



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, September 16, 2018

Volume 9, Issue 36



This-N-That

We talk about Veteran suicides quite often, and post various news articles about what the VA is "doing" about it, and this last week we talked briefly about the numbers the VA puts on various issues, suicide being one of them.

One person I've known for quite a number of years now has been fighting Veteran Suicide, almost daily and traveling from one end of the country to the other, to spread the word about the Spartan Pledge.

The [Spartan Pledge](#) is a commitment among Veterans

to not take their own lives but rather stand for their fellow soldiers in times of despair. It was created almost accidentally by an Iraq Veteran, Boone Cutler, when he spoke with another Veteran, his friend “Nacho,” about a mutual friend’s suicide.

We need to do a lot more, and the [Spartan Pledge](#) is one more way for each Veteran to look out for his/her battle buddies experiencing PTSD problems, and I'm sure this would fit just as well with some Veterans diagnosed with TBI.

“I will not take my own life by my own hand until I talk to my battle buddy first. My mission is to find a mission to help my warfighter family.”

Seriously, think long and hard about this pledge, then pass it along to all your fellow battle buddies. Make it a strong effort to commit to each other the above pledge!

We also publish every single week contact information for Veterans who are even thinking about suicide and don't have anyone to talk to. PLEASE use those numbers! Make that call! You are extremely important to us and want to have you around for a very, very long time!

On the Blue Water Navy issue, again we are asking everyone to please make the calls to your Senators

asking for their support and there is also a petition to sign as well. And you don't have to be a Veteran or Active Duty Military to sign or call. Civilians are more than welcome to help in this serious fight. It means the lives of many!

Even with all the mountains of evidence that has been provided to the VA over the years, their executive staff has flat out blatantly lied to the Senate Hearing Committee and is fighting this left and right, so all the support that can be mustard up is desperately needed.

And if you're calling, please call every week, pass on the information, share it in E-Mails, what ever it takes to get this job done!

About two weeks ago we announce a change in the news section. We're still working on that so all article will be in the various appropriate categories.

In addition we have several thousands of documents we're working on to get uploaded, and we've also gathered up some 1,200 more web links we will hopefully be adding beginning this coming week, so check the site often, and if you any issues creating your account or logging in to an existing account, please let me know as we did have a glitch which was repaired, but with upgrades, there are always bound to be issues.

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



BWN Needs Your Help!

The United States government, through its agency the Veterans Affairs, has a DUTY to TREAT medical problems associated with military service; COMPENSATE veterans (or their families) for early death or disability associated with their service; and MONITOR and DOCUMENT the effects of government policy and MISTAKES that created a higher health risk. For 50 years, VA has FAILED to monitor and document the effects of Agent Orange on military members that served in the "Blue Water Navy" during Vietnam. Congress is attempting to "fix" this dereliction of duty - and VA Officials oppose the change. We the people support treatment and compensation for these medical issues; and believe monitoring and documenting these issues should be the responsibility of VA, not the individual veterans.

Please sign, share on your page, copy and paste web link into an e-mail and send out to your entire e-mail address book and ask all your friends and family to sign, and forward on to their entire e-mail address book too!

You don't have to be active duty military, or a veteran, civilians can sign too. 96,980 signatures are needed

Click [HERE](#)



VA Agent Orange Claims Update - Advice On How to Get yours Approved

Ray Gustavson served with the U.S. Army in Vietnam , and is a retired VA Rating Specialist (RVSR). He is currently working on a novel about the Civil War, and also is writing a self-help book for veterans who want to better understand the complexities of the VA claims process. After he retired from the VA in October 2003, he began reading dozens of complaints on the Internet from veterans who had had their Agent Orange claims denied. This motivated him to help vets understand the VA claims process by explaining it in plain English so they have a better insight into how to prepare a claim and what to expect once they submit it. His comments are not intended to defend the VA or to apologize for its shortcomings. Those who are contemplating submitting a claim or have already done so are advised to read the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**VA Agent Orange Claim Submission**”. It should help you keep the door open for future approval in case your claim is initially denied.



REMEMBER THOSE WHO SERVED



ALL GAVE SOME, SOME GAVE ALL



VA Mission Act Update - A Glimpse Inside VA's Major Overhaul

The VA MISSION Act is the most massive comprehensive health care reform bill passed out of Congress in over 25 years. It was signed into law by President Donald Trump on 6 JUN. VA has quietly begun working on implementing these major changes but recognizes it can't do so without veterans' help. VA wants to know what questions veterans have about the VA MISSION Act as VA moves forward in rolling out these huge health system changes. While MOAA and other veteran service organizations (VSO) have started working with VA to implement the legislation, veterans are central to making the transformation smooth and in

helping the department meet the very tight deadline mandated by Congress.

Passage of the VA MISSION Act signaled Congress' readiness to implement major changes in VA's health care system -seen by some congressional leaders as long overdue reform. One of the most significant changes veterans will see in the next few months is the elimination of the Veterans Choice Program, established in 2014, to provide temporary relief and help VA rebuild internal capacity to reduce long wait times for veterans seeking health care. A new, streamlined community care program will replace Choice and consolidate multiple community care programs currently managed by VA into a single program. A few other major changes veterans can expect to see are:

- The expansion of VA's comprehensive caregiver support program, opening up the program to eligible pre-9/11 veterans;

- Veterans and their doctors will be able to decide the best option on where the veteran should get their care, whether inside VA or in the community;

 - More telehealth programs; and,

 - Walk-in health care services with local community providers

What would normally take three to five years to

implement such massive system changes, Congress gave VA one year from the enactment of the MISSION Act to replace the Choice Program and two years to implement the caregiver program expansion. Last week, VA provided MOAA and other VSOs a little peek under the tent as to the rough timelines the department is working under to combine and implement the new community care program and walk-in care services over the next year. Here's generally what they know:

Phase 1, June -October 2018. Build the operating structure, access and eligibility criteria, new veteran care contract agreements, and new competency standards for community providers; and, draft regulations.

Phase 2, November 2018 -February 2019. Complete and test the operating structure and elements initiated in Phase 1; continue rollout of the new community care provider network; begin educating and training VA staff; and, finalized regulations.

Phase 3, March -June 2019. Transition and begin operation of the new walk-in care and community care program; continue educating VA staff; continue rollout of new community care provider network; begin using new competency standards for community providers; publish regulations; and, end the Choice Program.

So here's what MOAA needs from veterans. They

need you to send them your questions about the VA MISSION Act that you want VA to answer and communicate to veterans now and throughout the implementation of the system reforms. To help get you started, here are a couple questions MOAA has already provided to VA we think veterans will want to know:

How can veterans expect VA to communicate with them as progress is made in implementing the MISSION Act and how can veterans provide feedback throughout the process?

What does walk-in care mean and will I be charged for getting this care outside of my VA medical center? Now, what questions are on your mind? You are requested to send your questions to legis@moaa.org and MOAA will share your questions with VA as well any communication and marketing materials as they become available.





Thank You



Prostate Cancer Screening

The prostate is the gland below a man's bladder that produces fluid for semen. Cancer screening is looking for cancer before you have any symptoms. Cancer found early may be easier to treat.

There is no standard screening test for [prostate cancer](#). Researchers are studying different tests to find those with the fewest risks and most benefits. One test is the digital rectal exam (DRE). The doctor or nurse inserts a lubricated, gloved finger into your rectum to feel the prostate for lumps or anything unusual. Another test is the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test. Your PSA level may be high if you have prostate cancer. It can also be high if you have an [enlarged prostate \(BPH\)](#) or other prostate problems. If

your screening results are abnormal, your doctor may do more tests, such as an [ultrasound](#), [MRI](#), or a [biopsy](#).

Prostate cancer screening has risks:

Finding prostate cancer may not improve your health or help you live longer

The results can sometimes be wrong

Follow-up tests, such as a biopsy, may have complications

You and your doctor should discuss your risk for prostate cancer, the pros and cons of the screening tests, and whether you should get them.



[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.

During the month of August 2018, we've added just under 200 new documents many in libraries you need to be a subscriber to view and download.

Additionally we're working on restructuring the NEWS section and making various categories where all new articles will be posted to and all older articles are slowly being moved over into the new categories.

This change will make it easier for everyone to choose a category and be able to scroll through all the news pieces and see how many times each has been viewed and you can see for yourself which news pieces are hot and which aren't.

Almost a hundred people have been involved; collecting web links to documents now housed 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, whatever you'd like it to be.

We also have a forum with for Mental Health and are currently seeking a new Licensed Mental Health Worker, where you can seek help or just ask questions.

We average **2,400** hits per day, and downloads average **1,720** per day with a total **4,353,525** visitors as of Friday.

If you subscribe you will have full access to the entire website and best of all it's **FREE of charge!** You just need a valid E-mail address so the system can send you a confirmation E-Mail. Once received, click on the link to be authorized automatically.

www.veterans-for-change.org

- Documents Library with over 16,662 documents on-line (Updated: 08/27/18)
- 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: **7,709**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than 3,663, Added 1 New Links
(Updated: 09/04/18)

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



**Join TRICARE for September 27
Webinar on New Dental, Vision
Coverage**

By law, the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) will end on Dec. 31, 2018. Starting Jan. 1, 2019, new dental plan options for those enrolled in TRDP will be available through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). FEDVIP vision coverage will also be available for the first time. Join the TRICARE webinar on Sept. 27, from 1 to 2 p.m. ET, to learn about your new dental and vision plan options.

Read the full article [here](#).



September's Featured Song

Ladder Up To Heaven

By

LT Bobby Ross

LT Bobby Ross - Voice Of America

Previous Featured Songs



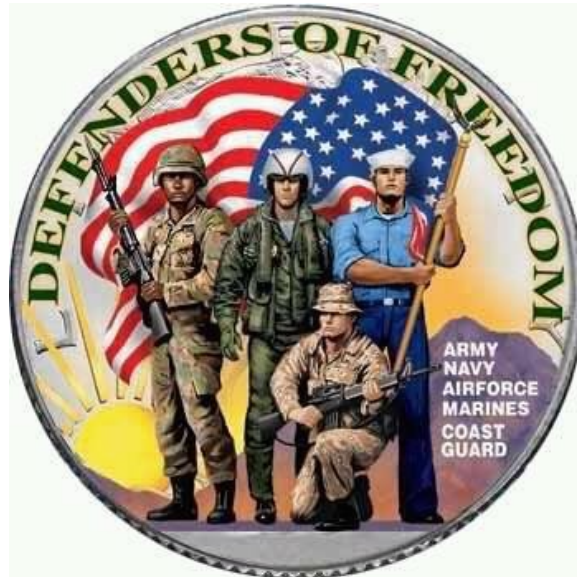
VA Pharmacy Update - Community Care Program

As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) efforts to improve care coordination for Veterans, the department is working with pharmacy services provider Walgreen's to coordinate patient and pharmaceutical care for VA-enrolled patients. With the click of a button, VA providers will be able to see the entire medication and immunization history of VA-enrolled patients who receive their prescription and immunization needs at Walgreen's. "This arrangement is the first of its kind and it's a strong collaboration," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie.

“Partnerships like this will help VA continue to improve the way we care for Veterans.”

As it expands its community care program, VA actively refines its ability to track medication prescribed by community providers. Prior to the arrangement, VA providers would ask patients to inform them about medications filled at Walgreen’s. With the VA-Walgreen’s exchange, VA providers can now easily view medications directly that are prescribed to VA-enrolled patients by community providers and filled at Walgreen’s pharmacies. For the past five years, VA and Walgreen’s have partnered to provide flu shots at no cost for enrolled Veterans, improving vaccination rates and access to immunizations.

VA exchanges standards-based medical information securely and electronically with participating community health care partners, such as Walgreen’s, to ensure the best possible care coordination and medication management. Currently, VA exchanges health information with over 170 community health care partners, representing 1,288 hospitals, 537 Federally Qualified Health Centers, 261 nursing homes, 8,649 pharmacies(including over 8,000 Walgreen’s pharmacies), and over 22,431 clinics. Additional information about the VA Health Information Exchange Program can be found online at



UPDATE

VA Overpayments Update - S.2884 - Fair Debt Notice Act

U.S. Senators Deb Fischer (R-NE), John Tester (D-MT), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), John Cornyn (R-TX), Dean Heller (R-NV), and Marco Rubio (R-FL) have introduced the Veterans Fair Debt Notice Act -S. 2884.

This legislation would address issues with the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) debt collection procedures and provide veterans needed information about potential debts. "Many of our nation's veterans and their families are accidentally overpaid by the VA, only to later find they owe money back. Our bill would help Veterans navigate the complicated VA bureaucracy in these confusing cases, and take steps to address the issue of overpayments in the first place. This is common sense bill our Veterans need, and it has support from both sides of the aisle," said Senator Fischer.

Under the Veterans Fair Debt Notice Act, the VA would partner with Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs) to create a new notice of indebtedness letter that explains why an individual owes alleged debts. The letter would also include steps the Veteran can take to challenge or mitigate the debt. In addition, the VA would be directed to create a method to notify individuals of their debt electronically. Furthermore, this bill would direct the VA, and Department of the Treasury where applicable, to study and report to Congress on administrative issues leading to VA overpayments, and long-term solutions to provide more useful and timely information to Veterans.



Congress Still Working on Funding Bills

Congress will be back in session tomorrow (Wednesday) after being out yesterday and today. They still must pass funding legislation for fiscal year 2019, which is swiftly approaching.

Our concern centers around funding for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense. While it is true that there is optimism among congressional leaders that those bills will be passed in time, it remains the case that neither has yet been approved by the full Congress so they can be sent to the President.

The VA funding bill, which is referred to as the Military Construction-VA or MilCon-VA bill because it also covers military construction, is linked together this year with funding legislation for Energy and Water and the Legislative Branch.

The Military Construction-VA portion of a three-bill appropriations package includes partial funding for the VA MISSION Act which was signed into law in June, and which gives veterans more flexibility to seek care at non-VA facilities. But in order for it to be fully funded lawmakers would have to trim money from other programs, either within the VA or under other spending bills. Agreement on a final compromise measure was announced yesterday afternoon and leaders in both the House and Senate said they hope for final passage of the bill by their respective bodies by the end of this week. The measure is likely also set off a broader debate about whether subsidies for health care at private facilities comes at the expense of the VA's own operations according to reports.

As far as the Defense funding bill goes, House and Senate negotiators continue to work on the legislation, which has been linked together in the Senate with Labor, Health and Human Services and Education spending packages. It is unclear if there are outstanding issues on the defense funding part of the

bill but conferees will still need to meet again on that portion of the bill because the Senate was late in naming its members to the conference committee.

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!

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VA Funding for Transitional Housing

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced it plans to provide approximately \$200 million in fiscal year 2019 funding to support more than 13,000 transitional housing beds for its [Grant and Per Diem](#) (GPD) Program. The list of community partners who will work with VA to provide transitional housing for homeless veterans can be found on the VA Homeless Veterans [webpage](#).



Research Focusing on Veteran Caregiver Challenges and Services

The new Elizabeth Dole Center of Excellence will work with VA investigators and universities to develop a better policy for supporting veteran caregivers, as well as best practices for in-home and community-based care. For more details, see this [article](#).





AMERICAN SOLDIERS

**WILLING TO DIE FOR THE COUNTRY
THAT ISN'T WILLING TO PAY THEM!**



Emergency Referral Waiver Procedures in NC, SC, and VA

Due to Hurricane Florence, emergency referral waiver procedures are in place until September 21st, 2018 for parts of NC, SC, and VA.

For more information, visit: [**TRICARE Disaster Alerts**](#)



VA marks Suicide Prevention Month in September with 'Be There' campaign

To mark Suicide Prevention Month this September, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is shining a light on effective ways to prevent Veteran suicide with its "**Be There**" campaign.

The campaign highlights the risk factors and warning signs for suicide, provides information about VA mental health and suicide prevention resources, and helps individuals and organizations start the conversation around Veteran mental health in their communities.

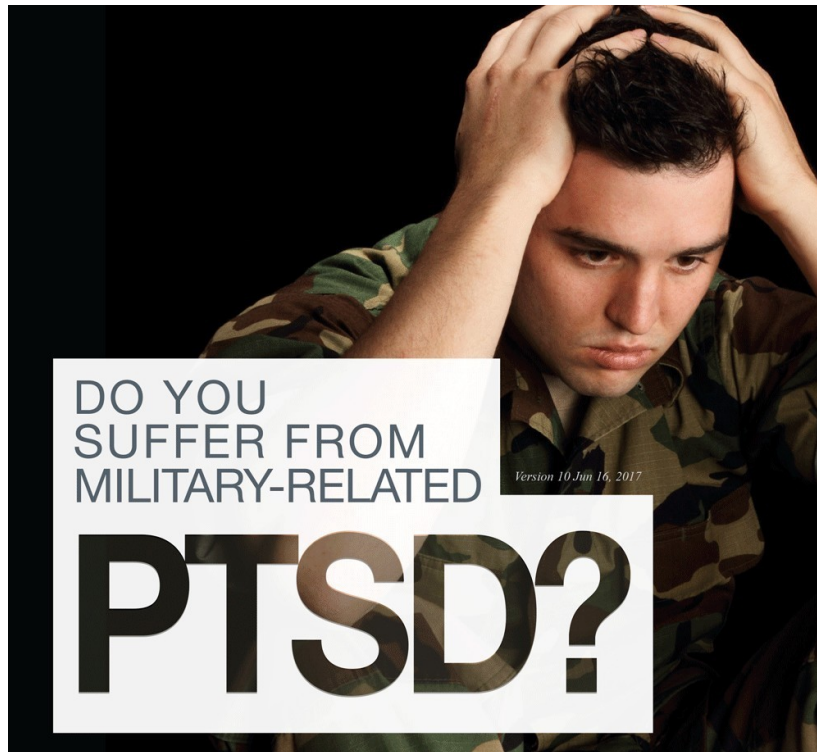
"In our various communities, everyone is in a position to make a difference for a Veteran who may be at risk for suicide," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, who recorded a video about VA's strategies to prevent Veteran suicide. "A common misconception is that you need special training to talk safely about suicide risk or show concern for someone who is in distress. One simple act of kindness could help save a life. I encourage everyone this September, and beyond, to take the first step in acting as that support system."

Talking with a Veteran about mental health or suicide risk may be challenging, but VA encourages community leaders, colleagues, family and friends to simply "Be There" by sharing messages of support that can help show a Veteran you care. VA has also collaborated with community partners and is asking individuals across the country this month to share resources with Veterans in their lives via the BeThereForVeterans.com webpage.

Veterans in crisis or having thoughts of suicide - and those who know a Veteran in crisis - can call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat or text to 838255.

Source: TREA





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



**Navy Emergency Preparedness
Resources**

September is National Emergency Preparedness Month. Commander, Navy Installations Command's (CNIC) Ready Navy Program educates Sailors and their families on how to be prepared when an emergency occurs. This year's overall theme is 'Disasters Happen. Prepare Now. Learn How.' Ready Navy is a proactive Navy-wide emergency preparedness, public awareness program. It is designed for the Navy community to increase the ability of every person and family on or near Navy installations to meet today's challenges head on and plan and prepare for all types of hazards. Strengthen emergency planning at home, as well as at work, by reading and following the tips and information found on the Ready Navy [website](#).



VA Disability Benefits

If you were exposed to a chemical, physical or environmental hazard during your military service, you may be eligible for health care, disability compensation and other Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits. In addition to Agent Orange, other potential qualifying exposures include Camp Lejeune water contamination, potential Gulf War exposures, some potential radiation exposures, depleted uranium and more. VA offers benefits for some children of Vietnam and Korean War-era veterans with birth defects. VA also offers free health registry evaluations for possible health problems related to environmental exposures. To learn about all VA benefits and how to apply, visit [Explore.VA.gov](https://www.va.gov).



**Our values
match yours.**



www.veterans-for-change.org



VA Secretary Pledges Changes at the VA to be More Welcoming to Women Veterans

Last Friday at the first annual meeting of the Military Women's Coalition, VA Secretary Robert Wilke pledged that "the VA will become a welcoming home for all those who have worn the uniform." Although he did not give specifics, he indicated that improvements in mental health and primary care for women would be on the agenda.

He said that in order to fulfill his pledge the VA would change the way it does business. One way of doing that he said was to install more diverse leadership at the VA. He noted that last month retired Air Force Col. Pamela Powers became his chief of staff.

According to a report on Military.com, women now make up about 13 percent of active duty forces, and Wilkie said he expected that number could rise to about 20 percent in coming years.

"This is your Veterans Affairs department. The doors are open we will be making changes to make sure that the needs of our fighting women are taken care of," Wilkie said.

A statement released to the press explained that the

purpose of the Military Women's Coalition is to "elevate the voices of the 2.2 million current service women and women veterans to bring about policy and culture change within the military and the veteran communities."

Source: TREA



Supportive Services Program for Veteran Families

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that thousands of low-income veteran families will continue to receive benefits under the [Supportive Services for Veteran Families](#) (SSVF) program. These veterans, who are permanently housed or transitioning to permanent housing, will continue to have access to crucial services with the funding of approximately \$326 million in grants. SSVF funding will be awarded to 252 nonprofit organizations in all 50 states. For a list of applicants that will be awarded grants and more information about the SSVF Program, visit the VA Homeless Veterans [webpage](#).





VA Gives Three Steps to Access 'Community Care'

Veterans may be eligible to receive care from a provider outside of VA in their community when VA cannot provide the care you need. This type of care is known as "community care," and is paid for by VA.

Although some changes have taken place with community care recently, Veterans continue to have access to this type of care.

The process starts at your VA medical facility. Follow the steps below to see if you're eligible:

1. Go to VA

Schedule an appointment with a VA provider.

Your VA care team will work with you to see if you

are eligible for community care.

Eligibility is based on your medical needs, care that is available at VA, and other requirements.

Important: Make sure VA confirms you are eligible and authorized before going to the next step.

2. Make an Appointment

VA will work with you to find a community provider and make an appointment.

You can select a community provider or VA can select one for you.

Important: The community provider selected must be in VA's network and be willing to accept payment from VA.

3. Receive Care

Arrive promptly for your appointment.

Important: If you need to schedule a follow-up appointment, check with your community provider to make sure VA authorized the care. If VA did not authorize the care, your community provider should contact VA to arrange the care you need.

You will likely have questions about these steps. See the list of [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Getting Support

If you have questions about your specific circumstances, please contact your nearest VA medical facility. If you have a question about the

Veterans Choice Program, contact (866) 606-8198. You can also call the VA Adverse Credit Helpline at (877) 881-7618 for help resolving adverse credit reporting and debt collection issues from using the Veterans Choice Program.

For more information, visit the following link:

<https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/index.asp>

Source: TREA



VA Expands VocRehab Program

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) [Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program \(VR&E\)](#) recently began reducing the average counselor-to-caseload ratio through the hiring of 172 additional vocational rehabilitation counselors (VRCs). The hiring effort will help improve service to veterans with service-connected disabilities and employment barriers. Once hiring is complete for the additional 172 counselors, a total of 1,113 vocational rehabilitation counselors will be available in the field to serve veterans. The VR&E program currently has more than 123,000 participants. For more information, visit this section on [vocational rehabilitation and employment](#).



Hurricane Florence Makes Landfall

The Department of Veterans Affairs has been monitoring Hurricane Florence closely as it made landfall in North Carolina on Friday morning. VA has evacuated the VA Medical Center in Hampton, Va., which is in a mandatory evacuation zone. It has also closed 22 community-based clinics in North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia. The Veterans Benefits Administration said September benefits have already been processed, but any service members who need assistance with receiving benefits checks can call 1-800-827-1000. Also, service members and veterans who have homeowners or renters insurance with USAA can call 1-800-531-8722 or visit the USAA mobile app for assistance. Several VA national cemeteries have also been closed due to the hurricane. Any veterans needing assistance during the storm should call 1-800-507-4571. Learn [more](#).



Disabled Vets Can Now Use Space “A” Travel

Fully disabled veterans can now utilize Space-Available travel. Veterans with a service-connected, permanent disability rating of 100 percent will be able to travel in the Continental United States or directly between the CONUS and Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa (Guam and American Samoa travelers may transit Hawaii or Alaska); or traveling within Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, or the U.S. Virgin Islands on flights operated by Air Mobility Command. Travelers should contact their local Passenger Terminal for further details and review travel information found on the [AMC Travel Page](#) for specific details on the Space A travel program.



Never forget our fallen!



TRICARE Issues Disaster Alert for Hurricane Florence

On Thursday, the Defense Health Agency announced that all TRICARE beneficiaries under mandatory evacuation orders in North Carolina, South Carolina, or Virginia may see a provider at any location without a referral from their primary care physician. This waiver applies to beneficiaries in more than 40 counties where the state Governor has ordered evacuations as a result of Hurricane Florence, and extends through Sept. 21. All TRICARE beneficiaries not on active duty can receive urgent care from any TRICARE-authorized urgent care center or provider without a referral. Additionally, beneficiaries in these affected areas, to include Washington D.C., may obtain emergency refills of their prescriptions through Sept. 20. Learn [more](#).



Wilkie Promises Female Vets 'It Is Your VA'

While he stopped short on giving details about new initiatives, new VA Secretary Robert Wilkie addressed women's military and veterans organizations last week to tell them the department would change to accommodate their needs. For more information, see this [article](#).



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



Send TRICARE to College with Your Child

Is your student hitting the books at college this fall? TRICARE travels with them. TRICARE coverage of eligible dependents extends to college students. TRICARE health plan options and payment requirements depend on the location of the college your student attends, your sponsor status, and your family's individual preferences.

Read the full article [here](#).



VA Job Vacancies

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has [released its figures on employment vacancies as of June 30](#), as mandated each quarter under the recently passed MISSION Act. There are 45,239 overall vacancies at the department, out of a total of 419,353 full-time authorized and budgeted positions. This includes 40,456 vacancies in the Veterans Health Administration. With approximately 374,000 current employees, VA is the second largest federal organization in the United States. For more information, read this [article](#).



Links to Other Stories

1. Bassfield Man Pleads Guilty to Bomb Threat Against Veterans Nursing Home
2. Blue Water Veterans Stalled? VA Vehemently Opposes New Legislation
3. Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC)
4. Military update: VA rips 'Blue Water' Agent Orange bill, urges Senate to sink it
5. Monsanto court ruling bolsters the hope for millions of Vietnamese Agent Orange victims
6. New VA secretary 'sucker punches' Vietnam Navy Veterans
7. Potential Exposure at Fort McClellan
8. Review of Accuracy of Reported Pending Disability Claims Backlog Statistics
9. Spartan Pledge
10. Taking the Spartan Pledge Against Suicide
11. Vallejo wins Defense Department contract to make Mare Island Naval Cemetery repairs

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



VA Receives Full Year Appropriations

Yesterday, Congress completed the first appropriations package of the year. The \$147.5 billion package includes full year appropriations for VA to start implementation of the VFW-supported VA MISSION Act of 2018, streamline the process for appealing decisions on benefit claims, reduce the rate of suicide among veterans, fight the opioid epidemic, and modernize its electronic health care record. The VFW remains concerned that the current dysfunctional budget process may impact VA's ability to receive the resources it needs in 2020 and 2021 for IT improvements required by the Forever GI Bill and to properly implement the VA MISSION Act of 2018. That is why the VFW has joined forces with a broad coalition of organizations to propose [common sense reforms to the federal budget process](#). Read the [Statement of the Independent Budget Veterans Service Organizations](#) or the [Joint Explanatory Statement for H.R. 5895](#).



Suicide Prevention Month Resources

September is geared towards suicide prevention awareness — if you or someone you know is in need of assistance, make use of [these guides](#) , and also check in with [Mental Health and Wellness section](#).



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North Korean MIA Recovery Talks Continue

Negotiators are moving forward with efforts to bring home the remains of more American troops killed in the 1950-53 Korean War, according to a [Stars and Stripes article](#) published Sunday. U.S. and North Korean generals met last week in the truce village of Panmunjom to discuss the next step after 55 cases of remains believed to be missing Americans were repatriated in late July. The Defense POW/MIA

Accounting Agency currently lists 7,683 Americans missing from the Korean War, with an estimated 5,300 of them in North Korea. Also missing in the vicinity of the Korean Peninsula are 111 Cold War MIAs. American-led recovery teams operated in North Korea from 1996 to 2005, returning some 229 remains, but that mission was suspended due to team safety and security reasons. “The return of our missing is a humanitarian mission that transcends politics,” said VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence, whose organization urged President Trump to include the return of American remains as a discussion point when he met with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore on June 12. “The VFW is grateful to the president for acting on our recommendation and to the North Korean leader for following through on his part of the summit agreement,” he said. “The VFW will continue working toward the fullest possible accounting of missing Americans on the Korean Peninsula and elsewhere because we leave no one behind. We owe it to their families and we owe to their battle buddies.”



*** RED ALERT ***

**Everyone Call The Senate Committee
On Veterans Affairs Members Ask
Them To Support and Vote to pass
HR 299 Blue Water Navy
Vietnam Veterans Act Of 2018 to the
Full Senate for a Vote!**

**Jon Tester (D - MT)202-224-2644-Tony
Murray, Patty (WA)202-224-2621-Ryan
Sanders, Bernie (VT)202-224-5141-Matt
Brown, Sherrod (OH)202-224-2315-Anna
Blumenthal, Richard (CT)202-224-2823-Ethan
Hirono, Mazie (HI)202-224-6361-Adam
Manchin, Joe (WV)202-224-3954-Emily**

**Please Ask everyone to Make The
Calls and Share this with
Everyone!**

**Thank You Michael F Kvintus
Sr. BWNVVA
National Vice Commander**



Emergency Prescription Procedures in US Territories

Due to Typhoon Mangkhut, emergency prescription procedures are in place until September 20th, 2018 for Guam and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands.

For more information, visit: [TRICARE Disaster Alerts](#)





'Rust and Blood' Controversy: VA to Add More Medical Staff

At a hearing last week before the Subcommittee On Oversight and Investigations, Rep. Phil Roe (R-Tennessee), a medical doctor and chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, pointed out instances where VA was struggling to fulfill the "most basic function" of its hospitals: "to make sure you have sterile equipment." For more details on his testimony, and VA's response, see this [article](#).



1. Benefits and Challenges of Payment Adjustments Based on Beneficiaries' Ability to Perform Daily Tasks
2. Clear Definition of the Interagency Program Office's Role in VA's New Modernization Effort Would Strengthen Accountability
3. Considerations Related to Providing Advance Appropriation Authority
4. Health Insurance Exchanges: HHS Should Enhance Its Management of Open Enrollment Performance
5. Health Resources and Services Administration: Efforts to Help Ensure Health Center Compliance with Prohibitions on the Use of Federal Funds for Certain Abortions
6. Indian Health Service: Agency Faces Ongoing Challenges Filling Provider Vacancies
7. IRS Managed Processing Challenges and Enhanced Its Management of Tax Law Changes
8. Medicaid: CMS Has Taken Steps to Address Program Risks but Further Actions Needed to Strengthen Program Integrity
9. Medicare Fee-For-Service: Information on the First Year of Nationwide Reduced Payment Rates for Durable Medical Equipment
10. NIH Research: Action Needed to Ensure Workforce Diversity Strategic Goals Are Achieved



Patriot Day: In Remembrance of 9/11

Join Military.com as we commemorate those who lost their lives on September 11, 2001, as well as service members and veterans who have helped keep our nation safe, in our [Patriot Day Remembrance](#).



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



Emergency Prescription Procedures in NC, SC, and VA

Due to Hurricane Florence, emergency prescription procedures are in place until September 20th, 2018 for parts of NC, SC, and VA.

For more information, visit: [TRICARE Disaster Alerts](#)



New Dental Plan Options for Military Retirees

Military retirees will soon begin to review the various features and monthly premiums of dental plan options for replacing their [TRICARE Retiree Dental Program \(TRDP\)](#). The TRDP is set to expire after Dec. 31. This will allow three million military retiree households access to the same menu of dental plans administered for federal civilian employees by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Read the entire [article](#).





TRICARE and Retirement

When you retire from active duty, your TRICARE plan options will change. As a retiree, you will need to take action to enroll in a TRICARE plan if you want to continue to receive coverage for civilian care. First, update your information in the [Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System \(DEERS\)](#). The next steps depend on which TRICARE plans you are eligible to use. If eligible, you can reenroll yourself and eligible family members in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select. Depending on the plan you choose, you will pay the single or family enrollment fee. There is no TRICARE Select enrollment fee for [Group A retirees](#). For more information, visit the TRICARE [website](#).





U.S. FOOD & DRUG
ADMINISTRATION

1. [Bravo Packing, Inc. Recalls Performance Dog Raw Pet Food Because of Possible Salmonella Health Risk to Humans and Animals](#)
2. [Gravel Ridge Farms Recalls Cage Free Eggs Due to Possible Salmonella Contamination](#)
3. [Pharm D Solutions, LLC Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of all Sterile Compounded Drugs Due to A Potential Lack of Sterility Assurance](#)
4. [Sarap Asian Fusion Recalls Cookies due to Undeclared Allergens](#)
5. [Voluntary Recall Notice of Meijer Taco Seasoning Mix 4.5 oz](#)





SURVIVAL IS FUN





Update - Voluntary Drug Recall Alert: Valsartan

On July 13, 2018, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a voluntary recall of valsartan. Valsartan is used to treat high blood pressure and heart failure. The FDA announced the voluntary recall after finding an impurity linked to cancer in drug products containing valsartan. The Department of Defense sent notification letters to all beneficiaries who potentially received currently affected products.

Read the full article [here](#).



Many Could Miss Out on Free ID Protection

In 2015 the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) experienced a data breach that exposed the personal data of approximately 4.2 million individuals. Following the breach, OPM and the Defense Department partnered with [IDExperts](#), a private sector firm, to provide services tailored to address potential risks created by this particular incident including personal ID protection services. The personal ID protection is offered at no charge. Unfortunately, many service members and veterans have not taken advantage of this protection and remain exposed to the criminal opportunities associated with ID theft. OPM has an online incident resource center that offers information on how to take advantage of this free ID protection. [Visit the OPM Cyber security website to get more information and to enroll.](#)



1. Employees with other sources of income should do a Paycheck Checkup
2. Here's how and when to pay estimated taxes
3. IRS issues proposed regulations on global intangible low-taxed income for U.S. shareholders
4. IRS reminder: Third estimated tax payment due Sept. 17; Tools are available to help people pay right amount following law changes
5. IRS urges taxpayers to prepare for natural disasters
6. Many small business and self-employed taxpayers should make quarterly estimated tax payments; third quarter deadline is Sept. 17
7. Retirees with pension income should do a Paycheck Checkup ASAP
8. Taxpayers should find out if they need to make estimated or additional tax payments



MIA Update

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced eight new identifications, and the burial date and location for two previously identified servicemen. Returning home with full military honors are:

Army Master Sgt. Leonard K. Chinn, 34, of Idaho

Falls, Idaho, whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Sept. 19, 2018, in Silver Creek, Neb. Chinn was a member of Company D, 2nd Engineer Combat Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, when his unit was fighting off persistent Chinese attacks in North Korea. Chinn was reportedly captured by enemy forces on Dec. 1, 1950, and was held at several temporary prisoner of war camps before being marched northwest to POW Camp 5 Complex, North Korea. [Read about Chinn.](#)

Navy Chief Machinist's Mate Dean S. Sanders, 38, of Lima, Ohio, whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Sept. 19 in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu. Sanders was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Sanders. [Read about Sanders.](#)

Army Sgt. Eugene G. McBride was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 311th Infantry Regiment, 78th Infantry Division. On Jan. 30, 1945, while engaged in an attack against enemy forces near Huppenbroich, Germany, McBride was killed by a blast from an enemy artillery shell. His remains were not identified by American forces after the battle. Interment

services are pending. [Read about McBride.](#)

Army Tech. Sgt. Robert J. Fitzgerald was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 311th Infantry Regiment, 78th Infantry Division. On Jan. 30, 1945, while engaged in an attack against enemy forces near Huppenbroich, Germany, Fitzgerald stepped on an anti-personnel mine and was killed. His remains were not identified by American forces after the battle. Interment services are pending. [Read about Fitzgerald.](#)

Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Leonard A. Tyma was assigned to Company E, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded. Tyma died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943, during the first waves of the assault. Interment services are pending. [Read about Tyma.](#)

Army Pfc. Fred W. Ashley was a member of Troop C, 2nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, 2nd Cavalry Group, on a reconnaissance in the town of Paseka, Czechoslovakia. On May 4, German soldiers attacked Ashley's platoon. Ashley's unit reported him missing in

action. Following the war, when Ashley was not among the American prisoners liberated from German captivity, the War Department amended his status to killed in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ashley.](#)

Navy Fireman 3rd Class Robert J. Bennett was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Bennett. Interment services are pending. [Read about Bennett.](#)

Navy Water Tender 2nd Class Clarence M. Lockwood was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Lockwood. Interment services are pending. [Read about Lockwood.](#)

Navy Seaman 1st Class James W. Holzhauer was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Holzhauer. Interment services are pending.

[Read about Holzauer.](#)

Navy Radioman 3rd Class Bruce H. Ellison was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Ellison. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ellison.](#)



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