



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter *A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, July 17, 2016
Volume 7, Issue 26

This-N-That

After three decades and billions of dollars spent and wasted, the DoD and the VA still can't seem to pull their heads out of their butts to accomplish a computerized program with the ability to share military and medical records between the two departments.

This tells me that neither department has got a clue on how to hire top notch properly trained and well educated IT professional staff, or that the billions spent are not being spent on this failed project but possibly being re-directed to other projects and programs.

And that neither department has the courage to step outside the box and seek out one of the hundreds of private civilian software producers to take a canned program and write in all the adaptations to make both departments work together with levels of security to still be able to produce the end product of sharing without compromise to integrity of security and classified information.

No surprise there, look at how many security breaches there have been over the past ten years on both departments.

Amazing though how these civilian companies can write programs for medical records, billing, etc. and at the very same time write in security protocols to prevent altering of medical records notes and these programs have been around since the same time the VA and DoD began their long wasted billions journey.

For many Veterans this among many other things has caused serious delays, constant denials for benefits and healthcare.

One of the protocols that could be written in to avoid breach of national security and/or admission we were in places we weren't supposed to be according to the conventions, the program could be easily setup for the DoD to "approve" a claim without admission or breach of security, but they don't seem to want to even do this. All in the efforts to save money, but at what costs? The lives of Veterans, the destruction of families and this is right?

We're still receiving reports of Veteran abuse from all over and this abuse comes in many forms from sexual abuse to physical and verbal abuse in our Veterans nursing homes, and in VA Hospitals.

While we're still getting all these reports, if you have been a victim of abuse or have a family member who is in a Veteran facility and being abused, we'd like to hear from you!

When writing to me, please include as much information as you are comfortable with, and as always confidentiality will be held to the strictest we can.

If you have check out the VFC Website, you might want to visit today. Over the past couple of weeks and additional 150+ documents have been added and more web links too have been added.

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

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org

Committee Conducts Hearing on TBI

The American Legion's Deputy Director of Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Roscoe Butler testified recently during a congressional hearing. He addressed pending legislation regarding traumatic brain injury (TBI) evaluations for compensation and implementation of peer specialists at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers. If passed into law, S. 244 would require VA to work with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to conduct a comprehensive review of VA examinations, ensuring TBI symptoms and subsequent levels of disability are accurately diagnosed for purposes of awarding disability compensation. Recently, VA acknowledged that it may have under-evaluated nearly 25,000 veterans suffering from TBI. Testimonies and a video of the hearing are available on the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs [website](#).

Protect Your Personal TRICARE Information

Fraud against TRICARE beneficiaries is in the news. Be safe; do not share your military ID or other personal or family information with an unknown person. Fraudsters often target TRICARE beneficiaries, including active duty servicemembers. Examples include fake surveys used to collect personal information or offering gift cards to get your information. If you think you are the victim of TRICARE related fraud, you can [report it](#) to the Defense Health Agency. TRICARE usually does not contact you asking for personal information. Only provide that information to a trusted entity. For more information about fraud, visit [Health.mil](#).

DAV-Supported COLA Bill Introduced in the House

On June 28, 2016, Representative Ralph Abraham (LA), Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, introduced H.R. 5588-the Veterans' Compensation COLA Act of 2016.

This bill, if enacted, would provide an increase, effective December 1, 2016, in the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) for the survivors of certain disabled veterans.

This bill does not contain the round-down provision of previous years that reduced compensation and pension payments by millions of dollars-at the expense of disabled veterans and their families. Therefore, DAV strongly supports H.R. 5588.

Please use the prepared electronic letter or draft your own to urge your Representative to cosponsor H.R. 5588, and to urge the House Leadership to bring this bill to the floor for a vote as soon as possible.

As always, we appreciate your support for DAV and your grassroots activism in participating in DAV CAN. Your advocacy helps make DAV a highly influential and effective organization in Washington.

Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.

Click [HERE](#) and send your message:

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

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

Improper Payments: CFO Act Agencies Need to Improve Efforts to Address Compliance Issues.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-554>

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: Policy Changes and Calculation Methods Likely Affect Improper Payment Rates, and USDA Is Taking Steps to Help Address Recipient Fraud.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-708T>

Coast Guard: Arctic Strategy Is Underway, but Agency Could Better Assess How Its Actions Mitigate Known Arctic Capability Gaps. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-453>

Critical Infrastructure Protection: Improvements Needed for DHS's Chemical Facility Whistleblower Report Process.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-572>

Military Health Care: Army Needs to Improve Oversight of Warrior Transition Units.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-583>

Coast Guard: Agency Could Better Assess Its Impact on Arctic Capability Gaps and Is Exploring Icebreaker Acquisition Options. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-738T>

Critical Infrastructure Protection: DHS Has Made Progress in Enhancing Critical Infrastructure Assessments but Additional Improvements are Needed. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-791T>

Force Structure: Better Information Needed to Support Air Force A-10 and Other Future Divestment Decisions.

http://www.gao.gov/restricted/restricted_reports

Credit Programs: Key Agencies Should Better Document Procedures for Estimating Subsidy Costs.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-269>

Management Report: Improvements Needed in Controls over the Processes Used to Prepare the U.S. Consolidated Financial Statements. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-621>

Railroad Financing: Stakeholders' Views on Recent Changes to the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing Program. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-714R>

Electronic Health Records: VA's Efforts Raise Concerns about Interoperability Goals and Measures, Duplication with DOD, and Future Plans. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-807T>

Defense Nuclear Enterprise: DOD Has Established Processes for Implementing and Tracking Recommendations to Improve Leadership, Morale, and Operations. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-597R>

Department of Energy: Whistleblower Protections Need Strengthening.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-618>

Environmental Protection Agency: Status of Efforts to Address Nonpoint Source Water Pollution through the Section 319 Program. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-697R>

Flood Insurance: Potential Barriers Cited to Increased Use of Private Insurance.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-611>

Iran Nuclear Agreement: The International Atomic Energy Agency's Authorities, Resources, and Challenges.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-565>

Joint Information Environment: DOD Needs to Strengthen Governance and Management.

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-593>

Syria Humanitarian Assistance: Some Risks of Providing Aid inside Syria Assessed, but U.S. Agencies Could Improve Fraud Oversight. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-629>

DOJ Grants Management: Justice Has Made Progress Addressing GAO Recommendations. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-806T>

Social Security Administration: Effective Planning and Management Practices Are Key to Overcoming IT Modernization Challenges. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-815T>

Syria Humanitarian Assistance: Implementing Partners Have Assessed Some Risks of Providing Aid inside Syria, but U.S. Agencies Could Improve Fraud Oversight. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-16-808T>

Countering Improvised Explosive Devices: Improved Planning Could Enhance Federal Coordination Efforts. http://www.gao.gov/restricted/restricted_reports

VA Workers Protest VA Medical Care Changes

Dozens of Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) workers rallied July 1 outside the Fayetteville VA Medical Center in Fayetteville, NC protesting a proposed overhaul of veterans' medical care. The Commission on Care, a panel created by Congress two years ago amid concern over long wait times for care at VA centers nationwide, is expected to recommend soon privatizing care for millions of veterans. The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) says the move would close 12 to 15 VA hospitals. The AFGE has organized similar protests recently at VA centers across the country. For more information, visit the AFGE [website](#) and read the [Opinion Page](#) in the New York Times.

House Approves Measure to Bar Women From Draft

The Republican-led House backed a measure Thursday that seeks to bar women from being required to register for a potential military draft, a victory for social conservatives who fear that forcing females to sign up is another step toward the blurring of gender lines. By a vote of 217 to 203, lawmakers approved an amendment that would block the Selective Service System from using any money to alter draft registration requirements that currently apply only to men between the ages of 18 and 25.

Culinary Boot Camp for Veterans

Utah's [Culinary Command](#) is a six-week program that prepares veterans and active military for restaurant, hotel and food-service jobs. The program teaches veterans how to survive — and thrive — in a professional kitchen. Class starts each day at 7 a.m. and continues late into the evening. Culinary Command Training uses the popular "Learn How to Cook (and eat your mistakes)!" 15-segment DVD series as the basis for its curriculum. Lessons range from knife skills and sautéing to preparing classic sauces to grilling and baking. The veterans pay no fees as the program operates entirely on donations. The next session runs Aug. 15 - Sept. 24. For more information and to apply, visit the Culinary Command [website](#).

Exchange Expands Layaway Program

The Army & Air Force Exchange Service is briefly extending its layaway program to include computers and tablets needed in the classroom. From July 1 to Aug. 31, just in time for back-to-school season, Exchange shoppers can use layaway to hold [computers, notebooks, tablets and iPads](#) — items that are not typically eligible for the program. A \$3 service fee and a deposit of 15 percent are required to hold items on layaway. Items must be picked up by Aug. 31. Shoppers can visit customer service at their local Exchange for complete details.

Lawn Care and Snow Care for Veterans

GreenCare for Troops connects volunteer contractors with disabled veterans. GreenCare helps hundreds of volunteers provide free lawn and landscape services for thousands of veterans and military families nationwide. SnowCare for Troops is an outreach program coordinated by Project EverGreen that connects local snow removal professionals with men and women serving our country in the armed forces away from home, as well as wounded or disabled veterans with service-related disabilities. For more information, visit the GreenCare/SnowCare for Troops [webpage](#).

TRICARE and Specialty Care

If you are a TRICARE beneficiary with special needs or a serious illness, your care is best coordinated through your regional contractor. TRICARE rules require that if the care you need is available at a military hospital or clinic near you, and there is space available, you will be referred there first. However, if the care you need is not available, you will be referred to a network provider near you. It is important to call and remain in contact with your regional contractor. Your regional contractor will have the most current list of providers. If you contact a specialty care provider directly, you could be on a wait list instead of getting the care you or a family member needs. You can reach your contractor by phone. Find your contractor's contact information on the TRICARE [website](#).

Rep. Jeff Miller Files New VA Accountability Act

House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Rep. Jeff Miller, R-Florida, has filed new legislation that he says will bring "real accountability" to all employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs. If enacted, the bill would radically reduce the time between firing or demoting an employee and getting a resolution if the action is appealed to no more than 77 days from more than a year. It would also entirely pull VA senior executive service officials out of the Merit Systems Protection Board.

The VA Spends Millions on Guns and Ammunition

Last month an organization called American Transparency released a report about what it calls "the militarization of America." It laid out in detail how many federal agencies have been arming themselves with weapons, including military-type weaponry, and how much money they've been spending on it.

Included among their findings was the fact that the Department of Veterans Affairs has bought more than \$11 million worth of weapons, ammo and other security equipment between 2005 and 2014. Besides pistols, the list includes body armor, police batons, ballistic shields, riot shields and helmets, night gun sights, tactical equipment for crowd control and more.

The VA also bought \$200,000 in night vision equipment and \$2.3 million worth of body armor the report said.

In 1996 the VA had 2,393 security personnel and it began a program to have them carry firearms and have arrest authority. By 2008 the VA force had grown to 3,175 officers and all were armed and had arrest authority. The VA now has over 3,700 officers.

In an email to the American Transparency organization last February the VA stated, ""While VA police work very closely with Federal, local and state law enforcement partners, VA police will be the first to have to deal with any active situation and are well trained accordingly."

The VA isn't the only federal agency that's been arming itself. The number of non-Defense Department federal officers authorized to make arrests and carry firearms (200,000) now exceeds the number of U.S. Marines (182,000). In its escalating arms and ammo stockpiling, this federal arms race is unlike anything in history. Over the last 20 years, the number of these federal officers with arrest-and-firearm authority has nearly tripled to over 200,000 today, from 74,500 in 1996.

Here are other findings from the report:

1. Sixty-seven non-military federal agencies spent \$1.48 billion on guns, ammunition, and military-style equipment.
2. Of that total amount, 'Traditional Law Enforcement' Agencies spent 77 percent (\$1.14 billion) while 'Administrative' or 'General' Agencies spent 23 percent (\$335.1 million).
3. Non-military federal spending on guns and ammunition jumped 104 percent from \$55 million (FY2006) to \$112 million (FY2011).
4. Nearly 6 percent (\$42 million) of all federal guns and ammunition purchase transactions were wrongly coded. Some purchases were actually for ping-pong balls, gym equipment, bread, copiers, cotton balls, or cable television including a line item from the Coast Guard entered as "Cable Dude".
5. Administrative agencies including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Small Business Administration (SBA), Smithsonian Institution, Social Security Administration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, United States Mint, Department of Education, Bureau of Engraving and Printing, National Institute of Standards and Technology, and many other agencies purchased guns, ammo, and military-style equipment.
6. Since 2004, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) purchased 1.7 billion bullets including 453 million hollow-point bullets. As of 1/1/2014, DHS estimated its bullet inventory-reserve at 22-months, or 160 million rounds.
7. Between 1998 and 2008 (the most recent comprehensive data available) the number of law enforcement officers employed by federal agencies increased nearly 50 percent from 83,000 (1998) to 120,000 (2008). However, Department of Justice officer count increased from 40,000 (2008) to 69,000 (2013) and Department of Homeland Security officer count increased from 55,000 (2008) to 70,000 (2013).
8. The Internal Revenue Service, with its 2,316 special agents, spent nearly \$11 million on guns, ammunition and military-style equipment.
9. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) spent \$3.1 million on guns, ammunition and military-style equipment. The EPA has spent \$715 million on its 'Criminal Enforcement Division' from FY2005 to present even as the agency has come under fire for failing to perform its basic functions.
10. Federal agencies spent \$313,958 on paintball equipment, along with \$14.7 million on Tasers, \$1.6 million on unmanned aircraft, \$8.2 million on buckshot, \$7.44 million on projectiles, and \$4 million on grenades/launchers.

After the horrific slaying of police officers in Dallas last week, the desire for police officers to have adequate equipment to face such dangerous situations is understandable. But does that mean that federal agencies that have nothing to do with law enforcement need to be armed like a military force? There are already a multiple of federal law enforcement agencies. Perhaps they should be given the responsibility of protecting federal administrative agencies like the VA.

Source: TREA

Twelve of fifteen commissioners appointed by Congress and the president to propose reforms to veterans' healthcare have endorsed 18 "bold" steps to transform the system, but in the end rejected a push to dismantle it and to shift most veterans' care into the private sector. And yet, say critics of the Commission on Care, including several veteran organizations, its final report released Tuesday still proposes to expand veterans' rights to choose outside healthcare providers, enough to put traditional VA healthcare at significant risk over time. The danger, opponents contend, is that a steady shift of patients from VA to private sector care by relaxing "choice" rules could explode VA spending, in turn forcing Congress to scrimp on resources for VA-provided care, including cutting edge specialty programs for the most disabled vets.

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

Study Looks at Gulf War Veterans

An updated research review has found that veterans of the Gulf War are more than twice as likely to have medically unexplained symptoms known as "multisymptom illness" (MSI), compared to Iraq/Afghanistan War veterans. Multisymptom illness refers to chronic, unexplained symptoms affecting several body systems, such as fatigue, mood or cognitive (thinking) problems, and joint and muscle pain. Although estimates varied widely, MSI prevalence was substantially higher in Gulf War veterans: 26 to 65 percent, compared with 12 to 37 percent in Iraq/Afghanistan War veterans. The odds of MSI were 2.5 times higher in Gulf War veterans versus other military groups. The study will appear in the July Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (JOEM) when it is posted on the JOEM [website](#).

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

Veterans Writing Project in North Carolina

The Dare County Arts Council in Dare County, NC, is accepting applications for their 2016 Outer Banks Veterans Writing Project. The workshop will be held for the fourth consecutive year on November 5 and 6 at the UNC Coastal Studies Institute on Roanoke Island. It is modeled after the Veterans Writing Project in Washington, D.C. The Dare County Arts Council is encouraging all former and current service men and woman in North Carolina, Virginia and surrounding areas to submit applications. For more information or to submit an online application for the Veterans Writing Project, visit the Outer Banks Veterans Writing Project [website](#), the Dare County Arts Council [website](#), or call (252) 473-5558.

Wyoming Vet Tuition Program Saved from Budget Cuts

A program that provides [tuition assistance](#) for veterans has been restored for now by Gov. Matt Mead after being targeted for elimination because of budget cuts. Mead announced Wednesday that he would continue funding the program through the coming fall semester. And he didn't rule out the possibility of continuing it after this year. The program, administered by the Wyoming Community College Commission, provided assistance to 162 veterans at the state's seven community colleges and the University of Wyoming last fall. Veterans who had been deployed to combat zones could receive 10 free semesters at any Wyoming community college and the university. Veterans' surviving spouses and dependents are also eligible.

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 **2,874,529** 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 15,406 documents on-line (Updated: **07/13/16**)
- ◆ FAQ's with more than 1,600 FAQ's and answers (Updated: **02/20/16**)
- ◆ Multiple Forums
- ◆ Job Postings (Updated: **07/11/16**)
- ◆ Memorial Pages (Updated: **01/02/16**)
- ◆ News (Articles On-Line: **5,871**)
- ◆ Polls
- ◆ Web Links, more than 3,440, Added 1 New Links (Updated: **07/13/16**)

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

FREE AFFIDAVIT PRODUCES NUMEROUS STATE COURT VICTORIES

by LT(j.g.) Gregory K. Parsons U.S. Navy, PDRL

Since 1987, the individual state and commonwealth family law systems have been presumptuously using disabled veterans' disability compensation benefit awards in establishment calculations for child support. The U.S. Supreme Court held in ***Rose v. Rose 481 U.S. 619 (1987)***: "A state court has jurisdiction to hold a disabled veteran in contempt for failing to pay child support, even if the veteran's only means of satisfying this obligation is to utilize veterans' benefits received as compensation for a service-connected disability."

However, that wasn't all that the *Rose* decision had to say regarding this domestic relations nightmare that a large percentage of disabled vets unfortunately experience sooner or later. The good news is that after the noted 1987 deficiencies cited in that high court ruling, U.S. Congress, under the leadership of President Reagan, went to work and

actively legislated to preclude disabled veterans from having to endure the consequences of the *Rose* verdict by establishing the new presidential cabinet level Department of Veterans Affairs and passing the **Veterans Judicial Review Act of 1988** (VJRA). A few years later, they repealed 38 U.S.C. § 211, engrossed § 511 in its place, and finally, oversaw the 1998 implementation of *Information Memorandum IM-98-03* entitled **Financial Support for Children from Benefits Paid by Veterans Affairs** promulgated by the Commissioner of the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) and as directed by the Secretary of Health & Human Services. And with that, *Rose v. Rose* was abrogated but only if the disabled veteran had knowledge of the active legislation.

However, because of congressional financial incentive laws, i.e. 42 U.S.C. §§ 658a & 655, the various states and commonwealths have stubbornly refused to read past the first page of the 1987 *Rose* holding. In doing so, they have also deviously, through their conspiring and abdicating state family law attorney associations, denied veterans due process in their family court hearings and proceedings. In 2014 after enduring years of contentious child support battles with the state of Texas and sensing that my federal civil rights had been ignored even though I had paid handsomely for legal representation, I began to seek answers with a small group of fellow disabled veterans also forced to abide by similar adversarial edicts. After several years of intense reading and research, I devised the **Parsons Due Process Affidavit (PDPA)** which assures that all the veteran's civil rights are asserted before the family court.

The PDPA is offered freely to all my "Disabled Vet Child Support Info" Facebook group members, established June 2015 with current membership totaling over 850, in a Microsoft WORD Template file. Recent court victories utilizing notarized PDPAs have been realized in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Florida & Illinois. Find the group and learn much more by sending a request to join at the following link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/VeteranChildSupportGroup/>

The online MS Word PDPA Template link is <https://1drv.ms/w/s!Am6tHjeMUbKAaskybdDDNMQ4hhA>

To hear my recent interview regarding the PDPA, go to <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/marcusechols/2016/05/28/the-child-support-hustle-show>

Follow us on Twitter



<https://twitter.com/Veterans4Change>

Links to Other Stories

- 1) [*Another accountability bill enters the VA melee*](#)
- 2) [*Electronic Health Records Quagmire, VA, DOD Still Can't Share*](#)
- 3) [*Lawsuit: Veterans home ignored abuse, harassment*](#)

- 4) [PTSD Awareness Month: Breaking The Cycle Of Substance Abuse In Trauma Victims](#)
- 5) [Redmond Man Pleads Guilty to Stealing Federal Benefits](#)
- 6) [Trump policy speech calls for changes in Veterans' programs](#)
- 7) [VA doubling back to resolve TBI claims denials](#)
- 8) [Veteran Golden Age Games Underway in Detroit](#)
- 9) [Veterans Affairs Officials Give Update on Improvements in Veterans Care](#)
- 10) [Veterans could benefit from bill pairing jail inmates with service dogs](#)

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



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 an E-Mail to: Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org

~We Proudly Support our Military Personnel & Families~

VA Schedules 2 Million Appointments Using Veterans Choice Program

Improvements made in increasing access to Community Care, but more work to be done

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) [Veterans Choice Program](#) (VCP) has reached a key milestone in improving access to health care for Veterans. More than two million appointments have been scheduled through the program.

“While two million appointments have been scheduled using the Choice Program and we are making progress, we will not rest until *all* Veterans who choose VA to be their healthcare provider are receiving the care they

need, when they need it,” said VA Secretary Robert McDonald. “We will continue to make strides towards an integrated care network, and I urge Congress to enact our Plan to Consolidate Community Care so we can continue to build upon our progress.”

The Choice Act, which included the VCP, was passed in August 2014 to help Veterans access timely health care both within VA and the community. VA was required to implement a new, national program in just 90 days, with new requirements that complicated the way VA provides community care. VA recognized many of these challenges very early in the implementation of the program and VA and all our stakeholders have been working together to make needed changes while implementing this new nationwide program.

VA has outlined a path to improve community care and create a program that is easy to understand, simple to administer, and meets the needs of Veterans, community providers, and VA staff. VA submitted this plan to Congress in October 2015.

Within the Plan are several legislative proposals that VA and Congress need to work on together to improve the experiences for Veterans and community providers.

- ◆ The first proposal would increase Veterans’ access to community care providers by allowing VA to enter into agreements with local community providers.
- ◆ The second would streamline when and how much VA pays for health care services by having VA be the primary payer.
- ◆ The third fix would allow VA to more accurately account for healthcare purchased in the community.
- ◆ Finally, the last request is for funding and funding flexibility to improve access to care, reimburse the cost of emergency treatment, and create value-based payment models to best serve Veterans that need community care.

“VA is developing innovative ideas and solutions to enhance the Veterans experience and strengthen partnerships with community providers” said Dr. Baligh Yehia, Assistant Deputy Undersecretary for Health, Community Care. “The Choice Program of today is a very different program than the one rolled out in November 2014. Many improvements have been made and we continue to work to deliver care to Veterans where and when they need it.”

VCP PROGRESS TO DATE

- ◆ Over 2 million appointments scheduled using the VCP significantly increases Veterans access to care.
- ◆ Since the start of VCP we have seen a dramatic increase in utilization. From October 2015 to March 2016 VCP authorizations for care have increased 103 percent.
- ◆ Over the course of the last 12 months, the Choice Provider Network has grown by 85 percent. The network now has over 350,000 providers and facilities.
- ◆ Improved timeliness of payments to community providers by removing the requirement that VA receive the Veteran’s entire medical record prior to payment.
- ◆ Reduced administrative burden for medical record submission for community providers by streamlining the documentation required.
- ◆ To enhance care coordination for Veterans, we have embedded contractor staff with VA staff at select locations.
- ◆ Created dedicated teams from across the county to deliver community care improvements.
- ◆ VA has also partnered with Congress to change laws to improve the community care experience by:
 - ◆ Removing the enrollment date requirement for Choice, allowing more Veterans to receive community care.
 - ◆ Implementing criteria of 40-mile driving distance from medical facility with primary care physician to increase number of Veterans accessing the program

- ◆ Implementing the unusual or excessive burden criteria to increase access for Veterans that do not meet other eligibility criteria.
- ◆ Expanding the episode of care authorization from 60 days to up to one year to reduce the administrative burdens of Veterans, community providers, and VA staff.

“VA needs Congress’s continued support to keep driving progress forward,” added VA Secretary Robert McDonald. “Several legislative barriers remain which inhibit improvements outlined in our [Plan to Consolidate Community Care Programs.](#)”

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>



Veterans-For-Change, Inc.

Riverside County, CA

Visit our website today

www.Veterans-For-Change.org

Serving those who served!

Please pass on to all your Veteran Friends and Family

Distribution	
Express Mail	144,501
Boston	71,090
Courtesy Copies	3,500
Department of VA	11,749
DoD	12,208
Face Book Pages	3,283
Google	5,987
Los Angeles	122,460
Microsoft	3,152
National Guard	386

New York	140,736
Other Social Media	25,583
San Francisco	70,977
Twitter	32
US House of Reps & Staff	829
US Senators & Staff	98
University of So. California	3,688
US Air Force	30,040
US Army	37,700
US Marines	22,216
US Navy	21,377
Veterans	19,064,706
Washington DC	137,706
Yahoo	134
	19,934,138