



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, May 28, 2017

Volume 8, Issue 22

This-N-That

This weekend will be a long weekend being Monday is Memorial Day!

Most who haven't a clue will use this as an excuse to get hammered, have parties, BBQ, go to the beach or shop the many stores offering "Memorial Day Sales!" Totally oblivious as to what this national day of remembrance is all about.

So for all our civilian readers, further down in this newsletter I have posted some basis ground rules under the heading Memorial Day.

And I know in the past I personally have broken the first rule unintentionally, but I assure you it will never happen again.

Something else I didn't even know what or was there a special meaning to when I visit dad at Riverside National Cemetery were when I would see coins left on headstones.

Here's what the meaning of the coins are:

1. Leaving a penny on the gravestone means that you paid your soldier friend a visit.
2. A nickel means that you and your fallen soldier buddy both went to the same boot camp or other military training course together.
3. If you were lucky enough to have served with the soldier, then you leave a dime.
4. A quarter is very significant because it means that you were there when that soldier died.

I never would touch them, but I did notice them, and finally after digging around I found the above meaning of each of the coins. And I'm sure many of our Veterans didn't know either, so this is why I am posting in this newsletter.

What I would like to ask of everyone this Memorial Day Weekend are two things. First, please take a couple of minutes on Monday and say a silent prayer, thank them for their service and remember their sacrifice. They gave up their today, so you could have your tomorrow's!

Second, I'd like to ask that each person set a table space to be kept vacant as a reminder of all those who gave their all for you and our country!

And as a last goodwill gesture, you could visit a National Cemetery to pay respect to all those who have fallen, and at the same time thank those who are there for their service and let them know you have not forgotten them.

Last week we put the call out to everyone for stories they would share with us to send to members of Congress.

We've received nearly 500 stories and have been blast faxing to all members of Congress since last weekend non-stop.

It's not too late, so if you'd like to share your story and help put faces on the problems that you face in your everyday life in dealing with the VA, please send them on to my e-mail address.

Only rules are no last names, no social security numbers, no phone numbers, only first name, city and state. All other information would be redacted and isn't needed so we can insure the protections of everyone.

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

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org



**Help Blue Water Vietnam Vets Exposed to
Agent Orange**

The “Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act” has been introduced in both the House and Senate (H.R. 299 & S. 422 respectively). These proposals would clarify that service members serving off the coast of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam conflict have a presumption for filing disability claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for ailments associated with exposure to the Agent Orange herbicide. FRA believes Congress should recognize that so-called “Blue water” veterans were exposed to Agent Orange herbicide and authorize presumptive status for VA disability claims associated with this exposure.

Please use the [Action Center](#) to ask your legislators to support this important legislation.

Supreme Court Rules VA Disability Pay Not Divisible in Divorce

Last week the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) unanimously ruled that a state court cannot offset the loss of a divorced spouse's portion of a military retiree's retired pay when that retiree subsequently waives retirement pay in favor of disability pay. The case, *Howell v. Howell*, has settled an issue that has percolated in the military retiree community for years.

TREA: The Enlisted Association was represented at oral argument by Deputy Legislative Director Mike Saunders.

The fact of the case are: in 1991 a court awarded Sandra Howell half of Air Force veteran John Howell's retirement pay when the couple was divorced. However, after becoming aware in 2005 that he was eligible for disability benefits, John, who had received a 20 percent disability rating from the Department of Veterans Affairs, elected to waive \$250 of his \$1,500 a month in retirement pay, which is taxable, in favor of \$250 monthly disability pay from the VA, which is not taxable. That reduced Sandra's monthly divorce settlement by \$125, so she went back to court, arguing that she should get half of what his

retirement pay would have been if he had not opted for disability pay.

The Arizona Supreme Court upheld her claim; SCOTUS's decision overturned the Arizona court's decision.

Until 2003 disabled veterans had to select either their full retirement compensation from the Department of Defense or their VA disability benefit with a reduced retirement annuity. This penalty became known as the "VA offset." Many veterans choose the offset because disability payments are tax-free. In the 2003 and 2004 defense authorization bills, Congress waived this offset in certain cases, and veterans with career-ending combat injuries or a disability rating of 50 percent or higher are now allowed to concurrently receive both types of payments.

The argument made at SCOTUS that ultimately prevailed was that Congress intended for veterans to keep their disability pay, as it compensates veterans and military retirees for the loss of a part of their physical health that they will never get back again. It is designed to "make them whole." Allowing disability pay to be divisible at divorce would liken the veteran or retiree's own body to a piece of divisible property, which is not something that Congress, or anybody else, finds fair.

Source: TREA

Memorial Day

Here's some ground rules for this weekend:

1. Don't wish me a Happy Memorial day. There is nothing happy about brave men and women dying.
2. It's not a holiday. It's a remembrance of those who gave their lives in war or warring conflict, declared and undeclared, on and off the books. They weren't on holiday...
3. If you want to know the true meaning, visit Arlington or your local VA, not Disneyland.
4. Say a prayer... and then mentally thank the brave men and women that never made it home for their sacrifice so that you could be living in the greatest county on the face of the earth today...

TO ALL VETERANS

Netflix is doing a toxic exposure documentary and one episode will address military toxic exposure including Blue Water Navy. Please go upload your story today!

<https://www.chronicillnessdocumentary.com/>

VFC is still conducting the fax blast to members of Congress and sharing your stories with them.

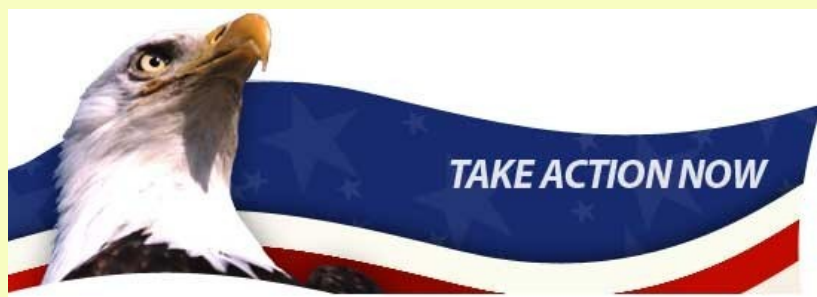
So far we have received just a little more than 400 and it's not too late to join in and help us to help you by showing and telling your stories and hopefully pushing the hands of Congress to take immediate and swift action.

Send your stories to: Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org



WH Budget Trims Some VA Benefits to Fund 'Choice'

President Donald Trump's [budget released Tuesday](#) proposes cutting monthly stipends to some [disabled](#), unemployed veterans and reducing veterans' cost-of-living adjustments as offsets to continue to fund the Veterans Choice Program, which allows veterans to seek care outside the Department of Veterans Affairs.



Support SBP/DIC Offset Repeal Legislation

Senator Nelson (FL) has introduced legislation (S. 339) and Congressman Joe Wilson (SC) has introduced identical legislation in the house (HR 846) that repeals the SBP/DIC offset for survivors, sometimes referred to as the "Military Widows Tax.". Please use this action center contact your legislators to ask them to support this important legislation.

[Take Action!](#)

Save on Out of Pocket Costs Not Covered by TRICARE

Stop paying out of pocket for co pays and other medical related expenses not covered by TRICARE. Help minimize or even eliminate out-of-pocket expenses with the TRICARE Insurance [Supplement Plan](#).

National Memorial Day Parade

Our nation's largest Memorial Day event, The National Memorial Day Parade, will take place along Constitution Avenue in Washington DC, from 2-4 PM this Memorial Day, Monday, May 29, 2017. The parade will be aired live on local television stations across the country, starting at Monday, May 29 at 2:00 PM Eastern / 11:00 AM Pacific. A list of stations carrying the broadcast is available [online](#). The Parade will also be streamed live by [Military.com](#).

TREA Alerts Senate About Need to Guarantee Health Care for All Veterans

Last week we reported that there is a controversy over the health care bill passed by the House of Representatives a couple of weeks ago, called the American Health Care Act (AHCA), and the effect it could have on some veterans.

The issue has become very partisan, with Democrats saying it could hurt up to 7 million veterans who are eligible for VA health care, while Republicans say it will not change anything concerning health care for any veterans.

TREA is a non-partisan association and we are very careful not to pick sides when it comes to party politics. We support legislation and regulations that help veterans and military people and their families, and we oppose legislation and regulations that hurt veterans and military people and their families, without regard to the positions taken by Democrats or Republicans.

Because this issue of whether or not veterans will be hurt by the AHCA, last week TREA sent the following letter to Senators Orrin Hatch (R- Utah) and Lamar Alexander (R- Tenn.), two of the key leaders on the Senate with regard to formulating the Senate's version of the ACHA.

On behalf of the members of The Retired Enlisted Association, a Congressionally-chartered veterans' service organization and the largest association in the nation exclusively for enlisted personnel and veterans from all branches of the Armed Forces, I am writing to urge you and your Senate colleagues to clarify a provision in the House-passed AHCA pertaining to veterans.

According to House Democratic critics of the ACHA, as well as authors in such publications as The Federalist, The Military Times, and the Washington Examiner, as many as seven million veterans may no longer have access to subsidized private health insurance because of provision in the legislation.

Under the ACA, the IRS and the Treasury Department issued a regulation allowing veterans and their dependents to choose whether to get VA coverage or enroll in coverage through the ACA. This means they currently can choose to be on the exchange and receive premium tax credits for it, even if they are eligible for VA care.

However, critics of the ACHA say the House-passed bill strikes

language in current law that applies to the veterans' tax credit with no mandate to reissue the existing IRS regulation, meaning some veterans would no longer have access to subsidized private insurance. The Treasury Department and IRS would then need to come up with new regulations in order to give all veterans the protection they now have.

At the same time, a spokeswoman for the House Ways and Means Committee has said that nothing will change for veterans and that unless they are specifically enrolled in and receiving insurance through the VA they would still be eligible for the tax credit.

We have no wish to get in the middle of a partisan political fight but we believe this needs clarification. That's why we are asking you and the Senators who are crafting the Senate version of the ACHA to specifically address the issue and make clear that the will of Congress is to give all veterans the protections they currently have under the ACA.

We look forward to receiving your response.

While we have not yet received a response from the Senators we will be watching closely to see what action the Senate takes and we will alert you if your help is needed in contacting your Senators and your Representative.

Source: TREA

**CONTACT YOUR
MEMBERS OF CONGRESS!**

To Call your Representative:

202-225-2305

To Call your Senators:

202-224-3841 or 202-224-3553

To call Different Members of Congress:

202-224-3121

TOLL FREE: 866-272-6622

PLEASE... STOP Making Excuses!

www.veterans-for-change.org

Proposed Budget for VA

In his fiscal year (FY) 2018 budget, President Trump is proposing \$186.5 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The FY 2018 budget includes \$82.1 billion in discretionary funding, largely for health care, and \$104.3 billion in mandatory funding for benefit programs, such as disability compensation and pensions, and for continuation of the Veterans Choice Program. The budget also requests \$74 billion, including collections, for the 2019 advance appropriations for medical care. Read more about the proposed VA budget [HERE](#).



Help VA Hold Wrongdoers Accountable!

Background: For far too long, underperforming employees have been allowed to continue working at VA, simply because the processes for removal are so cumbersome. Secretary of Veterans Affairs David J. Shulkin must expeditiously remove or demote VA employees who endanger the well-being of veterans. Senator Marco Rubio has introduced the bipartisan S. 1094, Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017, with the support of VA Committee Chairmen Sen. Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.) and Rep. Phil Roe, M.D. (R-Tenn.) and their ranking members, Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Tim Walz (D-Minn.). This bill will grant Secretary Shulkin the authority to swiftly terminate employees who do not deserve to work at VA.

Take Action: Contact your Senators and tell them to support S. 1094, Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017. Let them know this bill is vital to ensure VA is a strong and accountable organization.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO TAKE ACTION!

Brain Injury Center Adds More Sites

The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) recently added traumatic brain injury (TBI) network sites at Fort Gordon, Georgia; Fort Drum, New York; and at the South Texas Veterans Health Care System in San Antonio. These sites help DVBIC spread the word among the military community about the latest in TBI research and treatment. For more information, read this Health.mil [article](#).

Commissary, Family Programs Would Get Increase Under 2018 Plan

Many military family programs, including the commissary, would see a funding increase under a new [Pentagon budget proposal](#). If President Donald Trump's budget proposal goes through, full funding for the system would be restored. And although the proposal is silent on policy implications, the 2018 Defense Department budget proposal looks to return the system to its 2016 funding level of \$1.4 billion, up \$200 million from this year's level.



GAO: Report on PTSD/TBI Related Discharges

A recent audit by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has found that nearly a quarter of U.S. troops discharged for misconduct were given other-than-honorable discharges despite previously being diagnosed with a mental health condition. The report faulted branches of the Department of Defense (DOD) for having policies inconsistent with, or poor enforcement of, official Pentagon rules for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI) or sexual trauma. According to the GAO, 57,141 of the 91,764 troops separated for misconduct from 2011 through 2015 had been diagnosed with PTSD, TBI or another condition at least two years before their discharge. The [report](#) is available on the GAO website.

Navy Cash Cards Coming

Sailors and Marines will begin receiving new Navy Cash® cards starting summer 2017 as the afloat cashless program transitions to the new partners. The cards will have a different look, but will still work the same way. Until the new cards are received, Sailors and Marines should continue to use their current cards. Cards will be distributed in phases aboard ship. The only difference Sailors will notice is the new artwork and that the new cards are issued by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston (FRBB) and PNC Bank. The customer service phone numbers, email address, and the website address will remain unchanged. For more information, visit the Navy Cash® webpage on the U.S. Department of Treasury, Bureau of Fiscal Service [website](#).



U.S. Government Accountability Office Reports

- 1) Veterans Affairs: Improper Payment Estimates and Ongoing Efforts for Reduction.
- 2) DOD Training: DOD Has Taken Steps to Assess Common Military Training.
- 3) Social Security Numbers: OMB and Federal Efforts to Reduce Collection, Use, and Display.
- 4) Emerging Infectious Diseases: Actions Needed to Address the Challenges of Responding to Zika Virus Disease Outbreaks.
- 5) Emerging Infectious Diseases: Actions Needed to Ensure Improved Response to Zika Virus Disease Outbreaks.
- 6) Semiannual Report to Congress, October 1, 2016 through March 31, 2017.

The Legion Testifies on Legislative Agenda Affecting Veterans

The Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs recently held a hearing in Washington, D.C., to seek testimonies from local veterans' service organizations (VSOs) on more than a dozen draft bills that focus on critical issues affecting veterans and their families. The bills focus on several hot-button issues that range from improving military and veteran caregiver services, to establishing more accountability and whistleblower protection for Department of Veterans Affairs employees. American Legion National Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division Director Louis Celli testified on the Legion's behalf. A video of and testimonies from the hearing are available on the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs [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

Veteran's Story Finally Published

Jim Byers' new book, *An American Odyssey*, is based on a short story that his grandfather, Donald Byers, wrote about his stateside basic training several years after his discharge from the United States Army. Those handwritten and typed accounts constitute the early chapters, while the latter portion of the book is derived from notes he scribbled into pocket-sized pads while in combat in World War II. Letters that he wrote to family and friends filled in pieces of missing time and also reveal his personable side. The book is being published nearly sixty years after Donald Byers' death. For more information read the VA Vantage Point [Blog](#), and visit the My American Odyssey [website](#).

Veterans-For-Change Web Site

The Veterans-For-Change website has been under construction since day one back in 2009 and every day since then. The looks pretty much stay the same, but in the background constant improvement and change is being done to make our website the most user friendly “One-Stop-Shop” website to find almost everything you might have tried to find searching the internet.

Almost a hundred people have been involved; collecting web links to documents now houses on the VFC website, collecting thousands of web links for various issues, illnesses and benefits. Creating forums for all eras of service and two forums one just for men and one just for woman where you can go question, comment, share medical and personal concerns, what ever you'd like it to be.

We also have a forum with a licensed Mental Health Worker, again where you can seek help or just ask questions.

We average 1,700 hits per day, and downloads average 1,000 per day with a total 3,304,761 visitors as of Friday.

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.

www.veterans-for-change.org

- Documents Library with over 16,034 documents on-line (Updated: 5/18/17)
- FAQ's with more than 1,600 FAQ's and answers
- Multiple Forums
 - o Afghanistan Veterans
 - o FMP - Foreign Medial Program
 - o Gulf War & Desert Storm Veterans
 - o Iraq Veterans
 - o Korean Veterans
 - o Men Veterans Forum
 - o Mental Health for Veterans
 - o Political Issues
 - o Suggestion Box
 - o The Mess Hall
 - o VA Hospitals and Medical Centers
 - o Veteran Affairs
 - o Vietnam Veterans
 - o Welcome Mat
 - o Women Veterans Forum
 - o WW II Veterans
- Job Postings
- Memorial Pages (Updated: 10/10/16)
- News (Articles On-Line: 6,474)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than 3,549, Added 1 New Links (Updated: 05/10/17)

If you have a submission for the memorial pages, E-Mail:

Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org

Commissary Brands Are Coming

Commissary brands will soon debut on store shelves. Commissaries in the United States will see an initial roll out at the end of May with bottled water and later in June with plastic bags and paper products. Stores in overseas areas are expected to see commissary brand items in September. Commissary brand products will be equal or lower in price to commercial grocery store brands. The Defense Commissary Agency's (DeCA's) commissary brand will be sold under two names: Freedom's Choice for food items and HomeBase for nonfood items such as paper products and other household items. For more information on DeCA's commissary brand program, visit DeCA's Private Label FAQ [webpage](#).



**Implement Regulation to Help Blue Water
Vietnam Veterans Now!**

FRA supports the “Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act” (H.R. 299 & S. 422) that would clarify that service members serving off the coast of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam conflict have a presumption for filing disability claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for ailments associated with exposure to the Agent Orange herbicide. Studies demonstrate that the desalinization process used on Australian and U.S. Navy ships off the coast of Vietnam magnified the exposure of the Agent Orange in the water.

The VA Secretary could help these veterans by implementing a regulation. FRA has met with the VA Secretary and we have been informed that he is reviewing the policy. Please use the Action Center to ask the VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin to implement a regulation giving these veterans a presumption for filing disability claims with the VA for ailments associated with exposure to the Agent Orange herbicide.

Take **ACTION!**



<https://twitter.com/Veterans4Change>

**Secretary David Shulkin Announces
Establishment of Office of Accountability
and Whistleblower Protection & Names
Peter O'Rourke as Senior Advisor and
Executive Director**

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin recently announced that he has established the Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection in the Department, and that Peter O'Rourke will serve as Senior Advisor and Executive Director of the Office, reporting directly to the Secretary.

This announcement implements the requirements in President Trump's Executive Order signed at the Department on April 27, 2017 in one third of the 45-day timeframe required by the Order.

As detailed in the Executive Order, the Executive Director will:

- Advise and assist the Secretary in using, as appropriate, all available authorities to discipline or terminate any VA manager or employee who has violated the public's trust and failed to carry out his or her duties on behalf of Veterans.
- Advise and assist the Secretary in recruiting, rewarding, and retaining high-performing employees.
- Identify statutory barriers to the Secretary's authority to discipline or terminate any employee who has jeopardized the health, safety, or well-being of a Veteran and to recruit, reward, or retain high-performing employee and report such barriers to the Secretary for consideration as to the need for legislative changes.
- Work closely with relevant VA components to ensure swift and effective resolution of Veterans' complaints of wrongdoing at VA.
- Work closely with relevant VA components to ensure adequate investigation and correction of wrongdoing throughout the VA, and protect employees who lawfully disclose wrongdoing from retaliation.
- Consider redundancies and the possibility of combining the office with existing VA components to improve the VA's efficiency, effectiveness, or accountability.

O'Rourke is a veteran of both the US Navy and Air Force and has held executive roles in non-profit, consulting, and the federal government.

"I am pleased to announce the establishment of this office, fulfilling one of my highest priorities at the Department. We need to hold our employees accountable for their actions if they violate the public trust, and at the same time protect whistleblowers from retaliation," said Dr.

Shulkin. "Setting up this office under the strong leadership of Peter O'Rourke will give us the tools to do just that."

Source: TREA

Links to Other Stories

- 1) "You're Fired" bill scapegoats frontline VA workers and politicizes career civil service, union says
- 2) Care and Benefits for Veterans Strengthened by \$186.5 Billion VA Budget
- 3) Hold Veterans Affairs officials accountable
- 4) House of Lies: Agent Orange and the Government's Policy of Cover-up
- 5) House passes VA appeals bill and 5 other veterans measures
- 6) Inspector General Finds 'Cockroach Infestation' at Illinois VA Center
- 7) Make Memorial Day Every Day
- 8) Man Goes Undercover as Homeless to Help Fellow Veterans
- 9) Moving Veterans Forward program furnishing 800-plus homes
- 10) POW/MIA UPDATE: May 17, 2017
- 11) Trump Budget Calls for 2.1% Military Pay Raise in 2018
- 12) VA Announces Contract Award for Program for a Faster Care Mobile App for Veterans to Schedule Medical Appointments
- 13) VA Hosts Annual Brain Trust Event in Boston
- 14) VA Notes: Better Understanding, Better Care
- 15) VA Secretary Shulkin in Support of Senate Accountability Bill
- 16) VA Union Slams Pending Anti-Worker Legislation
- 17) Veterans Affairs Secretary Urges Med Graduates to Put Principles First
- 18) Veterans Affairs Taps Energy Department's Supercomputers for Big Data Health Projects
- 19) Veterans Conquer Depression with Equine Therapy
- 20) Women Veterans: Help for Postpartum Depression

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

President's Budget Proposes to Reduce Veterans' Benefits

On May 23, 2017, the Administration released the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) budget for fiscal year 2018. Contained within this budget were two legislative proposals that DAV strongly opposes because if enacted into law, they would seriously reduce benefits for our nation's ill and injured veterans, their families and survivors.

10-year cost-of-living round down

The Administration's budget proposal contains a provision that would round down cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for disability compensation, Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) and some other benefits for the next 10 years. DAV remains adamantly opposed to this or any permanent round down provision.

Veterans and their survivors rely on their compensation for essential purchases such as food, transportation, rent and utilities. It also enables them to maintain a marginally higher quality of life in the face of rising inflation. This COLA round down provision would unfairly target disabled veterans, their dependents and survivors to save the government money and offset the cost of other federal programs. That is simply unacceptable.

The cumulative effect of this provision of law would, in essence, levy a 10-year "tax" on disabled veterans and their survivors, reducing their income each year. When multiplied by the number of disabled veterans and recipients of DIC, hundreds of millions of dollars would be siphoned from these deserving individuals annually. All totaled, VA estimates this proposed COLA round down would cost beneficiaries close to \$2.7 billion over the next 10 years.

INDIVIDUAL UNEMPLOYABILITY AND SOCIAL SECURITY OFFSET

The Administration's budget proposal also contains a provision that would scale back VA's Individual Employability (IU) program for thousands of veterans. DAV strongly opposes this ill-conceived

proposal.

The IU program allows VA to pay certain veterans, who are determined to be unemployable as a result of service-connected disabilities, disability compensation at the 100 percent rate, even though VA has not rated their service-connected disabilities at the 100 percent level. This proposal would terminate existing IU ratings for veterans when they reach the minimum retirement age for Social Security purposes, currently 62, as well as cut off IU benefits for any veteran already in receipt of Social Security retirement benefits.

We oppose this and any measure that proposes to offset the payment of any other federal benefit or earned benefit entitlement against VA compensation payments made to service-connected disabled veterans. Benefits received from the VA, or those based on military retirement pay, have differing eligibility criteria for different purposes than other federal programs. Social Security benefits are an earned benefit for retirement while VA disability compensation is an earned benefit derived from injury or illness from military service. Reducing the Social Security benefit provided to a disabled veteran in receipt of IU is simply an unjust penalty and would place an undue hardship on all veterans in receipt of IU and their families.

Furthermore, we are vehemently opposed to limiting disability compensation benefits due to a veteran's age. Many disabled veterans might not have income replacement available-especially those who had been on IU for an extended period in advance of reaching retirement age. Arbitrarily cutting off IU eligibility for veterans who turn 62, an age at which millions of American's continue working and saving money for their retirements-a luxury that many disabled veterans do not have-would be grossly unfair to the men and women served.

We are calling on all DAV and members and supporters to contact their members of Congress and urge them to reject these harmful proposals that would negatively impact injured and ill veterans, their families and survivors.

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



Information Alert House Passes Veterans Bills

Veterans Bills Approved Include the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017, a Cost of Living Increase for Veterans Disability Payments and a bill that would require VA to report on the acceptance of private medical evidence submitted by non-Department of Veterans Affairs medical professionals in support of a veterans' claims.

On May 23, 2017, the House of Representatives approved the following bills that would improve veterans' benefits and claims delivery. These measures address some of DAV's key legislative priorities and are all in line with DAV resolutions.

DAV strongly supports H.R. 1329, a bill that would provide a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for veterans and their families and survivors

in receipt of compensation benefits. DAV Resolution No. 013 supports legislation to provide a realistic cost-of-living allowance for our nation's disabled veterans, their dependents and survivors.

DAV strongly supports H.R. 2288, the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017. This legislation would give veterans more options to have adverse claims decisions reviewed by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) or the Board of Veterans Appeals. It also affords opportunities to present new evidence to bolster their claims. DAV Resolution No. 222 calls on Congress and VBA to support significant and meaningful claims and appeals processing reform.

DAV supports H.R. 1725, a measure that would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide detailed reports to Congress on the acceptance, and use of private medical evidence submitted by non-Department of Veterans Affairs medical professionals in support of a veteran's claims. DAV Resolution No. 230 seeks the enactment of legislation that would require VA to consider private medical evidence supplied by licensed private health care providers.

DAV strongly supports H.R. 1005, legislation that would improve the payments to state veterans' homes offering medically based adult day health care services as an alternative to nursing care to eligible veterans. DAV Resolution No. 127 supports state veterans homes as the most cost-effective nursing care option available for veterans.

In testimony, DAV supported the intent of H.R. 467, a bill that would require VA medical centers to comply with regulations and directives pertaining to scheduling medical care appointments for veterans.

Finally, the House passed H.R. 1162, a bill that would authorize a pilot program to offer veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, military sexual trauma, chronic pain, and opiate addiction EKG/EEG-guided resonance therapy. Although DAV has no specific resolution on this measure, we expressed support of complementary and alternative treatments in testimony, in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 244.

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**Support our Services to Veterans
Caregivers Act**

Congressman Raul Ruiz introduced H.R. 1618, the Support Our Services (SOS) to Veterans' Caregivers Act. The bill would amend the law to allow VA to assist caregivers who are supporting the needs of veterans with serious illnesses related to military service. Such illnesses of veterans might include amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease), cancer or other devastating illnesses that can leave veterans completely dependent upon others for help.

Caregiver assistance has been critical for supporting family members of post 9/11 veterans who have turned their lives upside down to address the often constant care demands of gravely injured veterans. Under the current program, caregivers are provided assistance with training and technical support to manage their loved ones' care needs. Even more importantly, VA is authorized to provide health care coverage and counseling for the caregiver, at least 30 days of respite care, and a small stipend for the caregiver so they are not impoverished by the commitment they have made to meet their loved ones' needs.

Ruiz views his legislation as a correction for an unintentional oversight that has left the needs of thousands of caregivers assisting veterans with serious illness, rather than injury, unaddressed. It would also require VA conduct an annual multidimensional assessment to measure the impact of caregiving on the overall health and wellness of caregivers.

DAV Resolution No. 131 supports comprehensive assistance for caregivers of veterans with wounds, injuries or illness from all eras of service.

Please write your Representative asking him or her to cosponsor and support the final passage of H.R. 1618. Thank you for your participation in the Commander's Action Network.

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

ONE VOICE
CAN MAKE
ALL THE DIFFERENCE!



Veterans-For-Change, Inc.

Riverside County, CA

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Serving those who served!

Please pass on to all your Veteran Friends and Family!

Distribution	
Express Mail	144,815
Boston	75,190
Courtesy Copies	3,500
Department of VA	12,780
DoD	30,104
Face Book Pages	3,531
Google	28,688
Los Angeles	135,193
Microsoft	9,710
National Guard	4123
New York	152,803
Other Social Media	42,982
San Francisco	78,993
Twitter	40
US House of Reps & Staff	987
US Senators & Staff	109
University of So. California	5,250
US Air Force	26,222
US Army	67,124
US Marines	28,610
US Navy	38,047
Veterans	19,085,190
Washington DC	142,730
Yahoo	132
	20,116,853

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