



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, June 19, 2016
Volume 7, Issue 22

This-N-That

Just yesterday I spoke with the widow of a Veteran who is having difficulty getting her benefits from the VA, not news, in fact quite typical.

What I found distressing was to listen to how the Long Beach CA VA Medical Center Doctors ended up treating her husband.

He had been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease and the VA had been treating him for nearly seven years for Parkinson's, no problem, good care, then toward the end the Doctors did a 180 degree turn, and said he didn't have Parkinson's and was not having seizures, but pseudo seizures and needed mental help.

Not only did the Doctor "red flag" his chart, declared he didn't have Parkinson's but threw him into the psychiatric ward lock down.

Thankfully his wife had power of attorney, and returned the next morning and pulled him out and took him home.

Two questions come to mind, first why did the Doctor do a 180 on a diagnosis almost seven years old, and why did she put a red flag on his chart?

Was this their effort to save money? Reduce care to expedite his passing?

Don't have the answers to either question, but we also know many other Veterans have had this done to them, and had their chart also red flagged.

We're in the process now of putting a database together to submit to members of Congress, and we're asking you, if you have had this kind of treatment over the past ten years, to please write your story, and send it to us.

We will maintain your confidentiality if you wish to remain anonymous, but your stories will help us to drive the point home on just how bad care is in many VA hospitals.

If you have been treated well, provided good care, seriously we'd like to hear from you too!

We'd like to show the differences in locations, care provided, and what other information we can provide.

As much as I've seen, heard and read, the ratio of good/excellent care to poor/deadly care is high leaning toward poor/deadly in way too many cases.

With your help and stories the goal is to push Congress into drafting legislation to cause fixes and repairs, stop all bonuses regardless of location and quality of care.

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

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

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Poll Finds 91% Support VA Prescribing Rx Marijuana

A recent Quinnipiac University National poll has found that Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) doctors should be allowed to prescribe marijuana pills to veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. The poll asked 1,561 registered voters nationwide whether they support the use of marijuana for veterans, as well as broader questions, including whether general use of marijuana should be made legal in the U.S., and whether it should be made legal for adults if prescribed by a doctor for medical purposes. Only 9 percent of those polled opposed marijuana prescriptions in pill form for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. For more information and poll results, visit the [Quinnipiac University website](#).

New Navy View on Causes for Misconduct

To protect Sailors and Marines suffering with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI) or any other diagnosed mental health condition, the U.S. Navy will now ensure such conditions are considered before separating a service member. Previously a service member's misconduct took precedence over diagnosed mental health conditions, which impacted the veteran's ability to receive benefits. Now, if it contributed to the misconduct, the medical condition will take precedence. Effective immediately, Sailors and Marines being processed for any type of involuntary administrative separation (ADSEP) who have a diagnosed mental health condition may be referred into the Disability Evaluation System. If the Sailor or Marine is being administratively processed under a less than honorable discharge, the case must be referred to the first general officer/flag officer in the chain of command.

Operation Mail Call

*Troops resting on long deployments
- your support matters*



Veterans-For-Change - 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.

If you're a school teacher, please contact me at my E-Mail address at the top, our troops love to hear from kids too!

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

Government Accountability Reports

Climate Change: Selected Governments Have Approached Adaptation through Laws and Long-Term Plans.
<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-454>

Management Report: Improvements Needed in CFPB's Internal Controls and Accounting Procedures.
<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-522R>

Unemployment Insurance: States' Customer Service Challenges and DOL's Related Assistance.
<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-430>

Regional Missile Defense: Agency's Report Addressed Most Statutory Requirements, but Did Not Include Additional Relevant Information. http://www.gao.gov/restricted/restricted_reports

Syria: Train and Equip Program Servicemembers in Jordan Receive the Combat Zone Tax Exclusion Benefit while those in Turkey Do Not. http://www.gao.gov/restricted/restricted_reports

Distributed Common Ground System: Army is Applying Lessons Learned to Next Program Increment, but Needs to Conduct a Technology Assessment. http://www.gao.gov/restricted/restricted_reports

FACE Recognition Technology: FBI Should Better Ensure Privacy and Accuracy.
<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-267>

Federal Student Loans: Education Could Improve Direct Loan Program Customer Service and Oversight.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-523>

Food and Drug Administration: Comprehensive Strategic Planning Needed to Enhance Coordination between Medical Product Centers.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-500>

Managing for Results: Agencies Need to Fully Identify and Report Major Management Challenges and Actions to Resolve them in their Agency Performance Plans.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-510>

Medical Product Oversight: FDA Needs More Strategic Planning to Guide Its Scientific Initiatives.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-432>

Military Training: DOD Met Annual Reporting Requirements in Its 2016 Sustainable Ranges Report.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-627>

Coast Guard: Actions Needed to Improve Strategic Allocation of Assets and Determine Workforce Requirements.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-379>

Indian Energy Development: Interior Could Do More to Improve Its Process for Approving Revenue-Sharing Agreements.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-553>

Coast Guard: Actions Underway to Develop Acquisition Plans that Reflect New Assets and Improve the Asset Allocation Process.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-633T>

Environmental Protection: Status of GAO Recommendations to EPA.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-722T>

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

Are There Any Military Spouse Retirement Benefits?

As a military spouse, you've put in months of waiting on your service member to come home from long trainings or deployment, all while holding down your home and taking care of your family. You've battled career challenges for yourself, planning disasters, cross-country moves and everything Murphy's Law could throw at you.

But other than the long-sought break from the challenges of military life, what's in military retirement for you? To find out the details, click [HERE](#).

Records Show VA Mishandled Personal Info

According to federal records obtained by FOX25 Investigates, veterans' protected health information, lab results, doctors notes, and — in some cases, medicine — were mishandled 37 times by workers in the VA Boston Healthcare System in the last three years. The review comes after a disabled Navy veteran first told his story to FOX25 in March. Fox25 Investigates obtained records through the Freedom of Information Act that reveal at least 37 cases of mishandled sensitive material by the VA in Boston since 2013. For more information, visit the [Fox25 website](#).

TRICARE Hosts Urgent Care Webinar

Join TRICARE online on Wednesday, June 15, 2016 at Noon EST to learn about the new Urgent Care Pilot Program. This program allows certain Prime beneficiaries to get urgent care appointments without a referral or prior authorization. Sign up [online](#). Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis. Attendees on a network computer can join us via [DCS](#). For audio, dial 1-866-724-3083, access code 1085851. The speaker will take questions at the end of the presentation. For more information on the Urgent Care Pilot, visit the TRICARE Urgent Care Pilot Program [webpage](#).

Number of Vets Waiting for Health Care Grows

The most recent data on pending appointments recently released by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) shows that nearly 506,000 veterans currently seeking care at agency medical centers have waited more than a month for appointments, an increase of more than 10,000 in just two weeks and 23,000 in one month. The new numbers, which survey pending appointments as of May 15, cast light on the agency's continuing struggle to reduce wait times. A recent [report](#) by the Government Accountability Office concluded that the VA does not provide sufficient oversight to make sure that veterans receive timely care and that staffers accurately log patient wait times. The recent data is available on the [VA website](#).

Organizations Respond to McCain on Vet Healthcare

The American Legion reports that Sen. John McCain recently attacked the nation's largest and most influential veterans' service organizations by alleging they were opposed to the Veterans Choice Program that created a new, but temporary, option for veterans to receive health care from non-Department of Veterans Affairs providers. The senator's comments specifically targeted The American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and Disabled American Veterans. All three organizations issued a joint statement in response to McCain's comments. Their statement is available on the American Legion [website](#).

VA to Review TBI Claims for 24K Vets

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert McDonald has granted equitable relief to more than 24,000 veterans following a national review of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) medical examinations conducted in connection with disability compensation claims processed between 2007 and 2015. This action allows the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to offer new TBI examinations to veterans whose initial examination for TBI was not conducted by one of four designated medical specialists. Veterans will not have to submit new claims. If additional benefits are due, VA will award an effective date as early as the date of the initial TBI claim. VA will contact veterans identified as part of this national TBI review to offer them an opportunity to receive a new examination and have their claims reprocessed.

For more resources on TBI, click [HERE](#).

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

Shuttering Commissaries Required to Remove Subsidy

Shutting down all U.S. military commissaries is the only way for the system to operate without any cost to taxpayers, according to a new Defense Department report — a move officials say they don't want to do. "We have concluded that budget neutrality could not be reached through store closures unless the commissary system is shut down completely," states the report on cost savings at the Defense Commissary Agency. For more details, click [HERE](#).

Veteran Crisis Resources

Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1
Military Crisis Line 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
1-877-4AID-VET (424.3838)
VA Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274

VA Launches Veterans Legacy Program

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced the launch of the Veterans Legacy Program to memorialize veterans' service and sacrifice through public educational programming. The program will use resources at VA national cemeteries and online educational resources such as lesson plans, interactive maps and short video vignettes. The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) will co-sponsor a "Teachers Institute," a workshop for educators. Information about the program can be found on the Veterans Legacy Program [webpage](#).

VA Partnership to Support Women Vets

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Center for Women Veterans has announced a partnership with [LeanIn.Org](#). Building on the successful launch of LeanIn.Org circles within the Department of Defense, VA is following the same model to increase support to women Veterans. The VA initiative is called the LeanIn.Org Women Veterans' chapter and is comprised of two distinct pilot programs: the Veteran-to-Veteran program, a virtual program, which allows any woman Veteran to participate, no matter where she is located. The second is a face-to-face pilot circle created in partnership with the existing LeanIn.Org chapter in Seattle, WA. This circle consists of women Veterans and non-military members providing an environment for both to learn and share leadership skills. For more information about the LeanIn.org Women Veterans' chapter, visit the Lean In Women Veterans [webpage](#) or the Lean In Seattle [website](#).

Veterans-For-Change Website

If you haven't visited in a while, maybe you should visit today! Since we went back on-line in October 2012 average visitors have been around 1,700 per day and we've had a total of 2,774,311 visitors.

If you subscribe you will have full access to the entire website and best of all it's **FREE** of charge! You just need a valid E-mail address so the system can send you a confirmation E-Mail. Once received, click on the link to be authorized automatically.

We feel we have the largest One-Stop-Shop Veterans website available, and 100% user friendly.

There are era Forums, VA Forums, Mental Health Forum with a licensed clinical worker, and much much more!

www.veterans-for-change.org

- ◆ Documents Library with over 15,000 documents on-line (Updated: **06/01/16**)
- ◆ FAQ's with more than 1,600 FAQ's and answers (Updated: **02/20/16**)
- ◆ Multiple Forums
- ◆ Job Postings (Updated: **05/28/16**)
- ◆ Memorial Pages (Updated: **01/02/16**)
- ◆ News (Articles On-Line: **5,765**)
- ◆ Polls
- ◆ Web Links, more than 3,435, Added 4 New Links (Updated: 05/21/16)

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

New York Updates Retirement System for Vets

New York State recently extended the ability to purchase military service credit to all veterans who are members of the New York State retirement system. The new law will allow all honorably discharged veterans to buy back up to three years of their military service to credit their pensions for military service performed. Effective immediately, the law includes all who have been honorably discharged rather than those who have served in certain military campaigns. Because the new law removes the combat requirements, women veterans who were previously ineligible will qualify for the military buyback. For more information, visit the New York State Comptroller [website](#).

VA Announces Departure of Acting Under Secretary for Benefits Danny Pummill

Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the departure of Danny G.I. Pummill from his post as Acting Under Secretary for Benefits at the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). Mr. Pummill has served as the Acting Under Secretary since October 19, 2015. Mr. Pummill had previously planned to retire by the end of 2015, but upon the departure of previous Under Secretary for Benefits Allison Hickey, he remained as head of the administration at the request of Secretary Robert A. McDonald. His continuing service helped ensure the critical continuity required to complete VBA's transformation, and help expand the MyVA effort at the administration level.

"Danny has been the consummate Veteran advocate. He naturally embodies the spirit of MyVA by frequently meeting and talking to Veterans and VA employees where they live and work, listening to their concerns and taking their

feedback,” Secretary McDonald said of the career Army officer. “His hands-on approach of making Veterans the center of everything we do is exactly what we are all about. I am saddened to see him go but deeply appreciate that he agreed to stay on and lead VBA as long as he did.”

Mr. Pummill began his tenure at VBA in 2010 as the Deputy Director for Policy and Procedures for the agency’s compensation service. Two years later, he became Director of the VBA/Department of Defense Program Office, and in 2013, he was appointed Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits. Prior to coming to VBA, he served in the Army for 33 years as both an enlisted soldier and an officer and then continued with the Department of the Army as a civilian employee for five years.

While serving as Acting Under Secretary, Mr. Pummill continued the momentum of reducing the compensation claims backlog, closing out 2015 with 75,000 backlogged claims – an 87-percent reduction from the 611,000 peak in March 2013. He pioneered and championed the ongoing compensation and pension exam experience improvement effort, and he oversaw the implementation of the agency’s national work queue, the expansion of disability compensation eligibility for Veterans exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune and contract awards totaling \$6.8 billion for medical disability examinations.

“The greatest fulfillment of my life has been serving my country and my fellow Veterans, their families and their survivors,” Mr. Pummill said. “In my time at VBA, I continued to be impressed by the dedication and selfless sacrifice of the employees in service to our nation’s Veterans. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as their Acting Under Secretary for Benefits and it is with mixed emotions that I leave this great organization to begin the next phase of my life.”

Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary Thomas Murphy will be appointed as Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits and assume the role of Acting Under Secretary for Benefits. Mr. Murphy joined VBA in 2009 as the Director of the San Juan Regional Office in Puerto Rico. Prior to becoming Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary, he served as Director of compensation service.

Senate Overwhelmingly Passes NDAA

On Tuesday, the Senate voted, 85-13, to easily pass the defense authorization measure ([S 2943](#)) to authorize spending for defense programs at the Pentagon and related agencies.

In brief, the Senate version of the bill would back the administration's request for military pay caps the raise at 1.6 percent, a half percent below the measure for civilian wage growth; would overhaul Pentagon acquisition rules; would reform TRICARE, commissaries and housing programs; and would reduce the size of the National Security Council. It would also require women to sign up for Selective Service.

The White House, in a broadly worded Veto threat against the bill, criticized the underlying bill's nine-engine limit on Russian rockets and several dozen other aspects of the measure. This year marks the eighth consecutive year in which President Obama has threatened to Veto the annual defense budget legislation. However, the President has only followed through with this threat once in the past 8 years, last year to secure additional resources for non-defense programs.

This year’s Senate bill is notable for containing a provision that would require women to sign up with Selective Service so they would be eligible to be drafted, if a draft were put in place. The measure also stands out for the Senate Armed Services Committee’s latest attempt to overhaul the Pentagon acquisition system and to cap the number of four-star officers and the size of the president’s National Security Council.

The measure also sets strict oversight rules for programs such as the B-21 bomber, although senators also voted to limit public access to cost information about that program. The measure would extend restrictions on the administration’s

ability to transfer detainees from the U.S. military run prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, or to build an alternative prison in the United States.

The bill addresses a number of issues affecting military personnel. It supports the White House's proposed basic pay raise for uniformed personnel. It would also institute changes aimed at improving military healthcare.

Unlike the House-passed companion measure, the Senate bill would not cut the president's request for war funding and shift the authorization of spending to other programs.

The House and Senate will begin conference negotiations on the measure right away, in the hopes of getting an agreement before mid-July. But it is doubtful that the bill can be wrapped up before Congress adjourns for its August recess.

Once again NAUS thanks all our members and supporters who used NAUS CapWiz to contact their Senators. You helped defeat a provision aimed at privatizing commissaries and you helped soften TRICARE reforms. Thank you for standing strong to ensure that Congress hears our views on earned benefits.

Source: NAUS

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Possible Changes to Veterans Preference

In passing its NDAA bill on Tuesday, the Senate also agreed to limit Veterans preference in federal hiring.

Veterans preference would only apply to a Vet's first job in federal service under a provision in the [Senate fiscal 2017 Defense authorization bill](#). The provision, which is new this year, would not allow Veterans preference – a [confusing and often controversial factor in federal hiring](#) – to be an advantage in any subsequent federal jobs that an eligible employee applies for. In other words, Vets would receive the additional points that Veterans' preference confers during the application process for their first jobs in federal government, but not for any future positions within the competitive service.

The measure also would affect certain close relatives of Veterans, including spouses and parents, who are [eligible for Veterans' preference](#) under specific circumstances when applying for federal jobs. While the provision is part of the annual Defense policy bill, it would apply government wide. The House NDAA does not contain a similar provision.

It's not clear whether the Veterans preference limit will end up in the final version of the NDAA that the House-Senate conference committee crafts. The House Armed Services Committee would not comment on the issue. "Committee policy is not to comment on provisions that will be a subject of conference," said Claude Chafin, the committee's communications director, by email on Wednesday.

Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Fla., who is chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and is a member of the Armed Services Committee, said Vets preference shouldn't be an issue.

"The way Veterans preference works is that when a hiring decision comes down to two equally qualified candidates and one is a Veteran, the Veteran gets hiring preference. Anyone who believes otherwise is misinterpreting the law," Miller said in a statement earlier this month on the subject.

Source: NAUS

VA Partners with KaBOOM! To Support Veteran Families

Sometimes play is the best medicine. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is announcing a partnership with the national non-profit organization KaBOOM! to make play more accessible to children visiting VA Medical Centers and VA Fisher Houses. KaBOOM! is one of a number of partnerships formed under the MyVA initiative, the largest transformation in VA's history, which focuses squarely on the needs of Veterans through customer service and strong community partnerships.

Under the agreement, KaBOOM! will provide their signature Imagination Playground™ and Rigamajigs to VA locations across the nation. These portable, scalable play systems create safe, fun-filled environments for children to play in.

KaBOOM! will work with VA to select sites across the country that have the greatest need for play spaces. VA medical centers and VA Fisher Houses, which are built by Fisher House Foundation to provide temporary accommodations for families of Veterans receiving treatment at a VA medical center or military hospital, have been identified as ideal locations for these play environments.

"When Veterans are dealing with a serious illness or injury, it can be incredibly stressful for their families, especially those with young children," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. "Our partnership with KaBOOM! will enable us to use the simple art of play to help keep the children and families of Veterans happy and healthy. These types of partnerships are a great way for the VA to provide support for families – an important component of taking care of Veterans."

CarMax is the KaBOOM! corporate sponsor for this playground project. As a part of its ongoing multi-million dollar commitment to KaBOOM!, CarMax will build four playgrounds and provide 30 grants for Imagination Playgrounds™ and Rigamajigs to select VA medical centers, Fisher Houses and other organizations that serve Veterans and military families. It is expected that through this project, VA, KaBOOM! and CarMax will help reach 85,000 children over the next three years. The first donations were made to facilities located in Gainesville, Florida, and Salt Lake City, Utah.

"We are grateful to our Armed Forces who inspire us with their dedication to protecting our country," said James Siegal, CEO of KaBOOM! "Through our partnership VA, together we are honoring and showing commitment to Veterans and military families by encouraging play, particularly for kids who need it most. Creating play spaces in Fisher Houses and VA facilities will help ensure kids can experience balanced and active play so they can thrive and enjoy the childhood they deserve."

Since 1996, KaBOOM! has collaborated with its corporate partners to build, open or improve nearly 16,300 playgrounds, engaged more than one million volunteers, and served 8.1 million children.

Links to Other Stories

- 1) [818 Virginia Veterans seen by unqualified staff for traumatic brain injury](#)
- 2) [Bill Schuette accused of hypocrisy on abuse of Veterans](#)
- 3) [Justices side with Veteran-owned small business over VA](#)
- 4) [New OKC VA director discusses wait times, doctor shortage](#)
- 5) [New policy protects Marines, sailors facing separation for mental health issues](#)
- 6) [Oklahoma City VA Hospital Making Improvements](#)
- 7) [Polk official leads effort to ease benefit claims for Veterans' families](#)
- 8) [The VA Won't Validate Wounds For COMPENSATION But NOW They'll Cut Your Penis Off For FREE](#)
- 9) [VA faces more questions about records shredding at Philadelphia, other centers](#)
- 10) [VA Secretary grants relief for Veterans with traumatic brain injuries](#)
- 11) [Veterans need quick health care](#)
- 12) [Vietnam Veterans were treated cruelly](#)
- 13) [When VA is deciding on Agent Orange benefits, science sometimes takes backseat to politics and cost](#)

You can help VFC by reading articles posted and commenting at the bottom and rate the articles. If you don't have an account, sign up today, it's FREE. Your comments and rankings tell us what type of information you want most.

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

Senate Rejects Program to Privatize Commissaries

The U.S. Senate has agreed to strike a provision in defense authorization legislation that would have created a pilot program to privatize some military commissary stores. The upper chamber voted 70-28 in favor of an amendment introduced by Sens. Jim Inhofe, a Republican from Oklahoma, and Barbara Mikulski, a Democrat from Maryland, to remove the privatization language from the fiscal 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, or NDAA. Before the vote, the senators had pressed their colleagues to support their amendment to give the Defense Department more time to fully assess the effects and costs of the change. They cited a recent Pentagon report that concluded the program would hurt the purchasing power to achieve cost savings for military families and veterans. For more details, click [HERE](#).



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

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

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

If you're an employer and have a job to post, send and E-Mail to: Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org

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If you received this newsletter as a courtesy or a forward from a friend or relative, you can sign up to receive in your E-mail every week.

<https://gem.godaddy.com/signups/193302/join>



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www.Veterans-For-Change.org

Serving those who served!

Please pass on to all your Veteran Friends and Family

Distribution	
Express Mail	3
Boston	68,489
Courtesy Copies	3,500
Department of VA	13,253
DoD	11,538
Face Book Pages	3,260
Google	2,894
Los Angeles	118,022

Microsoft	3,288
New York	133,907
Other Social Media	23,833
San Francisco	69,301
Twitter	32
US House of Reps & Staff	829
US Senators & Staff	96
University of So. California	3,440
US Air Force	29,780
US Army	44,854
US Marines	22,081
US Navy	21,000
Veterans	19,059,202
Washington DC	143,518
Yahoo	134
	19,776,254