



*Est. 2006*

# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, October 01, 2017

Volume 8, Issue 40



**This-N-That**

PTSD in my opinion is one of the first types of claims that are almost systematically denied.

Even with a C&P doctors notes saying moderate to extreme, and using the phrase more likely than not was caused by his/her service.

Why? Do they think too many Veterans are claiming this? Are there too many "false" claims?

What is the real deal?

If you have been denied, maybe on appeal or have been on appeal for many months, then it's time to get serious.

Our recommendation is to call your Congressman's local office, ask to speak to the Veteran Liaison. Keep a civil tone, no foul language, give a brief explanation and ask for their help.

Most will take you on and most of the time are able to get your claim or appeal pushed through.

It should never come to this, especially if a VA doctor has said you diagnosis is PTSD. That to me should warrant an immediate approval.

And if the approval ratings were to increase, I can only imagine the suicide rates would drop. And this is part of two things that need to change.

There are a couple of articles posted to the VFC website, and links to those articles are further down in the newsletter.

Please take a few minutes to read them, become familiar with what you can do to help prevent suicides.

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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## **State of Emergency Declared due to Hurricane Maria**

Due to Hurricane Maria, referral waivers are extended until Dec. 6 for Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and several other locations. For more information, visit: [www.tricare.mil/Disaster](http://www.tricare.mil/Disaster).

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## **TREA Fights to Save Servicemembers' Financial Rights**

Last week TREA Legislative Director Larry Madison and Deputy Legislative Director Mike Saunders attended a meeting with Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.), Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, to discuss the issue of forced arbitration and how its use by so many companies essentially nullifies the rights granted to Active Duty personnel and members of the Guard and Reserve by the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA).

SCRA provides certain protections from civil actions against reservists & members of the guard who are called to Active Duty or given orders to deploy. It restricts or limits actions against these personnel in the areas of financial management, such as rental agreements, security deposits, evictions, installment contracts, credit card interest rates, mortgages, civil judicial proceedings, income tax payments, and more.

However, more and more, forced arbitration clauses are buried in the fine print of nonnegotiable financial agreements utilized by most major banks; they are not utilized by community banks or credit unions. These clauses apply to everything from credit cards and checking accounts to prepaid cards and payday loans, effecting tens of millions of consumers. With the use of forced arbitration, banks block lawsuits, including all class actions, from proceeding in court. Because forced arbitration is private, there is no public record, no meaningful appellate process, and no requirement that arbitrators enforce state and federal laws.

Forced arbitration is routinely used by major banks and in effect, it strips servicemembers of their rights under federal law, actively circumventing

protections enacted to ensure servicemembers financial well-being while on active duty. This issue was first recognized by the Department of Defense in 2006, which concluded that "Service members should maintain full legal recourse against unscrupulous lenders. Loan contracts to Service members should not include mandatory arbitration clauses or onerous notice provisions, and should not require the Service member to waive his or her right of recourse, such as the right to participate in a plaintiff class. Waiver isn't a matter of 'choice' in take-it-or-leave-it contracts of adhesion."

This situation came before the federal Consumer Financial Protection Board (CFPB) and the board ruled in favor of DoD's 2006 recommendations for servicemembers and the need to ensure their ability to enforce their rights under federal law.

The final rule does two simple things:

1. Restores targeted, private enforcement power to Americans against law-breaking banks, eliminating the need for industry-wide government regulations and burdensome compliance costs.
2. Maintains the right of banks to force individuals into arbitration, but for the first time imposes new transparency requirements on arbitrations to better inform the banking public.

The final rule will codify Senator Lindsey Graham's Servicemember Civil Relief Act (SCRA) Rights Protection Act.

However, there is a bill in Congress to overturn the CFPB's ruling. Unfortunately, the House of Representatives passed the bill. The action is now in the Senate and we are making every effort to convince senators to uphold the CFPB ruling.

TREA has been helping to coordinate efforts within The Military Coalition to rally the opposition of over 30 military and veterans associations to oppose the legislation.

You should also be aware that everyone in the nation is covered by these forced arbitration clauses in the same way that servicemembers are when they enter into many, if not most, financial arrangements. However, there is no law that is supposed to exempt them from the terms of forced arbitration.

Source: TREA

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## **2.1% Pay Raise, BAH Cuts, Tricare Fee Hikes Approved by Senate**

Troops would get a 2.1 percent pay raise in 2018 under a Senate bill approved late last Monday, but married military couples with dependents would potentially lose hundreds of dollars a month due to a new cap on housing allowances. The upper chamber of Congress approved its version of the \$700 billion defense authorization act by a vote of 89-8. The 1,215-page bill now heads to closed-door negotiations with House lawmakers known as "conference," in which the two versions of the annual policy bill will be combined. For more details, see this [article](#).

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## **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!**

Please, even if you have already sent this pre-written E-Mail, do it again, and forward the link to your friends, family, etc via an E-Mail and ask them too, to please sign and forward on to their address book.

We need to take care of our widows too! Current, past and future!

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## **The 2018 Military Budget – What's Really In It?**

The 2018 military budget has passed the House and Senate with some minor differences. These differences will now be ironed out in committees made up of members of both the House and Senate. We all know the \$700 billion bill will be paying for new weapons systems, ships and most likely a pay raise, but what is buried deep within its 1,200+ pages? Like most laws it includes good things, bad things, and strange things. For a closer look, see this [article](#).

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## **Navy Answers Hurricane-related Benefits Questions**

For active duty, civilian personnel and families who evacuated to Atlanta and are now moving to the Jacksonville, Florida, area on or about Sept. 18, there are many questions about per diem, which is the money authorized by evacuation orders that covers lodging, food and incidentals. Above all, it is important to keep all receipts, as they assist when liquidating the evacuation orders travel claim. As of Sept. 18, the designated safe haven will be Jacksonville and the Jacksonville per diem rate will apply, which is \$91 per day for lodging, \$46 per day for meals and \$5 per day for incidentals. Emergency Family Assistance Centers (EFACs) are open at NAS Jacksonville, NS Mayport and NSB Kings Bay and travel claims assistance is available at those EFACs. Additional updates can be found by following [Navy Region Southeast's Facebook page](#).

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## Pay Raise, Tricare Fees, 'Couples BAH' Might Take Months To Set

Military folks likely won't learn until December what their January pay raise will be, or whether pharmacy co-pays through mail order and retail outlets will rise sharply, or whether working-age retirees will see TRICARE fees jump next year. Also, service members with children and married to other members likely won't know for a few more months whether their combined [Basic Allowance for Housing](#) (BAH) will drop significantly as soon as they're reassigned. For more details, see this [article](#).





## **Legislation to Eliminate Copayment Requirements for Essential Preventive Medications and Medical Services for Veterans Using VA Health Care**

Representative Lee Zeldin (NY) and Senator Tammy Duckworth (IL) introduced the Veterans Preventive Health Coverage Fairness Act (H.R. 1100 and S. 1161), legislation that would eliminate requirements for veterans to make copayments for medical care and medications related to preventive health services delivered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This legislation would place VA in parity with the Department of Defense, as well as meeting the Affordable Care Act's standard relative to copayments for preventive health services for private sector health plans.

For veterans required to make copayments, VA charges \$15 for basic care and \$50 for specialty care visits and between \$5-\$11 for medication. With the passage of this legislation, veterans would continue to benefit from VA preventive health care and wellness services, but without the cost sharing. The VA health care system has been a leader in quality care and promoting the benefits of preventative services for veterans-many who are life-long patients. With its medically complex patient population, coordinating a comprehensive array of preventive and wellness services has helped VA contain costs and improve health outcomes for veterans. However, VA has been out of step in requiring copayments for health maintenance and preventive care services.

The United States Preventive Services Task Force, Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, and the Health Resources and Services Administration have made suggestions for preventative services including vaccines and women's preventive health care - such as mammograms, screenings for cervical cancer, prenatal care, and other services that show



significant benefit in disease prevention. These services are now routinely provided free of charge in private sector care plans.

These bills are consistent with DAV Resolution No. 115, which calls for the elimination or reduction of medical and medication co-pays, and DAV Resolution No. 128, calling for support of comprehensive health care services in VA. Veterans, through their patriotism, devotion, and sacrifices, have already paid the price for their health care, and as a grateful nation, our government should fully honor its moral obligation to care for veterans and generously provide them benefits and health care entirely without charge.

Please use the prepared messages to contact your elected officials and ask that they cosponsor and pass this important legislation-H.R. 1100 or S. 1161.

Thank you for advocating on behalf of our nation's ill and injured veterans through the DAV Commander's Action Network.

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

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## U.S. Government Accountability Office Reports

[Coast Guard: Status of Polar Icebreaking Fleet Capability and Recapitalization Plan](#)

[Navy and Marine Corps Training: Further Planning Needed for Amphibious Operations Training](#)

[Veterans Health Care: Additional Actions Could Further Improve Policy Management](#)

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### **How to Transition to TRICARE in 2018**

You may be wondering what action you need to take, if any, to ensure you continue [TRICARE coverage in 2018](#). If you are currently enrolled in or eligible for TRICARE coverage on Dec. 31, 2017, you will transition to your respective TRICARE plan on Jan. 1, 2018. If you want to enroll in a TRICARE plan or change coverage after Jan. 1, 2018, you will need to take action to enroll in the plan of your choice. All beneficiaries should take action by making sure their information is current in the [Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System](#) (DEERS). For more information, visit the [TRICARE website](#).

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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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## **Navy's Top Doc Orders Cell Phone Ban**

The Navy's top doctor has banned all workers' personal cell phones from patient areas, and directed all Navy medical staff to participate in a 48-hour "stand down" after Snapchat posts from a pair of Navy corpsmen calling newborns in their care "mini Satans" went viral across social media early this week. For more details, see this [article](#).

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## Reduce Your Rx Costs & Co Pays with a Tricare Supplement

Expenses can mount up quickly when you receive medical care outside the military system. Get a Tricare supplement that pays your cost shares and can pay 100% of covered excess charges. [Get Valuable Coverage Now.](#)

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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 1,200 per day with a total 3,581,924 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 16,142 documents on-line (Updated: 8/12/17)
- 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: 6,764)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than 3,608, Added 17 New Links (Updated: 08/12/17)

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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## **VA Removes Medical Center Director**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it has fired former Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center Director Brian Hawkins for his failure to provide effective leadership to the D.C. Medical Center. The department undertook this action using authorities provided by the VA Accountability Act, which the president signed into law in June. Hawkins was notified in late August that he was being proposed for removal. VA initiated the latest action after the VA Office of Inspector General issued a new report finding that Hawkins violated VA policy by sending sensitive VA information from his work email to unsecured private email accounts. The report is available on the [VA Office of Inspector General website](#).



## **Legislation to Improve Access to Child Care for Veterans In Need of VA Mental Health Care Services**

Congressman Brian Higgins (NY) introduced H.R. 3368, a bill that would improve access to child care services for veterans receiving certain Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care treatments including intensive or regular mental health care services or other types of health care deemed appropriate by the Secretary.

Veterans who are the primary caretakers of their children often cite lack of child care as a significant barrier to accessing needed medical care services-especially specialized services for war-related mental health conditions. H.R. 3368 would authorize VA to provide child care at an on-site VA facility, reimburse a private licensed child care agency for such care or collaborate with other federal agencies for the service helping to remove a known barrier for ill and injured veterans with child care responsibilities to access essential VA health care services.

Please use the letter below to urge your Representative to cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 3368-legislation to improve access to child care for veterans in need of VA mental health or other critical medical care services.

Thank you for your efforts and continued support of the Commander's Action Network.

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

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## **Navy Opens Emergency Family Assistance Offices in Florida**

Naval Station Mayport, Florida, Naval Air Station (NAS) Jacksonville and Naval Submarine Base (NSB) Kings Bay recently opened their Emergency Family Assistance Centers (EFACs). The EFACs are manned with Navy counselors prepared to assist families returning to the installations. For personnel and families at NAS Key West, it is still too soon to establish an EFAC. Personnel and families should continue to monitor the [NAS Key West Facebook page](#) for updates. The evacuation order has been extended to Sept. 30. For Sailors returning, visit the [Defense Travel System](#), to do the normal travel claim for temporary duty orders. These orders will cover the period you evacuated with your family. Meanwhile, personnel and families should check their installation or command Facebook pages for updates on the status of the impacted bases.

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**Our values  
match yours.**



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

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## **Tricare Guidance During Emergency in Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands**

The governors of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands have declared a State of Emergency due to Hurricane Maria. To get an emergency refill, take your prescription bottle to any Tricare retail network pharmacy. To find a network pharmacy, call Express Scripts at 1-877-363-1303 or search the [network pharmacy locator](#). If possible, visit the pharmacy where the prescription was filled. If you use a retail chain, you can fill your prescription at another store in that chain. If your provider is available, he or she may call in a new prescription to any network pharmacy. You can request assistance at another pharmacy, but it is at that pharmacy's discretion to help you. For more information, visit the Tricare [website](#).



## **S. 946, a Bill to Help Justice-Involved Veterans**



The veterans' treatment court model was established to remove veterans from the regular criminal justice process and to provide an opportunity for the veteran to address conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse disorder that that may have led to their involvement in the justice system. In a veterans' treatment court, the presiding judge works with the veteran and a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Justice Outreach specialist to establish a structured rehabilitation program and treatment plan that is tailored to the specific needs of the individual veteran.

S. 946, the Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act of 2017, requires the VA to hire additional Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) specialists to ensure veterans have greater access to effective and tailored treatment.

The bill authorizes \$5.5 million for each fiscal year beginning in FY 2017 through 2027 to hire 50 additional VJO Specialists. Funding priority would be given to VA facilities that work with newly established or existing but understaffed veterans' treatment courts. The legislation requires annual reporting on the implementation of the bill as well as its effect on the VJO program and a mandate for the Government Accountability Office to review and report on the implementation of the bill and the overall effectiveness of the VJO program for justice-involved veterans.

DAV Resolution No. 105 notes that veterans' treatment courts evolved from a proven national model of diversionary drug and mental health courts to address the specific challenges many wartime veterans face post service and calls for the continued growth of veterans' treatment courts.

Please use the prepared letter to write to your Senators and request support and passage of S. 946, the Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act of 2017. Thank you for your efforts and support of the Commander's Action Network.

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

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# Salute to Vietnam!

October 21, 2017

Cocktails start at 5:00 pm

Dinner and Silent Auction

Live Entertainment by Phoenix Patriot Band

Come Dress in your 1970's Attire

## French Valley Airport, Hangar 31

33750 Sky Canyon Drive

Murrieta, CA 92563

Purchase tickets by phone (951) 696-3901

\$65/per person or \$100/per couple



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**Are You Involved in the Equifax Data Breach?**

One of the three largest credit reporting agencies, Equifax, recently reported a data breach that exposed the sensitive personal information of 143 million consumers. The data breach occurred from mid-May through July. The breach is potentially dangerous because of the nature of the consumer information Equifax stored. Every consumer has a right to review one free copy of his or her credit report each. To do so, visit the [Annual Credit Report website](#). Visit the [Equifax website](#) to determine whether your account was one that may have been. If you have questions, call your nearest Armed Forces legal assistance office, which you can find [here](#).

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## **Estimate: It May Cost \$2 Billion to Clean Up Toxic Spills at Over 400 DOD Installations**

TREA: The Enlisted Association has been tracking a developing story out of Oscoda Township, Michigan at the old Wurtsmith Air Force Base, which closed in the 1990's during the first round of BRAC.

Democratic Senators said earlier this month that it may cost up to \$2 billion to clean up toxic firefighting chemicals that have leaked from more than 400 U.S. military installations, mostly those affiliated with the Air Force or Navy.

The Senate's Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (FY '18

NDAA) requested a study of PFOS and PFOA (PFCs), which were key ingredients in a foam that was used for decades to douse aircraft fires at military bases, civilian airports, fire stations and defense industrial factories.

In the last year people around the country have realized that the chemicals contaminated groundwater at many of those sites. US citizens all over the country, many not affiliated with the US military, have learned that the chemical concentrations in their drinking water exceed recommendations from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The chemicals have been linked to cancer, thyroid problems and immune system disorders, although scientists aren't sure exactly how they interact in the human body.

In a bit of good news, The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) says it will update the 2001 public health assessment for Wurtsmith. ATSDR is an independent agency under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) which operates jointly with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

The 2001 assessment found that it was "unknown" whether trichloroethylene (TCE), a cancer-causing industrial solvent found at astonishing levels in base drinking water in the late 1970s at Wurtsmith, "persisted at high enough levels for long enough durations to actually pose a public health hazard." In the intervening years the science has progressed enough so that it is extremely likely that a causal connection between chronic exposure and health problems can be established.

The report will be ready for public review this spring, ATSDR said. The hope is that the updated report prods the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to extend disability benefits and treatment to former service members without forcing them to somehow show medical evidence that links their disability claim to TCE exposure.

For that to happen, though, the ATSDR must conclude TCE exposure likely harmed people at Wurtsmith. That has to occur before the VA would consider amending its benefits policy. At that point it is extremely likely that Congress would need to appropriate additional funds for the victims, like it did with Camp Lejeune toxic exposure victims.

TCE levels at Wurtsmith in 1977 were found to be as high as 5,173 parts-per-billion (ppb), which is more than 1,000 times the EPA's current limit of 5-ppb for TCE in drinking water. TCE levels in LeJeune drinking water reached 1,400-ppb in the 1980s, prompting Congressional action for servicemembers and their families who were exposed to it.

Hopefully this turns out well for all the victims of toxic exposure at Wurtsmith, especially TREA: The Enlisted Association's friends at the [Veteran & Civilian Clean Water Alliance](#), who have been fighting to recognize both TCE and PFC exposure all over the country.

If you or anyone you know is a veteran who has been exposed to these or other chemicals due to your service, click on the hyperlink above and join their Facebook group. They are dedicated to getting you the resources that you need and deserve.

Source: TREA



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## **Here's How Tricare's 2017 Changes Affect You**

A series of sweeping [Tricare](#) changes could have a big impact on some of the military health care system's users — including an extra three months of deductible-free coverage. Are you one of them? [Here's what you need to know.](#)

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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

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## What Are the Tricare Rules for Getting Your Tubes Tied?

Along with other birth control options, Tricare covers tubal ligations and vasectomies. For more details, see this [article](#).



## Support Veterans Exposed to Burn Pits Act, HR 1279



Representative Elizabeth Esty, ranking member of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability and Memorial Assistance, introduced H.R. 1279, the Helping Veterans Exposed to Burn Pits Act. The bill would establish a Center of Excellence in preventing, diagnosing, mitigating, treating and rehabilitating conditions related to veterans' exposure to burn pits during Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. The Center would be charged with using data from the registry to study whether exposure is associated with long-term health effects in veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan in addition to improving diagnosis and treatments for those exposed.

VA's website states that exposure to toxins found in the burn pits may be associated with skin, eye, respiratory, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, or internal organ problems. Exposure to burn pits is generally associated with short-term effects, such as eye irritation, acute respiratory symptoms, and skin itching or rashes. However, according to a 2011 Institute of Medicine report, fine dust particles and pollution in Iraq and Afghanistan may actually be more responsible for respiratory illness claimed by veterans who served there.

DAV Resolution No. 237 supports improvement of care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxins and environmental hazards, including a rigorous research agenda to identify any associations between such exposures and adverse health outcomes.

Please write your elected officials and urge their co-sponsorship and support for passage of H.R. 1279. Thank you for your continued efforts and participation in the DAV CAN (Commander's Action Network).

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

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Links to Other Stories

- 1) [Coping with Traumatic Stress Reactions](#)
- 2) [My HealthVet: Vital Resource During Emergency](#)
- 3) [Negative Coping and PTSD](#)
- 4) [This Veteran Is Helping Others Fight PTSD — With Horses](#)
- 5) [VA Health Care](#)
- 6) [VA Providing Support to Veterans in Puerto Rico & the U.S. Virgin Islands in Aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria](#)

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)



## **URGENT ACTION NEEDED TO PREVENT HEALTH CARE COST INCREASES**



The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) now being debated in the Senate, with voting expected to start Monday (18 September 2017), contains provisions that will hit military retirees hard.

The bill would triple TRICARE pharmacy fees over a decade and tie rates to an index expected to increase by almost 6 percent next year.

Because so many military retirees and their spouses take medications, these increases could easily wipe out whatever COLA increase is given each year - if there even is one.

It is critical that you immediately send the message below to your Senators and urge them to vote against these provisions.

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



## **VA Releases Suicide Data**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has released findings from its analysis of veteran suicide data for 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. The release is part of [VA's comprehensive examination](#) of more than 55 million records, dated 1979 to 2014, which will be used to develop and evaluate suicide prevention programs across every state. The new data include veteran suicide rates and overall suicide rates by state, age group and gender. A full copy of the report is available on the [VA Mental Health webpage](#). For more information on VA's suicide prevention campaign, visit [Be There](#).

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## Determine Your VA Benefits Eligibility

Veterans often ask, 'What are my benefits? What am I eligible for? Or, I receive X benefit, but what other benefits can I use?' Those are hard questions to answer because in many cases, it depends. VA benefits eligibility is based on your [character of discharge](#). And some benefits connections are equally hard to explain without further personal information. But some Veterans become eligible for additional benefits based on a number of different situations. The additional benefits that open up from a given situation are what are called 'derivative' benefits. To better explain this, VA has built a [Derivative-Benefits Eligibility Matrix](#). On this webpage, there are three matrices and, depending on which one you click, will lead you to a table where you identify your situation. For more information, read the VA [VAntage Point Blog](#).

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**Free Vaccinations at Walgreens**

VHA has again teamed up with national retail pharmacy Walgreens to provide no-cost quadrivalent flu vaccinations for enrolled veterans. All veterans who are currently enrolled in VA care may walk into any of the over 8,000 Walgreens nationally and the Duane Reade pharmacies in the New York metropolitan area to receive a vaccination at no cost. After presenting a Veterans identification card and a photo ID, a Walgreens pharmacist administers the vaccine and transmits that information securely to VA where it becomes part of the patient's electronic medical record. To locate a Walgreens store near you, call 800-WALGREENs (800-925-4733) or visit the [Walgreens website](#). To learn more about the flu and flu vaccine, visit the [VA Influenza webpage](#) or the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) website](#).

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

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## **VA Updates Rating Criteria**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has completed its first comprehensive review of the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities. The first of these updates, for Dental and Oral Conditions, went into effect September 10. This update includes added disability levels. No existing dental or oral conditions were removed. If you are already service-connected for a dental or oral condition and submit a claim for increase, your disability rating may increase (or decrease) based on the new rating criteria. In the coming months, more body systems will be updated until all 15 are modernized, ensuring VA provides the most accurate ratings for disability compensation claims. For more information, visit the [VA disability compensation page](#).

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## **STOP TRICARE Fee Increases and Other Onerous Provisions in Senate NDAA**

The House and Senate have passed their respective versions of the FY 2018 Defense Authorization bill. A conference committee will be appointed to resolve the differences between the two bills. The Senate bill provides for substantial TRICARE fee increases by repealing the so-called grandfather clause that would exclude retirees that retired before January 1, 2018 from scheduled TRICARE fee increases. The Senate bill also increases pharmacy co-pays, provides for a smaller active duty pay increase (2.1% vice 2.4%) and makes further cuts to Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH).

Please use the Action Center to ask your Representative to oppose these onerous Senate provisions in the final Defense Authorization bill.

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

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



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

Riverside County, CA

Visit our website today

[www.Veterans-For-Change.org](http://www.Veterans-For-Change.org)

Serving those who served!

**Please pass on to all your Veteran Friends and Family!**

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## Distribution

Express Mail	144,982
Boston	76,119
Courtesy Copies	3,500
Department of VA	13,018
DoD	30,507
Face Book Pages	3,568
Google	29,151
Los Angeles	136,969
Microsoft	9,857
National Guard	4423
New York	154,721
Other Social Media	46,513
San Francisco	80,022
Twitter	44
US House of Reps & Staff	1002
US Senators & Staff	119
University of So. California	5,515
US Air Force	26,982
US Army	68,642
US Marines	29,437
US Navy	38,846
Veterans	19,094,144
Washington DC	144,481
Yahoo	185
	20,142,747

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