



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, January 13, 2019

Volume 10, Issue 02



This-N-That

Veterans Affairs has been working on expanded community care rules for Veterans' medical appointments since last summer, when Congress approved the VA Mission Act. Details of that work are expected to be released in early 2019, and a full set of new regulations is scheduled to be released in early spring.

Among other priorities, the legislation mandated a retooling of the department's policies for Veterans seeking private-sector care, a massive undertaking that supporters have hailed as giving more flexibility

and freedom to Veterans who face long lines at VA hospitals and clinics.

Democrats, including House members who will be taking control of the chamber this year, have promised intense oversight into the new outside care rules, to ensure they aren't written to siphon off needed federal resources to private businesses.

In regard to Democrats taking control, I have a ton of things I'd say about this but I will remain silent for now and do my best to remain objective, wait and see.

The OIG had found that there were millions of dollars that had been ear marked for suicide prevention had gone unused, and so far I have found absolutely NO explanation for this.

What matters to me most is providing care for all Veterans and maintaining continuity in care nationwide which we are sorely lacking.

When it comes to our Veterans and Military and spending, if every state in the country were to adhere to federal law on immigration, there would be no question as to funding being available.

If all those here illegally were deported, pulled off the welfare rolls, that would provide an estimated \$850 Billion dollars a year of funding that could seriously be put to far better use, our Veterans and American

citizens.

For years now, many of our lower ranking military families have had to rely on Welfare, HUD, Food Stamps, etc. but the Government has made it more and more difficult for them to even be approved. But those funds are always available and almost immediately granted to those who come here illegally.

I'm sure I could debate this to no end with many, but the point is we all need to band together, speak out a hell of a lot this year. We need to make this the year of the Veteran.

Get as many bills approved and signed into law as is humanly possible, and it all begins with you!

The key is to make things go viral such as we tried to do last year and we will continue to do this year with Blue Water Navy Veterans.

And how you make things go viral, if you have a social media page(s), post all the information there, then copy and paste into an E-Mail and send to your entire address book and ask all friends and family to please make the calls, click on the links to send the pre-written letters to members of Congress, and make all the calls.

Even if you don't think your rep listens to you, even if you don't agree with their politics, please, just make the calls, send the letters, and if you have fax capabilities,

fax them too!

The more people involved, the more noise we make, the more attention we will get.

This month is blood donor month, so if you're able to give blood, please, check with your local VA Hospital and see what their dates of donation are and give blood. You never know whose life you will be saving. Maybe even your own!

On behalf of our Volunteers nationwide and myself, we wish you and your family good health and a safe and Happy New Year!

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org



**Blue Water Navy Vietnam
Veterans Bill Remains Top
Priority**

The VFW has worked with congressional leadership in the House and Senate to reintroduce and work toward quick passage of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019, which would restore benefits to Blue Water Navy veterans and expand benefits for Korean DMZ and Thailand veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange. Stay tuned to the VFW Action Corps Weekly for updates on this important bill. Read House Committee on Veterans' Affairs [Chairman Mark Takano's statement on reintroduction](#). Read [Ranking Member Phil Roe's statement](#).



Don't Let the Flu Get You, Get Your Flu Shot Now

Did you get your flu shot? If not, it isn't too late. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, flu season peaks between the months of December and February. An estimated 960,000 people were hospitalized and an estimated 79,000 died due to flu complications during the 2017-2018 flu season. Use your TRICARE benefit to get the flu vaccine.

Read the [full article here](#).



Veterans-For-Change Web Site

The Veterans-For-Change website has been under construction since day one back in 2009 and every day since then. The looks pretty much stay the same, but in the background constant improvement and change is being done to make our website the most user friendly “One-Stop-Shop” website to find almost everything you might have tried to find searching the internet.

Almost a hundred people have been involved; collecting web links to documents now houses on the VFC website, collecting thousands of web links for various issues, illnesses and benefits. Creating forums for all eras of service and two forums one just for men and one just for woman where you can go question, comment, share medical and personal concerns, what ever you'd like it to be.

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

We average **2,301** hits per day, and downloads average **1,435** per day with a total **4,646,675** 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 **16,843** documents on-line (Updated: 12/23/18)
- 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: 10/30/18) (37 Added)
- News (Articles On-Line: **8,122**)
- Polls

- Web Links, more than **4,678**, Added 20 New Links
(Updated: 01/10/19)

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



2019 Brings Major Changes to State and Federal Veterans' Benefits

With a new year come new laws and regulations. Many new federal and state-specific regulations and laws impact military members and veterans. Several states have new tax or fee waivers and rules for military members or veterans. And expanded federal benefits include certain expansions to the GI Bill as well as an expansion of Space-A travel to 100 percent disabled veterans. Read more about those and other expansions [here](#).



Join TRICARE for Jan. 15 Q&A Facebook Event on Preventive Services

Do you have questions about preventive services that TRICARE covers? Here's your chance to get some answers. Join TRICARE on Tuesday, Jan. 15 at 3:15 p.m. ET. The live Q&A session is on the TRICARE Facebook page. TRICARE subject matter experts will answer your questions about TRICARE preventive services, costs, and how to get care based on your health plan live on Facebook. Don't miss this opportunity to ask questions about your benefit.

Read the full article [here](#).



Veterans-For-Change Makes Social Media Change

Effective immediately, all social media pages that have been on Face Book for many years have all been moved to MEWE.com for a number of reasons.

We know most people don't like change, however, this new Social Media Site, MEWE.COM has no advertisers, truly respects privacy and protects your security far better than Face Book ever could. They also have a fantastic customer service group who

actually does respond to your messages, suggestions, ideas and more!

We hope you will join us on this new site.

Veterans-For-Change

www.mewe.com/join/veterans-for-change

Homeless Heroes Program of Veterans-For-Change

www.mewe.com/join/homelessheroesprogramofveterans-for-change

AMVETS Group

www.mewe.com/join/amvetsgroup

VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP

www.mewe.com/join/veteranssocialgroup

{USAVET} SUPPORTING GOD & ALL WHO SERVED OUR GREAT NATION

www.mewe.com/join/usavetsupportinggodallwhoserveandserve

AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY

www.mewe.com/join/americansforsovereignty





Missed TRICARE Open Season?

TRICARE beneficiaries were required to enroll in or change their TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select plan for 2019 by Dec. 31, 2018. If you missed the December 31, 2018 deadline, you will now only be able to enroll or make changes to your TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select plan during the annual TRICARE Open Season or after a [Qualifying Life Event](#) (QLE). The next TRICARE Open Season will take place in fall of 2019 for coverage starting on Jan. 1, 2020. A Qualifying Life Event is a certain change in your life, such as marriage, birth of a child, or retirement from active duty, which may mean different TRICARE options are available to you. For more information, visit the TRICARE QLEs [webpage](#).



Student veterans CEO calls on veterans to fill America's 'leadership deficit'

Jared Lyon, a Navy veteran and CEO of Student Veterans of America, recently addressed a crowd of about 2,300 people at the group's national convention in Orlando, Florida. In his speech, Lyon noted "incredible challenges" facing the country, including the ongoing war in Afghanistan, which entered its 18th year in 2018, as well as political divisions and potential threats to the U.S. economy. "I remain convinced that you, a highly educated generation of student veterans, are the solution that our country desperately needs," Lyon said. He called on student veterans to start a "second service," promote "dignity, humanity and civility" and bridge divides by "reaching out to those different from you, with different life experiences."

[**READ MORE**](#)





January's Featured Song

Voice of America

By

LT Bobby Ross

LT Bobby Ross - Voice Of America

Previous Featured Songs



**Medicare's General Enrollment
Period is January 1–March 31**

Missed your Initial Enrollment Period last year? If you're eligible for Medicare, you may still be able to sign up for Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance) and Medicare Part B (Medical Insurance) during the **General Enrollment Period**.



Space-A Travel Opens to 100% Disabled Vets

A new change contained in the 2019 defense bill now allows 100 percent disabled veterans to travel Space-Available aboard military and military-contract flights within the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii and U.S. territories. According to this **article**, the disabled veterans must possess a Defense Department ID Card (DD Form 2765) in order to not only fly Space-A but to access military installations. The rule change halfway accomplishes Resolution 419 from the 112th VFW National Convention; only halfway because dependents are not eligible to accompany them. The article also states disabled vets have limited destinations, whereas other Category 6 travelers (military retirees) have worldwide eligibility. That discrepancy will be addressed.





These New UCMJ Laws Started Jan. 1

A series of sweeping reforms and updates to the [Uniform Code of Military Justice](#) (UCMJ) kicked in on Jan. 1, 2019, including the addition of some crimes, an expansion of victims' rights and standardizing the legal blood alcohol limit for drivers on some military bases. Read more about the updates [here](#).



Senators want answers on unspent VA suicide prevention funds

A group of 21 Senate Democrats has asked the Department of Veterans Affairs to explain why it spent just \$57,000 of \$6.2 million budgeted for paid media advertising campaigns directed at suicide prevention in fiscal 2018, a deficiency they called "appalling" for its lack of oversight. The lawmakers, led by Senate Veterans Affairs Committee ranking member Sen. Jon Tester of Montana, demanded a full accounting of the \$17.7 million budgeted by VA for suicide prevention outreach, which includes both paid advertising such as radio spots, billboards and digital ads, as well as unpaid outreach such as public service announcements, social media and the VA's own Crisis Line website. [READ MORE](#)



**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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Could your family survive without you? Because tomorrow is never guaranteed, protect your family's future now. [Get \\$300k life insurance coverage from just \\$21 a month.](#)



Veteran unemployment increased in December — but there's still good news

Military Times In December, 3.6 percent of post-9/11 veterans and 3.2 percent of all veterans were unemployed — up slightly from 3.4 and 3.1 percent, respectively, in November. Experts warn against putting too much stock in the monthly figures and recommend instead tracking larger trends. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show an annual average unemployment rate of 3.8 percent for the youngest generation of veterans, on par with nonveterans. For veterans overall, the 2018 rate also dropped to 3.5 percent from 3.7 the previous year. [READ MORE](#)





AMERICAN SOLDIERS

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



Air Force Approves HIV Prevention Drug; Waiver Still Needed

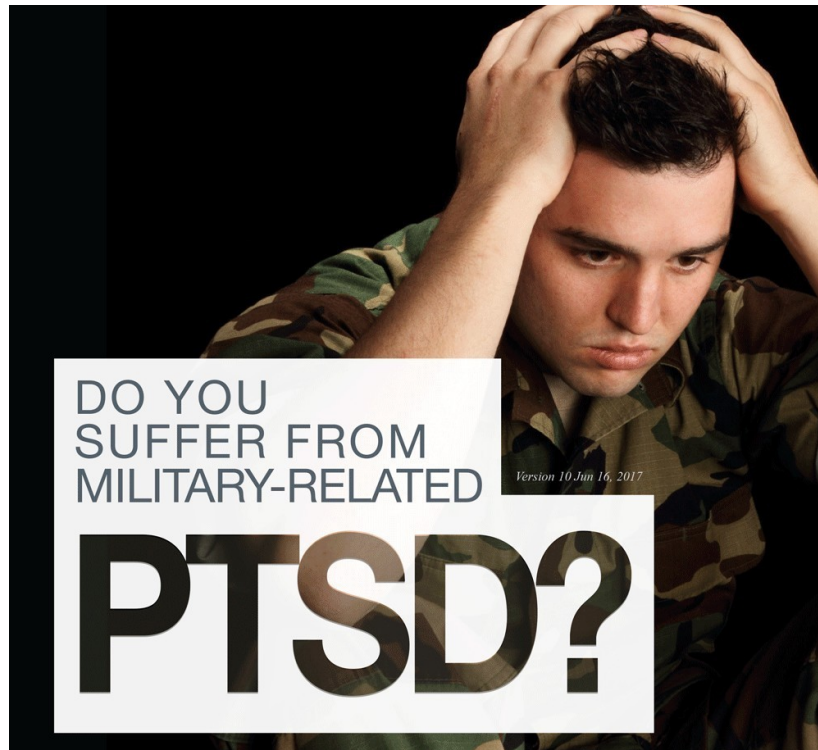
The U.S. [Air Force](#) has approved the use of a medication designed to prevent HIV infection for pilots and aircrew, overriding an older policy that prohibited its use. The pre-exposure prophylaxis treatment (PrEP) medication, commonly known as Truvada, helps reduce the risk of contracting the human immunodeficiency virus. Pilots and aircrew who wish to use PrEP must apply for a waiver. Read more about the drug and the waiver process in this [article](#).



Coast Guard retirees among those struggling to make ends meet amid shutdown

WBUR-FM Retired members of the United States Coast Guard may not receive their monthly retirement checks if the government shutdown drags on, the Department of Homeland Security tells On Point. The veterans are the latest group of people suffering the impact as the shutdown drags on. From roughly 800,000 federal workers facing pay freezes, to millions of Americans anticipating food stamp interruptions, the effects are piling up. National parks in disarray, more TSA workers calling out sick and a potential delay in tax refunds are also on the horizon. [READ MORE](#)





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



**Blended Military Retirement Plan
Not as Popular as Projected**

Opt-ins to the Defense Department's new blended retirement system (BRS) fell as much as two-thirds below projections for active-duty and reserve component forces. Near-final tallies of opt-in decisions for BRS (through Dec. 17) show only 280,000 active-duty members and just over 72,000 reserve component personnel chose to shift out of the previous High-3 plan. In 2016, Pentagon officials estimated that a total of 916,754 active and reserve component members would opt into the BRS when it became available. Read more in this [article](#).



**VA secretary on GI Bill problems:
'We owe you every penny that
you've earned'**

Military Times Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie told a large gathering of student veterans that his No. 1 priority for the VA in 2019 is quality customer service. That's why the VA will correct inaccurate payments made to thousands of student veterans last fall. Stymied by technical problems, the department has been giving students the wrong housing stipend amounts for months and continues to do so — long after the Aug. 1 deadline Congress gave VA to calculate housing stipends under revised rules. "The bottom line is: We owe you every penny that you've earned. That is what the nation has promised you, and that is what you deserve," Wilkie said, addressing some 2,300 student veterans attending the annual Student Veterans of America National Conference via livestream, after his plans to attend in-person were canceled at the last minute because of travel restrictions amid the government shutdown. [READ MORE](#)



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



Military hopes 3-D printing bones can help combat veterans' injuries

Fox News Dr. John Szivek, who runs the University of Arizona Orthopaedic Research Lab, said the lab received a \$2 million grant from the Department of Defense to create 3-D bone printing to help military personnel. "We could regenerate their bone by 3-D printing a scaffold that's specific to that bone and that patient and then filling it with stem cells from that patient, adult stem cells," Szivek explained. "Surgeons in the military would try to treat military personnel with blast injuries, in particular. Those injuries usually cause massive bone loss and unfortunately, in many cases, they're currently amputating military personnel who have those types of injuries. But in this way, they could regrow the bone for that person and they could continue their service in the military." [READ MORE](#)





Express Scripts Quarterly Update

This week, VFW National Security and Foreign Affairs Director John Towles attended the quarterly Express Scripts MSO/VSO meeting at their Washington, D.C. office. The meeting provided insight into what the company's primary agenda is moving into 2019 and gave attendees the opportunity to engage with their government relations staff. Topics of discussion ranged from 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, improved electronic health records interface that gives health care providers a more comprehensive view of the medications that they are prescribing to patients, and legislative priorities for the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, such as pharmacy fee increases and future policy initiatives that will better serve TRICARE beneficiaries. [Learn more](#) about how Express Scripts serves the military community.



Blue Water Healthcare Act Will Resurface

Incoming House Committee on Veterans Affairs Chairman Mark Takano, D-Calif., promised in a bipartisan Dec. 20 press conference that the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act will resurface early when the 116th Congress begins Jan. 3. The act is a top priority of the Republican he is replacing as chairman of the committee, Dr. Phil Roe of Tennessee. Takano said the measure, which affects some 90,000 Vietnam War veterans exposed to the toxic defoliant Agent Orange who served on surface ships during the war, will also be high on his agenda. The measure was blocked on Dec. 10 primarily by two senators who objected, one on the basis of cost and the other who questioned the science. The act passed the House by a 382-0 vote last June.



Acting SecDef Shanahan Pledges to Carry Out President's Agenda

New Acting Secretary Patrick Shanahan pledged Jan. 1 to work with the military leadership to carry out President Donald Trump's policy agenda on national security issues without pushback. In a three-paragraph statement Shanahan twice stressed that there would be no daylight between him and Trump on the Syrian withdrawal or other issues that [led to Mattis' resignation](#). Read more on [here](#).



Phone Services for Veteran Families

[Coaching Into Care](#) is a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) telephone service that provides assistance to family members and friends trying to encourage their Veteran to seek health care for possible readjustment and mental health issues. It is a national phone service that helps to link veterans with services available in their own communities. Frequently it is friends and family who are first to notice their veteran having a tough time adjusting. For more information, visit the Coaching Into Care webpage at <https://www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching/>, read the VA Vantage Point Blog at <https://www.blogs.va.gov/Vantage/55165/veterans-family-thanks-vas-coaching-care/>, or call Coaching Into Care at (888) 823-7458.



Never forget our fallen!



Tricare Survey: Advocacy Group Wants Your Help

The Military Officers Association of America wants your help with the final installment of its three-part user survey on the [Tricare](#) health program. Aimed at tracking experiences and satisfaction with Tricare in light of last year's sweeping changes, the data gathered from this survey will be used to examine trends and shape the organization's legislative efforts. Read more about the survey [here](#). You can take the survey on [MOAA's website](#).



VA Awards Contracts for New Health Providers

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has awarded contracts to manage provider networks for [Regions 1, 2 and 3](#) of VA's new [Community Care Network](#) (CCN), the department's direct link with community providers that will ensure VA provides the right care at the right time to Veterans. The network will be the standard contract vehicle allowing VA to purchase care for veterans from community health care providers using industry-standard approaches and guidelines. VA will provide care coordination under this new contract. The contract award for Region 4 is expected by early April 2019. Contract award for Regions 5 and 6 are expected by end of calendar year 2019.



Support HR 203 and HR 299, Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019

On January 3, 2019, House Veterans' Affairs Committee Ranking Member, Dr. Phil Roe (TN), introduced H.R. 203, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019. On January 8, 2019, House

Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman, Mark Takano (CA), introduced H.R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019.

Nearly identical legislation was approved in the House last year by a vote of 382 to 0. Unfortunately, the legislation was not approved by the Senate so it must be approved again by the new 116th Congress.

Both bills would expand the presumptions for service connection related to exposure to herbicides containing dioxin, including Agent Orange, to veterans who served in the territorial seas of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

Veterans who served on ships in the waters off shore of Vietnam are arbitrarily and unjustly denied benefits of the presumption of exposure, and thereby are ineligible for presumption of service connection for herbicide-related disabilities. These bills would correct that injustice.

DAV strongly supports H.R. 203 and H.R. 299 and both bills are in accord with DAV Resolution No. 033.

Please use the prepared electronic letter or draft your own to urge your Representative to support and cosponsor H.R. 203 and H.R. 299. As always, we appreciate your support for DAV and your grassroots activism in participating in DAV CAN. Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.

Take Action



Links to Other Stories

1. Alabama Veterans Affairs board picks new commissioner
2. Collier official who helped Veterans for two decades retires; Hartnack leaves at 65
3. Give Veterans benefits they've earned
4. Know a military Vet turning 65? Here's how Medicare can work with VA health care
5. Lawmakers hope for swift action this year on 'blue water' Vietnam Veterans benefits
6. New in 2019: VA's health care rules will be completely rewritten this year
7. NEW VA APPEALS PROCESS
8. Reforming Veterans benefits will be controversial, but necessary
9. Six months into her new job, interim VA director wants to stay
10. SLC Housing Authority sends demand letter to VA, saying building to house homeless Veterans had vacant beds for years
11. State audit criticizes Dept of Veterans Affairs following Call 6 Investigation into fund
12. Supreme Court To Hear Veteran'S Case

Challenging VA'S Power To Interpret Its Own Rules

13. USAA customers to receive more than \$12 million for alleged violations in handling accounts, errors

14. Veterans' Groups Compete With Each Other, and Struggle With the V.A.

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Check us out today: www.veterans-for-change.org



Your 2019 \$0 Down VA Loan Benefit Is Ready to Use Now

VA Loan limits have increased to \$484k for 2019. Take advantage of this great benefit and lock in a low rate for as little as \$0 down. [Use your VA loan benefit today.](#)



VA Partners with APTA for New Physical Therapy Resources

The U.S Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it has established a partnership with the [American Physical Therapy Association](#)(APTA) to promote and support veterans by providing new physical therapy resources. The partnership will benefit all veterans and their families, physical therapists (PT) and physical therapist assistants by helping to raise awareness of physical therapy and create new employment and practice opportunities. The agreement will use VA and APTA resources to promote nonpharmacological treatment options for pain, [VA's suicide prevention efforts](#), utilization of [VA's Adaptive Sports Grants](#) Program and physical therapists' participation in [VA's National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events](#). VA employs over 3,500 physical therapists and PT assistants.



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Service Members and Citizens Can Participate in Anti-terror Program

The Eagle Eyes program is an Air Force anti-terrorism initiative that enlists the eyes and ears of Air Force members and citizens in the war on terror. Eagle Eyes teaches people about the typical activities terrorists engage in to plan their attacks so anyone can recognize elements of potential terror planning when they see it. The program provides a network of local, 24-hour phone numbers to call whenever a suspicious activity is observed. If you need to contact your local Eagle Eyes unit, consult your base phone book or call your base operator for the telephone number of your base's unit. Or, call toll free 1-877-246-1453 for the phone number of the unit nearest you. Personnel can also report any and all suspicious activities by emailing EagleEyes@us.af.mil or hqafosi.watch@us.af.mil.



Joint VA Partnership with Fund Will Provide Health Resources

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) [announced its partnership](#) with [The Independence Fund](#) to provide wellness and mental health education to Veterans, caregivers and families. VA and The Independence Fund will collaborate on suicide prevention initiatives to connect Veterans with care and support before they reach a crisis point. The two organizations will work together on Operation Resiliency to encourage Veterans to take part in suicide prevention initiatives. This includes a 2019 retreat that will bring together at-risk Veterans who served in the same unit during deployments. Partnerships such as this with The Independence Fund are an important part of VA's [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#).





*** Women Veterans * Women Spouses ***
Global Corporations Hiring Locally & Nationally

FRIDAY 12 APRIL
Four Seasons Hotel Seattle

SEATTLE



Women Veterans Roundtable & Luncheon
Hosted by Women Leadership at Amazon

Informal Q&A with Panel of Employers
Talk with Recruiters - Prep for Job Fair

Power Breakfast w/ Microsoft
Hosted by Microsoft Military Leadership

Free Professional Headshots
Upload on Your Social Media Profile

*** NETWORKING RECEPTION ***
Meet with Corporate Recruiters in Relaxed Setting

*** CAREER FAIR & INTERVIEWS ***

Meet with Recruiters from these Companies

Accenture, Alaska Airlines, Amazon, AWS, Bechtel, Boeing, Booz Allen Hamilton, Cortac Group, Cummins, Deloitte, Edward Jones, EY, GE, GM, Intel Corp., Johnson Controls, Johnson & Johnson, JPMorgan Chase, Kellogg, Koch, Merck, Micron, Microsoft, Northrop Grumman, Pacific NW Laboratory, PNC, PWC, Rollins, Schneider Electric, Shell, Stryker, T-Mobile, Travelers, University of Washington, U.S. CBP, U.S. Secret Service, Verizon, Walmart, Zillow Group *(more to come...)*

REGISTRATION INCLUDES

- Individual Resume Review
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- Corporate Hosted Sessions
- Professional Head Shot
- Interviews as Scheduled by Employers
- Women Veterans Roundtable
- Informal Q&A w/ Employer Panel
- Welcome Reception w/ Employers
- Breakfast & Lunch

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Employer Spotlight: Altria Wants You

The Altria Group's companies are tobacco industry leaders and have been for thirty years. Visit [Altria's Veteran Resource Center](#) to find about our military support programs, veteran employee success stories, and job search tools for veterans and transitioning service members.



Lawmakers reintroduce legislation to help Blue Water Navy veterans

Connecting Vets In the first week of the new year, lawmakers reintroduced a bill that would clarify toxic exposure definitions, allowing Blue Water Navy veterans to receive the same benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs as their counterparts who served in Vietnam on the ground. In June of last year, the House voted 382-0 to grant benefits to Blue Water Navy veterans, but in a surprise to many, a senator objected to it, stalling the bill's progress. For years, those who served on Navy ships during Vietnam and were exposed to toxic chemical exposures faced challenges accessing certain healthcare and benefits; H.R. 203 could change that. "The fact that politics got in the way of our duty to care for veterans affected by toxic exposure is a disservice to the 90,000 Navy veterans who served in the coastal waters of Vietnam," said House Veterans Affairs Committee chairman Mark Takano, D-Calif. [READ MORE](#)



Office of Inspector General

1. Better Information Could Help Eligible College Students Access Federal Food Assistance Benefits
2. Clear Procedures and Improved Data Collection Could Facilitate Property Disposals
3. DHS Should Take Additional Steps to Evaluate Organizational Placement
4. Indian Health Service: Spending Levels and Characteristics of IHS and Three Other Federal Health Care Programs
5. Medicare Fee-For-Service: Information on the Second Year of Nationwide Reduced Payment Rates for Durable Medical Equipment
6. Medicare: Payments for Certain Long-Term Care Hospitals that Specialize in Spinal Cord Treatment
7. VA Health Care: Improvements Needed in Suicide Prevention Media Outreach Campaign Oversight and Evaluation
8. VA Construction: Strengthened Pilot Design and a Dedicated Team Could Improve Real-Property Donation Pilot Program
9. VA Disability Benefits: Planning Gaps Could Impede Readiness for Successful Appeals Implementation
10. VA Health Care: Improvements Needed in Suicide Prevention Media Outreach Campaign Oversight and Evaluation



Exchanges Remain Open During Shutdown

All Army & Air Force Exchange Service stores will remain open for Soldiers, Airmen, military families and retirees during the federal government shutdown. Though the Exchange is part of the Department of Defense, the organization is a nonappropriated fund entity, with nearly 100 percent of its operating budget coming from the sale of goods and services. During the government shutdown, 2,700 Exchange facilities, including department stores, convenience stores, food courts, malls and movie theaters, in 49 states and more than 30 countries will continue to serve the military community. ShopMyExchange.com remains unaffected as well.



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



Helping Loved Ones with PTSD

If you are living with a family member who has post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), it is normal to feel frustrated or discouraged. But there are steps you can take to help: (1) educate yourself. Visit the National Center for PTSD [website](#); (2) watch, short animated videos at www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/video/index.asp to help you learn about PTSD and effective treatments; (3) download and use the PTSD Mobile Coach App at www.ptsd.va.gov/appvid/mobile/familycoach_app.asp; (4) read the booklet 'Understanding PTSD, a Guide for Family and Friends at www.ptsd.va.gov/publications/print/understandingptsd_family_booklet.pdf. Reach out to Coaching into Care, the Department of Veterans Affairs' free national telephone service.



1. Happy Together, Inc. Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Product Due to Presence of Undeclared Sildenafil and Tadalafil
2. Lupin Pharmaceuticals, Inc. Issues Voluntary Recall of Ceftriaxone for Injection USP, 250mg, 500mg, 1g and 2g
3. Medtronic Recalls Synergy Cranial Software and Stealth Station S7 Cranial Software Due to Inaccuracies Displayed During Surgical Procedures
4. Vecuronium Bromide Powder Recalled Nationwide



Marine Pens Novels

Marine Reservist Lance Cpl. David Roach spent six years learning infantry tactics, machine gunnery, bulk fuels and heavy equipment while serving in the Marine Corps from 2002-2008. He uses his experiences to add to the realism behind the fantasy of his characters in his five-novel Vikings series called 'Marauder'. His books also reflect his military experience because he does not shy away from dark humor, cursing or the brutality of war. Roach started with self-publishing his first few novels but after a positive review from a professor of Norse archaeology, he picked up a publisher. Roach's books are available on Amazon.com at www.amazon.com -- search for the author D.W. Roach.





SURVIVAL IS FUN



**Nurse Advice Line Provides
Quick Answers**

Sometimes you need a quick answer to a health question, and it helps to have an expert to turn to. With the Military Health System (MHS) Nurse Advice Line, you can get advice from a registered nurse anytime, 24/7. To reach the Nurse Advice Line, visit the MHS Nurse Advice Line webpage at [MHSNurseAdviceLine.com](https://www.mhsna.com) for web chat and video chat, or dial 1-800-TRICARE (874-2273), option 1. For overseas military hospitals and clinics, contact your local facility or visit the MHS Nurse Advice Line webpage at [MHSNurseAdviceLine.com](https://www.mhsna.com) for web chat, video chat, or to find country-specific numbers. If you need immediate medical attention, call 911 or your international emergency number, or go to an emergency room.




Veterans Can Make Purchases at Exchange

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service is reminding veterans of their military exchange shopping benefit, which is tax-free shopping with military-exclusive pricing through ShopMyExchange.com at www.shopmyexchange.com. More than 75,000 veterans have shopped at ShopMyExchange.com, saving more than \$4 million in sales tax. Home electronics, computers, footwear and appliances are among the top sellers. Every purchase made at the Exchange, whether in-store or online, makes life better for servicemembers and their families as 100 percent of earnings support military Quality-of-Life programs. Veterans can verify their eligibility to shop the Exchange at ShopMyExchange.com/veterans.



Tax & Credit Information



1. [2018: The year of the data breach tsunami](#)
 2. [All the reasons why cybercriminals want to hack your phone](#)
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American Legion Distributes Family Assistance Grants

Through The American Legion's National Emergency Fund (NEF), Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) and Operation Comfort Warriors (OCW) program, military and veterans' families are assisted following the aftermath of natural disasters, during times of financial need, and when recovering from various wounds and illnesses. In 2018 alone, these three American Legion programs provided more than \$737,350 in assistance. TFA awarded \$221,705 in cash grants, benefiting 364 minor children of 174 veterans. The grants help eligible veterans, with minor children, meet the cost of shelter, utilities, food, clothing and medical expenses. To support these efforts through an online donation, visit the American Legion website at www.legion.org/donate.





**The Honorable
Robert Wilkie
Secretary of
Veterans Affairs**

Community Townhall Event

January 17, 2019

1:00pm - 3:00pm ET (webcast)



**Are you part of the Veteran community?
Join us for the 2nd virtual townhall event with VA!**

Be sure to tune in! Register and view the free webcast here:

<https://www.webcaster4.com/Webcast/Page/89/28837>

If you need to speak to someone right away about a health care or benefits concern,
please contact the White House VA Hotline 1-855-948-2311.

Panel 1

Dr. Richard Stone – VHA Health
Dr. Kameron Matthews – Community Care
Dr. Keita Franklin – Suicide Prevention

Panel 2

Dr. Paul Lawrence – VBA Benefits
Randy Reeves – NCA Cemetery
Chairman, Cheryl Mason - Appeals

Keynote Address following SECVA Wilkie

Dr. Lynda Davis, VA Veterans Experience Office

[Veterans Experience Office](#)

[VA Welcome Kit](#)



If you received this newsletter as a courtesy or a forward from a friend or relative, you can sign up to receive in your E-mail every week.



CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE VFC NEWSLETTER!



MIA Update

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced three new identifications. Returning home with full military honors are:

Navy Chief Pharmacist's Mate James T. Cheshire 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, including Cheshire. Interment services are pending. [Read about Cheshire.](#)

Navy Chief Warrant Officer John A. Austin 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, including Austin. Interment services are pending. [Read about Austin.](#)

Navy Buglemaster 2nd Class Lionel W. Lescault 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, including Lescault. Interment services are pending. [Read about Lescault.](#)



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www.Veterans-For-Change.org

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Family!**



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