

Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, January 31, 2016 Volume 7, Issue 05

This-N-That

After nearly a year with the visit of Secretary McDonald to the West Los Angeles Medical Center and the long standing scandal of turning away homeless Veterans, the VA has released proposed "blueprints" of the modifications planned to deal with homeless Veterans.

The plan calls for construction of 1,200 permanent supportive housing units for disabled and traumatized Veterans and more than 700 short-term units for homeless Veterans in the midst of some of the city's toughest neighborhoods. Some permanent housing could open as soon as next year, officials said, perhaps by adapting some of the 388-acre property's historic buildings.

This still doesn't address several other issues that have plagued this facility for the past five plus years.

- 1) Where are all the funds that the director Donna Beiter collected from illegal tenants that supposedly went to helping Veterans?
- 2) Why are there still illegal tenants on VA Land?
- 3) Why was it necessary to spend over a million dollars on security fencing to keep Veterans out and off VA land?
- 4) Why the increased number of Gestapo style police officers and high tech security surveillance equipped vehicles?

Why do these plans not call for more usage of the 388 acres putting in more housing for homeless Veterans is another issue I take personally, especially since several smaller organizations have done this and proven beyond a doubt costs could be maintained at no more than \$8-\$12 thousand dollars per home, take up small footprints, look nice and still deal with the never ending problems?

Even by their own numbers which are more than double what we've known all along of 44,000 this only puts a very small dent in a very significant problem.

Granted it's a start, but why not address the problem as a whole, come up with a plan and blueprints to solve much more?

And why do they still not hold this medical centers director Donna Beiter fully accountable for all the monies brought in from rents and leases?

Then we have the issue of executives who were caught scamming the VA system to the tune of several thousand dollars who were never charged, recently demoted and allowed to return to work, then the review judge over turns the decision and allows them to not only return to work but in their former positions.

None of this makes sense, but then when does anything that the VA does make sense?

But Gibson praised what he called a long and distinguished career and said if anything she was guilty of "an error in judgment, a serious error in judgment" not an ethical violation.

What part of this statement would justify allowing someone to steal from the Federal Government and Veterans? In my eyes, none of it. Just more of the good old boys club at work!

The majority of our readers are Veterans, and most if not all of you have served on foreign soil at one point in your career and I'm sure that when it came time for mail call you witnessed one or more fellow soldiers in your unit whose names were never called.

Operation Mail Call is designed to address that problem and a little more!

Betty Hidalgo who is the director of VFC's Operation Mail Call Program does her level best to bring a little joy to all those on foreign soil by sending them care packages which she is working all the time to fill them with a little bit of home with cards, letters, baked goods, candies, and sometimes little gag gifts, anything she can find to bring a little joy to their daily lives where they are.

Where we need help most are cards and letters and with Valentine's Day coming up very quickly, and it being another holiday they're away from home, we need your help in this area, letting them know all those here at home appreciate them, and support them.

A little further down in this newsletter there is a web link which will take you to the information on where you can send cards and letters which will be included in many of the boxes that go out weekly.

We'd appreciate anything you can do to help us bring a little joy to them, maybe even put a smile on their faces even if only for a few moments.

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

Are Programs Impacting Women Vets' Health Care?

A Marine Corps veteran and American Legion member wants to know how the addition of Women Veterans Program Managers at VA medical centers nationwide is affecting health care for women veterans. The purpose of the study is to evaluate whether or not the Women Veterans Program Manager improves accessibility of health-care services for women veterans. Findings will be shared with Women Veterans Program Managers at VA medical centers throughout the country and with the American Legion. Women veterans who use VA health-care facilities can take the quick survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/VAWVIOPsychResDTTX3YR.

'Vets Only' Jobs at VA are Low-Pay

The only jobs explicitly reserved for veterans at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are janitors or housekeeping aides, according to a Daily Caller News Foundation analysis of data from USAjobs.gov. According to the Daily Caller, only about 50 job ads, seeking approximately a few hundred workers, are accepting applications exclusively from veterans. Out of those positions, all but a few pay only \$13 an hour. Simultaneously, more than a thousand vacancies, many with no special skill requirements, were being advertised as open only to current civil servants. For more information, read the article on the <u>Daily Caller website</u>.

Bases No Longer Accept IDs from Five States

U.S. military installations are no longer allowing visitors to gain base access using official ID cards from five states — and other installations may soon follow. State-issued driver's licenses and identification cards from Illinois, New Mexico, Missouri, Washington and Minnesota can no longer be used to obtain a visitor's pass because those cards don't comply

with federal standards, officials said. DoD officials did not say whether or not enhanced driver's licenses (EDL) from Minnesota or Washington would still be accepted.

OPERATION MAIL CALL



Operation Mail Call needs your help! We need cards and letters to send to our troops currently serving on foreign soil.

Doesn't have to be anything special, just words of support and thanking them for their service!

Operation Mail Call has successfully moved into it's new location:

For more information visit: http://veterans-for-change.org/5439-operation-mail-call-2

Statement from VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald

On the Need to Reform the Veterans' Appeals Process

Last week I presented to the Senate Veterans Affairs' Committee the way forward for the important transformation of the Department of Veterans Affairs—what we call MyVA. We aim to improve our care and services to all Veterans. In order to do that, I made clear that we would need Congress' help in legislating a fair, streamlined, and comprehensive process for new appeals, as well as providing much needed resources to address the current pending inventory of appeals. I look forward to working with all stakeholders to design an appeals process that better serves Veterans.

VA will need legislation and resourcing to put in place a simplified appeals process that enables the Department to resolve the majority of our appeals in a reasonable timeframe for Veterans.

The appeals process we currently have set in law is failing Veterans—and taxpayers. Decades worth of law and policy layered upon each other have become cumbersome and clunky. Most importantly, it is now so antiquated that it no longer serves Veterans well as many find it confusing and are frustrated by the endless process and the associated length of time it can take to get an answer.

In 2012, VA made the commitment to end the disability claims backlog. It took too long for Veterans to receive a decision on their claim. Our commitment has resulted in transformational change. The disability claims backlog has been driven down to fewer than 82,000, from a peak of 611,000 in March 2013. At the same time, we have fully transitioned to a paperless, electronic processing system, eliminating 5,000 tons of paper a year. Last year, we decided 1.4 million disability compensation and pension claims for Veterans and survivors – the highest in VA history for a single year and that comes on the heels on two previous record-breaking years of productivity.

As VA has become more efficient in claims processing, the volume of appeals has increased proportionately. While it remains true that 11-12 percent of Veterans who receive a disability rating file for an appeal, more processed claims means more appeals. This is VA's next challenge.

The current pending inventory of appeals stands at more than 440,000 and is estimated to grow rapidly. Right now, Veterans who file an appeal wait an average of three years for appeals to be resolved by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), and an average of five years for appeals that reach the Board of Veterans Appeals' (Board), with thousands lasting much longer. That's unacceptable.

We are applying lessons learned from the transformative change that allowed us to reduce the disability claims backlog. Like our work with the claims processing, the appeals process will need changes in people, process and technology. Upgraded technology will make changes to our mail system and paper records, and incorporate some efficiencies in the way appeals are managed and processed. Retraining and increased staff will be necessary. But they will not be enough. We must also look critically at the many steps in the current complex appeals process used by VA and by Veterans and their advocates to design a process that better serves Veterans.

A new appeals process would provide Veterans with the timely and fair appeals decisions they deserve, and adequate resourcing that permits the VBA and the Board to address the growing inventory of appeals.

Navy Evaluates Ratings to Avoid Discrimination

Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Ray Mabus recently directed a review of the Navy's rating names to ensure they were representative of all Sailors and did not discriminate based on gender. The Navy will look specifically at ratings that referenced "man" in the title, which encompasses more than 20 Navy jobs. As the Navy moves toward the full integration of women serving in all job fields, the service will review its ratings for gender-neutral titles, accurate descriptions of their work, and alignment with civilian related jobs. A report detailing proposed courses of action is due to SECNAV by April 1.

How Can a Divorced Military Parent Get on Base?

This week's question for the Questions and Benefits column comes from a father whose daughter is divorced from an active-duty airman. The problem lies with taking her son to the doctor — it's a big hassle every time she tries to bring her son to the base. Is there a way to fix this problem? For the answer, see the **Questions and Benefits column**.

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 2,557,171 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 01/24/16 16 New Jobs and 0 New Job Fair)
- Memorial Pages (Updated 01/02/16 added 17)
- News (Updated almost daily, 5,479 articles on-line)
- Web Links (3,391 Active Links)(Updated 01/15/16 added 1,719 New Links)

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.

Save Big on Costs Not Covered by TRICARE

Doctor and hospital bills are expensive even when you're covered by TRICARE. Help minimize or even eliminate out-of-pocket expenses with the TRICARE Insurance Supplement Plan.

TRICARE OTC Program Becomes Permanent

TRICARE's over-the-counter (OTC) drug coverage is here to stay. Formerly a demonstration program, the OTC benefit becomes a permanent part of the TRICARE pharmacy benefit on February 1, 2016. Effective that date, TRICARE is making some changes to OTC coverage to bring it in line with other TRICARE pharmacy coverage.

Starting February 1, beneficiaries must pay the usual generic copays for covered OTC drugs. OTC drug coverage will still require a prescription from a doctor. Female beneficiaries can still get Levonorgestrel, an emergency contraceptive used to prevent pregnancy without a copay or prescription at a network or military pharmacy, also known as Plan B—there are no age restrictions or costs for the contraceptive.

Monday, February 1 also brings a change to which drugs are available under the OTC benefit. The allergy medications Cetirizine and Loratadine were previously covered, but now the versions that contain pseudoephedrine will also be covered. However, brand name Prilosec OTC is no longer covered. The generic version, Omeprazole, is still covered, as is the prescription version of Prilosec.

Visit the TRICARE Pharmacy page for more information on the TRICARE pharmacy benefit. If you have questions about whether or not one of your drugs is covered, you can always call the TRICARE pharmacy contractor, Express Scripts, at 1-877-363-1303.

Army Childcare Fee Assistance Program Moving

A program that helps Soldiers with off-post child care expenses will begin transitioning from the Government Services Administration (GSA) to a contractor, Feb. 22. The Army Fee Assistance program helps Soldiers with the cost of off-post child care when on-post care is unavailable. The transition to the contractor, Child Care Aware of America, or CCAoA, will take place over about eight months. GSA will continue to manage Army Family accounts until the transfer to the contractor is complete in October. The transition will consist of seven geographically defined phases and all families residing within a geographic area will be transitioned to the contractor as a group. With the formal transition, CCAoA will begin management of any families new to the AFA program regardless of their location.

FRA Needs Your Input—2016 Survey on Military, Veterans Benefits

FRA needs YOU to take our brief online survey to determine which military and veterans' benefits are most important to you and your family. The survey, available at www.fra.org/survey, asks current and former members of the uniformed services and their spouses to rate the importance of various benefits and quality-of-life programs associated with their service to our nation.

"As Congress explores ways to cut federal spending, many hard-earned benefits are in the budgetary crosshairs," explains Tom Snee, FRA's National Executive Director. "FRA is asking all current and former military personnel and their spouses to share their opinions about the programs they value most. Survey responses and comments from participants provide important reference information when we testify before Congress or meet one-on-one with lawmakers and their staff."

FRA shares the survey results with elected officials on Capitol Hill, key committee staff, and leaders within the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs—ensuring these crucial decision-makers understand the enlisted sea service perspective.

Visit www.fra.org/survey to let FRA know which military and veteran benefits are most important to you!

Government Accountability Office (GAO) Reports

Small Business Investment Companies: Characteristics and Investment Performance of Single and Multiple Licensees. http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-107

Defense Infrastructure: Improvement Needed in Energy Reporting and Security Funding at Installations with Limited Connectivity. http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-164

Banking: Federal Agencies' Compliance with Section 302 of the Riegle Community Development and Regulatory Improvement Act. http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-213R

Water Infrastructure: EPA and USDA Are Helping Small Water Utilities with Asset Management; Opportunities Exist to Better Track Results. http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-237

Army Contracting: Training and Guidance Needed to Ensure Appropriate Use of the Option to Extend Services Clause. http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-262R

U.S. Border Communities: Ongoing DOT Efforts Could Help Address Impacts of International Freight Rail. http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-274

Information Security: DHS Needs to Enhance Capabilities, Improve Planning, and Support Greater Adoption of Its National Cybersecurity Protection System. http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-294

Excess Personal Property: DOD Should Further Reassess the Priorities of Its Disposal Process. http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-44

Defense Infrastructure: Energy Conservation Investment Program Needs Improved Reporting, Measurement, and Guidance. http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-162

Data Act: Data Standards Established, but More Complete and Timely Guidance Is Needed to Ensure Effective Implementation. http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-261

Army Voter Registration Campaign

The Army kicked off the 2016 voting season Nov. 4 for Soldiers and their families around the world to learn how to register. The Federal Voting Assistance Program makes online registration, absentee ballot and detailed voting

information available. To find the dates of elections in your state and how to register to vote, visit the <u>Federal Voting</u> <u>Assistance Program (FVAP) website</u>. For more information on voting, visit the <u>Army Human Resources Command</u> <u>website</u> and follow Army Voting on <u>Facebook</u> and on <u>Twitter</u>.

Follow Veterans-For-Change on Twitter



Vietnam History Series to Debut in Maryland

A new, three-hour documentary, Maryland Vietnam War Stories, is set to debut May 24-26 on Maryland Public Television (MPT) as part of MPT's 50th anniversary commemoration of the Vietnam War. The multi-year-project also includes a traveling exhibit that has been making its way around Maryland since last May, to celebrate the service of Marylanders during the Vietnam War. The free exhibit will be at the <u>Towson Library</u> until Feb. 7. Please check your local television listings for exact dates and times of the program on MPT.



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 01/29/16 by 10pm PST

Writing Workshop in California Free to Vets

A Veterans Writing Conference for active duty military, veterans and their family is set for Feb. 6 at the North County Veterans' Resource Center in Oceanside, Calif. The conference is 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 1617 Mission Ave., Oceanside, Calif. Snacks and lunch will be served. The conference is free for active duty military and their families and veterans. For

more information and to register, visit the <u>Us for Warriors Foundation website</u>, the <u>Veterans' Writing Group website</u>, or call (858) 205-2600.

Links to other Stories

- 1) After Overpayment Of Benefits, VA Wanted \$38,000 Back
- 2) Lawmakers push VA to let doctors recommend medical marijuana
- 3) Tuberculosis Cases at Illinois VA Hospitals
- 4) VA brass defends demotion of Phila. director
- 5) VA hiring rules discriminate against Veterans
- 6) VA hospital surgeon's body found in river, cops investigate
- 7) VA proposes hundreds of housing units plus services for homeless Vets at West L.A. campus
- 8) VA Secretary Says Job Performance Standards Have Been 'Too Low'
- 9) Veteran Who Became Face of VA Wait-Times Scandal Dies of Cancer
- 10) Veterans unwillingly thrust into latest GOP presidential fight
- 11) Why is Gilead charging VA \$40,000 for drug?
- 12) Wounded Warrior Project reportedly accused of wasting donor money

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

New Vet Business Program in Florida

A new entrepreneurship program that is geared toward military veterans is being implemented with the help of Hillsborough Community College in Tampa. The college will offer training and entrepreneurial education to veterans living in Florida who aim to open their own businesses through the Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program. The program will also be implemented at the University of West Florida, University of North Florida, Florida Gulf Coast University and Florida Atlantic University. The Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program is provided free of charge to Florida resident veterans who are active duty or who have been honorably discharged. Veterans who plan to relocate to Florida to pursue entrepreneurship are also eligible for the program. The <u>Veterans Florida Entrepreneurship Program website</u> is set to launch in February 2016; interested veterans can visit the website to apply for the program or contact (850) 898-3489 or info@FloridaVetBiz.org for more information.

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

Senatorial Fellowship Opportunity for Iowa Vets

U.S. Senator Charles ('Chuck') Grassley (R-lowa) is accepting applications for a fellowship program for lowans with recent military service. The program is designed to help veterans gain experience in the civilian work force. Grassley seeks two fellows in his Veterans Fellowship Program, one in Des Moines and one in Cedar Rapids. The candidates will meet with veterans and service organizations on Grassley's behalf. Applications are available on Grassley's website, and hard copies are available in his offices in Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Davenport, Des Moines, Sioux City and Waterloo. Applications are due Jan. 31.

TRICARE Standard Newsletter Available

A 12-page newsletter for TRICARE Standard beneficiaries is available online. The newsletter includes articles on submitting claims, costs, limited out-of-pocket costs under the Autism Care Demonstration, updating DEERS during a life change, a change to your pharmacy benefit, filling compound drug prescriptions, shingles and pneumococcal vaccines, clinical preventive services and vaccines, TRICARE Young Adult program premiums for 2016, the Nurse Advice Line, understanding emergency vs. urgent care, provider choice under TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra, prior authorizations, the Notice of Privacy Practices, reporting other health insurance, the Military/Veterans Crisis Line, and TRICARE benefit updates.

To read this newsletter, go to: http://go.usa.gov/cPMkJ.

~ We Proudly Support Our Military Personnel & Families ~

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/survev.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.

Affordable Care Act

All Affordable Care Act documents are now posted in myPay. If you find there are errors on your IRS 1095 form and you are military (active or reserve) or a military retiree, you must contact a DEERS representative at 1-800-538-9552 who can assist you. If you are a DoD Civilian you must contact DCPAS Benefits General Inquiry Line at 703-882-5197. If you are a Non-DoD Civilian serviced by DFAS, please contact your Human Resources Benefits office.

If you have questions about the number of dependents on your IRS 1095B, and you are a civilian, please contact your Health Benefits Carrier directly. If you are military (active or reserve) or a military retiree, you must contact a DEERS representative at 1-800-538-9552 who can assist you. For general questions related to the Affordable Care Act call the DFAS Customer Care Center at 1-888-332-7411, option 2. Additional information can also be found on the <u>DFAS</u> Website.

Source: NAUS

Affordable Care Act Form 1095 for Annuitants

While downloading the form from the DFAS website is the easiest and quickest way to get it, the 1095B form with your healthcare information related to the ACA will be mailed no later than February 1 to the Sponsor's address on record in the DEERS system.

Please allow 7-10 days for delivery. If the Sponsor's address on record is incorrect, it must be updated on the MilConnect website or at your nearest ID CARD Facility (DEERS office). After the address has been updated, a new form must be requested on the MilConnect website (go to the Correspondence/Documentation tab and select ACA – Corrected IRS Form) or by calling (800) 642-1386.

Source: NAUS

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



Our country is not the only thing to which we owe our allegiance. It is also owed to justice and to humanity. Patriotism consists not in waving the flag, but in striving that our country shall be righteous as well as strong.

~James Bryce~

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!

Distribution	
Express Mail:	144,450
Boston	64,246
Courtesy Copies:	3,500
Dept of VA	11,494
DoD	3,791
Face Book Pages:	3,087
Los Angeles	106,727
New York	115,193
Other Social Media:	15,744
San Francisco	58,810
Twitter:	27
U.S. House of Reps & Staff	804
U.S. Senators & Staff	85
University of So. CA	1,459
US Air Force	15,443
US Army	37,375
US Marines	17,665
US Navy	11,802
Veterans	19,040,501

Washington DC	130,934
Yahoo:	130
	19,783,267