



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans



This-N-That

I know it would be hard to believe, but finally some good news from the Veterans Court of Appeals which could lead to an increase in benefits for some Veterans.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims issued a decision last month that could make it easier for Veterans with injuries to the back, neck, and joints to obtain higher disability ratings, even in cases where Veterans are already receiving disability benefits for such injuries.

The recent case, called Sharp v. Shulkin, reviewed the Department of Veterans Affairs' current system for assessing the origin and extent of a Veteran's disability and clarified the responsibilities of Compensation and Pension examiners and the Board of Veterans Appeals when it comes to giving an opinion on pain flare-ups caused by musculoskeletal disabilities. The court ultimately ruled that the system was inadequate, because not all C&P examiners consider flare-ups and pain when determining what disability rating a Veteran should receive.

But it never fails, with some good news always ends up with some bad news.

A 68-year-old Vietnam Veteran in Massachusetts, hospitalized with

multiple ailments, died in July while the nurse's aide assigned to care for him played video games, according to a published report.

Bill Nutter suffered from the effects of Agent Orange, diabetes and a condition that could suddenly send him into cardiac arrest without warning.

He was supposed to be checked on every hour during his stay at the Bedford VA Medical Center, one of the country's top-rated hospitals, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

My question would be how would a nurses aid not be seen playing video games while on duty? And didn't the floor nurse hold the same responsibilities to check on his/her own patients as well as a back-up, especially when someone is in such critical condition a doctor would order a Veteran to be checked every hour?

The nurses aid was terminated, but, why have no charges of elderly neglect filed?

Yes, many Veterans are dissatisfied with the VA Healthcare System, and yes it's flawed with numerous problems, and most of it was brought on by greed, yes greed of the administrative staff who were doing everything they could to guarantee they received healthy bonuses. Bonuses that should never have been put in place at all.

After all it is a government agency, why are there bonuses?

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

Military Health Care in the Balance - but No Answers Yet as to What Will Happen

Every year we know with a certainty there will be three bills that Congress

will vote on that will directly and specifically affect Veterans and military people, including Active Duty, Retirees, Guard and Reserve, and dependents and survivors. These three bills are the Military Construction/Veterans Affairs bill (known as MilCon/VA), the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), and the National Defense Appropriations bill.

There are other bills, of course, that can affect Veterans and military people, but we know these three will for sure.

Both the Senate and the House have passed their respective versions of the MilCon/VA and the NDAA bills. However, no agreement has been reached on a final version of either bill which means no bill has been sent to the President for his signature.

In addition, no agreement has been reached on appropriations - in other words, on how much money will be spent next year.

The NDAA is the legislation that establishes policy for DoD and we reported recently on the Senate version of the NDAA and why we oppose its health care provisions. The Senate wants to impose very large health care fee increases on currently serving and retired members and families who were explicitly grandfathered against such increases in the FY17 NDAA.

The Senate also wants to increase TRICARE pharmacy co-pays and eliminate the COLA-based adjustment process for those co-pays -meaning co-pays would automatically increase, even if you get a smaller COLA, or even no COLA at all. That means that every year you would have less money in your pocket. That is outrageous!

We support the House version's provision to grant members of the Guard and Reserve equal treatment in their orders to serve on Active Duty under section 12304a and 12304b of Title 10. Servicemembers making the same sacrifices in support of our nation should receive the same benefits. We have already lobbied Congress on these and other matters in the NDAA.

However, we may not know what Congress will eventually settle on regarding these matters until sometime in December, even if they reach an

agreement on the NDAA. That's because almost everything in the NDAA is dependent upon how much money can be spent. And because Congress cannot reach an agreement on a budget, we will be kept in the dark until the DoD budget is agreed upon. If Congress refuses to spend the additional money that the NDAA envisions, there will be major cuts in DoD's budget and we do not know at this point what would happen to health care and all the other things in the NDAA.

We will keep you advised as things progress and let you know when you need to contact your Senators and Representatives on these important issues.

Source: TREA

VA Offers Draft CARE Act Proposal

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has announced that it has presented the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees with the administration's draft proposal of the Veterans Coordinated Access & Rewarding Experiences (CARE) Act. The bill aims to (1) simplify eligibility requirements; (2) help VA to continue to build a high-performing network; (3) streamline clinical and administrative processes; (4) implement new care coordination support for veterans, and (5) merge community care programs. The bill will also replace the current wait-time and distance eligibility criteria under the Choice Program. For more information, visit the [VA Access to Care website](#).

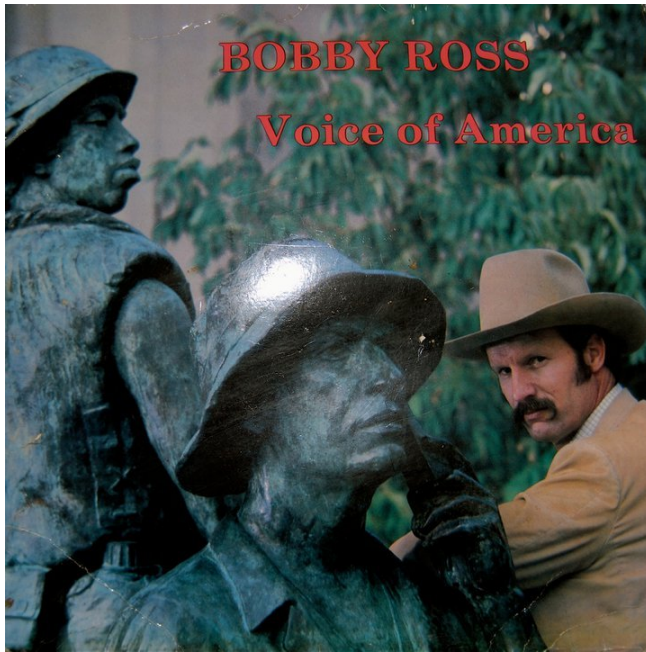
Will Plan to Dump Choice Fix VA Healthcare?

The final details of a plan that will replace the much-maligned [Veterans Choice program](#) were released last week. The plan, which VA titled the Veterans CARE (Coordinated Access & Rewarding Experiences) Act, would empower VA to modernize large parts of its health care system and has support from the major veteran groups, in part because they helped to shape it.



2018 Voter Forms Approved

In preparation for the 2018 election cycle, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) updated the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) and Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB). The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) requires FVAP to prescribe both standard forms, which are accepted by all States and territories in elections for federal office. Service members, their eligible family members, and overseas citizens may use the FPCA to register to vote, request absentee ballots, and update contact information. If they do not receive their requested absentee ballot from their State, they can vote using the FWAB as a backup ballot. The forms are available on the [Federal Voter Assistance Program website](#).



Voice of America

This is my first post on Jim's "Veterans For Change Newsletter", so let me introduce myself. I'm LT Bobby Ross. I am a Country Music recording artist. This past month, I was the Number #1 singer and music producer in the world on the International Music Chart for 4 weeks in a row. Not bad for an old

"Mud Roller" from the Vietnam War! OH, yeah, I'm a combat Veteran from the Vietnam War. And my music deals with my fellow Veterans and Active Duty Military folks a whole lot. I guess I'm pretty well known, but, then again, I'm not Elvis or one of the beat up Beatles.

Every recording artist has his 'signature song'. Elvis with "Hound Dog" and the Beatles with "A Hard Day's Night". My signature song was my first International hit. It's "Goodbye To West Virginia". This song tells you the story of the Vietnam War. It's not a 'happy' tune. Matter of fact, it's very sad. But, sad songs are common in Country Music. So here it is if you care to take a listen.

<https://vimeo.com/album/3991266/video/164305149>



WHITETAIL'S STORY

Whitetail Ranch Center is the vision of Dave and Julie Tudor. Its vision was shaped after two events - Dave's son returning from Iraq and from Julie's own journey through PTSD. These two events began an eighteen-month conversation that eventually shaped Whitetail Ranch Center. With Julie's background as an associate professor and researcher, she dove into current the research literature to understand best practices in serving veterans with PTSD. She learned veterans would benefit from educational, vocational, physical, social emotional, and alternative complementary interventions, programs, and support systems. Julie then researched current non-profit veteran organizations to understand how and which veterans were currently being served. Indeed, many wonderful veteran non-profit organizations are meeting veteran's needs, yet, none addressed all areas as noted in the research. What came to light was the need for a unique wrap-around program that served veterans in every aspect of daily living. So, Dave and Julie got to work connecting with veterans, farmers, executive chefs, mental health professionals, VA professionals, and equine specialists across the country. Thus, after much reading, listening, and learning, Whitetail Ranch Center's mission was established.

MISSION

Whitetail Ranch Center's mission is to meet the needs of veterans with PTSD. Whitetail Ranch Center will empower veterans to lead independent, productive, and healthy lives.

Becoming a reality...

Whitetail Ranch Center is still a vision with the goal to open in 2019 in southwestern Montana. Whitetail Ranch Center is a unique vision that began in 2016. Nestled in a passion to serve our veterans, the Whitetail Ranch Center seeks to provide a setting where veterans with PTSD can receive vocational training and educational support while living in a structured community supporting re-integration to civilian life.

Make Whitetail Ranch Center a reality at
www.whitetailranchcenter.org/takeaction

2017 Air Force Art Contest

The Air Force Services Activity is sponsoring the 2017 Air Force Art Contest. The contest is open to Airmen and their families including children ages 6-17. The call for entries will run Nov. 1-30. The contest is online only. Artists can submit up to two photographs of their two-dimensional painting or drawing on any subject. The photos must be an original camera photo in JPEG or JPG format with a file size of 3-8 MB. The virtual art show is family friendly, and entries will be screened for content before being approved and posted on MyAirForceLife.com. The online art exhibition will open Nov. 1. The contest is divided into two adult and three youth categories. Winners will be announced in January 2018.



U.S. Government Accountability
Office Reports

- 1) [Federal Facility Security: Selected Agencies Should Improve Methods for Assessing and Monitoring Risk](#)
 - 2) [Low-Dose Radiation: Interagency Collaboration on Planning Research Could Improve Information on Health Effects](#)
-

More Than Half of States Don't Tax Retired Pay

West Virginia will soon be joining the growing list of states that don't tax retired [military pay](#), pushing the number of states on that list to 27. Currently, half of all U.S. states do not tax [military retirement](#) pay. Earlier this year, Arkansas passed a law ending their tax in 2018, and the West Virginia legislature just passed a measure, which was requested by the governor, this week. It is expected to become law soon.

**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

VA Drops Plan to Suspend Ethics Law

Last week the Department of Veterans Affairs dropped its plan to suspend an ethics law barring employees from receiving benefits from for-profit colleges. The move comes after criticism from government watchdogs who warned of financial entanglements with private companies vying for millions in GI Bill tuition.

As recently the day prior to that decision the VA had told the Associated Press it would implement the rule next Monday, citing the lack of any "significant adverse comment." It changed its position after it was asked about rising opposition to the plan.

The VA had called the 50-year-old law outdated and "unfair" to VA employees who it said often have no real conflicts of interest. The law in question was passed in 1966 in the wake of several scandals involving the for-profit education industry. It calls for dismissal of any VA employee who receives "any wages, salary, dividends, profits, gratuities, or services" from a for-profit school in which a veteran is also enrolled using VA GI Bill benefits.

TREA: The Enlisted Association feels that the law had sufficient leeway built in to allow individuals in non-compromising situations to further their educations or to teach at for-profit schools. Case-by-case waivers do a much better job of protecting the interests of student veterans than a blanket waiver, even if VA officials complain that the current system is burdensome.

Just two months ago, the Republican-controlled Senate Appropriations Committee urged the VA to strengthen the law, saying that it may not address meals and gifts from for-profit colleges as another potential source of conflicts of interest. The committee told VA Secretary David Shulkin to prepare a report on the law's effectiveness in stemming conflicts of interest within six months.

Source: TREA

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 **3,640,100** 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 **16,142** 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: **6,825**)
 - Polls
 - Web Links, more than **3,611**, Added 3 New Links (Updated: 10/26/17)

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

Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org

Military Resource & Services EXPO

Sat- Nov. 4, 2017

9AM 5K Walk Run
10-1PM EXPO

10AM Field of Honor Opening Ceremony

www.MurrietaFieldOfHonor.com

Veterans Memorial Garden
Town Square Park, City of Murrieta

Presented By
Women's Council of REALTORS®
Southwest Riverside County

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL
MURRIETA

GARY SINISE FOUNDATION
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

VA Aspire Center Helps Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs [Aspire Center](#), located in San Diego, California, is a 40-bed, 30,000 square-foot facility aimed at promoting recovery in Veterans returning from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The center provides temporary housing and comprehensive interdisciplinary care including: psychiatry, psychology, addiction therapy, onsite primary care and nursing support, spirituality, social work services, recreational activities, financial counseling and vocational and occupational therapy for veterans who need them. The program can last from three to six months depending on individual needs. For more information, read the [VA VAntage Point Blog](#).

COLA for 2018 is Announced

In case you missed it, the The Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) will be 2% in 2018 which is the first substantial increase in years.

- The COLA for Retired military veterans, VA rates for compensation and pension for disabled veterans and surviving families will be effective December 1, 2017 and will be reflected on the first check to be paid on December 31, 2017.
- Social Security benefits will be effective beginning with the December 2016 benefits, which are payable in January 2018.

Source: TREA

VA Tips on Making Homes More Accessible

For veterans who need a more accessible living space, here are some tips to make your home safer to get around: (1) Where do you see the potential for falls, slips, trips or getting stuck? Enlist some help to remove these hazards; (2) remove all throw rugs and mats; (3) replace all door units and trim door frames if they are not wide enough to fit a wheelchair or walker; (4) install a ramp; (5) bring items closer to your level; (6) consider installing bed cables; and (7) invest in a lift chair. For more tips, read the [VA Vantage Point Blog](#).



**Our values
match yours.**



www.veterans-for-change.org

TRICARE Enrollments Shifting from Fiscal to Calendar Year Starting in January 2018

The following information comes from TRICARE. Please be aware that this information does NOT apply to those using TRICARE For Life.

Starting Jan. 1, 2018, [cost changes for TRICARE benefits](#) transition from a fiscal year October 1 - September 30 period to a calendar year period. Changing from fiscal year (Oct. 1 - Sept. 30) to calendar year (Jan. 1 - Dec. 31) makes the TRICARE benefit consistent with civilian health plans. The change will largely affect those plans which have an enrollment fee and are currently billed by the fiscal year. This includes retirees and their family members in TRICARE Prime, TRICARE Retired Reserve, TRICARE Reserve Select and those in TRICARE Young Adult plans. This change is one of several [changes that TRICARE is adopting in 2018](#).

TRICARE is changing. Here is what you need to know:

Enrollment Fees

Enrollment fees apply to retirees and their family members enrolled in [TRICARE Prime](#), those enrolled in the premium-based plans, and several others, including:

- [TRICARE Young Adult-Prime Option](#)
- [TRICARE Young Adult-Standard Option](#)
- [TRICARE Retired Reserve](#)
- [TRICARE Reserve Select](#)
- [Continued Health Care Benefit Program](#) (this will continue to follow a fiscal year cycle)
- [US Family Health Plan](#)

Transition Period:

If you're in a plan now that requires enrollment fees, there will be a transition period, from Oct. 1, 2017, to Dec. 31, 2017, so you won't experience additional costs in 2017. During this time, you'll continue to pay your enrollment fees. However, enrollment fees will be prorated for the three-month period and billed accordingly for enrollees who pay on a monthly or quarterly basis. If you pay enrollment fees on an annual basis,

you'll be billed for the fees to cover the three-month period and sent a billing notice for the annual fee for calendar year 2018.

Catastrophic Caps and Deductibles:

TRICARE will extend payments (for example, catastrophic caps and deductibles) that usually reset on Oct. 1 through the end of the calendar year. Any enrollment fees you pay during the transition period will continue to count against the catastrophic cap until it resets on Jan. 1, 2018. This means that if you reach your fiscal year 2017 catastrophic cap, you will not have additional out-of-pocket costs for authorized [TRICARE-covered services](#) for the last three months of the year. On Jan. 1, 2018, [new rules for deductibles and catastrophic caps](#) will apply to some costs.

This is your benefit. Here is what you need to do:

Automatic Payments

If you pay your enrollment fees by allotment, you don't need to do anything. You will continue to pay your enrollment fees automatically. Unless you cancel your allotment, TRICARE will continue to deduct enrollment fees starting Jan. 1, 2018. If you pay enrollment fees by electronic funds transfer (for example, debit card, credit card and electronic check) and are in an area where a [new regional contractor](#) will be delivering services, you will need to update your payment method with your new regional contractor in December.

Source: TREA

TRICARE Changes Survey

Background: Last year's National Defense Authorization Act contained a number of changes to TRICARE, most of which take effect January 1, 2018. The VFW believes service members, veterans and their families must be able to voice how these changes will impact them. To ensure your views and preferences are heard, the VFW has developed a survey to gauge our members' awareness of these changes and how they will affect beneficiaries. The data collected will be used to advocate for policy and legislative changes that are based on the needs of TRICARE beneficiaries.

Action Needed: Help the VFW hold DOD and Congress accountable for fulfilling their mission to provide accessible, affordable health care to service members, veterans and their families by taking a short survey regarding your preferences and thoughts on health care and the upcoming TRICARE changes.

Take the survey by clicking [here](#).



RIVERSIDE CITY COLLEGE

Veterans Resource Fair

SAVE THE DATE

November 3
10 am - 3 pm

Event is open to veterans,
dependents and local community.

For further information please contact RCC
Veteran's Resource Center at 951-222-8607 or
email veterans@rcc.edu

 **RCC**
RIVERSIDE CITY COLLEGE

The Riverside Community College District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies or practices: District Compliance Officer, 3801 Market Street, Riverside, CA 92501, (951) 222-8039.



Veterans with 'Bad Paper' Won't Get New VA ID Cards

Starting next month, veterans can register for identification cards that prove their military history — but not everyone who has served will get one. For more details, see this [article](#).

Updating Your TRICARE Payment Options

With the Jan. 1, 2018 changes to [new stateside regions and contractors](#), you may need to update your payment option to guarantee continued payment of your TRICARE enrollment fees and monthly premiums. You will no longer be able to make payments via paper check. Acceptable methods of payment will continue to be allotment, electronic funds transfer, and debit or credit card. If you currently pay your enrollment fees or premiums by allotment through a Defense Financing and Accounting Service (DFAS) or other Uniformed Services Pay Center, you will not need to update your payment information. If you live in an area where a new regional contractor will be delivering services, you will need to update your payment information to go to your new regional contractor. For more information, visit the [TRICARE Changes webpage](#).



Navy Drug Take Back Day

Naval Station Rota and U.S. Naval Hospital Rota, Spain want your unwanted and/or expired prescription drugs during the 14th semi-annual Drug Take Back Day, Oct. 28. Local beneficiaries can properly dispose of their medication in front of the Navy Exchange from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and are strongly encouraged to take advantage in this free and anonymous service, no questions asked. Hospital corpsmen will be standing by ready to accept prescription and over-the-counter drugs including; pills, ointments, lotions, powders and liquids (if less than four ounces). The program gives beneficiaries an environmentally responsible way to dispose of medications.



Job Training Program with Large Veteran Enrollment Suddenly Shuts Down

A job training program in North Texas that caters to veterans suddenly shut down last month after news of an investigation by the Department of Veteran Affairs. As a result, roughly 300 student veterans were left out in the cold.

The Retail Ready Career Center in Garland, TX suddenly closed its doors after graduating more than 2,000 veterans in recent years.

Most of the stranded students were staying at an Extended Stay in Irving while enrolled in the training program. The group said they were in the middle of class when an instructor abruptly told them they had to leave the premises and that the school was being shut down.

In a statement, a spokesman for the center said "the Department of Veteran Affairs is conducting an administrative review that has temporarily suspended classes. We hope to resolve this issue soon... Retail Ready Career Center is attempting to address any issues that may have arisen from this unfortunate situation."

TREA: The Enlisted Association urges all veterans who use the Post 9/11 GI Bill or the Montgomery GI Bill (apparently there are still some) to use the College Scorecard or the GI Bill Comparison tool (available at <https://www.vets.gov/gi-bill-comparison-tool>) to make good decisions with their benefit.

TREA: The Enlisted Association is working to make college and job-training program selection process even clearer - we will let you know when more information becomes available.

Source: TREA

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

Tax Reform: How Does It Affect You?

The actual tax reform package in Congress has not been released yet. While the White House has issued their set of "principles" to guide the process, we do not yet know how the House Ways and Means committee and the Senate Finance committee will come down on the many, many issues facing the economy.

Simply put: if healthcare was hard because it affected 1/6 of the economy, this will be six times harder. It's the entire economy.

The House has passed their FY 2018 Budget Resolution. When the Senate passes theirs ([something that came into even more doubt today](#)), Ways & Means and Senate Finance will have their operating procedures on how to go about writing a tax reform bill. The FY 2018 National Defense Authorization Act is awaiting the same instructions, to see exactly what the spending levels for the Department of Defense are going to be set at.

It is important to note that while broad-based reductions in income taxes are planned, as well as cutting the corporate tax rate (and the estate tax, according to the White House), this will result in a hole in federal tax revenue. It will need to be offset with concurrent "loophole closing." In non Beltway-speak, this means that favored tax credits like the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), which among other things helps hire unemployed and disabled veterans, and income tax deductions like the home mortgage interest deduction and the state and local tax deduction could also be sacrificed to compensate for the reduction in overall tax rates. It remains to be seen where Congress goes on all of these ideas.

TREA: The Enlisted Association has been talking to members of both the Ways & Means and Senate Finance committees. When we find out where things are headed we'll let you know.

Source: TREA

Links to Other Stories

- 1) [A Well-Kept Secret: How Vets And Their Doctors Are Getting Around The VA's Medical Marijuana Policy](#)
- 2) [Colorado Homeless Female Veterans Undercounted, Underserved](#)
- 3) [Councilwomen Remove Veteran Memorial, Citizens Respond](#)
- 4) [Coverup: Veterans Affairs Paid Employees to Hide Malpractice](#)
- 5) [Diabetes Pill Might Replace Injection to Control Blood Sugar](#)
- 6) [DNA damage found in Veterans with Gulf War illness](#)
- 7) [Early numbers show the Army's new fitness test is reducing injuries in basic training](#)
- 8) [Female Air Force Commanders Are Shaking Up The Status Quo](#)
- 9) [Female Marine gets a second try to become a special operations Raider](#)
- 10) [For suicidal veterans, loneliness is the deadliest enemy](#)
- 11) [NFL star, former Olympian shares struggle with mental illness with Phoenix Veterans](#)
- 12) [Nine days ago, she pleaded to join the Marine Corps Marathon; Sunday she came in first](#)
- 13) [President Trump : Declare State of Emergency, Provide Naloxone to Fight Opioid Crisis](#)
- 14) [VA Mammogram guidelines: when, where, and what they mean](#)
- 15) [VA Seeks Partnerships to Build and Improve Health-care Facilities](#)
- 16) [Veterans Showcase Talents at National Creative Arts Festival in Buffalo, N.Y.](#)
- 17) [Vets May Now Be Able To Get Higher Disability Ratings For Service-Connected Injuries](#)
- 18) [Vietnam Veteran died while nurse's aide played video games: Report](#)
- 19) [Why Are So Many Female Veterans Killing Themselves?](#)
- 20) [Women Served Too: Memorial to Female Vets Marks Anniversary](#)
- 21) [Women Veterans seek their own medical care](#)

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



'Operation Stand Down Rebound' in Houston

Due to the impact of Hurricane Harvey and the increased number of homeless veterans in the storm-ravaged area, the Department of Veterans Affairs annual homeless Veterans stand down took on new significance. 'Operation Stand Down Rebound,' sponsored by the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center and the City of Houston, provides homeless Veterans and those at risk of becoming homeless, with the opportunity to access a broad range of services in one convenient location. The increased support will allow DeBakey and Houston to serve Veterans who are still in need of housing, extended basic needs such as: mattress, bedding, work attire and household items as a result of storm damage. For more information, read the [VA Vantage Point Blog](#) and visit the [Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center website](#).

House Veterans' Affairs Committee Holds Hearing on Future of Choice Program

Last week the Department of Veterans' Affairs issued a plan to streamline and expand its programs allowing veterans to receive health care from the private sector. That set off the first spark in the fight to determine the future of the government's role in providing care to veterans.

The Veterans Affairs Department wants to consolidate the various "community care" programs into one "Choice" program, allowing patients to receive care outside of VA providers. The plan, called the Veterans Coordinated Access and Rewarding Experiences (CARE) Act, was presented to Congress last week. There was a hearing on the plan on October 24th.

While there are many details yet to be fleshed out, the measure would eliminate rules for the Veterans Choice Program that require a veteran to live 40 miles from a VA facility or face a 30-day wait to receive care at one in order to become eligible for private care on the department's dime. That program, created by a law President Obama signed in 2014, got off to a rocky start but has since gained popularity.

VA said its measure would also shore up VA facilities by improving buildings and boosting staffing levels where large numbers of vacancies persist. Secretary David Shulkin said earlier this year the department had 49,000 unfilled positions, but the number has since decreased.

Still, opponents of expanding private care were quick to denounce VA's plan, saying loosening eligibility restrictions for private coverage robs the department of resources for its own facilities and begins a slippery slope toward privatization. Many Democrats have said they can support expanding the choice program only if Congress invests equally in VA's internal care. President Trump extended the shelf life of the choice program in August by signing a stopgap measure.

TREA: The Enlisted Association is cautiously optimistic about the plan. We are wary of any attempt to shift resources outside of the VA system when there are so many specialty services that the VA provides that other cannot be replicated in the private sector. The community care consolidation has been a long time coming, but removing the 30 day/40 mile barrier to

accessing community care was done as a cost-saving measure. It remains to be seen how Congress will pay for this plan that is estimated to cost \$18 billion, especially when they have to come up with an additional \$12 billion to pay for the Electronic Health Record (HER) that Congress authorized the VA to purchase earlier this year.

Much, much more to come on this. TREA will keep you informed as more information becomes available.

The House Veterans' Affairs Committee, led by Chairman Phil Roe, R-Tenn., is pursuing its own plan to reform the VA's choice program and relationship with the private sector. A draft bill Roe is still ironing out with input from colleagues and VSOs would allow any veteran VA determines it cannot support with a care team or a dedicated primary care provider to seek treatment in the private sector through a network of providers it establishes in each of its regions.

Roe is also leading the charge on another controversial measure to put VA through a process similar to the Defense Department's Base Realignment and Closure Commission. The department must assess which facilities are underutilized and either consolidate or closure them, Roe and his supporters argue. The Commission on Care included a VA BRAC proposal in its final recommendations. Some of the savings would be reinvested back into the VA system, closure proponents have said, though the bill is intentionally being coupled with choice reform to offset some of the costs that will inevitably stem from expanding that program.

Source: TREA



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

Veterans Outreach in Illinois

American Legion national staff is heading to Illinois to assist department Legionnaires in a district revitalization and membership outreach effort. Veterans in the area are invited to get information about American Legion programs and Department of Veterans Affairs and other veterans benefits. The outreach effort will take place over four days at American Legion Post 365, 1022 Vandalia St., Collinsville. The hours are 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Oct. 26-28 and 1-5 p.m. Oct. 29. A veterans service officer will be available at both locations to assist with VA claims and other benefits questions.

American Public
WE NEED YOUR HELP!

**Vietnam War veterans who served in
Harbors and Off-Shore Vietnam
NO LONGER receive Health Care for
cancers and other diseases caused by
exposure to Agent Orange Herbicide.**

WE NEED OUR VA BENEFITS!

**Please Contact Your Senators and
Representatives
(Call, Write, Email, Fax, or Visit)**

**ASK THEM TO PASS
HR-299 AND S-422**



Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Association
PO Box 1035 Littleton, CO 80160-1035
Navy@BlueWaterNavy.org



**Vietnam Veterans Photos Sought for
Memorial**

There are 58,318 names etched in the black granite walls of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. And photos of nearly 5,000 of those service members are still needed to complete the [Wall of Faces project](#), which is an effort begun by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to commemorate this year's 35th anniversary of the memorial. The Wall of Faces is an online database that features a photo of the service member with a brief biography. There are 26 U.S. States with missing photos of their fallen Vietnam service members. See [a list of states](#) that have all photos accounted for. For more information, visit the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund website](#).

Public Law 115-62, Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2017

On September 29, Public Law 115-62, the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2017, was enacted into law. The bill extends a number of current authorities in veterans' programs, including Health Care, Benefits, Homelessness, and other matters. The provisions discussed below are supported by resolutions approved by DAV's membership at our national convention this summer.

DAV strongly supports this law, which extends, by two years, authority for VA to provide nursing home care to veterans with service-connected disabilities; to provide assistance and support services for caregivers; to continue a pilot program for child care for certain veterans in order to allow them to receive health care; to extend a pilot program offering women veterans counseling in retreat settings; and to support beneficiary travel and grants for innovative transportation for veterans living in highly rural areas. It also allows VA to reimburse veterans for beneficiary travel to Vet Centers in the same manner as if they received services within VA health care facilities for one additional year. A pilot program to provide neurobehavioral therapy and services to veterans with traumatic brain injuries was extended only by three months pending the submission of a final report to Congress due this December.

The Act also allows VA to continue to provide rehabilitation and vocational benefits to active duty service members with severe injuries for one more year. This authority allows VA to address immediate rehabilitative needs of

service members while their probable medical discharges are pending.

The Act extends, by one year, many provisions to assist homeless veterans, including the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) program administered by the Department of Labor, in addition to grants for child care for certain veterans participating in these programs. It extends authority for referral and counseling services for certain "at risk" veterans and provides supportive services for very low income families in permanent housing to preempt homelessness. It extends, by two years, "special needs" grants to homeless provider grantees who work with populations who require additional attention such as hospice services or intensive mental health care and authority for VA to continue to provide comprehensive community services to homeless veterans with serious mental illness.

In addition, the law authorizes, for two additional years, appropriations for adaptive sports programs for disabled veterans and service members. It also extends authority for specially adapted housing grant programs.

DAV commends Congress for acting quickly to ensure these important authorities for veterans were not allowed to lapse. Service-disabled veterans depend upon these programs to reintegrate successfully into their families, communities and vocations.

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

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

Serving those who served!

Please pass on to all your Veteran Friends and Family!

Please do not reply to this E-Mail, this is an unattended E-Mail address,
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