



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

*A Voice of the Veterans*

**Week Ending Sunday, February 14, 2016**

**Volume 7, Issue 07**

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## ***This-N-That***

The Veterans Affairs is once again patting themselves on the back because of “strides made” in their IT department claiming services are now being provided in a more streamlined fashion.

However, all I have read so far is a pile of garbage not actually saying where or how, let alone when. None of it makes any mention of claims and appeals processing which are in my opinion the most critical of any area in the Veterans Affairs Healthcare system!

Reaching another backlog of nearly one MILLION again, you would think this would be a clear and unmistakable sign there are serious problems that require immediate attention. And to back that up the ever growing appeals back log numbers.

If they would focus on claims, appeals, caring and compassionate medical staff and getting rid of all the dead weight, thieves, manipulators, etc. to me this would be an absolute serious improvement.

The Veterans Affairs is also boasting that care for women Veterans is so good that our women Veterans are giving their thumbs up. But I still get the very unsatisfactory ratings from almost every single woman Veteran I come in contact with.

So this begs the question, where is this excellent service being provided? Is it one location, two locations, a dozen? None of what I have read specifically sites where leading anyone who reads the information to believe it's system wide.

So what is it that Secretary McDonald doing that makes all these reports worthy of press? Just because he says it's true, we're to believe it?

I don't, and my reasoning behind that are all the Veterans who E-Mail or write to me and tell me all their problems, issues, concerns, their declining health because they can't get properly tested, or even get timely appointments, and still doctors and nurses treating them worse than a second class citizen.

I continue to do a fax blast to all 535 members of Congress and I bullet point the complaints, problems, issues be they with Veterans or the VA in general. So please, keep writing to me!

We've recently added polling back to our website. We had to wait for a different program to be produced, and although we initially had 60 survey questions posted, we've cut that back to just two for now as there are still some minor bugs that have to be fixed and we'll be going ahead full force soon.

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

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### ***Caregivers Lose Stipends***

Due to closer scrutiny by VA, the caregivers of about 7,000 veterans who once were enrolled in VA's Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Program no longer are receiving stipends. The program delivers extra compensation to caregivers of badly wounded Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in the interest of keeping them out of expensive, long-term treatment facilities. Most of the caregivers are spouses or close family members of veterans. The program still is growing at a rate of 400 patients a month, but the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been taking a closer look at the veterans it initially enrolled to see whether they still meet standards to continue receiving checks. The VA badly underfunded the program and fell behind in oversight, according to a [September 2014 study from the Government Accountability Office](#).

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### ***New ID Rule Impacts Use of State Driver's Licenses***

Under a new federal law, Department of Defense (DoD) installations can no longer accept [driver's licenses from five states](#): Minnesota, New Mexico and Washington, as well as licenses from American Samoa. The legislation requires that all ID cards have specific security features that prevent identification theft and duplication of cards and documents. People can show other forms of identification cards such as: passports, DoD common access cards, DoD uniformed services identification and privileges cards or federal personal identification verification cards. Transportation workers' identification credentials are not affected. For more information visit the [U.S. Department of Defense website](#).

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### ***TRICARE Update: Time to Have Your Eyes Checked***

January is Glaucoma Awareness Month. If you last had an eye examination over a year ago, you are overdue. Doctors can detect things like diabetes and high cholesterol from annual eye exams, not to mention eye diseases that have no known symptoms, like glaucoma. TRICARE covers routine eye exams for active duty servicemembers to maintain fitness for duty. TRICARE also covers vision screening and one routine eye examination every two years beginning at age three to age six under the Well-Child benefit although active duty family members (ADFM's) may have an annual eye exam beginning at age three. Your eye exam coverage depends on who you are, your age and your TRICARE plan. For more information, visit the [Eye Exams](#) page on the TRICARE website.



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>

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## ***VA's Polytrauma System of Care Marks One Million TBI Screenings***

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) [Polytrauma System of Care](#) (PSC) has hit the one million mark in screening Veterans for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), often regarded as one of the signature injuries of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. TBI symptoms such as severe headaches, memory loss, reduced executive functioning, and tinnitus can range from manageable to seriously disabling, potentially limiting a Veteran's ability to work and manage daily living. Screening Veterans for TBI and helping them to deal with the condition is one of the central programs of PSC.

Started in May 2005, PSC provides comprehensive and coordinated rehabilitative care to Veterans with life-changing injuries, including TBI, limb loss, blindness, hearing loss and tinnitus, among others. PSC also assists with community re-entry needs. It is fully coordinated with the Department of Defense to ensure uninterrupted, seamless health care transition for those that served on active duty.

Over these past 10 years, many Servicemembers have returned home with injuries that would not have been survivable in previous conflicts. Today, they not only survive, they thrive, in large part due to PSC, a thoroughly Veteran-centric VA program.

"The one million mark in TBI screenings reflects VA's success in building an integrated polytrauma care program for wounded and injured Servicemembers and Veterans," said Dr. David J. Shulkin, VA Under Secretary for Health. "VA's dedicated polytrauma care teams recognize the importance of taking care of the whole person and coordinating physical, mental and rehabilitative care for Veterans suffering the most dramatic injuries of the war."

VA employees created PSC to address the need for a comprehensive multi-disciplinary system of care to help Veterans suffering with two or more injuries considered disabling physical and psychological impairments, such as blast injuries and traumatic amputations. PSC patients have sustained injuries affecting multiple body parts that result in physical, cognitive, psychological, and functional disabilities. Frequently, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) occurs in Polytrauma patients, as does Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and other mental health problems.

"The Polytrauma System of Care sets VA apart from other health care systems," said Dr. Joel Scholten, National Director, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation for VA. "PSC demonstrates VA's unique understanding of the needs of Veterans and the best way to support them in achieving well-being and their personal life goals."

VA has 110 [Polytrauma rehabilitation sites across the country](#), including 5 Polytrauma Rehabilitation Centers (comprehensive inpatient rehabilitation); 23 Polytrauma Network Sites (comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation); and 87

Polytrauma Support Clinic Teams (comprehensive outpatient rehabilitations). Services available through PCS include interdisciplinary evaluation and treatment, development of a comprehensive plan of care, case management, patient and family education and training, psychosocial support, and use of advanced rehabilitation treatments and prosthetic technologies.

For more information about the Polytrauma System of Care, visit [www.polytrauma.va.gov/](http://www.polytrauma.va.gov/). A VA blog post featuring Polytrauma System of Care may be found [here](#).

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### ***Beware of IRS Impersonators***

As tax-filing season begins, veterans should be aware of people contacting them who claim to be from the Internal Revenue Service and the Treasury. These IRS tax impersonators have been using phone calls and emails to take millions of dollars from taxpayers in every state. The callers tell intended victims they owe taxes and must pay using a pre-paid debit card, money order or a wire transfer. If you owe Federal taxes, or think you might owe taxes, hang up and call the IRS at 800-829-1040. IRS workers can help you with your payment questions. If you do not owe taxes, fill out the "IRS Impersonation scam" form on [TIGTA website](#) or call TIGTA at 800-366-4484. For more information, read the [VA VAntage Point Blog](#).

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

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### ***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 **2,580,103** 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](http://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 02/01/16 **32** New Jobs and **0** New Job Fair)
- Memorial Pages (**Updated 01/02/16** added **17**)
- News (Updated almost daily, **5,506** articles on-line)
- Polls Added 02/08/16
- Web Links (**3,428** Active Links)(**Updated 02/07/16** added **1** 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](mailto: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.

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### ***New Education Requirement for Marines***

The Marine Corps recently announced that first-time users of Marine Corps tuition assistance must now first complete the Higher Education Prep course. The course is available online via Joint Knowledge Online. Completion of this course satisfies the requirement for College 101, which installations are no longer required to conduct. Marines should provide a copy of the completion certificate to their Education Service Officer for entry in the Navy College Management Information System. For more information, Marines should contact their ESO.

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### ***AF Voluntary Education Policy Update***

The Air Force has several programs to support enlisted Airmen toward achieving their educational goals. Under a new policy, students are allowed to self-enroll for the first and second course enrollment without supervisor and/or commander involvement. However, subsequent enrollments will require engagement with the member's supervisor, squadron commander and group commander. The policy applies to all enlisted distance learning professional military education programs such as Airman Leadership School or Course 3 for Reserve and Guard members, as well as Noncommissioned Officer Academy (Course 15) and Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy (Course 14). Members can find additional information and instructions for completing the required coordination for third through fifth reenrollments at the [Air University Education Support Center](#).

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### ***Wounded Warrior Program for Native American Vets***

Wounded Warriors Family Support is an independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide support to the families of those who have been wounded, injured or killed during combat operations. Wounded Warriors Family Support has teamed with the Office of Tribal Government Relations at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs on the new Native American Veterans Support, Transition and Resources (NAVSTaR) program. So far, the organization has provided Ford vehicles to the Blackfeet Nation, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Fort Belknap Indian Community, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Lakota Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and Three Affiliated Tribes. For more information, visit the Wounded Warriors Family Support [website](#).

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### ***Government Accountability Office (GAO) Reports***

Special Education: State and Local-Imposed Requirements Complicate Federal Efforts to Reduce Administrative Burden. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-25>

Supply Chain Risks: SEC's Plans to Determine If Additional Action Is Needed on Climate-Related Disclosure Have Evolved. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-211>

Disaster Response: FEMA Has Made Progress Implementing Key Programs, but Opportunities for Improvement Exist. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-87>

DOD and Coast Guard: Actions Needed to Increase Oversight and Management Information on Hazing Incidents Involving Servicemembers. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-226>

Federal Aviation Administration: Preliminary Observations of Potential Air Traffic Control Restructuring Transition Issues. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-386R>

Medicaid: Changes to Funding Formula Could Improve Allocation of Funds to States. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-377T>

VA's Health Care Budget: Preliminary Observations on Efforts to Improve Tracking of Obligations and Projected Utilization. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-374T>

Financial Audit: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Funds' 2015 and 2014 Financial Statements. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-300>

Rare Earth Materials: Developing a Comprehensive Approach Could Help DOD Better Manage National Security Risks in the Supply Chain. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-161>

Biosurveillance: Ongoing Challenges and Future Considerations for DHS Biosurveillance Efforts. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-413T>

Immigrant Investor Program: Additional Actions Needed to Better Assess Fraud Risks and Report Economic Benefits. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-431T>

Veterans' Health Care: Preliminary Observations on VHA's Claims Processing Delays and Efforts to Improve the Timeliness of Payments to Community Providers. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-380T>

GAO: Summary of Performance and Financial Information, Fiscal Year 2015. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-4SP>

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### ***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](mailto: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 02/12/16 by 10pm PST***

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Veteran Crisis Resources	
<a href="#">Veterans Crisis Line</a>	1-800-273-8255 and Press 1
<a href="#">Military Crisis Line</a>	1-800-273-TALK (8255)
<a href="#">National Call Center for Homeless Veterans</a>	1-877-4AID-VET (424.3838)
<a href="#">VA Caregiver Support Line</a>	1-855-260-3274

### Links to other Stories

- 1) [Care and benefits for Veterans strengthened by \\$182 billion VA budget](#)
- 2) [Giving Veterans the VIP treatment through IT development](#)
- 3) [How the heart works: a detailed overview](#)
- 4) [IOM Gulf War Report "Turns Science On Its Head"](#)
- 5) [Judicial Board Needs to Allow for VA Accountability](#)
- 6) [Mesothelioma Compensation Center to Ensure Diagnosed US Navy Veterans Exposed to Asbestos Get a Much Better Settlement](#)
- 7) [Natick scientists collaborating to create 'second-skin' protection](#)
- 8) [Rise of the bugs, and the DoD Biosurveillance Enterprise](#)
- 9) [Secretary McDonald on leadership: Leaders must be purposeful and deliberate](#)
- 10) [VA doctor shares PTSD expertise at World Health Organization conference](#)
- 11) [VA's Polytrauma System of Care Marks One Million TBI Screenings](#)
- 12) [Women Veterans highly satisfied with VA care](#)

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](http://www.veterans-for-change.org)

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 <b>FREE</b> Number:	866-272-6622

### California Senate Confirms Two for Veterans Board

Sacramento – The California State Senate confirmed the appointments of Juan Gonzalez and Todd Trotter to the California Veterans Board February 1, 2016. Both were appointed by Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. in February 2015.

Gonzalez, 78, of Lancaster, was a design engineer at Eaton Corporation from 1987 to 1995 and served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from 1960 to 1968. He lives at the California Veterans Home in Lancaster and is the "resident member" on the Board.

Trotter, 50, of Sacramento, has been national senior director at Kaiser Permanente since 2013, where he has held several positions since 2002, including human resources leader, Northern California director of labor relations and human resource business partner. Trotter served as a letter carrier and labor relations representative at the U.S. Postal Service from 1992 to 2002 and served in the U.S. Army from 1983 to 1991. He earned a Juris Doctor degree from the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law. Trotter is a Democrat.

For more information about the California Veterans Board, please visit <https://www.calvet.ca.gov/Pages/California-Veterans-Board.aspx>.

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**~ We Proudly Support Our Military Personnel & Families ~**

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### ***Proposed Law May Eliminate VA Home Loan Guarantee Caps***

Lawmakers have taken a step toward removing the cap on the amount the Veterans Affairs Department can guarantee under its VA home loan program, in legislation passed by the House this week.

It's unknown whether the Senate will take similar action.

Witnesses told lawmakers that changes in the program, like higher loan guarantee limits could help more veterans take advantage of the benefit.

Higher loan guarantee limits are "absolutely necessary," said Sherri Meadows, vice president of the National Association of Realtors, testifying Feb. 10 before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee's panel on economic opportunity. "Veterans should be able to purchase a home wherever they choose to live."

Generally, the VA can guarantee a loan of up to \$417,000. About 90 percent of VA loans are made without a down payment from the borrower, said Mike Frueh, director of loan guaranty service for the Veterans Benefits Administration.

In an analysis conducted by the VA last year, about 15,000 veterans wanted to buy homes in areas where homes were more expensive than the loan guarantee cap, Frueh told lawmakers.

The VA cap is not a lending cap. It's the amount that the VA guarantees. VA doesn't set a cap on how much a veteran can borrow to finance the home, but there are limits on the amount of liability the VA will assume on that loan, which usually affects the amount of money an institution will lend a veteran. That limits the risk to the lender if the borrower defaults.

"No down payment is important," Frueh said. "Setting an artificial cap on the amount we can guarantee is going to eliminate people who want to buy a home above that cap, because that no down payment is an important part of the benefit."

Meadows also said veterans need flexibility to negotiate all fees, so they aren't at a disadvantage when negotiating with a seller to buy a home. A variety of fees, from termite inspection, to document recording, to postage and delivery fees, are a part of the closing, but veterans aren't allowed to pay these fees. While the association supports the VA's efforts to shield veterans from excessive fees, Meadows said, the inability to negotiate these fees can put veterans on an uneven playing field with non-VA buyers, she said.

Source: NAUS

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***Care and Benefits for Veterans Strengthened by \$182 Billion VA Budget***



WASHINGTON – In his **FY 2017 budget**, President Obama is proposing \$182.3 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Funding will continue to support the largest transformation in VA history; expand access to timely, high-quality health care and benefits; and advance efforts to end homelessness among Veterans.

“VA has before it one of the greatest opportunities in its history to transform the way it cares for our Veterans who nobly served and sacrificed for our Nation,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “As we work to become a more efficient, effective and responsive, Veteran-centric Department, we can’t do it alone; we need the help of Congress. This year, VA submitted over 100 legislative proposals, including 40 new proposals to better serve Veterans. Our goal is provide the best care to our Veterans while removing obstacles or barriers that prevent them from getting the care they deserve.”

### **Highlights from the President’s 2017 Budget request for VA**

The FY 2017 budget includes \$78.7 billion in discretionary funding, largely for health care and \$103.6 billion for mandatory benefit programs such as disability compensation and pensions. The \$78.7 billion for discretionary spending is \$3.6 billion (4.9 percent) above the 2016 enacted level, including over \$3.6 billion in medical care collections from health insurers and Veteran copayments. The budget also requests \$70.0 billion, including collections, for the 2018 advance appropriations for medical care, an increase of \$1.5 billion and 2.1 percent above the 2017 medical care budget request. The request includes \$103.9 billion in 2018 mandatory advance appropriations for Compensation and Pensions, Readjustment Benefits and Veterans Insurance and Indemnities benefits programs in the Veterans Benefits Administration.

### **Health Care**

With a medical care budget of \$68.6 billion, including collections, VA is positioned to continue expanding health care services to its millions of Veteran patients. Health care is being provided to over 922,000 Veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn/Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) and Operation Freedom’s Sentinel (OFS). Major spending categories within the health care budget are:

- \$12.2 billion for care in the community;
- \$8.5 billion for long-term care;
- \$7.8 billion for mental health;
- \$1.6 billion for homeless Veterans;
- \$1.5 billion for Hepatitis-C treatments;
- \$725 million for Caregivers;
- \$601 million for spinal cord injuries; and
- \$284 million for traumatic brain injuries.

### **Expanding Access**

The President’s Budget ensures that care and other benefits are available to Veterans when and where they need them. Among the programs that will expand access under the proposed budget are:

- \$12.2 billion for care in the community compared to \$10.5 billion in 2015, a 16 percent increase;
- \$1.2 billion in telehealth funding, which helps patients monitor chronic health care conditions and increases access to care, especially in rural and remote locations;
- \$515 million for health care services specifically designed for women, an increase of 8.5 percent over the present level;
- \$836 million for the activation of new and enhanced health care facilities;
- \$900 million for major and minor construction projects, including funding for seismic corrections, two new cemeteries, and two gravesite expansions; and
- \$171 million for improved customer service by providing an integrated services delivery platform.

### **Improving the Efficiency of Claims Processing**

The President’s Budget provides for continued implementation of the Veterans Benefits Administration’s (VBA) robust Transformation Plan -- a series of people, process, and technology initiatives -- in 2017. This plan will continue to systematically improve the quality and efficiency of claims processing.

Major claims transformation initiatives in the budget invest \$323 million to bring leading-edge technology to claims processing, including:

- \$180 million (\$143 million in Information Technology and \$37 million in VBA) to enhance the electronic claims processing system – the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS); and
- \$143 million for Veterans Claims Intake Program (VCIP) to continue conversion of paper records, such as Veterans’ medical records, into electronic images and data in VBMS.

In addition, the President’s Budget supports increasing VBA’s workforce to address staffing needs so it can continue to improve the delivery of benefits to Veterans. As VBA continues to receive and complete more disability compensation

rating claims, the volume of non-rating claims correspondingly increases. The request for \$54 million for 300 additional full-time equivalent employees (FTE) and claims processing support will allow VBA to provide more timely actions on non-rating claims.

### **Appeals Reform**

The current appeals process is complicated and ineffective, and Veterans on average are waiting about 5 years for a final decision on an appeal that reaches the Board of Veterans' Appeals, with thousands waiting much longer. The 2017 Budget proposes a Simplified Appeals initiative – legislation and resources – to provide Veterans with a simple, fair, and streamlined appeals process in which they would receive a final appeals decision within one year from filing an appeal by 2021. The Budget requests \$156 million and 922 FTE for the Board, an increase of \$46 million and 242 FTE over 2016, as a down payment on a long-term, sustainable plan to improve services to Veterans.

### **Ending Veterans Homelessness**

The Administration has made the ending of Veteran homelessness a national priority. The Budget requests \$1.6 billion for programs to prevent or reduce Veteran homelessness, including:

- \$300 million for Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) to promote housing stability;
- \$496 million for the HUD-VASH program, wherein VA provides case management services for at-risk Veterans and their families and HUD provides permanent housing through its Housing Choice Voucher program; and
- \$247 million in grant and per diem payments that support temporary housing provided by community-based organizations.

### **MyVA**

The 2017 budget continues the largest Department-wide transformation in VA's history through the MyVA initiative, which is changing VA's culture, processes, and capabilities to put the needs, expectations and interests of Veterans and their families first. MyVA has developed five objectives fundamental to the transformation of VA: 1) improving the Veterans' experience; 2) improving the employee experience; 3) improving support service excellence; 4) establishing a culture of continuous performance improvement; and 5) enhancing strategic partnerships. To aid in this transformation, the Department established the Veterans Experience Office (VEO). The VEO will represent the voice of Veterans and their families in Departmental governance; design and implement customer-centric programs to make interactions with VA easier; and support VA's "mission owners" in carrying out MyVA improvements across the system.

### **Veterans Choice Act**

The Veterans Choice Act provides \$5 billion to increase Veterans' access to health care by hiring more physicians and staff and improving the VA's physical infrastructure. It also provides \$10 billion through 2017 to establish a temporary program (the Veterans Choice Program) to improve access to health care by allowing eligible Veterans who meet certain wait-time or distance standards to use eligible health care providers outside of the VA system. In 2017, VA will use the Choice Act funds in concert with annual appropriations to meet VA staffing and infrastructure needs and expand non-VA care to Veterans who are eligible for the Veterans Choice Program. VA plans to spend \$1.4 billion in 2016 and \$853 million in 2017 to support more than 9,700 new medical care staff hired through the Choice Act; \$980 million in 2016 and \$116 million in 2017 to improve VA facilities.

### **Other Key Services for Veterans**

- \$286 million to administer VA's system of 134 national cemeteries, including additional funding for operations of new cemeteries and the National Shrine program to raise and realign gravesites;
- \$4.3 billion for information technology (IT), including investments to strengthen cybersecurity, modernize Veterans' electronic health records, improve Veterans' access to benefits, and enhance the IT infrastructure; and
- \$125 million for state cemetery grants and state extended care grants.

### **Enhanced Oversight of VA's programs**

- The 2017 budget requests an additional \$23 million and 100 FTE for the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to enhance oversight and assist the OIG in fulfilling its statutory mission and making recommendations that will help VA improve the care and services it provides.

VA operates the largest integrated health care system in the country; the tenth largest life insurance program in the Nation, with \$1.3 trillion in coverage; monthly disability compensation, pensions, and survivors benefits to 5.3 million beneficiaries; educational assistance or vocational rehabilitation benefits and services to nearly 1.2 million students; mortgage guaranties to over 2 million homeowners; and the largest cemetery system in the Nation.

Information about VA's 2017 budget submission and links to related documents may be found [here](#). Information about the President's budget may be found [here](#).

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



We need a type of patriotism that recognizes the virtues of those who are opposed to us..... The old "manifest destiny" idea ought to be modified so that each nation has the manifest destiny to do the best it can - and that without cant, without the assumption of self-righteousness and with a desire to learn to the uttermost from other nations.

~Francis John McConnell~

## ***Veterans-For-Change, Inc.***

Riverside County, CA

Visit our website today  
[www.veterans-for-change.org](http://www.veterans-for-change.org)

*Serving those who served!*

***Please pass to all your Veteran friends and family!***

<b>Distribution</b>	
Express Mail:	144,450
Boston	65,044
Courtesy Copies:	3,500
Dept of VA	12,001
DoD	3,937
Face Book Pages:	3,080
Los Angeles	106,992
New York	117,070
Other Social Media:	16,030
San Francisco	59,985
Twitter:	27
U.S. House of Reps & Staff	824
U.S. Senators & Staff	91
University of So. CA	1,509
US Air Force	15,656
US Army	38,286
US Marines	18,429
US Navy	12,124

Veterans	19,043,115
Washington DC	138,122
Yahoo:	132
	<b>19,800,404</b>