#).

Veterans Resource Guide in Delaware

Many veterans are looking at the state of Delaware as a place for retirement. [WalletHub's 2015 review of the Best & Worst States for Military Retirees](#) recently placed Delaware at Number 1 in quality of life for veterans. However, the state placed at No. 35 in the overall rankings. Military retirees can find more information about veterans' benefits online in the [Veterans Resource Guide](#), published by the Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs in Dover.

If you received this Newsletter as a forward or as a Courtesy Copy and would like to continue to receive this FREE weekly newsletter, click on link below:

<https://app.expressemailmarketing.com/survey.aspx?sfid=121170>

Complete all information, and select the appropriate box at the bottom of the form. You will then receive an automated authentication E-Mail, follow the instructions and you will then be added to the weekly distribution list.

Our mailing list is never sold, traded or shared with anyone ever, and is held in the strictest of confidence.

Vet Bus Pass Program in Tallahassee

Tallahassee City Commissioners recently approved a permanent program to allow low-income veterans to ride StarMetro buses for free. The Veterans Bus Pass Program started as a pilot program in October 2014. The program is for low-income veterans, including those who are homeless. To receive a bus pass, qualified veterans should complete an application that will be processed through the Leon County Veterans Center. There are approximately 19,000 veterans living in Leon County, Florida. For more information, visit the [City of Tallahassee website](#). Follow StarMetro on [Facebook](#).

Tuskegee Airman Dies

Milton Pitts Crenshaw, one of the last remaining instructors for the Tuskegee Airmen, passed away recently near Atlanta. He was 96. Crenshaw was one of the original flight instructors for the program established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to train black pilots in a segregated unit. He was the first Arkansan to be successfully trained by the federal government as a civilian licensed pilot. He later was instrumental in establishing an aviation program at Philander Smith College in his native Little Rock, Ark. Read an [interview](#) that Inviting Arkansas did with Crenshaw. For more information about the Tuskegee Airmen, visit the [Tuskegee Airmen, Inc. website](#), the [New York Times website](#), and the Tuskegee Airmen Archives on the [University of California, Riverside website](#).

VA's Eight Priority Groups

The Department of Veterans Affairs set up eight Priority Groups to make sure that certain groups of veterans are able to be enrolled before others. Based on your specific eligibility status, you will be assigned a Priority Group which range from 1 to 8, with 1 being the highest priority for enrollment. A list of the priority groups is available on [Military.com](#). It is important to remember that although you may not be enrolled in a Priority Group, you may still be eligible for care should you experience a catastrophic health event.

Horseback Riding Therapy for Vets

A therapeutic riding program in Oklahoma is designed to help veterans with all sorts of mental and physical disabilities. The Hooves on the Ground program at the Right Path Riding Academy in Drumright, Oklahoma, recently graduated its first class of veterans. The eight veterans in the class are dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or a physical disability, and each one has a veteran mentor. The program is designed to get them back on the right path. Another class begins in February. For more information, visit the [Hooves on the Ground webpage](#) or contact the Veterans Administration in Oklahoma and ask about Hooves on the Ground.



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter is a once weekly publication deadline for submission is 5:00 PM PST on Thursday!



He loves his country best who strives to make it best.

~Robert G. Ingersoll~

Veterans-For-Change, Inc.

Riverside County, CA

Visit our website today
www.veterans-for-change.org

Serving those who served!

Please pass to all your Veteran friends and family!

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Courtesy Copies:	3,500
Dept of VA	11,898
DoD	1,209
Face Book Pages:	3,047
Los Angeles	96,987
New York	104,527
Other Social Media:	12,997
San Francisco	54,146
Twitter:	27
U.S. House of Reps & Staff	763
U.S. Senators & Staff	20
University of So. CA	1302
US Air Force	11755
US Army	33,763
US Marines	17,115
US Navy	14,982
Veterans	19,026,404
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