



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, February 18, 2018

Volume 9, Issue 07



## **This-N-That**

Almost every Secretary of the VA has at one point promised improvements in the VA Healthcare System, and frankly there has only been one Secretary of the VA whom I had a lot of faith and trust in, and that was Secretary Shinseki, but his hands were tied so badly, he was not able to accomplish what he knew deep in his heart needed to be done.

Then we had Secretary McDonald who to me was nothing more than a show piece, he was followed

by our now current Secretary Shulkin whom I am still not impressed with, however, he is promising quick results in the following areas:

**1. Central, national accountable leadership** – VA has designated Dr. Peter Almenoff, Director of VA's Office of Reporting, Analytics, Performance, Improvement and Deployment (RAPID) Healthcare Improvement Center, to oversee improvement at each of the centers. Dr. Almenoff reports directly to Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Executive in Charge of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

**2. Comprehensive analysis and identification of improvement targets** – VA is employing a new initiative, known as Strategic Action Transformation (STAT), that uses a rigorous and formal approach based on clinical performance indicators to identify vulnerabilities in each low-performing facility and set specific targets for improvement.

**3. Provision of national resources for improvement** – VA's RAPID team of experts will use sophisticated statistical tools to track the progress of improvement against these targets, and, where warranted, will dispatch a team of expert improvement coaches quickly to the medical centers to assist them in meeting the goals.

**4. Accountability for results** –VA's Central Office

will review each of the facilities quarterly, and if the facilities fail to make rapid substantial progress in their improvement plan, VA leadership will take prompt action, including changing the leadership of the medical center.

VA whistle blowers who have identified problems and reported them have been treated so badly most who want to speak out are afraid due to retaliation in one form or another.

But I'd like to ask our readers to keep your eyes open, and any areas you see are failing, need improvement, or even if staff need to be terminated, PLEASE send me an E-Mail with as much detail as possible.

We'd like to track and report to all 535 members of Congress, President Trump and Secretary Shulkin, and see exactly how they will address those problems. And of course we will not say where our information came from protecting all sources.

In addition a subject came up over the past few days on several social media sources about free services to Veteran in the area of either stationary or mobile canteens providing coffee and tea at NO cost as supplies are all donated.

Does your VA facility provide this to you while waiting to see your doctor, or have tests performed?

And are you being seen within 30 minutes of your scheduled appointment?

In addition to this, we'd like to also know how many VA Hospitals provide a library for long term residents.

If you can help us in this area and provide as much information as possible, we'd greatly appreciate it.

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)



**Everything You Need to Know About  
Trump's 2019 Budget Request**

President Donald Trump has released his budget request for fiscal 2019, marking the first step in a months-long process in which lawmakers from both chambers of Congress debate and ultimately decide on its funding levels and policy provisions. For a complete rundown of the major military budget changes proposed for next year, see this [article](#).



## **Announcement of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's (ATSDR) Public Meeting**

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) invites the public to attend a public meeting of its Camp Lejeune Community Assistance Panel (CAP). Please see below for more information about this public meeting, including how to watch the meeting via live stream link.

Community Assistance Panel Meeting: **February 27, 2018 9:00 AM**

Century Center  
Conference room 1A/1B  
1825 Century Boulevard NE

Atlanta, GA 30345

Registration is required to gain entrance into the building and closes on February 26, 2018. To register to attend the meeting in person, submit your registration online at <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune/capregistration.asp>. All audience members must arrive at the visitor center by 8:45 AM so they can be escorted to the meeting room. Please note that all visitors must have a valid U.S. driver's license or passport to obtain entrance into the building.

For those not able to attend the meeting in person, a live stream of the meetings will be available for viewing via computer. A link to the live stream will be available on the day of the meeting at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune/index.html>.

For more information about the health studies and other work done by ATSDR at Camp Lejeune, visit <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune/activities.html>.

To contact the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to learn more about benefits, please visit <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune/> or call (877) 222-8387 (Healthcare -

Veterans), (866) 372-1144 (Healthcare - Family Members), or (800) 827-1000 (Benefits).

For more information, or to update your contact information, please visit <http://www.marines.mil/clwater/>, call (877) 261-9782, or e-mail [clwater@usmc.mil](mailto:clwater@usmc.mil). Please share this information with anyone that may have been at Camp Lejeune in 1987 or prior years and encourage them to register with us.

Sincerely,  
The Camp Lejeune Historic Drinking Water  
Program



## How President's Food Stamp Cuts Would Impact Military Families

A federal funding proposal issued by the White House this week would cut the amount of food aid given to most recipients, including many military families, and replace it with a subscription-style box of delivered foods. The proposal, announced Monday, would slash the food stamp program, known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), by \$17 billion in 2019. For more details, see this [article](#).



### ***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 **2,100** hits per day, and downloads average **1,200** per day with a total **3,892,725** 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 **16,163** documents on-line (Updated: 12/30/17)
- 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: 11/02/17)
- News (Articles On-Line: 7,124)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than 3,618, Added 1 New Links (Updated: 01/03/18)

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



## **AAFES Offers Tax Prep Discount**

The Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) is teaming up with H&R Block to [provide tax preparation services at a 10 percent discount](#) at Exchange locations worldwide. Also, if you file a 1040EZ form, the tax professionals will do it for free until Feb. 28. H&R Block tax preparation at the Exchange includes a free second-look review. Tax professionals will examine tax returns from the last three years to see whether filers are entitled to money that was not claimed. Military shoppers can visit the Exchange [website](#) to locate their local H&R Block office or contact their local Exchange.



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
Riverside National Cemetery 22495 Van  
Buren Boulevard Riverside, CA 92518**

I am writing regarding our upcoming observance of National Medal of Honor Day for 2018.

Riverside National Cemetery is home to the Medal of Honor Memorial and five recipients are interred at our cemetery, On March 17, 2018, Riverside National Cemetery will hold its 2nd annual National Medal of Honor Day ceremony to honor the valiant actions of Medal of Honor recipients.

I would like to extend an invitation to you to attend this event.

I would be honored if you would join the community of Riverside on March 17th, from 1 to 2 p.m. to honor these heroes.

This ceremony will take place at the Medal of Honor Memorial at Riverside National Cemetery.

Parking is free to the public.

Contact Greta L. Hamilton at [greta.hamilton@va.gov](mailto:greta.hamilton@va.gov) to RVSP.

Please RSVP by March 10th, we hope to see you in March.



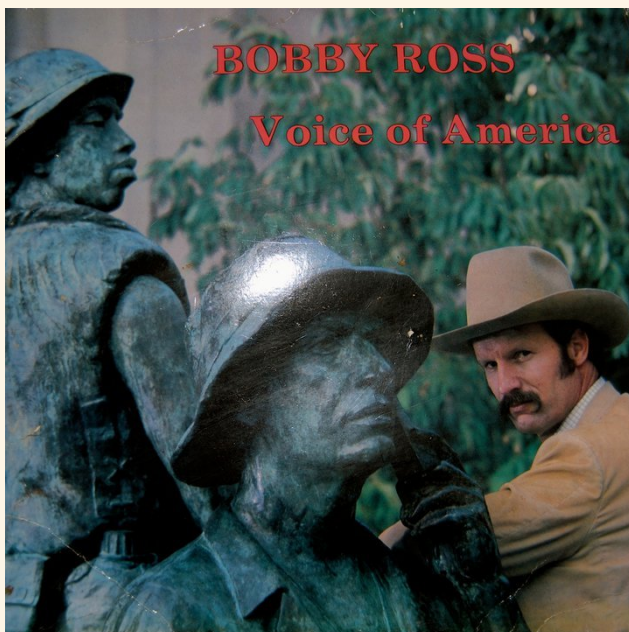
## Navy Faces Travel Claim Backlog

The U.S. Navy's Permanent Change of Station (PCS) Travel Processing Center (TPC) in Memphis is currently experiencing a significant backlog in processing travel claims. Currently, TPC Memphis is processing a backlog of 7,500 claims with a settlement time between 60 and 70 days. The JTR requires travel claims to be processed within 30 days of the end of a servicemember's travel. Currently, TPC Memphis is processing claims from mid-November, and anticipates returning to the 30-day processing requirement by mid-March. For information on how to submit travel claims, visit the NPC [website](#).





## LT Bobby Ross



February's  
Featured Song

JACK

LT Bobby Ross

PATRIOTIC  
MUSIC



## Army Warns About Social Media Scams

The U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command's (CID) Computer Crime Investigative Unit (CCIU) is once again warning Soldiers and the Army community to be on the lookout for 'social media scams' where cybercriminals impersonate servicemembers by using actual and fictitious information. Frequently, CID receives notifications from individuals stating they were scammed online by someone claiming to be a Soldier, but in reality it was an online Scammer who has used an unsuspected Soldier's name and available social media photos to commit a crime. For information about computer security, other computer-related scams and to review previous cyber-crime alert notices and cyber-crime prevention flyers, visit the Army CID [website](#).



## **VA Secretary Says Caregivers Program Can Save Money**

Last week the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, David Shulkin, testified to the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee that a limited expansion of his department's caregivers stipend program could save the federal government around \$2.5 billion annually by reducing nursing home and medical assistance costs.

Congress, however, seems worried about the upfront costs of the plan. These concerns made it seem like the Caregiver expansion might be dropped entirely from the VA healthcare legislation that is now working its way through Congress.

The program provides stipends of up to several thousands of dollars a month to the families of Post-9/11 veterans who require around-the-clock home care. This prevents them from needing care in facilities, which can cost multiples of in-home care provided by a family member.

Secretary Shulkin, along with veterans groups, have been pushing that the program should include other generations of veterans as well, especially as they age and require more expensive, supervised medical care.

Lawmakers in both the House and Senate have been supportive of the idea, but not necessarily the cost. Senate lawmakers have suggested a rolling expansion of the stipend program that the Congressional Budget Office says would require \$3.4 billion in new funding over five years, money that would require offsets under House rules.



Shulkin supports expanding the program to only the most severely injured and incapacitated veterans, which would add around 40,000 new beneficiaries to the Caregivers program. All current participants are expected to be grandfathered in.

TREA: The Enlisted Association will keep you updated as more information becomes available.

Source: TREA



**Your Tricare Supplement: Save on Co-Pays & Rx Costs Now**

Get a Tricare supplement that pays your cost shares and can pay 100% of covered excess charges. Get valuable coverage **now**.



## **Court determines military burn pits caused lung disease in service members**

Fox News **Court determines military burn pits caused lung disease in service members**. The thousands of U.S. military personnel and private contractors whose health was compromised by the dense black smoke of burn pits - and who were then denied proper treatment - may finally be vindicated by a recent court ruling. A judge under the U.S. Department of Labor's Office for Workers' Compensation Programs decreed last month that open-air burn pits -- where thousands of chemicals were released into the air after trash and other waste were incinerated at American military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan -- are connected to lung disease, Fox News has learned.



## **Tom Hanks Wants Veterans to Audition for His Next War Movie**

Tom Hanks is looking for extras to play Navy crewmen in his upcoming World War II naval flick, Greyhound, specifically those with a military background. The upcoming film is based on The Good Shepherd, a fiction novel by C.S. Forester, and follows a Navy destroyer during the grueling Battle of the Atlantic — one of the **longest campaigns** of the war. For more details, see this **Under the Radar post**.



**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)**



## **Vets Don't Need 20% Down with the VA Loan Benefit**

2018 is here and the VA Loan Limits have increased again, now worth up to \$453k financing. Now is the time to use this great benefit. Qualified borrowers can buy or refi with as little as \$0 down, and have no PMI payments with great rates and financing up to \$453k. **Use your VA loan benefit today.**



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**904-824-1625**



## **OBITUARY NOTICE**

Daniel Allen Suttelle, age 96, of St. Augustine, passed away on Wednesday, Feb.14, 2018 at Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home. Dan was born on Sept. 27, 1921 in Ambridge, Pa. to Frank and Margaret Griffin Suttelle. After graduating from high school, Dan joined the US Navy in Oct of 1939 serving as a Chief Pharmacist Mate specializing in Aviation Medicine. He served aboard the USS Seiverling, DE441 in most all of the major battles in the Pacific in WW II. His ship was tied up alongside the USS Missouri during the signing of the Japanese surrender in Japan at the

end of the war and he witnessed along with many of his shipmates the signing of the surrender. He retired from the U.S. Navy in June of 1960 after 20 years of service.

Dan was married to the former Lois Marie Demko. She preceded him in death in 1990. After his retirement, Dan was employed as a Director at the Red Cross in Long Island, N.Y and United Way in Long Island. He later moved to St. Augustine in the early 70's and was employed by Deltona Real Estate and was heavily involved in development of St. Augustine Shores. He served as a docent at World Golf Hall of Fame giving tours, was a former President of the St. Augustine Navy League Council, a National Director and a member of the US Navy Fleet Reserve. He was also a member of the Knights of Columbus, Exchange Club, and Lions Club.

Dan will be best remembered as a caring and giving person who was always ready to help a friend or family member in need.

In addition to his wife, Dan was preceded in death by his parents Frank and Margaret Suttelle, brothers, Francis, Clayton, and John Suttelle. He is survived by a niece, Lynne Suttelle Stasi and her

children Spencer Stasi and Alisa Daglio , and a nephew, Robert Schmetzer and his wife Kathy.

Funeral services will be held at 11 am on Saturday, February 17, 2018 at St. Johns Family Funeral Home with Father Nick Marziani officiating.

Interment at Arlington National Cemetery will take place at a later date. In lieu of flowers a donation in Dan's memory can be made to the St. Augustine-Palm Coast Navy League Council, P.O. Box 2117, St. Augustine, FL. 32085. Bill and Nancy Dudley, longtime friends, neighbors, and caretakers for Dan would like to thank the nurses and staff of the Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans Nursing Home, Northeast Florida Community Hospice and the caretakers from Visiting Angels for their excellent and skillful care of Dan during his illness.

St. Johns Family Funeral Home in St. Augustine is in charge of arrangements.





**Our values  
match yours.**



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

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## **Urgent Message from TRICARE West**

Due to recent changes to TRICARE that went into effect Jan. 1, members in the TRICARE West region who utilize TRICARE for their health insurance must update their insurance premium payment method with the new insurance provider, or face dis-enrollment. Health Net Federal Services replaced United Healthcare as the insurance provider for TRICARE West On Jan. 1, 2018. To update your insurance premium payment method, contact HNFS at 844-866-9378, or visit the TRICARE West [website](#).

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## **Risk to Commissaries is Growing**

For the last few years TREA has been warning that the commissary benefit is in danger of going away.



Back in 2011 the Senate Armed Services Committee voted to combine all base exchanges and commissary operations everywhere into one for-profit retail business. While that did not come to fruition it began the attacks on the commissaries by some key members of Congress who have complained about the taxpayer subsidy of the commissaries.

Those attacks kept getting stronger until a couple of years ago when DeCA, the Defense Commissary Agency, was forced to take measures to change how commissaries are operated in an effort to try and save the benefit.

Some of those changes are now in place and DeCA is hopeful they will allow the taxpayer subsidy to be reduced. However, DeCa has told Congress that it is not possible to eliminate the subsidy entirely and still save the benefit.

That's why a new report is so troubling. According to military columnist Tom Philpott, commissary officials have said that on-base sales at commissaries fell six percent last year, which continues a trend that began in 2012. Sales have dropped a total of 21.3 percent since then.

According to Philpott, "The worry is that falling sales leave commissaries open to criticism that they're losing relevancy as a military perk, or becoming too costly for taxpayers to support, given the fierce competition for customers from commercial grocers."

The fall in sales is ironic because surveys have shown the the benefit is the second most popular one after health care, according to Pentagon officials.

In addition to the benefit itself, commissary and exchange programs are a gift that keeps on giving to the military community- spinning off benefits far in excess of resources that are consumed-tens of thousands of jobs for family members; financing hundreds of millions of dollars in base infrastructure improvements; hundreds of millions of dollars in dividends that support MWR programs; and providing the support and financial base for services and programs for overseas and deployed forces.

DoD has set annual targets DeCA must hit to lower its appropriation from \$1.4 billion in 2017 to \$400 million by 2021. Military leaders have testified they want that that billion dollars in savings to applied to

more critical readiness needs.

DeCA's target for 2018 is to lower reliance on appropriated dollars by \$150 million but reaching that goal is likely to be very difficult.

TREA has been very active in the effort to save the commissaries and we will continue to do so. In the meantime, you can help by shopping at your commissary this week and this year and help stop the drop in sales.

Source: TREA



## **VA Celebrates African-American Veterans throughout February**

WASHINGTON —Today the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced several events in celebration of African American History Month.

“All of our Veterans have a story to tell,” said VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin. “It’s an honor to be able to celebrate the accomplishments of African-Americans who, despite myriad challenges, have made a profound, lasting impact in the story of our nation.”

This year’s national theme is “**African Americans in Times of War**,” which calls attention to the heroic contributions of African Americans during the nation’s military conflicts, from the Revolutionary War to present-day operations.

**VA Center for Minority Veterans** (CMV) in partnership with Blacks In Government and the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Braintrust will host a reception at the African American Civil War Museum located at 1925 Vermont Ave., NW, on Feb. 21 from 5:30-8 p.m.

The event will include a reception, a showing of short films celebrating African- American Veterans,

an update on the CBC Veterans Braintrust and a four member panel of Veteran speakers with an opportunity for questions. The event is free and open to the public. Attendees must register at the following link: [CMV Reception](#).

In continued celebration of African American History Month, Barbara Ward, director of Center for Minority Veterans, will moderate a roundtable discussion on the Vets Speaks radio program hosted by the Kentucky National Association for Black Veterans. The roundtable is scheduled for Feb. 12, from noon to 12:30 p.m.

Additionally, CMV, in partnership with Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation and The Center for Women Veterans, will host a luncheon at the Women's Memorial located at Arlington National Cemetery on Feb. 27, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The event will feature guest speaker, Verna Jones, executive director of the American Legion, followed by a series of short films celebrating African-American women Veterans. This event is free and lunch will be provided. Attendees must register at the following link: [CMV Luncheon](#).



## **Legion Offers Discount for Centennial Tour**

Travelers who book by March 1, 2018, can receive a \$1,000 discount per couple to join Across 2 Wars: The American Legion's Centennial Commemorative Tour of historic World War I and World War II sites in France next fall. The eight-day tour with an optional one-night extension in Paris is operated by the National WWII Museum, as part of its educational travel program, in alliance with The American Legion. The scheduled tour dates are Sept. 3-11, 2018, and Sept. 30-Oct. 8, 2018. To learn more about the tours and to make reservations, visit the [National WWII Museum website](#) online.



**VA and Treasury Team Up to Fight Fraud**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it has formed a partnership with the U.S. Department of Treasury to develop new and innovative tools to combat fraud, waste and abuse. VA's related projects will concentrate on the following: identifying where and how VA can learn from industry leaders and bridge gaps in payment processes; creating a comprehensive methodology for identifying fraud risks across VA programs; and building data models to identify potential fraud in one of VA's most used Community Care programs. The next step will be for Treasury to produce a government-wide framework to assist other federal agencies in addressing fraud, waste and abuse.



## **No Request to Close More Bases/Posts in President's Budget**

One of the unexpected surprises in President Trump's FY 2019 budget proposal is what it does not do. It does not call for closing more military facilities. It's surprising because a call for closing more bases and posts has been a regular part of presidential budget requests for the last several years.

For the first time in half a decade, the Pentagon isn't



asking Congress to close some of the 22 percent excess infrastructure it is paying to keep open. DoD estimates it would save about \$2 billion a year if it could conduct another round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC).

Even though the budget calls for major increases in military spending in FY 2019, things will level off after that. So perhaps this is only a one-year lull and calls for more closings will reappear next year.

Whatever the case, Congress has not authorized another round of base/post closures since the last one in 2005. And since most of the president's budget request is not likely to pass anyway, we can rest easy for a few months that no new closures will be coming anytime soon.

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**



## **President Seeks Increase in 2019 VA Budget**

In the fiscal year (FY) 2019 budget, President Trump is proposing a total of \$198.6 billion for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). This request is an increase of \$12.1 billion over 2018. The FY 2019 budget medical care request is \$76.5 billion, including collections. Suicide prevention is VA's highest clinical priority. The request of \$8.6 billion for mental health services is \$468 million (5.8 percent) above 2018. The FY 2019 budget also requests \$1.2 billion to continue implementation of a single, accurate, lifetime Electronic Health Record (EHR). For a copy of the current budget submission FY 2019, visit the VA Office of Budget [website](#), and for more details, see this [article](#).



**Is Your Heart Healthy? Register for  
TRICARE Webinar on Heart Health**

February is widely recognized as American Heart Month. Join us on Thursday, Feb. 22, from 1 to 2 p.m. (ET) for the "What Women Need to Know About Heart Health" TRICARE webinar. Learn about the risks, warning signs and ways you can prevent heart disease from an expert cardiologist at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. About 600,000 people die of heart disease in the U.S. every year, making it the leading cause of death for men and women.

Read the full article [here](#).



## Links to Other Stories

- 1) [CMS-ID Database Error Causes Accidental Job Posting Cancellation](#)
- 2) [CNIC Continues to Support Warfighters, Families during Possible Government Shutdown](#)
- 3) [Embedded Mental Health Care Providers Break Down Barriers to Care](#)
- 4) [Help for Veterans with Seasonal Affective Disorder](#)
- 5) [NAVSEA to Offer Navy Civilian Job Opportunities](#)

at BEYA STEM Conference

- 6) PNS Aslat Seizes 5 Tons of Drugs to Total \$1 Billion in CTF-150 Seized Drugs in Recent Months
- 7) Program helps formerly homeless Army Vet land a job at VA serving his fellow Veterans
- 8) Seeking Innovative Ways to Restore Our Warfighters
- 9) VA Announces Aggressive New Approach for Low-Performing Medical Centers
- 10) VA Celebrates African-American Veterans throughout February
- 11) Veterans, smiles and a dog named Honor

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)



**Apply for Your Veterans ID Card**

Veterans with honorable service can apply for the [Veterans Identification Card](#) (VIC) to use as proof of military service. To request a VIC, Veterans should visit [vets.gov](#), click on 'Sign In' in the top right hand corner and establish an ID.me account. Once the Veteran verifies their identity they may request to 'Apply for the Veteran ID Card.' If you already have a photo ID issued by the Department of Defense or a Veterans Health ID, you do not need the new card. For more information, read the VA Vantage Point Blog and listen to this [video](#).



## **Monitoring Commissary Patrons' Savings In An Era Of Reforms**

When asked about the current level of savings for commissary shoppers in an era of sweeping reforms, the interim director of Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA), retired Navy Rear Adm. Robert Bianchi, referred to results of a price comparison survey conducted in 2016 and released in late January last year. It showed average savings at commissaries “globally” were 23.7 percent compared to prices at commercial grocery stores. More specifically, patron savings averaged 20.2 percent at stateside commissaries and 44.2 percent overseas. For more details, see [this article](#).



**VA Offers Veterans 'Welcome Kit'**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently released a Welcome Kit that can guide Veterans to which benefits they may qualify for. The guidance is based on the Veteran's stage of life. The road map starts with the moment you join the United States military and goes all the way to a Veteran's later years. For more information, listen to the [Podcast](#) and download your [VA Welcome Kit](#).



## **Public Invited to Free Musical Tribute to Veterans**

INDIO – The 50-member Symphony Orchestra of California Baptist University will honor our nation's veterans with a musical tribute at the Rose Garden at Empire Polo Club at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 21.

Admission and parking to the performance, A Patriotic Musical Salute to Veterans, are free of charge. The Empire Polo Club is located in Indio at 81-800 Avenue 51. Signs will direct parking from Monroe Street, south of Avenue 50.

The orchestra, formed in 2012, previously performed a musical salute to veterans at the County Administrative Center in Riverside in 2016.



Supervisor V. Manuel Perez arranged to have the group perform in the Coachella Valley, with the venue donated by Alex Haagen III.

“Our veterans and members of our military are owed a great debt of gratitude and appreciation for their service and sacrifice to our nation,” said Supervisor V. Manuel Perez. “This concert is another expression of our honor and respect to veterans and their families. The patriotic melodies of the ensemble, in the beautiful setting of the prestigious Empire Polo Club, will combine to make a very special evening for all guests to enjoy. We are very delighted to have this musical tribute to veterans, and hope you will join us.”

The concert, presented by Supervisor Perez and several county departments, is made possible by the generous sponsorships of Chandi Group USA, Empire Polo Club, Esser Air Conditioning and Heating and other sponsors.

“My family and I are pleased to join with Mr. & Mrs. Alex Haagen to present this concert for the enjoyment of our veterans, their families, and friends,” said Nachhattar S. Chandi.

During breaks in the music, awards will be

presented to veterans' service organizations and community partners.

“As a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and a military retiree, I believe I can speak for all veterans when I say thank you to the orchestra, Supervisor Perez, and the sponsors for putting on this special musical salute to our military,” said Master Gunnery Sgt. Daniel Smith III USMC, ret. Smith, a U.S. Marine Corps combat veteran of the Vietnam and Gulf Wars, is a 100 percent disabled veteran.



## **CAMP Lejeune Family Health and Disability Benefits**

In 2012 Congress passed and President Obama signed to aid veterans and their family members who may have developed 15 medical conditions due to drinking contaminated water at Camp Lejeune N.C. It was discovered in the 1980s that several of the wells that provided drinking water contained trichloroethylene (TCE), perchloroethylene (PCE), vinyl chloride, benzene and other volatile organic compounds. These compounds were mainly from on base leaking storage tanks and industrial activities and an off base dry cleaner.

Exposure to these compounds can, it is believed, contribute to many illnesses/ medical conditions. If a veteran, National Guard or Reserve member or their family members lived on Camp Lejeune or Marine Corps Air Station for at least 30 days (cumulative) between August 1st 1953 and December 31st 1987 are eligible for healthcare and/or financial help for health care if the person has one of the following conditions:

1. Bladder Cancer
2. Breast Cancer
3. Esophageal Cancer
4. Female infertility

5. Hepatic steatosis
6. Kidney cancer
7. Leukemia
8. Lung cancer
9. Miscarriage
10. Multiple myeloma
11. Myelodysplastic syndromes
12. Neurobehavioral effects
13. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
14. Renal toxicity
15. Scleroderma

Additionally, if a family member was exposed at the same time they can be reimbursed by the VA for any treatment costs after payment from the patient's other insurance policies. **THIS IS A UNIQUE BENEFIT.** The VA has never paid healthcare for non-veterans.

The veteran can also be found to have a presumption of service connection for the following 8 conditions and qualify for VA disability payments. **(THE FAMILY MEMBERS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICE CONNECTED DISABILITY PAYMENTS.)**

These conditions are:

1. Adult leukemia
2. Aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes
3. Bladder cancer
4. Kidney cancer
5. Liver cancer
6. Multiple myeloma
7. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
8. Parkinson's disease

To apply for the Ft. Lejeune health care go to [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/) or call 1-877-222-8387.

To apply for veterans disability compensation you can find a Veteran Service Officer by looking for VA facilities at <http://benefits.va.gov/benefits/offices.asp> and ask for assistance.

Source: TREA



U.S. Government Accountability  
Office Reports

- 1) [Additional Actions Are Essential for Assessing Cybersecurity Framework Adoption](#)
- 2) [Coast Guard Health Records: Timely Acquisition](#)

of New System Is Critical to Overcoming Challenges with Paper Process

3) Coast Guard Health Records: Timely Acquisition of New System Is Critical to Overcoming Challenges with Paper Process

4) FDA Medical Device Reviews: Evaluation is Needed to Assure Requests for Additional Information Follow a Least Burdensome Approach

5) Federal Buildings: GSA Should Establish Goals and Performance Measures to Manage the Smart Buildings Program

6) Federal Health-Insurance Marketplace: Analysis of Plan Year 2015 Application, Enrollment, and Eligibility-Verification Process

7) Generic Drugs: FDA Should Make Public Its Plans to Issue and Revise Guidance on Nonbiological Complex Drugs

8) Information on Inmates with Serious Mental Illness and Strategies to Reduce Recidivism

9) Medicaid: CMS Should Take Additional Steps to Improve Assessments of Individuals' Needs for Home- and Community-Based Services

10) Medicaid: Further Action Needed to Expedite Use of National Data for Program Oversight

11) Medicare Part B: Medicare Represented at Least Half of the Market for 22 of the 84 Most Expensive Drugs in 2015

12) Prescription Opioids: Medicare Should Expand Oversight Efforts to Reduce the Risk of Harm

13) VA Health IT Modernization: Historical Perspective on Prior Contracts and Update on Plans for New Initiative



## **Pentagon's New Deploy-or-Out Policy Could Separate Up to 286K**

The Pentagon's new "deploy-or-out" policy could result in the separation from military service of possibly 286,000 personnel who are currently deemed medically unfit for overseas duty. "This new policy is a 12-month deploy or be removed policy," Robert Wilkie, the undersecretary of defense for Personnel and Readiness, told the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel Wednesday. For more details, see this [article](#).



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## Employers Apply for DoL HIRE Vets Medallion

The Department of Labor (DoL) is currently accepting applications for the beta phase of the HIRE Vets Medallion Program to recognize employers who hire and retain veterans as employees. This year's awards, specifically titled The HIRE Vets Medallion Program Demonstration, will be used to finalize the permanent awards program beginning in 2019. Employers wishing to be recognized can apply directly at [HireVets.gov](http://HireVets.gov) and fill out an electronic application. The application period opened Feb. 2 and will close April 30, 2018, or after the first 300 applications are received. For more information about the awards program and other services, read the VA [VA Vantage Point Blog](#), visit the [VETS website](#), follow [@VETS\\_DOL](#), and join the conversation [#HIREVets](#).



**U.S. FOOD & DRUG**  
ADMINISTRATION



- 1) Acyclovir 400mg Tablets by Apace Packaging: Recall - Product Mix-up
- 2) Apace Packaging LLC Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Acyclovir (Lot 19900) Due to Product Mix-up
- 3) FDA Announcement of Certain Raw Pet Foods Made by Arrow Reliance Inc., Including Darwin's Natural Pet Products and ZooLogics Pet Food
- 4) Redbarn Pet Products Issues Voluntary Recall of Dog Chews



**This month please remember these women who died during February while serving our country in or during war times:**

4 Feb 1997: USN AW3 Wendy L Potter, airplane

crash, off coast of Israel

5 Feb 2015: USCG PO2 Lisa Trubnikova, 31,  
murdered by USCG member, Bourne, MA

7 Feb 1944: USA ANC LT Marjorie Morrow, WW II

7 Feb 1944: USA ANC 1LT Carrie Sheetz, WW II

7 Feb 1944: USA ANC LT Blanche Sigman, WW II

7 Feb 2007: USMC CPT Jennifer Harris, 27, IRAQ

7 Feb 2007: USMC CPL Jennifer Parcell, 20, IRAQ

9 Feb 1944: USA ANC LT LaVerne Farquar, WW II

9 Feb 1944: USA ANC LT Gertrude Spelboug, WW  
II

9 Feb 2005: ILARNG SGT Jessica M. Housby, 23,  
IRAQ

9 Feb 2015: USAF CPT Jamie Brunette, suicide,  
Tampa, FL

9 Feb 2015: USA Amanda Weyrick, 25, drug  
overdose, San Antonio, TX

10 Feb 2010: USA PFC Adriana Alvarez, 20,  
gunshot wound, IRAQ

10 Feb 1945: USN HA1 Marilyn E Weeks, bacterial  
infection, Navy Hospital, Seattle, WA

12 Feb 2007: USN MA2 Laquita (Pate) James, 33,  
natural causes aboard USS Bataan,  
AFGHANISTAN

12 Feb 2009: USN IT3 Caitlin Trask, 21, died of  
gunshot wound by her former boyfriend in Newport  
News, VA

12 Feb 2009: USAF T/SGT Jessica Sweet, 30,  
leukemia, Walter Reed

14 Feb 2008: USA SGT Julianna Gehant, 32,  
murdered in Northern Illinois University

14 Feb 2013: USA SPC Kimberly Walker, 28,  
murdered by boyfriend, Colorado Springs, CO

15 Feb 2010: USAF MG Jeanne Holm, died from  
double pneumonia

16 Feb 1944: USA ANC Ellen Ainsworth, 24, WW II

16 Feb 2004: USAR PFC Nichole M. Frye, 19,  
IRAQ

16 Feb 2005: USA SPC Katrina Lani (Johnson)  
Bell, 32, IRAQ

16 Feb 2014: USMC GySgt Monica Plank, 34, hit &  
run driver, OH

17 Feb 2006: USAF SrAirman Alecia S Good, 23,  
plane crash near Africa

18 Feb 1944: WASP Marian Toevs, WW II

18 Feb 1966: USA ANC 2LT Carol Ann Drazba, 22,  
VIETNAM

18 Feb 1966: USA ANC 2LT Elizabeth Ann Jones,  
22, VIETNAM

19 Feb 2009: HIARNG PFC Cwislyn K Walter, 19,  
non-combat vehicle accident

19 Feb 2010: USA SGT Winter Plummer, 27,  
murdered by husband at Ft Lewis, WA

21 Feb 2010: TNARNG CWO2 Billie J Grinder, 25,

helicopter accident, IRAQ

22 Feb 2008: USA SPC Keisha M Morgan, 25, non-combat overdose, IRAQ

22 Feb 2010: USA PFC Autumn M Shannon, 32, murdered by mother, Ft Bragg, NC

24 Feb 1944: ANC 2LT Elizabeth J Howren, plane crash near Gela-Vittoria, Sicily

25 Feb 1944: WASP Trainee Betty Pauline Stine, WW II

25 Feb 1991: USAR SPC Christine Mayes, 22, barracks building in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, DESERT STORM

25 Feb 1991: USAR SPC Beverly S Clark, 23, barracks building in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, DESERT STORM

25 Feb 1991: USAR SPC Adrienne L Mitchell, 20, barracks building in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, DESERT STORM

26 Feb 2007: MDARNG PVT May Yuen, 22, Basic Training suicide?

27 Feb 1991: USA SGT Cheryl (LaBeau) O'Brien, 24, DESERT STORM

28 Feb 1991: CTARNG SPC Cindy Marie Beaudoin, 19, Kuwait, DESERT STORM

28 Feb 2003: USAF SSG Shelby Dawn Orelup, 22, murdered at Sheppard AFB, TX

28 Feb 2009: USMC Carri Leigh Goodwin, 20,

suicide due to rape



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