



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, May 20, 2018

Volume 9, Issue 20



## **This-N-That**

If you have tried in the past few days to access our website, I want to apologize as our IT guy had to take it off line to do annual hardware maintenance as well as update all our security and to install some software updates.

Hopefully we will be back on-line in the next few days so do check back often, and once we're back on-line again we will be able to

update news articles, and the library.

I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce you to LT Bobby Ross.

For the past few months we have been having quite a few discussions and in last weeks newsletter I touched on Autism.

Bobby founded AFOA (Autistic Farmers of America) and we've merged forces to help in that area, as we both knew of people who had joined one branch or another of our Armed Services who were Autistic.

The Autistic Farmers of America (AFOA), a nonprofit corporation organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes, seeks to advance the principles to operate a model organic farming enterprise where autistic adults can gain farming skills with crops and animals to optimize their capabilities for self-sufficiency. AFOA plans to support that purpose from donations to sustain

both the direct operating costs of the farm, and subsidize the participation of an annual group of autistic adults for that experience.

Over the next few months we're looking to gain better insight of how many Veterans and children of Veterans are affected by this illness and help guide them to a means of being a productive citizen and guide them towards a means of being self supportive in a healthy, caring and giving environment.

As you know our former Director of Operation Mail Call. Betty Hidalgo-Rabuse was diagnosed with Cancer and we've been trying to keep you updated as best we can.

Last week we had been told that Betty had Pancreatic, Cervical and Bone Cancer, and they did put in a colostomy due to a blockage they weren't able to locate and repair.

But in further testing they discovered the pancreas was actually not affected except on

the outer tip, but none-the-less doesn't really change that she is stage 4 and there really isn't much they can do for her.

She was in some pretty serious pain but they were able to give her pin-point radiation to kill the nerve endings to stop the pain and she has already undergone her first round of chemotherapy which the doctors have told James and Betty and James had passed on to me will give her as much as a year, without three months or less.

Betty was at a cancer facility up in San Francisco overlooking the Pacific Ocean and has some really awesome doctors, but they are looking to transfer her back to Merced so she can be much closer to home and James won't have that long drive to and from the hospital and home, but they do still need help with costs.

Betty will have six more weeks of chemotherapy, then they will make the decision whether she can go home or will need to go

into hospice.

Betty always worked so far giving of her time and own personal funds to provide care packages to troops serving over seas. We still don't know the grand total of packages she had sent out but we do know it was up in the thousands of packages sent out over a seven year period of time.

So please keep Betty and James in your prayers.

On behalf of our Volunteers nationwide and myself, we wish you and your family good health!

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

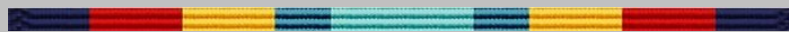
[Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org](mailto:Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org)



# Women and Health: Take Time to Care for Yourself

It's National Women's Health Week. Do you or the women in your life prioritize their health, or put it on the back burner? Being proactive about your health can help prevent disease and illness. It may also help you catch medical problems before they become serious. TRICARE covers preventive health care for women, including immunizations and screenings.

Read the full [article here](#).



# Personalized Plan Puts Veterans in Control of their Health Care

Yesterday the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs released the names of 18 facilities designated [VA Whole Health Flagship sites](#), which are spread around the country within the VA health-care system and are focused on empowering and equipping Veterans to take charge of their health and well-being.

As VA shifts from a health-care system focused primarily on treating disease to one guided by a personalized health plan that considers the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and environmental needs of Veterans, the [Whole Health System](#) acknowledges that health care involves more than the physical human body.

“VA’s Whole Health approach helps Veterans live their lives to the fullest,” said VA Acting Secretary Robert Wilkie. “By developing a personal health plan that integrates many

areas of their lives, Veterans can truly take charge of their well-being and improve their health all around. I'm pleased to recognize these VA facilities that are helping our Veterans do just that."

**The following facilities have been designated Whole Health Flagship Sites:**

- VA Boston Health Care System (Massachusetts)
- VA New Jersey Health Care System (East Orange)
- Erie VA Medical Center (Pennsylvania)
- Beckley VAMC (West Virginia)
- W. G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center (Salisbury, North Carolina)
- Atlanta VA Health Care System (Georgia)
- James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital (Tampa, Florida)
- Tennessee Valley Health Care System (Nashville and Murfreesboro)
- Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center (Saginaw, Michigan)
- Tomah VA Medical Center (Wisconsin)
- St. Louis VA Health Care System (Missouri)



- Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (Little Rock)
- South Texas Veterans Health Care System (San Antonio)
- Salt Lake City VA Medical Center (Utah)
- VA Portland Health Care System (Oregon)
- Tucson VA Medical Center (Arizona)
- VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (Omaha, Nebraska)
- Palo Alto VA Medical Center (Livermore, California)

In addition to the naming of the flagship facilities, VA also announced new sites that will serve as Whole Health Design Sites beginning in 2018 as well as the [VA facilities designated as Whole Health Design Sites](#) in 2016 and 2017.

The VA Whole Health Design Sites listed are focused on implementing specific elements of the Whole Health System and/or expanding their existing efforts to implement a more comprehensive Whole Health capability.

Additionally, every VAMC now offers an [Introduction to Whole Health](#) learning opportunity for transitioning service members, family members and currently enrolled Veterans. For information about the Whole Health System, flagship facilities or design sites, visit

<https://www.va.gov/patientcenteredcare>.



## **House Passes VA MISSION Act**

The House of Representatives yesterday passed, by a vote of 372-70, the VA MISSION

Act (H.R. 5674) to extend and reform the Veterans Choice Program to allow more private care options. Funding for the Choice Act was scheduled to expire at the end of the month.

The legislation, which TREA: The Enlisted Association supported in a letter sent to the House Veterans Affairs Committee, would also lift the restrictions on family caregiver benefits, which are now limited to post-9/11 veterans, and extend them to the caregivers of veterans of all eras.

The bill will now go to the Senate, where the Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC), Senator Johnny Isakson (R-GA), and the SVAC Ranking Member, Senator Jon Tester (D-MT), have already expressed their support.

President Donald Trump has said he will sign the bill quickly when it reaches his desk.

In a statement last week, the White House said the bill would "transform the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) into a modern, high-

performing, and integrated healthcare system that will ensure our veterans receive the best healthcare possible from the VA, whether delivered in the VA's own facilities or in the community."

As stated in last week's Update, just two Democrats on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee (HVAC) voted against the consolidation of the VA's community care programs into one, one of which was HVAC Ranking Member Tim Walz (D-MN), who is a Life Member of TREA: The Enlisted Association.

This is clearly bipartisan (or, more importantly, non-partisan) legislation. The only opposition to it is based on policy, not political, differences.

Ranking Member Walz said "he supported 95 percent of the measure, but had concerns about how its provisions would unfold in future years." The VA MISSION Act, for example, would fund the new private sector health care

program through the regular discretionary budgeting process. While Walz supported that funding stream, he issued an amendment to shield it from potential cuts when budget caps are reinstated. All three Walz amendments were voted down by the full committee.

The funding issue is a real one - Congress, especially this one, has shown little to zero patience when costs go up. As we all know, healthcare costs continue to rise in the private sector. What happens in the coming years when the cost of veterans getting care in the community rise? Will Congress finally 'bite the bullet' and increase spending? Or will they pull back on private healthcare for veterans while simultaneously having failed to properly invest in brick and mortar VA healthcare facilities? We shall see.

The VA MISSION Act would provide veterans access to private sector care when the services they are seeking are not offered at VA, there is no full-service medical facility in their state, they previously were eligible for

outside care under the Veterans Choice Program or VA cannot meet its own standards of care in providing care to an individual veteran. It would also allow a veteran and doctor to mutually agree that private care was in the patient's "best medical interest."

The VA provider would have to first assess the distance the veteran must go to receive care from the department's network of more than 1,200 medical facilities, the nature of the services required, the frequency of treatment, the timeliness of available appointments and other "excessive burdens to care."

The measure includes another controversial provision to put VA through a process similar to the Defense Department's Base Realignment and Closure Commission.

TREA: The Enlisted Association will keep you updated as the measure works its way through the Senate.

Source: TREA



## 'Blue Water' Vets Near To Gaining VA Benefits

After months negotiating with Senate colleagues, the House Veterans Affairs Committee voted unanimously to forward a bill likely to qualify 90,000 ailing Vietnam War veterans, called "Blue Water Navy Veterans," for Agent Orange-related disability pay and health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Read the recent Military Update to learn about the possible inclusion of "[Blue Water](#)" Veterans to the VA's Agent-Orange related disability compensation.



## Vietnam Veteran's wife Diagnosed with Stage 4 Cancer Needs help!



Hello my name is James Rabuse. I am a Vietnam Era Veteran. I am retired on SSI and Disability. I come to you with some bad news and just ask for prayers and help as my wife Betty is going through a lot of pain

Betty and I were married on May 27, 2017. About a month ago Betty took seriously ill, and was transferred from Atwater, CA to a Hospital in San Francisco, CA where they diagnosed her with stage 4 cancer. As you know travel, gas to and from the hospital, room and, board, and parking fees gets costly. In order for my wife to get the best possible care while she is still here, this treatment needs to get done.

Betty has been a very active Veteran volunteer



being director of Operation Mail Call for Veterans-For-Change after losing her son's father in the Vietnam War, then she also lost her oldest grandson to the Afghanistan War.

She tirelessly with her own time and money supported our troops over seas with care packages being sent out every week for almost six and a half years using her own money, donated socks, t-shirts, personal care items, DVD's, gag gifts, plus cards and letters you all have provided.

Betty did this with her love for all our servicemen in the military for many years. It is time we give back to Betty for all that she done for our troops!

Any **donation** will be appreciated and help towards traveling from Atwater, CA to San Francisco, CA and other expenses. At this time the date for her to return home is undetermined.

We Thank you in advanced for any **donations**

made, and god bless you.

James Rabuse



## **Public Service Loan Forgiveness Is a Military Recruiting Tool; Congress May Cut It Anyway**

The Enlisted Association has been leading the charge, along with other veteran education advocates, to fight the PROSPER Act, H.R. 4508. This is a controversial bill that would sunset the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program for public-sector employees, including service members.

This is a huge problem for the military. Getting qualified people to serve their country is hard enough, as any recruiter will tell you. When the cost of education is factored in, especially for doctors, lawyers, and cyber security professionals, many of these potential recruits

simply cannot afford to serve their country without the promise of getting their student loans forgiven after 10 years.

Despite TREA: The Enlisted Association's opposition, the bill's proponents see PROSPER as a way to curb rising college costs and enable students to pursue careers without large amounts of student loan debt.

A Defense Department document released earlier this year states the loan forgiveness program, available to eligible borrowers after 10 years of qualifying student loan payments, is an "important recruitment and retention tool for the military to compete with the civilian sector," particularly in specialty fields. The Navy has also raised concerns for the Navy Judge Advocate General's Corps, which leans on this program as an incentive for new recruits.

TREA: The Enlisted Association has learned that roughly 80 percent of the lawyers at the US Army Litigation Services Agency (USALSA)

use the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program, as well as the Income-Driven Repayment Plan. Both would go away under the PROSPER Act.

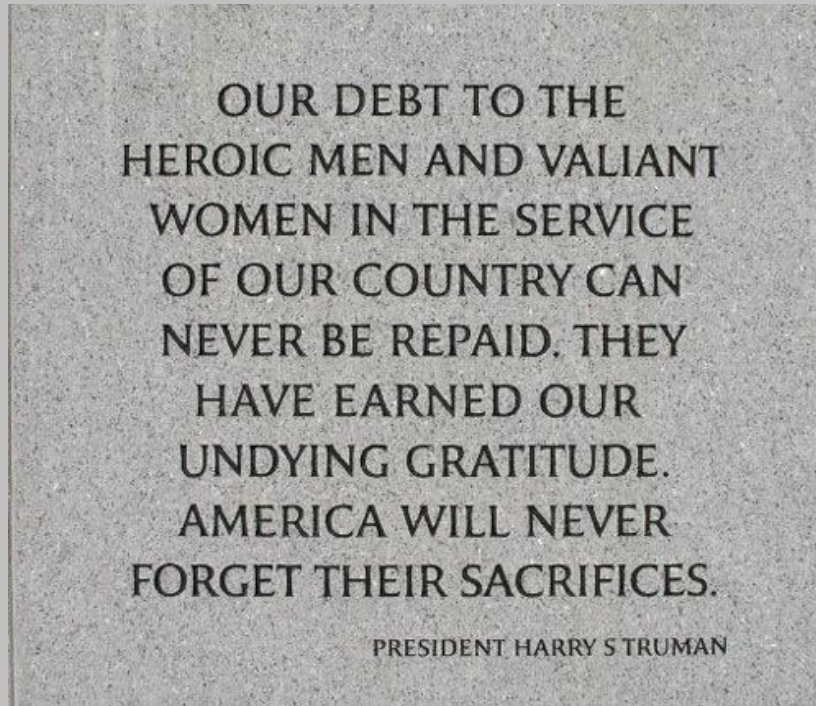
TREA: The Enlisted Association has recently learned that House Leadership intends on bringing the bill to the floor for a vote the week of June 18th.

"Sources with close knowledge of the legislative agenda tell Military Times PROSPER has a lot of must-pass legislation to compete with, and the partisan nature of the bill may make it a tough sell in an already-contentious election cycle."

The good news, for now, is that the Senate does not seem likely to introduce companion legislation any time soon.

TREA: The Enlisted Association will keep you updated as the issue works its way through the legislative process.

Source: TREA



## **The Enlisted Association- Backed Bill Now Up for a Vote in the House**

The House Veterans' Affairs Committee also sent the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act to the full House for a vote.

The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act would grant presumptive Agent Orange exposure status to US service members who served in the territorial seas of Vietnam during

the Vietnam War. This would enable eligible veterans to receive expedited consideration for Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits if they suffer from any of the diseases the U.S. Government has linked to Agent Orange. This measure has received support from various veterans organizations, including the Fleet Reserve Association, Military-Veterans Advocacy, Inc., and the Blue Water Navy Association.

During the Vietnam War, more than 20 million gallons of the herbicide "Agent Orange" were sprayed to remove jungle foliage. A toxic chemical in the herbicide has since been linked to devastating health effects, including non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma (NHL), various cancers, Type II Diabetes, and Parkinson's disease.

The Agent Orange Act of 1991 (AOA) empowered the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to declare certain illnesses "presumptive" to exposure to Agent Orange and enabled veterans to receive disability compensation for these related conditions.

However, in 2002, the VA stopped giving benefits to blue water veterans and limited the scope of the AOA to only those veterans who could provide proof of "boots on the ground" in Vietnam. As a result, veterans who served in the waters off of the Vietnamese coast or in bays and harbors were required to file individual claims to restore their benefits, which have then been decided on a case-by-case basis.

This bill restores the presumptive coverage for those who served in the territorial seas of Vietnam that existed prior to 2002 and lifts the burden from the individual veteran to prove direct exposure to Agent Orange.

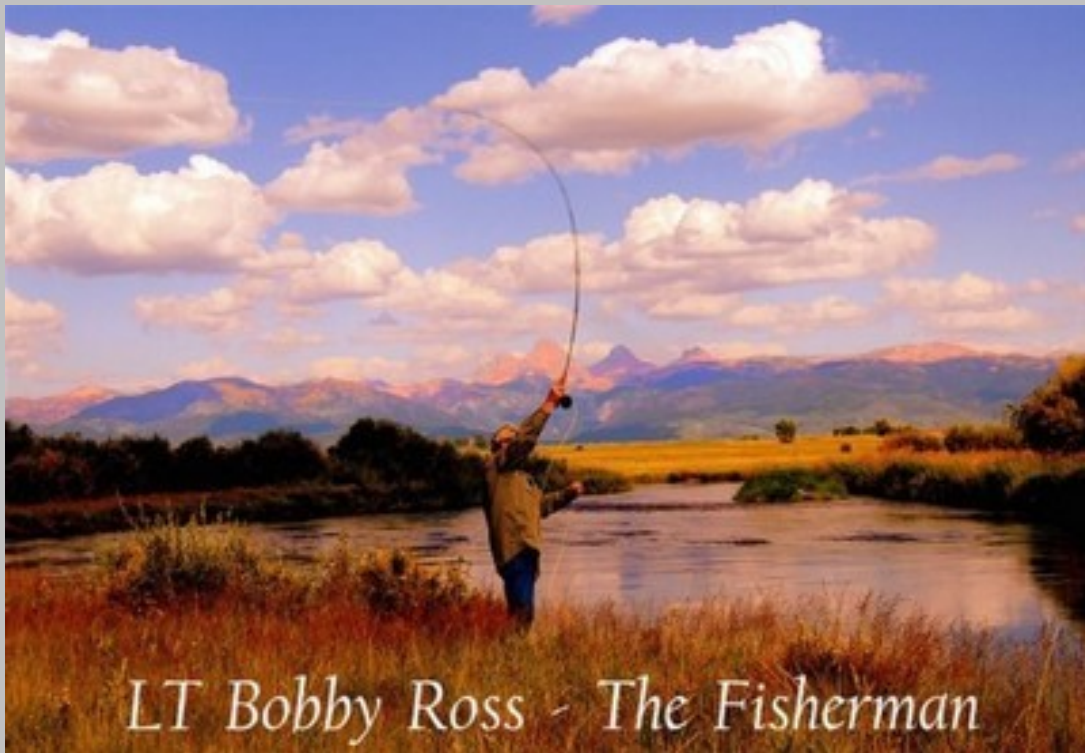
The presumption currently exists for veterans who served on land and inland waterways, and therefore the bill places Navy personnel on the same playing field as those who served in country.

The legislation would also reduce backlogged VA claims for veterans who are suffering from diseases the U.S. government has linked to

Agent Orange, therefore reducing the overall backlog.

TREA strongly supports this legislation and we hope it will be voted on and passed very quickly. Our next task will then be to get the Senate to pass the bill.

Source: TREA



**LT Bobby Ross**



## May's Featured Song

### **The Fisherman**

LT is #1 Singer in World

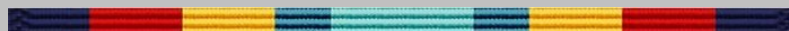
LT's #1 Song in 2017

LT's #2 Song Honoring Native Americans

Autistic Farmers Of America (AFOA)

### **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!



## **Exec Order to Improve MilSpouse Hiring Practices**

President Donald Trump has signed an executive order that adds new accountability measures to hiring opportunities for military spouses in the public sector, allowing the government to better track its success at hiring spouses and promoting greater awareness of existing opportunities. Read the entire [article](#).



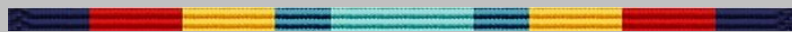
## Armed Forces Day 2018

Tomorrow is Armed Forces Day, which was created in 1949 to honor those who wear the uniform of our nation. It is an opportunity to express our gratitude to selfless patriots who raise their right hands when most don't. In a Military Times editorial, VFW National Commander Keith Harman calls Armed Forces Day "a time for all Americans to reflect on the freedoms we have today, and to think about the brave service members who for centuries have provided our country with the very security which makes those freedoms possible." [Read more](#).



**CHOICE Program Will Be  
Broke In Three Weeks, Says  
VA**

In his third warning letter to Congress, Acting VA Secretary Robert Wilkie says the [VA Choice Program](#) could run out of money by the end of the month, and once that happens, VA "will be unable to create new referrals or authorizations under [the] program". For more details, see this [Paycheck Chronicles post](#).



## **Lawsuit: Army Wrongly Denied Housing Benefits to Deployed Reservists**

Army reservists deployed to Europe are suing the Army, claiming that they were wrongly denied housing allowance payments, subjected to humiliating criminal investigations and forced into debt by the service after the Army "willfully disregarded" its own policies to refuse benefits owed.

The lawsuit says the soldiers faced threats that "jeopardized their careers and security clearances by flagging them as subjects to fraud or larceny investigations," according to

## Stars & Stripes.

The dispute began in 2016 after reservist soldiers deployed to Europe and received benefits authorized by the Army, which included basic housing allowance, or BAH, for their stateside homes.

Full-time servicemembers normally receive either BAH or overseas housing allowance; however, when reservists mobilize overseas, they receive BAH because they cannot work the civilian jobs that pay their mortgages and rent. They also receive OHA when ordered by the Army to live off post, as the plaintiffs were in Germany because of a lack of available housing.

The benefit is spelled out in the Joint Federal Travel Regulations, which govern how allowances are paid: "A Service member called/ordered to active duty in support of a contingency operation is authorized primary residence-based BAH/OHA beginning on the first active duty day . . . This rate continues for

the duration of the tour." Army regulations reiterate the policy.

Months into their respective deployments, the finance office at U.S. Army Europe decided the benefits should no longer be paid.

The Army Reserve and National Guard members, who were dispatched to Europe for contingency operations, are seeking to restore their benefits and abolish Army-imposed debts that have been levied.

Defense Financing and Accounting Services reviewed the case of Col. Bradley Wolfing and concluded that the Army's decision to ignore (the Joint Federal Travel Regulation) and deny COL Wolfing his primary residence location BAH entitlement was erroneous, a conclusion will likely factor into any future litigation.

Needless to say, destroying the careers of servicemembers who did nothing but follow existing Army regulation is unconscionable, and TREA: The Enlisted Association hopes that the judge agrees.

Source: TREA



**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)**



**Vet Choice Update -  
Expected To Run Out of  
Funding in June**

As Veterans Affairs officials await news on the next possible pick to lead the department,

they're also sounding the alarm on the next challenge facing their agency: running out of money for a controversial health care program in coming weeks. On 27 APR, in a letter to lawmakers, acting Department Secretary Robert Wilkie said the VA Choice program is expected to run out of funding "in approximately the first two weeks of June." Veterans participating in it will begin receiving letters early next month warning that the program could be shut down in early summer. "America's veterans need Congress to come together to support this crucial program and pass legislation that will make it permanent," Wilkie said in a press statement. "There is simply no denying how vital community providers are to VA's mission."

The timetable for the funding expiration isn't a surprise, since VA officials have been predicting they would run out of money in May or June since late 2017. But, since the firing of VA Secretary David Shulkin last month, the urgency of that timeline has largely been overshadowed by leadership controversies at



the department. The Choice program has come under criticism since it was established four years ago in the wake of VA's national wait time scandal, where administrators were found doctoring appointment schedules to cover up problems with delayed medical care for veterans. Congress created the Choice program in an effort to help veterans more quickly get appointments outside the VA health system. Eligibility was limited to individuals who live at least 40 miles from a VA hospital or face a 30-day wait for VA care.

For the program's first two years, conservative lawmakers complained the program was not used enough, and that VA administrators made accessing care through the program overly bureaucratic in an effort to undermine it. But for the last two years, the opposite has been true. Twice in the last nine months, lawmakers have had to approve multi-billion-dollar funding extensions to the program while they try and finalize a larger VA health care overhaul plan. Department officials said they need another \$1.3 billion to extend the program until this fall,

and up to \$3.6 billion more to keep it running through fiscal 2019. That's assuming lawmakers can pass a community care overhaul measure in the next few weeks.

House Veterans' Affairs Committee members are expected to resume debate on a legislative package when they return to Washington next week. House and Senate Republicans were close to a deal on the legislation last month, but House Democratic leaders blocked the measure. But even the two sides can pass a new overhaul measure before the end of May, VA administrators expect they'll need a year to fully transition Choice participants to a new program. "We cannot wait any longer," Wilkie said in his statement. "Decisive action must be taken in order to deliver on our promise to our veterans."

How long Wilkie remains in his role as chief administrator and advocate for VA remains unclear. Wilkie was named acting secretary after the firing of former Secretary David Shulkin in March, but was only expected to

hold the job for a few weeks during the confirmation process of secretary nominee Rear Adm. Ronny Jackson. Jackson withdrew his name from consideration last week after allegations of unprofessional behavior were raised by Senate lawmakers. White House officials have not yet named their next nominee, although President Donald Trump has hinted that he has a candidate in mind.

In the interim a lawsuit for immediate removal has been filed by veteran advocacy groups arguing his appointment violated federal law. If successful, the lawsuit would not only remove Wilkie from office (replacing him with Deputy Secretary Thomas Bowman) but also invalidate any decisions or contracts he has authorized in his month at the post.



## **Wilkie Nominated to be New VA Secretary**

The president today announced his intention to nominate Robert Wilkie to become the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The son of an Army artillery officer, Wilkie has served in both the legislative and executive branches of government, and is a former Naval Reserve intelligence officer. He is currently an Air Force Reserve officer, as well as the under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness. He has been serving as the Acting VA Secretary since March 28. The VFW wishes him well through the confirmation process, and looks forward to working with him for the betterment of our nation's wounded, ill and injured veterans and their families. [Read his VA bio.](#)





LA Union Station • Historic Ticketing Hall • 800 N Alameda St • Los Angeles, CA 90012

## Veterans Summer Slam Employment Fair

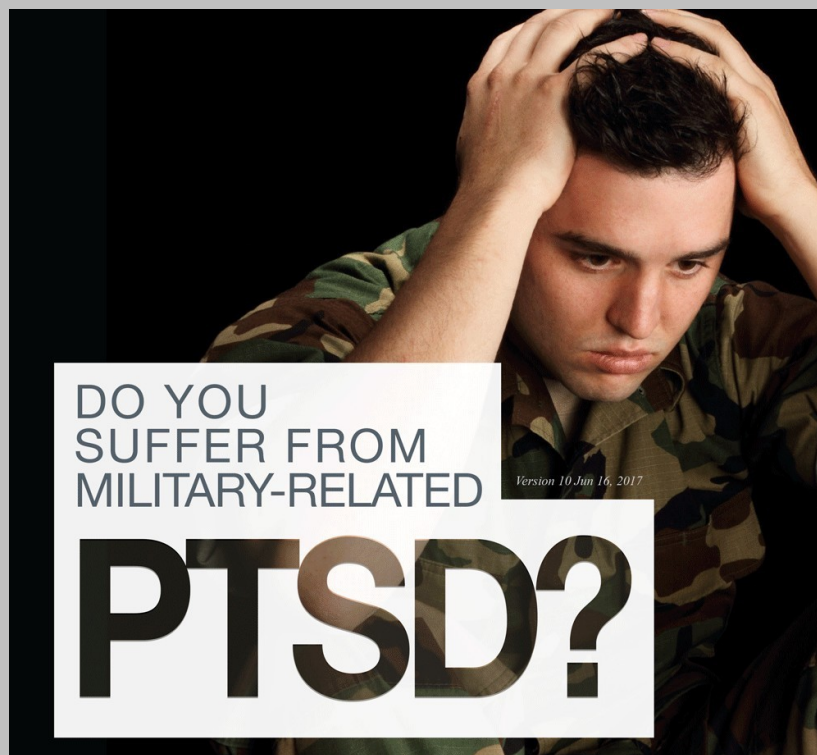
Friday, June 29, 2018 • 9am – 2pm

LinkedIn Tips for Professional Networking • Job Fair

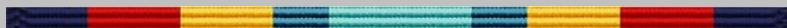


**Vets Don't Need 20% Down  
with the VA Loan Benefit**

Don't waste your money on rent — now is the time to use your VA loan 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**



# Reduce Your Out of Pocket & Rx Costs with a TRICARE Supplement

Get a Tricare supplement that pays your cost shares and can pay 100% of covered excess charges. Get [valuable coverage](#) now.



## VA ID Card Update - Mailings Start

Identification cards from the Department of Veterans Affairs' new program will be in the mail, on their way to veterans starting "4 MAY," VA officials said -- two months after they were initially scheduled to go out. Officials said in January that approved veterans would start receiving the free printed cards in early March. But when March rolled around, printing was delayed to April. Now, a VA spokesman says the cards will be sent starting tomorrow "We expect to begin mailing cards in batches tomorrow to veterans whose applications have been reviewed and approved," Curtis Cashour

told [Military.com](https://www.military.com) on 3 MAY.

All honorably discharged veterans can apply for the ID card, which was ordered by Congress in 2015. The card, which is not an official form of federal ID and does not qualify veterans for any federal or military benefits, is meant to serve as proof of past military service at private businesses. Veterans who hold other identification showing service, such as a military ID or VA health ID card, do not need to apply. About 90,000 veteran applications for the card have been received, Cashour said. Of those, 21,000 have been approved and are awaiting printing and mailing.

Veterans must apply for the card online via <https://www.vets.gov/?next=%2Fveteran-id-card%2F>. Card applications are not available at VA facilities. The veteran ID card program has faced a series of delays and technical challenge since its November 2017 launch. A glut of applicants overwhelmed the system's server, and the application was put on hold for several weeks. Since applications reopened



early this year, users have complained that their service records are reported as "not found," even though they receive other VA benefits such as the post-911 GI Bill. Others complained that their military service branch was not listed on the application pulldown menu.



## **AAFES Hiring Veterans, Spouses**

The Army & Air Force Exchange Service is reaffirming its commitment to hiring 50,000 veterans and military spouses by 2020. The Exchange was named a 2018 Top 10 Military Friendly Employer® and Military Spouse Friendly Employer® by Victory Media. About 35,000 associates work for the 122-year-old Department of Defense retailer at its department stores, convenience stores, malls, restaurants, theaters and other operations around the world. Veterans, military spouses and others seeking employment with the Exchange can visit [ApplyMyExchange.com](http://ApplyMyExchange.com) to view job openings worldwide.

For more on veteran jobs, including job fair calendars and job postings, visit the [Veteran Jobs Center](#).



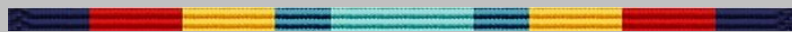
## **6 Steps to Get Your Military Kids Financially Strong**

Preparing and equipping our kids to be independent, strong and happy means making them money-savvy and stacking the financial cards in their favor. Here are [six fundamental ways](#) you can work those two tasks.



**New VA Claims Process**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it is offering two opportunities for early participation in a new, claims decision review process which aims to be more efficient than previous processes. VA is expanding the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP) by removing the requirement that veterans first receive an invitation from VA in order to participate. Second, the Board of Veterans' Appeals is launching its Early Applicability of Appeals Modernization (BEAAM) pilot project. Fifty veterans will participate in this project, which allows them the option of appealing directly to the Board or seeking a review in RAMP. For more on the current VA claims process, visit the [VA Claims and Appeals page](#).



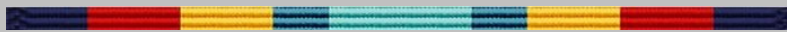
## **Express Scripts Quarterly Update**

This week, VFW National Security and Foreign Affairs Director John Towles attended the quarterly Express Scripts MSO/VSO meeting in St. Louis. The meeting provided an in-depth look at one of three state of the art Express Scripts mail order pharmacy distribution centers, which fills more than 70 percent of all TRICARE mail order prescriptions. Attendees were also given a preview of some of the technologies Express Scripts is developing, such as an automated kiosk that will be able to fill routine prescriptions without the need for an in-person pharmacist, smartphone applications that track medication usage such as insulin and asthma medication, and an electronic health records interface that gives health care providers a more comprehensive view of the medications that they are prescribing to patients. Towles met with leadership from the Express Scripts government relations team to discuss pharmacy fee increases and future policy initiatives that will better serve TRICARE beneficiaries. [Find out more](#) about how Express Scripts serves the military community.



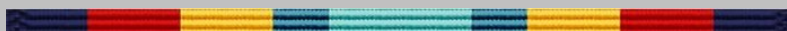
## **Navy Courses Get Reviewed for College Credit**

Members of the American Council on Education (ACE) recently visited the Center for Information Warfare Training (CIWT) to evaluate six cryptology courses offered by the Information Warfare Training Command (IWTC) Corry Station. The team reviewed five courses related to the cryptologic technician (technical) (CTT) rating as well as the Cryptologic Warfare Officer Basic Course. ACE recommends equivalent college credits for members of the armed forces for certain types of military training and service experiences. For more information on the Center for Information Warfare Training organization, visit the [CIWT website](#), the [CIWT webpage](#), and follow CIWT on [Facebook](#) and on [Twitter](#).



## **VA Signs Electronic Health Record Modernization Contract**

Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie signed a \$10 billion contract on Thursday that will lead to veterans receiving better care from VA. With the goal of having a single record that can follow a person from their time in the military to being a veteran and patient at VA, the contract is one of the largest of its kind managed by the government. The 10-year contract would enable veterans to receive seamless care through the military, VA and community providers without the worry of transferring records to different locations or losing information. Read [VA's press release](#).





# VFW-supported Legislation to Improve Burn Pit Registry

Representatives Tulsi Gabbard and Brian Mast jointly introduced bipartisan legislation that would strengthen the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. H.R. 5671, the Burn Pits Accountability Act, would require the military to expand post-deployment physicals to include information on burn pits to which service members may have been exposed and would auto-enroll service members in the registry. This would be an important first step to increase data that could later be used by service members when submitting a VA claim for disability compensation and health care. Representative Gabbard is a member of VFW Post 2875 in Honolulu, and Representative Mast is a member of VFW Post 9610 in Lake Park, Fla. [Read the bill text.](#)



## **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**



## **Memorial Day Weekend Activities in Washington**

Visitors to our nation's capital have a host of Memorial Day weekend events and activities to consider attending, May 25-28. Up first is a VFW-supported and USAA-sponsored Poppy Wall display to be set up by the Korean War Veterans Memorial, May 25-27. The VFW will also have a benefits information tent set up, May 26-28, just east of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Saturday at 8 p.m. will be the dress rehearsal for Sunday's National Memorial Day Concert on the west lawn of the Capitol. Many consider this the time to go because of smaller

crowds and closer lawn seating. [Rolling Thunder XXXI](#) begins at noon on Sunday and will travel from the Pentagon past the National Mall to West Potomac Park. The [National Memorial Day Concert](#) begins Sunday evening at 8 p.m. and will air on PBS stations nationwide. National Memorial Day ceremonies on Monday begin at the [National War II Memorial](#) at 9 a.m., at [Arlington National Cemetery](#) at 11 a.m., the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial](#) at 1 p.m., and the Korean War Veterans Memorial at 5 p.m. Also on Monday is the [National Memorial Day Parade](#), which begins at 2 p.m. along Constitution Avenue.



## **MIA Update**

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has announced identification and burial updates for eight American service members who had been missing in action from WWII. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Clarence E. Allen**, 23, of Venice, Calif., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 23 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Allen was a member of the 395th Fighter Squadron, 368th Fighter Group, and was the pilot of a P-47 aircraft as the lead element in a dive-bombing mission near Aachen, Germany in mid-October 1944. The squadron engaged enemy aircraft in dogfights in the vicinity of Dusseldorf, but following the battle all aircraft except Allen's returned to the base. The squadron mission report indicated that a P-47 was seen crashing in the vicinity of the battle. [Read about Allen.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Sgt. Elden W. Grimm**, 26, of Menasha, Wis., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 26 in Neenah, Wis. Grimm was assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 18th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force. On Nov. 20, 1943, Grimm's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll against stiff Japanese resistance. Over several days of

fighting, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed in the intense fighting. Grimm was killed on Nov. 25, 1943. [Read about Grimm.](#)

-- **Marine Corps 2nd Lt. Harvel L. Moore**, 25, of Chatham, La., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 26 in his hometown. Moore was assigned to Company E, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force. On Nov. 20, 1943, Moore's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll against stiff Japanese resistance. Over several days of fighting, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed in the intense fighting. Moore was killed Nov. 22, 1943. [Read about Moore.](#)

-- **Navy Gunner's Mate 2nd Class William F. Hellstern**, 20, of Peoria, Ill., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 18 in Wheat Ridge, Colo. Hellstern was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island,

Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. [Read about Hellstern.](#)

**-- Navy Seaman 1st Class Willard H.**

**Aldridge**, 20, of Sitka, Kan., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 26 in Ashland, Kan. Aldridge was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. [Read about Aldridge.](#)

**-- Navy Reserve Ensign Harold P. DeMoss** was a member of Fighting Squadron 100 (VF-100), piloting an F6F-3 Hellcat from Naval Air Station Barbers Point, Hawaii. On June 23, 1945, DeMoss was accompanied by two other

squadron aircraft for a night division tactics training flight. Following the completion of their flight plan, the pilots circled the island. DeMoss climbed above the clouds and attempted to descend through them. His aircraft was not seen reemerging from the clouds and DeMoss was declared missing shortly thereafter. Interment services are pending. [Read about DeMoss.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. Melvin C. Anderson** was a member of Company C, 803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, participating in intense fighting in the Hürtgen Forest. On Nov. 25, 1944, his company was deployed as direct-fire support of American infantrymen attacking the town of Grosshau. The M10 tank destroyer Anderson was commanding was knocked out in the fighting. He was killed during the battle, though his status was initially listed as missing in action. On Dec. 21, 1944, his status was amended to killed in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about Anderson.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class William V.**

**Campbell** was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. Interment services are pending. [Read about Campbell.](#)



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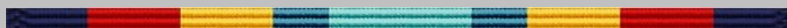




- 1) Fees and Challenges Associated with Patients' Access
- 2) Status of Agency Efforts to Improve 340B Program Oversight
- 3) Status of HHS Agencies' Obligations, Disbursements, and the Activities Funded



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## **The Pentagon Run-Down: Uniform Madness**

*Jeff Schogol*

The uniform wars that the brass began after the turn of the 21st Century have led each service to field its own distinct brand of camouflage uniforms. Now the U.S. military seems to have more camouflage patterns than a U.N. peacekeeping force.

This week the Air Force has made a major step towards common sense [by adopting the Army's Operational Camouflage Pattern uniform](#), which will replace the service's Airman Battle Uniform — which was so heavy and hot that airmen downrange ditched it for Army uniforms for years.

So the Air Force is down with OCP. (For those of you born after 1990, that is a reference to the 1991 song “OPP” by “Naughty by Nature.” Rather than Google what “OPP” stands for, let's just say it is an acronym for “Other People's [Camouflage] Patterns.”)

By the time the Air Force is finished fielding the OCP uniforms in 2021, more than half of the U.S. military will wear the same camouflage pattern for the first time since the services began moving away from the woodland green and desert camouflage uniforms in 2002. But the Navy and Marine Corps will continue to retain their own camouflage uniforms, making the U.S. military as a whole about as uniform as the Holy Roman Empire after the [Treaty of](#)

## Westphalia.

If you are wondering why the military branches have wasted so much time and money to come up with their own style of uniforms, you're not alone.

A [2013 Government Accountability Office report](#) found that the services had spent close to \$500 million to develop seven different styles. Later that year, Congress banned the Pentagon from developing and fielding new camouflage uniforms until it could agree on a common pattern for all troops.

That did not stop the Army and Navy from fielding uniforms to replace their ineffective camouflage patterns — the [Army Combat Uniform](#) and the [Navy Working Uniform Type I](#) — because both services had alternatives that had already been developed before the law passed, officials told Task & Purpose.

While it does not appear that all four services will wear the same camouflage uniform any time soon — as this would too readily save

taxpayer money while fielding everyone in the most concealing battle dress — other uniform issues are bubbling under the surface, ready to explode like a volcano of well pressed textiles.

The Army is still considering whether to adopt the [Pinks and Greens](#) – a throwback to World War II – as its dress uniform. One of the big difference between the Pinks and Greens and the current Army Service Uniform is that it makes soldiers look like they are in the Army rather than bus drivers for Greyhound.

Meanwhile, the Navy's Fleet Forces Command plans to wear test a new flame resistant [two-piece working uniform](#) that includes a khaki variant for chiefs and above, officials said. If approved, the uniform will allow sailors to take off their shirts while working to show off the Navy's big guns.

And Lord Vader has been tasked with leading the Pentagon's effort to come up with new [Space Force uniforms](#). After reviewing one proposed design, he told uniform board

officials, “I find your lack of spandex disturbing.”



- 1) Apotex Corp. Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Piperacillin and Tazobactam For Injection, USP 3.375 Gram/Vial And 4.5 Gram/Vial Strengths Due to Elevated Levels of Impurities That May Result in Decreased Potency
- 2) Auromedics Pharma LLC Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Product Piperacillin and Tazobactam For Injection 3.375 Grams Per Vial, Due to Presence of Glass Particulates
- 3) BLM Issues Allergy Alert On Undeclared Egg and Milk
- 4) Juluca, Tivicay, Triumeq (dolutegravir): FDA to Evaluate - Potential Risk of Neural Tube Birth Defects
- 5) Mas Food Services Co. Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Sulfites in The Peruchef Dry Potato

6) Shoreside Enterprises Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of 7K and Poseidon 4500 (Extreme 1000 Mg) Due to Presence of Undeclared Sildenafil and Tadalafil

7) Sugarfina, Inc. Issues Allergen Labeling Alert for Undeclared Eggs in Sugar Cookies Product



## **Statement by Acting Secretary Robert Wilkie**

**VA signs contract with Cerner for an electronic health record system**

I am pleased to announce we have signed a contract with Cerner today that will modernize the VA's health care IT system and help provide seamless care to Veterans as they transition from military service to Veteran status, and when they choose to use community care.

This is one of the largest IT contracts in the federal government, with a ceiling of \$10 billion over 10 years. And with a contract of that size, you can understand why former Secretary Shulkin and I took some extra time to do our due diligence and make sure the contract does what the President wanted.

President Trump has made very clear to me that he wants this contract to do right by both Veterans and taxpayers, and I can say now without a doubt that it does.

With this contract, VA will adopt the same EHR platform as the Department of Defense (DoD):

- Patient data will be seamlessly shared between VA, DoD, and community providers

through a secure system.

- Health information will be much easier to share, and health care will be much easier to coordinate and deliver, as well as faster and safer.
- Care by all providers will be transparent to the entire care team.
- VA will add capabilities to the system as necessary to meet the special needs of Veterans, VA clinicians, and our community-care partners.

When fully deployed, the new system will represent a monumental advance in Veterans' health care — bigger than VA's initial deployment of electronic health records 40 years ago.

- VA and DoD are collaborating closely to ensure lessons learned at DoD sites will be implemented in future deployments at DoD as well as VA. We appreciate the DoD's willingness to share its experiences implementing its electronic health record.

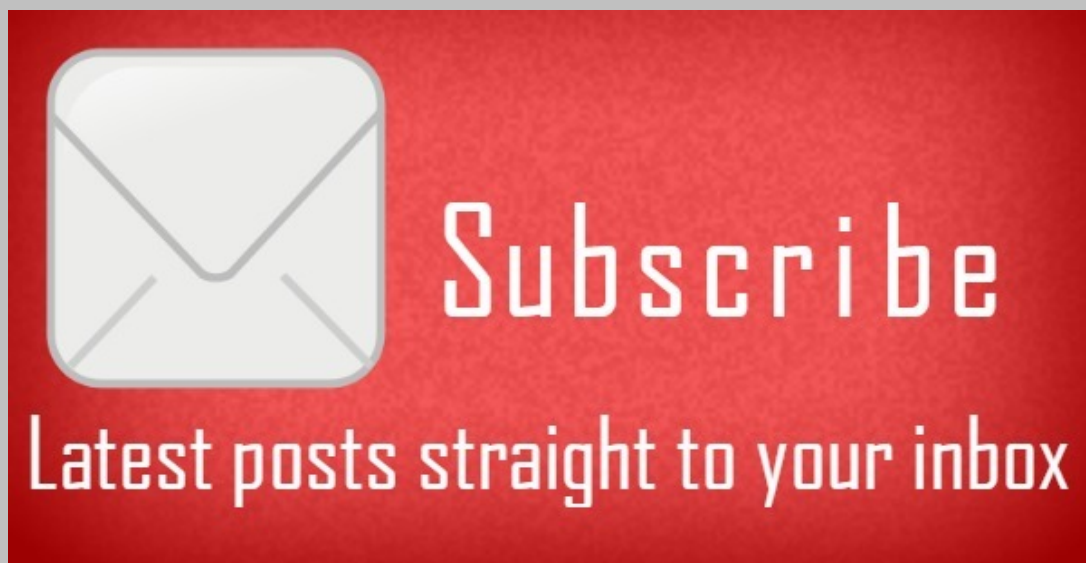


- We already have \$782 million in funding for FY 2018 to get the effort underway, thanks to support from Congress.

In sum, signing this contract today is an enormous win for our nation's Veterans. It puts in place a modern IT system that will support the best possible health care for decades to come. That's exactly what our nation's heroes deserve.



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