



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, March 25, 2018

Volume 9, Issue 12



## **This-N-That**

As you might have noticed, we've added a new section of news from the U.S. Food & Drug Administration on various recalls on both human and pet food products.

We wanted to make sure you were aware of the various recalls, some are specific to certain areas and others are nationwide, but keeping you informed and safe is the goal with this new section.

We all know how bad the VA healthcare system is and has been under the various Secretary's of the VA we have had, but there are many Veterans waiting as much as seven months to get their wheel chairs fixed and ending up being confined to bed needlessly.

The inspector general for Veterans Affairs reported this week on problems at VA medical facilities in its southeast network with its repair system for scooters and wheelchairs. One vet waited as long as 210 days—roughly 7 months—for his power wheelchair to be fixed.

The inspector general initiated the audit after Senate committee chairman Johnny Isakson (R., Ga.) heard of delays at the Atlanta VA. The audit found that the problem was widespread at eight facilities within the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) in the southeast.

The audit revealed 40 percent of repair orders were delayed, taking an average 69 days to complete.

Almost everything the VA does is unacceptable, but to forcibly confine a Veteran to bed when their entire life is controlled by their mobility is nothing short of insanity.

You want to see things that would make your blood boil? Down under [Links to Other Stories](#), read **6 eye-popping findings from an investigation of the Washington, D.C., VA medical center.**

We've all known or remember many years ago how the government was paying astronomical fees for light bulbs, toilet paper, toilet seats, ash trays, hammers, etc., etc., well here is yet another example, but this time involving money budgeted for Veterans.

I've received several hundred E-Mails over the past month or so, which I fully intend to reply to each one, but for the most part many of you are outlining issues and asking us to "solve" them.

As hard as we try and address each and every

single issue, most of which we have been doing for several years, we simply cannot fix every one of them alone.

Even with several other organizations also addressing the same issues, and some we collaborate on, it's simply impossible to do alone.

I also know I've harped on the issue of Veteran involvement for years now, and again, knowing we have more than forty million Veterans nationwide, if we only had a mere 10%, that's 4 million Veterans helping us in this fight on all issues, we could resolve most of the problems and Veterans could begin to see immediate improvement and change for the good.

I'm sure many of you are on Face Book, and if you can spend 30 minutes a day, or week on that social media outlet, why would you not spend that amount of time once a week to help in the fight?

There are only 535 members of Congress, four million Veteran voters could do some serious

damage to their daily routines which is how we get their attention!

Be sure to check our website often, there will be many more news pieces being added over the next three days.

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)



## **VA Secretary Shulkin Twists in the Wind**

Reports continue to circulate that the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Dr. David Shulkin, could be fired by President Trump. However, over the weekend Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), Chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, told

President Trump that he had "full confidence" in Secretary Shulkin, according to Politico.

Senate Republicans believe that Secretary Shulkin's rumored replacement, Fox and Friends host Pete Hegseth, would be impossible to confirm.

Secretary Shulkin is under fire after reports surfaced that he used taxpayer money for his wife on a trip to Europe.

Shulkin has done "a great job" as secretary, Isakson said in an interview with Politico on Monday evening. "Yes, there have been a few difficult times, but that's because we're making progress. I've talked to the president about my confidence in Shulkin."

Hegseth would be enormously difficult to confirm if he were Shulkin's replacement, said Republican sources on Capitol Hill, because certain GOP senators oppose Hegseth for his criticism of their work.

Hegseth has attacked Isakson in the past as a

"so-called Republican" and a "Swamp-creature" for working with Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) on veterans' legislation.

With Senator John McCain (R-AZ) away receiving cancer treatments, there are currently only 50 GOP Senators able to vote on a replacement.

Source: TREA



## **Which Plan is Right for You? Comparing TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Select**

If you have health coverage with TRICARE, you can choose from a variety of plans, which provide you options in where and how you seek medical and dental services. Two major health programs include TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Select. Both require enrollment and each offer the quality care you deserve.

Read the full article [here](#).



## **DFAS Scam Warning**



The Defense Finance Accounting Service (DFAS) is warning Defense Travel System (DTS) users of a new phishing scam targeting government travelers. In this scheme, scammers send an official-looking email notifying the member they were not paid correctly for their last TDY. The email then directs the traveler to click on a link to update their information. An extract from the typical phishing e-mail is available on the Air Reserve Personnel Center [website](#). Do not forward suspect emails and do not visit any links from untrusted sources. For more information, email [dfas.indianapolis-in.jft.mbx.in-army-dts-inquiries@mail.mil](mailto:dfas.indianapolis-in.jft.mbx.in-army-dts-inquiries@mail.mil).



## **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 3,961,347 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 16,387 documents on-line (Updated: 02/20/18)
- 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 (Counselor Needed)
  - 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: 01/11/18)
  - News (Articles On-Line: 7,213)
  - Polls
  - Web Links, more than 3,625, Added 6 New Links (Updated: 02/19/18)

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



OUR DEBT TO THE  
HEROIC MEN AND VALIANT  
WOMEN IN THE SERVICE  
OF OUR COUNTRY CAN  
NEVER BE REPAID. THEY  
HAVE EARNED OUR  
UNDYING GRATITUDE.  
AMERICA WILL NEVER  
FORGET THEIR SACRIFICES.

PRESIDENT HARRY S TRUMAN



## **VA Reporting Delayed GI Bill Payments**

The VA has reported that GI Bill payments for the spring semester are experiencing "longer than usual processing times". Many veterans whose spring term began in January are reporting that they still have not received any GI Bill payments for their schooling as they begin their midterm breaks. For its part, the VA apologizes for the delay and says the delays are due to high claim volume during spring enrollment season and installation of computer system upgrades. They also say that claims are being processed in the order in which they were received. For more details, see this [article](#).

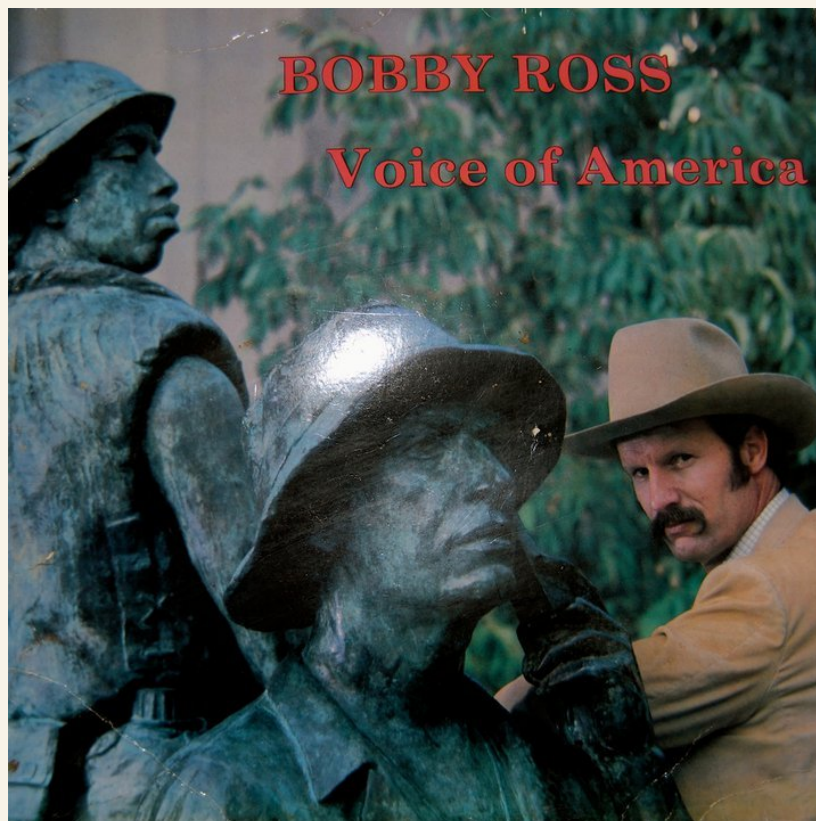


## **New DOD Task Force Eyed For Merging Exchange Services, DECA**

The three military exchange services and the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) would be merged into a single resale enterprise under a proposal backed by John H. Gibson II, the Defense Department's new chief management officer, who has been tasked to make DoD business operations more efficient. For more details, see this [article](#).



## LT Bobby Ross



[Click Here](#)

## **March's Featured Song**

### **Back To Blue Jeans**

**LT Bobby Ross**

### **PATRIOTIC MUSIC**

Remember this site is an Internet Adventure. All you need do is click on the pictures and any highlighted word, and you are launched to another world in Cyberspace. Try it! So much fun!



## **Are The New VA Employee Accountability Measures Being Abused?**

Last June, President Donald Trump signed the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, a bipartisan bill intended to make it easier to fire employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs. It is a very, very rare rollback of the federal government's strict civil-service job protections. This is a

direct result of the many problems that in recent years at various Department of Veterans' Affairs facilities.

Proponents of the bill from both parties ensured the public that it would hold everyone—especially top officials—accountable.

Department of Veterans' Affairs Secretary David Shulkin pushed the measure by highlighting an example where the VA had to wait 30 days to fire a worker caught watching porn with a patient.

"I do not see this as a tool that's going to lead to mass firings," Shulkin said last June in Politico. "I would never support that as secretary. I see this as a tool that's going to be used on a small number of people, who clearly have deviated from accepted practices and norms."

The law has undoubtedly had an effect. In the second half of 2017 firings rose 60 percent over the first half of 2017. Since June, the VA has removed 1,704 of its 377,000 employees.



But if top officials were the target of the law, a ProPublica investigation suggests the legislation misfired. In practice, the new law is overwhelmingly being used against the rank and file. Since it took effect, the VA has fired four senior leaders. The other 1,700 terminated people were low-level staffers with titles such as housekeeper (133 lost their jobs), nursing assistant (101 ousted) and food service worker (59 terminated), according to data posted by the VA.

While TREA: The Enlisted Association knows quite well that problem employees exist at all levels of an organization, the intent of the law was clearly to clean up the "culture" of the VA and to fire employees who erode the "trust" that veterans have in it. Housekeepers, food service workers and nursing assistants are not the prime culprits in creating the cultural problems at the VA.

If the VA doesn't figure out how to use the law to clean up the VA's systemic problems, the authority to quickly fire employees can leave

as quickly as it came.

Some of the fired workers surely deserved it. But some were guilty of minor infractions-such as arriving late to work-things that wouldn't previously have received as harsh a punishment, according to union officials and a letter sent to Shulkin on February 26 by six Democratic senators. And there is more:

"There is evidence to suggest that it's not just junior VA staffers who are losing their jobs - whistleblowers and people who filed discrimination complaints are among those being fired, in several cases reviewed by ProPublica. That means a law intended to protect whistleblowers may be doing the opposite. Retaliating against such employees remains illegal, but the new law makes it much harder for them to defend themselves."

You can read the rest of the very long report [here](#).

Source: TREA



## Tax Refund for Sinai Troops

Soldiers serving in a designated combat zone are eligible to exempt military pay from their taxable income. Soldiers who served in the Sinai Peninsula during any time after June 9, 2015, can now obtain a corrected W-2 and file an amended return with the IRS. Active Component Soldiers who were assigned temporary change of station (TCS) or temporary duty (TDY) during any period from June 2015 through December 31, 2016, should submit a copy of their TDY/mobilized orders and a completed travel voucher (DD Form 1351-2 or DTS Voucher) to the finance office for review. For information on how to file an amended income tax return, contact your local tax center or visit the IRS [website](#).



**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)**



**Veterans Roundtable, Riverside,  
Thursday, 29th of March**

Dear Riverside County Veterans' Service  
Center,

As your representative in Congress, it is my  
responsibility to be your voice in Washington,  
D.C. I am honored to serve the people of the  
41st District of California

(Riverside, Moreno Valley, Jurupa Valley,  
Perris, Mead Valley) and proud to serve as the  
Vice Ranking Member on the House  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

While there are still several challenges in Washington, D.C., I wanted to give you an update on the work we've accomplished on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Please join me for a Veterans Roundtable on Thursday, March 29, 2018 from 5:00pm to 7:00pm at the VFW Post 10267 located at 8607 Mission Blvd., Riverside, CA 92509.

This Roundtable is also an opportunity for organizations and community members to share with me and our office some of the challenges and solutions they are working on to the benefit of our Veterans community.

My District Office staff will also be on hand to take care of any additional casework questions you or the community member you serve may have.

Additionally, my staff will be presenting on the Vietnam War Commemoration project, publicly honoring living U.S. military veterans who served during the Vietnam War period and

how you can be involved in presenting them with a lasting memento of the Nation's thanks.

For more information and to RSVP, please call my District Office at (951) 222-0203 or Email [Ignacio.Romero@mail.house.gov](mailto:Ignacio.Romero@mail.house.gov).

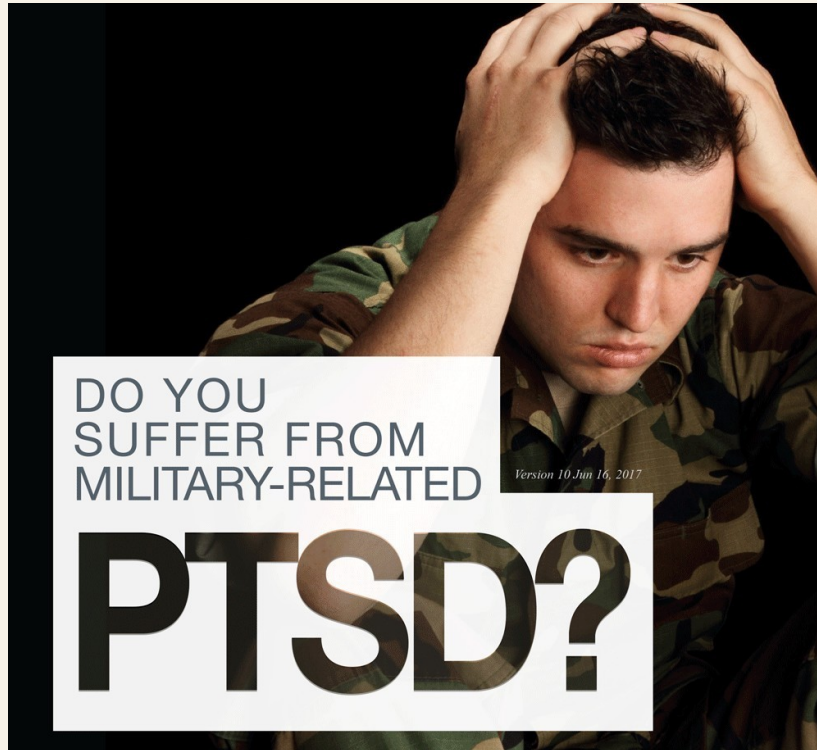
Sincerely,  
Mark Takano  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



## **2018 VA Loan Rates are Out: Now is the Time to Use Your Benefit**

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.





**Veterans Crisis Line:  
1-800-273-8255 & Press 1  
Ntl Call Center for Homeless Vets  
1-877-424-3838**



**Mailing of New Veteran ID Card  
Delayed**



The new free ID cards were supposed to be mailed in early March. Instead they won't go out until sometime in April, officials said this week. All honorably discharged veterans qualify for the cards, which can be used at businesses to show proof of service. For more details, see this [article](#).



**Our values  
match yours.**



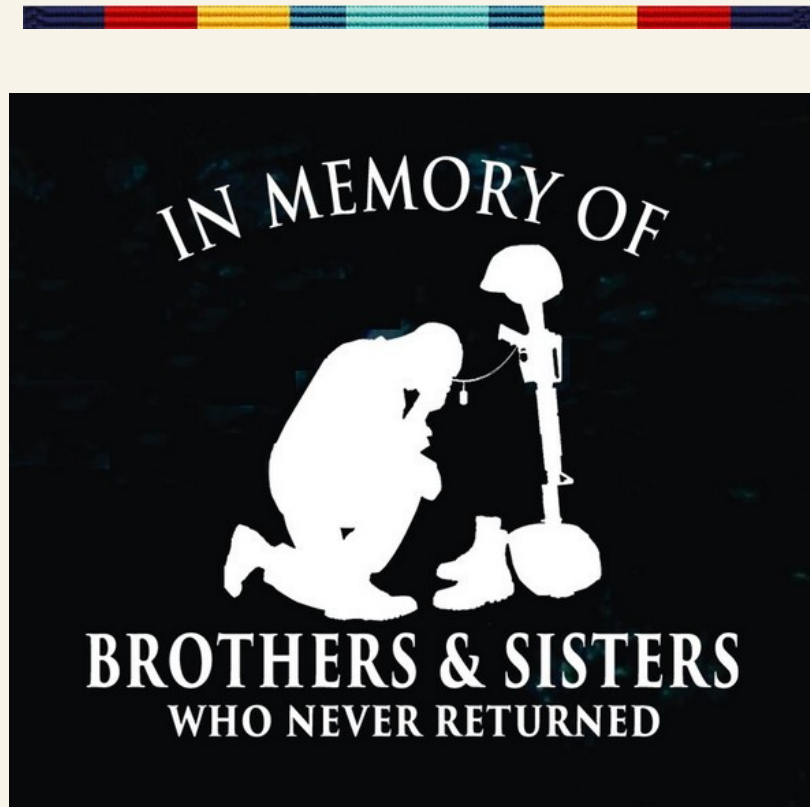
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[www.veterans-for-change.org](http://www.veterans-for-change.org)



## **Report Shows High Produce Prices at Commissary in Japan, Korea**

Although the contract to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to military commissaries in Japan and Korea is saving taxpayers about \$40 million a year, it's resulted in skyrocketing produce prices for shoppers, according to a new report from the DoD Inspector General. For more details, see this [article](#).



**No-cost Admission to the PGA's  
TPC Tournament**

Continuing a PGA TOUR tradition of honoring men and women in uniform, THE PLAYERS Championship has announced military appreciation activities for the 2018 event in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. The Military Appreciation Day Ceremony will begin at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 8 and the concert will kick-off at 6 p.m. on the 17th hole when the tournament returns to THE PLAYERS Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass, May 8-13. The ceremony and concert are free to any Tuesday ticket holder. Also, all career military will receive complimentary admission to the tournament all week and discounted admission for veterans. For more information, visit [THE PLAYERS](#) website.





## **Risks to the GI Bill Come From Education Committees**

Congress is now considering legislation that would reauthorize the Higher Education Act of 1965. The veterans' community has not historically engaged with this legislation, which is now in the process of being reauthorized for the ninth time in the last 53 years by H.R. 4508, the Promoting Real Opportunity, Success, and Prosperity through Higher Education Reform (PROSPER) Act.

There are several aspects of the legislation that TREA: The Enlisted Association supports, namely:

- The bill encourages accreditors to focus more time and resources on schools that are struggling, as opposed to forcing them to spend equal time among schools that have no problems as well as problem schools.
- Restricts a school's ability to hide poor student outcomes.
- Increases program funding, along with incentives for schools that successfully graduate or improve graduation potential for Pell Grant recipients.
- Expands the Pell Grant Program with a bonus of up to \$300 for low-income students who take at least 30 credits during a full school year.

Unfortunately, H.R. 4508 fails to protect student veterans in a number of remarkable ways. For years TREA: The Enlisted Association has fought against the predatory and fraudulent practices of largely for-profit institutions that cheat student veterans who use the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill, the Montgomery G.I. Bill, and survivor benefits like the Fry Scholarship. H.R. 4508 would enable "bad actor" schools to use deceptive recruitment

practices that emphasize enrollment numbers rather than positive student outcomes.

In our opinion, the most egregious example of this is the fact that the bill eliminates the 90-10 rule—a requirement that for-profit schools receive no more than 90 percent of its revenue from the federal government. This imposes a market test, which means that if the "free market" will supply a school with at least ten percent of its total funding, the other 90 percent of its revenue can come from federal funding sources.

The 90-10 rule is built into the GI Bill to help assure the financial soundness of colleges and universities by curbing abuse within these programs.

Unfortunately, military educational benefits currently count in the 10 percent part of the formula, so that bad actor schools already target veterans as a way to skirt this rule. Doing away with the 90-10 rule would mean that schools can exist entirely on federal

funding without having to adequately compete in the marketplace for non-federal funds. This is bad for student veterans, and bad for the American taxpayer. If a school can't get 10 percent of its funding from sources other than federal funding, it probably should not be in business.

The PROSPER Act repeals the gainful employment rule, which protects students from poor quality educational programs that are overpriced and lead to low-paying jobs. Making sure that schools actually provide their students with the means to attain high-paying jobs that provide veterans, and our country, a positive return on their investment is a common-sense position. The bill also eliminates the existing borrower defense to repayment regulation and puts in place new rules that make it more difficult for students defrauded by their educational institution to have their loans discharged.

Repealing the borrower defense regulation is a big deal, even in the veterans' community,

because studies have shown that roughly 25 percent of all student veterans take out loans while advancing their education.

That is why reducing access to education by increasing the cost of college for service-affiliated students and discouraging them from continued service when they enter the workforce is such a problem. H.R. 4508 eliminates the subsidized Stafford Loan, which does not accumulate interest while a borrower is in school. This would increase the size of the average student loan burden by 44% - by the time that student, veteran or not, graduates.

Repayment also becomes more difficult under H.R. 4508 as borrowers and their families would be placed on a more stringent income-driven repayment plan, and for low-income borrowers with average debt loads, loan repayment could become lifelong burden.

Finally, H.R. 4508 proposes to eliminate the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), which enables borrowers to enter public



service careers and give back to their communities by working in areas of high need for low pay. After 10 years of creditable service to the country the loans are forgiven. The US Naval Institute (USNI) News reports that almost 6,800 active duty military personnel are enrolled in the PSLF program, and the program's elimination will likely have a substantial impact on efforts to recruit veterans into advanced degree programs and continued service in military jobs.

This legislation makes harder to enter public service. It makes student loans bigger. It reduces repayment options that allow graduates to raise families and save for retirement. And it makes it harder to prevent bad actor schools from defrauding student veterans or to repair the damage that is done when schools defraud student veterans. These are not the type of policy prescriptions that TREA: The Enlisted Association can support. We call on Congress to do better, and not to serve the interests of the for-profit school industry over student veterans.

The Senate has no official companion legislation at the moment, but they are working behind the scenes. TREA: The Enlisted Association is fighting to prevent this legislation from becoming law and will report back with any updates.

Source: TREA



## **Proposal Would Give Military Families Cash for School**

A new proposal on Capitol Hill would divert some federal funding typically sent to local schools to “education savings accounts” held by military families. Although some officials think this program could give military families more school choice, other advocates say it’s a bad idea. For more details, see this [article](#).



## **No, That Tricare Changes Letter Wasn’t Lost in the Mail**

A mail contractor problem led to a more than one month delay to letters sent to Tricare beneficiaries warning of changes. The arrival of the letters, which were dated “December, 2017,” sent to the contractor in early January and mailed in mid-February, confused many Tricare users. For more details, see this [article](#).



## Army Equipping States for Disaster Incident Response

The U.S. Army is equipping all U.S. States and territories with a National Guard presence with a new tool suite known as the Disaster Incident Response Emergency Communications Terminal (DIRECT). This system enables National Guard signal units to provide commercial phone, Internet access, and commercial Wi-Fi and 4G LTE to first responders during domestic natural disasters, emergencies and civil support operations. The entities all use different radios on different frequencies or cell phones. DIRECT allows them to be tied together to have one voice and one central hub. To date, 17 states have the DIRECT system. The Army anticipates completing the DIRECT equipping effort in fiscal year 2021.



## **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**



## **VA Offers Aid in Response to Yountville Shootings**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has expressed its sympathies are with the families, friends and colleagues of the three employees killed recently at The Pathway Home, a private non-profit residential treatment facility located on the Yountville State Veterans Home campus. Although this is not a VA facility, VA has placed a Mobile Vet Center on the Yountville campus. VA's National Center for PTSD and Rocky Mountain Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center are posting resources on their web pages for dealing with tragic violent events. The Veterans Crisis Line is always available 24/7/365 for any crisis needs. To reach it, call 1-800-273-8255, press 1; visit the [Veterans Crisis Line website](#); or text to 838255.



## Links to Other Stories

- 1) [6 eye-popping findings from an investigation of the Washington, D.C., VA medical center](#)

- 2) Decision Ready Claims
- 3) Disabled Veterans Waited Up to Seven Months for VA to Fix Their Wheelchairs
- 4) Drug used for PTSD nightmares falls short in large VA trial
- 5) eBenefits continues to achieve milestones: 7 million registered users
- 6) Forever GI Bill - Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act
- 7) Helping homeless and marginally housed Veterans through photography
- 8) How intimate partner violence affects women Veterans
- 9) Impact of sexual assault and combat trauma on fertility in Veterans
- 10) Improving outcomes among inpatients with alcohol use disorders
- 11) Meet the 18 military Veterans competing at the 2018 Paralympic Winter Games
- 12) PTSD and accelerated aging: How advanced is the science?
- 13) Retention Rules Tighten on Members Not Medically Fit to Deploy
- 14) The loneliness factor: How much does it drive depression in Veterans?

15) Trauma-sensitive yoga for female Veterans with PTSD who experienced military sexual trauma

16) VA launches telehealth program for rural Vets with PTSD

17) White matter damage linked to chronic musculoskeletal pain in Gulf War Veterans

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)



*Click Here*





## TREA Meets with Head of Commissary Agency

In 2011 the Senate Armed Services Committee voted to combine all base exchanges and commissary operations everywhere into one for-profit retail business. That began what has been constant pressure from some in Congress to cut the amount of taxpayer subsidy that is given to commissaries.

The Department of Defense has stated that it expects to reduce government funding for commissaries and exchanges by an estimated \$2 billion (\$1 billion from commissaries and another \$1 billion funding target for exchanges) over a 5-year period during fiscal years 2017-2021.

In order to compensate for that cut in support, DeCA, the Defense Commissary Agency, has taken a number of steps to try and operate more like a business but yet save the benefit. However, the Department of Defense has said that the benefit cannot be saved if the commissaries are forced to operate as a for-

profit business.

Last week TREA's Legislative Director Larry Madison met with the head of DeCA for a briefing on what has happened so far and what to look for in the future. One of the issues that was discussed was the problem of keeping the shelves stocked with grocery products. We were told they are aware of the problem and are working on it. There are several issues involved because of the way things have been done in the commissaries in the past but we were assured they hope to have the problem solved very soon.

However, whether it's keeping shelves stocked or other problems, the reality is that 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.

This is a problem because Congress is watching how much commissaries are used and whether or not they are worth the cost.

If you value the commissary benefit it is very important that you shop at your commissary as often as possible. There is an effort in the Pentagon to move forward with combining all three exchanges (AAFES, Navy, and Marine Corps) with commissaries and making them all for-profit businesses.

If that happens, the commissary benefit will be gone because the discount you get now will go away.

TREA is continuing to fight to save the commissaries but you must help by shopping at the commissary if one is available to you, and also by letting your Senators and Representative know that you want the commissaries saved and not made into a for-profit business.

Source: TREA



**The Legion Continues Vet  
Benefits Outreach in California**

The American Legion is sponsoring a veterans outreach and district revitalization effort March 28-30 in Eldorado, Nevada and Placer counties in California. The effort is scheduled for 9 a.m.-4 p.m. March 28-29 and 9 a.m.-noon March 30 at Veterans Memorial Hall, 100 East St., Auburn, Calif. A county veterans service officer will be available all three days to assist with Department of Veterans Affairs-related issues and other veterans benefits questions. Veterans and their families are encouraged to attend to get assistance and learn about American Legion programs.






## Veteran Employer of the Week: Fairbanks Scales

Fairbanks Scales, a leader in the weighing industry, strives to recruit and hire U.S. military talent nationwide. Veterans are valued at Fairbanks for their leadership, teamwork, integrity, strong work ethic, respect for procedures/accountability, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Postings at Fairbanks for individuals interested in mechanic or telecommunications positions, as well as more information about the company, can be found at the [Fairbanks Scales hiring page](#).



U.S. Government Accountability  
Office Reports

- 1) [DOD Should Fully Incorporate Leading Practices into Its Planning for Effective Implementation](#)
- 

## Navy Seeks JO's for White House Assignment

Navy junior officers interested in serving as White House social aides are invited to apply for acceptance into the program through April 9. The social aides help manage guests who attend social functions at the White House, facilitate interactions with the president and first lady and escort dignitaries. Unmarried naval officers in the paygrades of O-2 through O-4 who are currently stationed in the National Capital Region are eligible to apply to the program, which is a collateral duty, not a permanent change of station. Applicants must have 18-24 months remaining on current orders within the National Capital Region. Applications must be requested via email from the navy service program manager, Lt. John Harry, at [john.harry@navy.mil](mailto:john.harry@navy.mil). Scanned applications must be emailed no later than April 13.



## VA Touts Improvement at DC Med Center

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) outlined a series of major improvements undertaken at the DC VA Medical Center (DCVAMC) in the 11 months since the VA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) released an interim report critical of the Medical Center. Important actions taken at the DCVAMC include: (1) eliminated all pending prosthetics consults greater than 30 days; (2) promptly addressed new supply or equipment shortages and instituted a 24-hour hotline for ordering urgent and emergent medical supplies; (3) ensure automatic inventory replenishment levels are validated to ensure stock outages do not occur; and (4) secure off-site and warehouse areas with restricted access to protect medical equipment and supplies.



**~We Proudly Support our  
Military Personnel & Families~**



## **AF Joins with Buddy Bison Great Outdoors Challenge**



The Air Force Services Activity is partnering with the National Park Trust to bring the Buddy Bison Great Outdoors Challenge to military families at installations. The Buddy Bison program encourages children and families to participate in programs such as camping, canoeing, fishing and hiking while exploring local, state and national parks. The following bases are piloting program: Moody Air Force Base; Hurlburt Field; Little Rock AFB; Hill AFB; F.E. Warren AFB; Peterson AFB; and the U.S. Air Force Academy. Participating installations will host kick-off events for Buddy Bison in the coming weeks. For more information, visit the Kids to Parks Day [webpage](#) or visit a participating base's child and youth programs and outdoor recreation office. For more details, see this [SpouseBuzz post](#).



- 1) [BD Vacutainer Blood Collection Tubes by Becton, Dickinson and Company \(BD\): Class I](#)

## Recall - Chemical Interference with Certain Tests

- 2) BD Updates Instructions for Use for Certain BD Vacutainer® Blood Collection Tubes
- 3) PDX Aromatics Issues Second Expanded Recall of Kratom Products Because of Possible Health Risk
- 4) Weis Markets Issues an Allergy Alert For Weis Quality Store-Made Cole Slaw Sold in 8 Stores Due to Undeclared Egg Allergen
- 5) NeuroBlate Probe by Monteris Medical: Letter to Health Care Providers, Class I Recall - Unintended Heating
- 6) Piggie Park Enterprises Inc. Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Wheat and Soy in Gourmet Carolina Gold Honey Sauce
- 7) Piggie Park Enterprises Inc. Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Wheat and Soy in Maurice's Southern Gold Honey Sauce
- 8) Vietti Foods Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Wheat and Eggs in Southgate Hot Dog Chili Sauce
- 9) River Valley Sprouts Recalls Alfalfa Sprouts and Garlic Alfalfa Sprouts Due to Possible Salmonella Contamination

- 10) Natural Grocers Issues Recall on Coconut Smiles Organic Due to Salmonella
- 11) Oregon Food Bank Voluntarily Recalls Nutritional Yeast
- 12) Oregon Food Bank Voluntarily Recalls Pumpkin Seeds Because Of Possible Contamination By Listeria Species
- 13) Chris's Cookies Recalls Chocolate Chip Cookies Due to Undeclared Peanuts
- 14) PDX Aromatics Expands Recall of Kratom Products Because of Possible Health Risk
- 15) International Harvest, Inc. Recalls Organic Go Smile! Raw Coconut Because of Possible Health Risk



## **2018 Naval History Essay Contest**

The Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) has announced the requirements for the 2018 Naval History Essay Contest with a submission deadline of June 30. The essay requires entrants to elaborate on a naval history topic of their choice that relates a lesson from history that applies to establishing and maintaining maritime superiority in today's environment. Your submission package should be e-mailed to [cnoessaycontest@usni.org](mailto:cnoessaycontest@usni.org) with the subject heading the title of your essay. For more information, visit the NHHC CNO Naval History Essay Contest [webpage](#) or contact Ms. Meghan Cunningham at (202) 433-2331. For advice and guidance on writing essays, contact Ms. Jaci Day via e-mail at [jday@usni.org](mailto:jday@usni.org).





## VA Releases GI Bill Cost Data

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has released data showing GI Bill tuition and fee payments to VA-approved colleges, universities, and other education and training institutions across the country. The current available data spans fiscal years 2009 to 2017, and includes key information, such as names of institutions, states, countries, school classifications, number of enrolled beneficiaries, total amount paid to each institution by fiscal year and grand total money spent. This information is posted in a downloadable spreadsheet on the VA [website](#) and will be updated at the end of each fiscal year.



## **TRICARE Tip: National Nutrition Month**

March is National Nutrition Month. Check out the [TRICARE monthly tips](#) to discover small changes that will make a big difference. You will learn health and wellness tips, including ways to adjust your diet, make food swaps, shop smart and engage in preventive health. You can use your [TRICARE preventive health benefits](#) to improve your health. TRICARE covers: (1) one Health Promotion & Disease Prevention Exam (HP&DPE) annually; (2) age-appropriate doses of vaccines; (3) maternity care; and (4) medically and psychologically necessary mental health and substance use disorder care. For more information on what is covered under TRICARE, visit the [TRICARE website](#).



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