



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

## **This-N-That**

We recently lost another Veteran who was at the time being held in detention by Cibola County Detention Center, 70 miles west of Albuquerque, NM due to a medical emergency that jail staff failed and/or refused to address, even when fellow inmates repeatedly tried to alert staff.

Even when 50-year-old Doug Edmisten started violently writhing on his bottom bunk and vomiting blood it was still ignored by staff.

I don't know why they refused to address the emergency for many hours, maybe it was that they didn't want to incur the cost of providing medical care, costs of transporting to a hospital, but it happened.

Down further under links to other stories you can read the article of the incident.

Homeless Veterans is always an issue that I personally do not feel is being dealt with properly by the VA, and in Los Angeles the West Los Angeles VAMC has been in the news off and on for many years now.

I remember when a Federal Court Judge in San Francisco issued an order to remove all civilian businesses from the property, and I have tried to get a copy of the court order for publication, but, those who

promised to provide it have failed.

Needless to say Judicial Watch who has been following and on top of this particular VAMC has filed a second lawsuit in order to obtain records of NON-Veteran use of land.

I know it won't bring about resolution, but there are many still fighting to have the land returned to the VA and all buildings be renovated and converted to housing to help the more than 12,000 homeless Veterans in Los Angeles County alone.

For some time now I have been working with a Veteran here in Southern CA who had been told to go to a local emergency room for medical care as the nearest VA was too far away.

The Veteran and his wife went to the ER, and were told he needed emergency surgery, with a phone call by his wife to the VA, she was told verbally over the phone get the surgery done and the VA would cover the cost, NO problem.

Well the total costs were nearly \$90,000 for the surgery and hospital stay, and of course the VA denied the medical bills.

Well now it seems this is standard practice with the VA as Bob Ramsey of Minnesota has also encountered the same situation where the VA was denying his medical bills, and in both situations each Veteran has been turned over to collections.

Fortunately although this is still dragging out, the Veteran I am working with, his wife was smart enough to have recorded the phone conversation to get the approval and the approval was recorded.

I know when it comes to emergency situations, you may not have many choices and have to take what ever actions are necessary.

I very strongly recommend although the mindset might not be there at the time of crisis, be sure to write down and document everything so that, God forbid, you too are faced with the same situations.

We continue to receive more stories and have been blast faxing to all members of Congress since nine weeks ago Sunday 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](mailto:Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org)

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## VA Choice Program Funding Problems Loom

Returning from their 4th of July recess today, Congress has only a few days to act before funding for the VA Choice program dries up in early August.

Late last month VA Secretary David Shulkin warned Congress that money in the Choice program funds was being spent at a faster rate than officials expected, threatening to bankrupt the program before the end of the fiscal year. Available funds dropped from about \$2 billion to less than \$850 million in three months.

The VA has asked for authority to move money from other outside care initiatives to the program to cover the funding gaps, ensuring that veterans medical appointments aren't disrupted while VA officials work

on an overhaul of the Choice program, as proposed in the White House budget request.

But Congress left town for the July 4 recess without addressing the issue. VA officials have warned that the money will run out in early August, and the program will face problems if a fix isn't put in place well before then.

Secretary Shulkin has proposed significant changes to the program next fiscal year, and is expected to detail specifics at a Senate hearing on July 11.

Source: TREA

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## Exchanges Soon Opening to Millions of Veterans

Last month, 12,000 veterans began shopping at the military exchanges by way of a “beta test.” The beta test allowed veterans’ to test the new online exchange shopping experience, which will open for millions of honorably discharged veterans on Veterans Day Nov. 11th. All veterans are being encouraged to confirm veteran eligibility status at <https://www.vetverify.org>. It might be a multi-step process if the Defense Manpower Data Center lacks information to verify that a veteran served and received an honorable discharge.



**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!](#)

**Transportation Security Administration** | **CarePoint HEALTHCARE** | **isle** | **Lady Luck**  
**Davita Medical Group** | **Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corp.** | **HAYNES**  
**rh Robert Half** | **BAL SEAL ENGINEERING, INC.** | **NATIONAL GUARD**  
**MassMutual FINANCIAL GROUP** | **Northwestern Mutual** | **NATIONAL AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**  
**Sava SeniorCare** | **Select HOME CARE** | **BROOKDALE SENIOR LIVING**  
**WESTIN HOTELS & RESORTS** | **Cabela's** | **FedEx Express** | **Via Mobility for Life**  
**DiamondStandard EVENTS** | **CSI CAREER STRATEGIES, INC.** | **The Children's Hospital** | **LODGE CASINO**  
**COLAVRIA HOSPITALITY** | **BRILLIANT EARTH** | **sears HOME SERVICES**  
**TOWNE PARK** | **Sonnenalp Hotel** | **Leaderquest** | **Atria SENIOR LIVING**  
**DeVry University** | **OURAY SPORTSWEAR** | **SELECT ENERGY SERVICES**

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## TRICARE Online Patient Portal

The Defense Health Agency's TRICARE Online Patient Portal (TOL PP) recently upgraded several features. The online features allow TRICARE beneficiaries to schedule appointments, access personal health data by utilizing the "Blue Button" feature, refill prescriptions, access service separation and retirement information, send secure messages to their health care team by using RelayHealth and provides 24/7 access to registered nurses through the Nurse Advice Line. TOL PP is also now available on mobile devices to further enhance access-to-care capabilities. For more information on TOL PP, visit the TRICARE Online Patient Portal [website](#).

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## Congress Again Proposing Cuts to Dual-Military BAH

For the second year in a row the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) is suggesting cuts to the basic allowance for housing to come up with savings to spend on other military programs.

SASC's FY 2018 National Defense Authorization Act includes a provision that would cut BAH for dual military couples to the "without dependents rate" even if they have kids. The provision is not in the House version of the bill. If the Senate passes the bill it will have to be reconciled with the House version.

Needless to say, TREA: The Enlisted Association strongly opposes any compensation cut for currently serving members of the Armed Forces. Raising children is hard enough nowadays - these people are doing the best that they can, and punishing them for marrying another servicemember would harm morale and create a set of rather perverse incentives.

Source: TREA





## **Caregivers Program Should Include All Badly Disabled Veterans**

Expand VA Caregivers Program (HR 1472/S.591)

The "Military and Veteran Caregiver Services Improvement Act" has been introduced in the House and Senate (H.R. 1472 and S. 591 respectively) to expand the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Caregivers program to include veterans catastrophically disabled before September 11, 2001. The current program applies to veterans disabled on or after September 11, 2001.

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

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## U.S. Government Accountability Office Reports

- 1) [Chemical and Biological Defense: DOD Has Identified an Infrastructure Manager and Is Developing the Position's Roles and Responsibilities.](#)
- 2) [Critical Infrastructure Protection: DHS Has Fully Implemented Its Chemical Security Expedited Approval Program, and Participation to Date Has Been Limited.](#)
- 3) [Defense-Wide Working Capital Fund: Action Needed to Maintain Cash Balances within Required Levels.](#)
- 4) [Gulf War Illness: Additional Actions Needed to Improve VA's Claims Process.](#)
- 5) [Gulf War Illness: Improvements Needed for VA to Better Understand, Process, and Communicate Decisions on Claims.](#)
- 6) [Hospital Value-Based Purchasing: CMS Should Take Steps to Ensure Lower Quality Hospitals Do Not Qualify for Bonuses.](#)
- 7) [Investigational New Drugs: FDA Has Taken Steps to Improve the Expanded Access Program but Should Further Clarify How Adverse Events Data Are Used.](#)
- 8) [Telecommunications: Additional Action Needed to Address Significant Risks in FCC's Lifeline Program.](#)
- 9) [VA Health Care: Improvements Needed in Data and Monitoring of Clinical Productivity and Efficiency.](#)
- 10) [VA Information Technology: Pharmacy System Needs Additional Capabilities for Viewing, Exchanging, and Using Data to Better Serve Veterans.](#)
- 11) [VA Real Property: Planning and Communication Improvements Could Help Better Align Facilities with Veterans' Needs.](#)
- 12) [Veterans Affairs: Improved Management Processes Are](#)





## **Veterans call the President. Whose VA is it?**

We need everyone to call The President's VA Hotline @ 855-948-2311 8:00AM till 5:30PM ET and tell them about the Veterans plight with the VA denying presumption of exposure to Agent Orange and various other illnesses related to Agent Orange. Tell them your story.

This would also apply to Veterans from Korea, Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan as well.

This is YOUR CHANCE to get the message through to the President . Be patient and wait for the operator to talk to you .

The line is being manned by military spouses, parents and veterans. All are volunteers. Please show them the respect they deserve.

And if you have not written your story and sent it to me, please do keep them coming. We're not stopping the attack from the side of Congress either!

Send your stories to: [Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org](mailto:Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org)

Just please keep in mind, no last names, street addresses, social security numbers or phone numbers. Just First Name, City and State.

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

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## **Commissary On-Site Sales**

The Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) Guard/Reserve On-Site Sales provide the commissary benefit to those who do not live near one. Customers shop and pay for purchases much like they would at a commissary. There are also preorder and prepay sales where customers order their groceries on-line and pay for them prior to pick-up at the designated location. There are also hybrid sales that are a combination of conventional and preorder/prepay. Sales average two or three days and are open to all authorized commissary shoppers. To find a sale, visit the DeCA Guard/Reserve [webpage](#) that lists sales

locations and dates along with contacts for more information on particular events.

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## **VA Supports Expanding Caregivers to All Generations**

VA Secretary David Shulkin told congressional committees last month that he supports a change in law to expand the Post-9/11 caregiver program so that the cash stipend and support services can benefit caregivers to severely injured veterans from all generations.

Before that change takes place the VA intends to standardize how the Post-9/11 program is administered across more than 150 VA medical facilities supported by more than 360 caregiver coordinators. There have been irregularities in vetting people for the program at VAMCs across the country. The VA has been discharging hundreds of veterans and caregivers from the program with little or no explanation as to why they no longer qualified for benefits.

It got so bad that in April Secretary Shulkin told all VA facilities to cease discharging people from the Caregiver program until it can be made uniform across the VA system.

When discharges ceased, about 22,000 caregivers for veterans with severe physical or mental injuries were receiving Post-9/11 benefits, down from a peak of 25,000 in 2015. The program enacted in 2010 provides cash stipends for caregivers based on hours of care required and local wage scales, health insurance if caregivers have none, guaranteed periods of paid respite to avoid caregiver burnout and training to enhance patient safety.

Over the six years of program operations, 11,000 veterans using in-home caregivers had their eligibility revoked, and almost 1800 of these veterans lost or forfeited caregiver benefits more than once, according to VA data.

Forty-one percent of revocations occurred because veterans no longer met clinical eligibility criteria. Thirty-four percent asked to end benefits, sometimes because marriages to caregivers dissolved under the stress and demands of wartime injuries. Fraud or program abuse accounted for 11 percent of revocations. Eight percent of participants lost eligibility for non-compliance, such as refusing home visits. In four percent of cases, caregiver or veteran died. Only one percent of veterans dropped the benefit to enter residential care.

The 41 percent tossed from the program for failing to meet screening criteria raised the most concern among advocacy groups. Too many lost eligibility, proponents argued, because initial VA assessments screened applicants using criteria shaped by limited resources and individual judgment.

Source: TREA



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## **The Moving Wall**

In 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall was built and dedicated

to those who served and died in the Vietnam War. While attending the dedication in 1982, a group of artists felt the positive power of The Wall and felt it should be shared not only in Washington D.C., but across the country. Sitting at about half the size of the actual Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall, the two replicas began their journey in Tyler, Texas in 1984. Today, the walls travel across the country from April to November, to pay tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. For more information, visit the Wikipedia website at [and The Moving Wall homepage](#).

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## **Help Extend VA's Comprehensive Assistance Program to Family Caregivers of Veterans of All Military Service Eras**

DAV's "Unsung Heroes Initiative" was launched to great fanfare on Capitol Hill on Monday, June 20. As part of this campaign, DAV National Commander Dave Riley, in concert with Paid Leave for the United States (PL+US), a new organization that shares our goal of supporting family caregivers, recently published a [Change.org](#) petition urging Congress to expand comprehensive caregiver benefits to severely disabled veterans of all generations.

Join more than 30,000 supporters who have already signed this important petition calling for change. Ensure Congress makes this a top legislative priority in the 115th Congress.

Click [HERE](#) to sign.

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## VA Offers PTSD Consultation Program

Roughly eight out of every 100 people will experience post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at some point in their lifetime, and almost 500,000 of the Veterans treated by VA have a primary or secondary diagnosis of PTSD. One of the best kept secrets of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the [PTSD Consultation](#) Program at the National Center for PTSD. The PTSD Consultation Program is valuable for anyone providing mental health support within or outside of VA because all of its services and resources are free, and the consultants are leaders and innovators in PTSD treatment and research. To use the free PTSD Consultation Program resources, providers who treat Veterans can email the PTSD Consultation Program at [PTSDconsult@va.gov](mailto:PTSDconsult@va.gov), call 866-948-7880.

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## 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**

## Links to Other Stories

- 1) [15 Things People with Assistance Dogs Want the Public to Know](#)
- 2) [Airline passengers refuse to wait for body of servicemember to leave aircraft](#)
- 3) [At 95, Weinstein Keeps Going After 50 Years on Bench](#)
- 4) [Forced to move: City Council votes to uphold renter policy, despite pleas](#)
- 5) [Getting homeless Veterans tested for Hepatitis C](#)
- 6) [Hundreds of VA officials fired since Trump's inauguration](#)
- 7) [Inmates pray and beg for help as a Veteran slowly dies. Jailers do nothing, lawsuit alleges](#)
- 8) [Judicial Watch Files Second Lawsuit Against Veterans Affairs for Information on Non-Veteran Use of Massive West Los Angeles VA Facility](#)
- 9) [VA Becomes the First Federal Agency to Publicly Post All Major Disciplinary Actions](#)
- 10) [VA Expands Transparency, Accountability Efforts: Becomes First Agency to Post Information on Adverse Employee Actions, Requires Senior Official Sign-off on all Settlement Actions above \\$5,000](#)
- 11) [VA research targets brain receptor that processes pain in PTSD, alcohol abuse patients](#)

- 12) [VA To Publicly Post Employees' Disciplinary Actions](#)
- 13) [VA's New Rules on Agent Orange Reject Most Previously Filed Claims](#)
- 14) [Vet turned over to collections after VA bill denial](#)
- 15) [Veteran Legislation](#)
- 16) [Veterans' Affairs Fires Over 500 Employees, Suspends 200 For Misconduct](#)
- 17) [Washington DC VA Medical Center Operating Room Temporarily Shut Down](#)

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

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## **House Panel Votes to Include Marines in Navy Department Name**

When the House version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2018 was passed out of the House Armed Services Committee two weeks ago and on to the full House for a vote, it included a provision to change the name of the Department of the Navy to the "Department of the Navy and Marine Corps."

The provision was authored by Rep. Walter Jones (R-S.C.), within whose district lays Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune.

According to a press release from the Congressman, "The Marine Corps is an equal member of this department, and therefore, deserves equal recognition in its title."

Jones has been seeking to make the change since 2001.

The NDAA still has to be voted on by the entire House of

Representatives and then the Senate must pass its own version of the NDAA. If the Senate does not include the name change in its bill it will have to be negotiated between the House and Senate.

Source: TREA

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## **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 2,200 hits per day, and downloads average 1,000 per day with a total 3,415,309 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](http://www.veterans-for-change.org)

- Documents Library with over 16,034 documents on-line (Updated: 5/19/17)
- 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: 6,583)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than 3,591, Added 6 New Links (Updated: 06/21/17)

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

[Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org](mailto:Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org)

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## **Navy to do Away with Peacoat?**

While military traditions are important in all of the U.S. Armed Services, the Navy is one of the most tradition-laden. That's why it was a surprise last year when the Navy Personnel Command announced that the iconic Navy peacoat would be an optional item as

of October 1, 2018.

The replacement for the peacoat would be a black cold-weather parka for the service and service dress uniforms. The rationale for the change is to reduce up-front costs for sailors and offer more versatile outerwear.

In reaction to that announcement, the House Armed Services Committee has included in its version of the FY2018 NDAA a provision that expresses concern that the Navy policy change will harm the American textile industry that makes the peacoats. It also calls on the Secretary of the Navy to explain the peacoat change. However, currently the position of Secretary of the Navy is vacant.

The peacoat is manufactured by Sterlingwear of Boston which had a contract worth up to \$48 million in 2015 to make the coats. The company has said that phasing out of the traditional peacoat could cost hundreds of jobs and cause the end of New England woolen manufacturing.

Besides the effects on the nation's domestic textile industrial base, the Armed Services Committee also wants to know why the coat is being removed as a mandatory piece of clothing and whether any improvements to the peacoat had been considered by the Navy. It also wants to see an evaluation of the costs for the peacoat versus the cold-weather parka.

The full House still has to pass its version of the NDAA and unless the Senate includes a similar provision in its bill the two Houses will have to negotiate about whether to pass the provision into law.

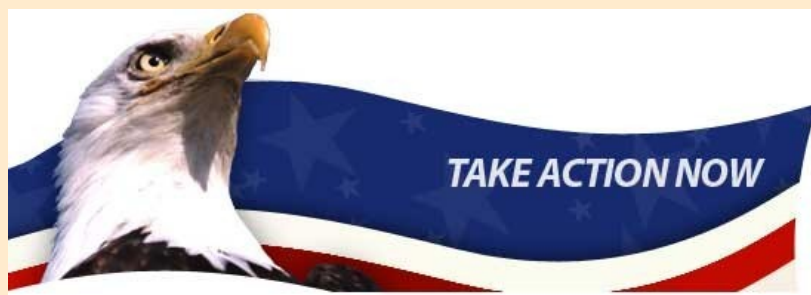
Source: TREA

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<https://twitter.com/Veterans4Change>

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## **Support S. 683, Keeping Our Commitment to Disabled Veterans Act of 2017**

Senator Mazie Hirono introduced S. 683, the Keeping Our Commitment to Disabled Veterans Act of 2017. This bill would extend the requirement for VA to provide nursing home care to veterans with service-connected conditions rated at 70 percent or more, as well as those who need such care for a service-connected disability, or who have a rating of total disability based on individual unemployability.

DAV Resolution No. 142 calls for support of legislation to expand the comprehensive program of Long-Term Support Services (LTSS) for service-connected disabled veterans irrespective of their disability ratings. The resolution notes that there is a subset of service-connected veterans with chronic or terminal illnesses who need LTSS and will require institutional placements. According to a recent DAV family caregiver survey, most caregivers indicated that their loved one would need care in an institution now (26%) or would need institutional care in the future without their support (49%). Without family caregivers, institutional care is the only alternative for many veterans



with severe disabilities.

According to VA, there were around 21,300 veterans nationwide who met the legislative mandate for nursing home care in fiscal year (FY) 2016. VA estimates there will be over 21,800 veterans treated under this legislative mandate in 2017 and this number is projected to increase to over 22,200 in FY 2018 and over 22,600 in FY 2019. Without extension of the current mandate by Congress beyond December 31, 2017, VA would no longer be required to provide this critical LTSS coverage to service-disabled veterans.

Please ask your Senator to cosponsor and to support passage of the Keeping Our Commitment to Disabled Veterans Act of 2017, S. 683.

As always thank you for your support of disabled veterans and the DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network).

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



**“We Proudly Support our  
Military Personnel & Families”**

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## **New Veterans' Administrator at SBA**

Today the SBA announced the appointment of Mr. Raymond Milano as Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Veterans Business Development, U.S. Small Business Administration.

For the past 2 years Mr. Milano has served as SBA's Director, Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) Program. In that position he significantly increased VBOC participation in SBA's Boots to Business program. Before leading the VBOC Program, Mr. Milano served 16 years at SBA's Massachusetts District Office in numerous jobs. (If any Massachusetts TREA members have dealt with him please call our Washington Office at 703-684-1981). He is a graduate of Northeastern School of Law and proudly served in the US Marine Corps.

Source: TREA

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New York	153,566
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San Francisco	79,370
Twitter	43
US House of Reps & Staff	990
US Senators & Staff	109
University of So. California	5,335
US Air Force	26,395
US Army	67,564
US Marines	28,795
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