



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, February 03, 2019

Volume 10, Issue 05



This-N-That

We've officially closed all our Face Book Pages and are now officially on MEWE.COM for everything. So if you're interested in following us on any of the various pages, all the links further down in the newsletter will take you there.

Good things there, they don't require a lot of personal information from you like Face Book does, they don't have advertisers, don't sell,

trade or give any of your personal information away to anyone and you still would have many of the features of Face Book, but in a more user friendly environment! So come join us!

I would like to say CONGRATULATIONS to Blue Water Navy in the case Procopio v. Wilkie, that was brought by Military Veterans Advocacy Executive Director John Wells to the United States Court of Appeals and WON!

Even with the case noted above, we still really need to push and push hard for HR 299 to be brought to the floor, voted on and Passed, then sent to the Senate, voted on and passed there so it can all be signed into law by President Trump.

So please, keep making the calls, sending E-Mails to your Reps in DC and kindly ask that they fully support and pass once the bill is brought to the floor.

I know from many of the E-Mails I've received that there are still those out there who decline the Flu Shot, and the reasons are so far

stretched, and most are rumors, or in some cases bogus news is why we still recommend people get the shots.

Annually there are no less than 200,000 people all across the country who end up in the hospital for the Flu virus who didn't get the shots, and of those 5,600. have died. And according to the hours and hours of research, and calling various doctors and emergency rooms, reviewing CDC reports of the millions of people who have received the Flu Virus shots it's been reported that 107 people have died due to the injection which has all been contributed to severe allergic reaction to one of the ingredients in the anti-viral injection.

With those numbers as they are and have been reported, we still recommend everyone at minimum, talk with your doctor and get the anti-virus shot. We want to see everyone around for many years to come!

Today begins the new VA Appeals Process and since it's just beginning there isn't anything

to report, but we'd like to ask all those who do participate in the new appeals processes, please do keep us informed as to how well it's working!

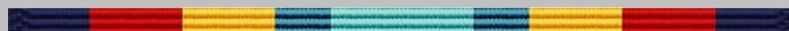
On behalf of our Volunteers nationwide and myself, we wish you and your family good health!

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org



VETERANS SCORE MAJOR VICTORY IN COURT RULING

The United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit today ruled that Navy service members who served in the coastal waters and territorial seas of Vietnam are to be considered eligible for benefits related to Agent Orange exposure.

The case, Procopio v. Wilkie, was brought by Military Veterans Advocacy Executive Director John Wells, himself a Navy veteran and attorney.

In 1991, Congress passed the Agent Orange Act, granting certain benefits for service men and women who served in the Republic of Vietnam between 1962 and 1975. In 1997, the Department of Veterans Affairs counsel decided that only service members who actually set foot on Vietnamese soil would be eligible for Agent Orange benefits.

"What this decision overlooked was that Navy service members who never left ships were still exposed to Agent Orange, often in even more damaging ways," Wells said.

Studies have shown that Agent Orange, an exfoliant later found to be carcinogenic, toxic and otherwise harmful to humans, was in runoff from Vietnam and was literally sucked into the filtration systems aboard ships in the coastal waters and territorial seas. Rather than removing Agent Orange, the filtration process actually exacerbated its harmful effects.

Service members aboard ships were thus exposed to enhanced toxicity as they bathed in and ingested contaminated waters.

"For years, Navy veterans have suffered with the effects of Agent Orange exposure while the VA remained intransigent," Wells said.

Last year, the House of Representatives unanimously passed the Blue Water Navy Veterans Act, which would have overturned the VA's 1997 decision and restored benefits. The

bill stalled in the Senate, with Senators Mike Lee (R-UT) and Mike Enzi (R-WY) placing holds on the legislation because of concerns about cost.

"We found a way to offset the projected cost of restoring these benefits, but this was never about money," Wells said. "While the VA and Senate stalled, innumerable veterans were denied palliative and potentially lifesaving benefits."

While working to get the legislation through the House again in the new Congress, Wells simultaneously battled in court through the Procopio case, partnering with attorney Melanie Bostwick of Orrick, Herrington and Sutcliffe, LLP, in Washington.

"We are thrilled by today's ruling from the Court of Appeals," Wells said. "The many people who fought this battle alongside us and the veterans whose lives have been forever changed by the VA's policy are all due thanks and credit."

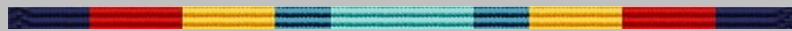
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Military-Veterans Advocacy is a tax exempt non-profit corporation based in Slidell, Louisiana. For more information please go to www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org



VA Begins New Claims Appeals Process Next Month

The [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) has announced that a new procedure for appealing disability claims decisions will begin Feb. 19, 2019. The new system, known as the [Rapid Appeals Modernization Program](#) (RAMP), is touted by the VA as a major improvement in the claims appeals process. It is meant to fix the dismal delays veterans face when appealing the VA's decisions on disability claims. This new program was mandated by [Public Law 115-55](#), The Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017. Read more about the new process in this [article](#).



Veterans-For-Change Web Site

The Veterans-For-Change website has been under construction since day one back in 2009 and every day since then. The looks pretty much stay the same, but in the background constant improvement and change is being

done to make our website the most user friendly “One-Stop-Shop” website to find almost everything you might have tried to find searching the internet.

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

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

We average **1,887** hits per day, and downloads average **1,256** per day with a total **4,695,747** 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 **16,844** documents on-line (Updated: 01/21/19)
- 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: **8,170**)
- 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



VA Releases Plan to Implement New Community Care Program

The VFW-supported VA MISSION Act of 2018, became law this past summer and established six ways veterans can access private-sector

care, known as community care. The law granted VA broad authority to determine two of the six eligibility standards for the new VA Community Care Program — access and quality standards. VA worked closely with Congress and veterans organizations to draft the law, but chose to ignore its strategic partners when drafting the regulations to implement it. In a statement released Wednesday, VA publicly announced its plans to implement the access standards. “While we are glad VA has finally informed us of how it plans to implement the VA MISSION Act access standards, we are disappointed VA chose not to incorporate the voice of our 1.6 million members in the decision making process,” said VFW Executive Director Bob Wallace. “As a result, VA is repeating previous mistakes,” he said. The proposal is expected to be published in the Federal Register next week. VA proposes to give veterans the ability to use private sector care if it takes them more than 30 minutes to drive to their VA primary or mental health care appointments or if their wait times for such care are more than 20 days.

Veterans who require specialty care appointments would be eligible for private sector care if they drive more than 60 minutes or if their wait time is more than 28 days. “Twenty days is just as arbitrary as 30 days,” Wallace continued, “and once again adopting TRICARE Prime Service Area standards does not serve the best interest of veterans.” The new VA Community Care Program, which will replace the Veterans Choice Program, is expected to launch June 2019. VA also released its plan to expand access to private sector urgent care clinics around the country, a move the VFW supports. However, the VFW does not agree with VA’s plans to charge veterans who receive urgent care related to a service-connected disability. Read [VA’s statement](#). Read or comment on the [urgent care proposal](#).



Veterans Can Get Increased Disability Compensation

Did you know that you can have your [VA disability compensation benefit](#) increased by the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#)? Many types of medical conditions get worse over time. If you are getting disability benefits from the VA, you have the right to request that your rating be increased if your medical condition gets worse or causes your health to deteriorate. Before you file for an increase in your disability rating, make sure you know what you can expect from the VA, and be prepared for both the best and worst outcomes you might face after requesting a disability rating increase. Read more about changing your disability rating in this [article](#).





~Veterans-For-Change Makes Social Media Change from Face Book to MEWE~

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.

IMAGINE A SOCIAL NETWORK WITH ALL THE FEATURES YOU LOVE AND NONE OF THE BS.

Where you are the customer to serve and not data to sell.

Where you share your real life and celebrate, not censor, diversity.

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/usavetsupportinggodallwhoobserveandserve

AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY

www.mewe.com/join/americansforsovereignty



Army Doubles Parental Leave for Secondary Caregivers

The [Army](#) updated its parental and adoption leave policies to extend the number of days available and include flexibility in deciding which parent receives primary caregiver leave. The new Army Military Parental Leave Program, signed Jan. 22, gives soldiers who give birth six weeks of maternity convalescent leave, starting immediately after discharge from a hospital, with an additional six weeks available. And soldiers who qualify for "secondary caregiver" leave, once called paternity leave, are authorized up to 21 days. The non-chargeable leave can be used in conjunction with birth or adoption but must be taken within a year of the event. Previously, the Army provided 12 weeks of maternity leave and 10 days of paternity leave. Read more in this [article](#).



VIETNAM
VETERANS

TRIBUTE RIDE



Start Malcom Randall VA Medical Center
1601 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608
30 MAR 2019 Meet 8:30am then Kickstands up at 9:30am

Veterans Memorial Park **Finish**
7400 SW 41st Pl, Gainesville, FL 32608

**To
Register**

Contact:

Cherie Korn

EMAIL: CKORN@ALACHUACOUNTY.US

• <https://www.vietnamveterantribute.org/> •

Event sponsored by: NF/SG Veterans Health System and Alachua County Veteran Services



**DoD Announces Extension
to GI Bill Transfer Rules**

The Defense Department has once again shifted its policy on who can transfer [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#) benefits to dependents, temporarily moving back to a rule that permitted transfers among some who are blocked from serving an additional four years. Troops who have at least 10 years of service and are blocked from serving four additional years due to statute or policy have until July 12 to transfer their education benefits to dependents if they agree to serve the maximum time authorized. Read more about the extension in this [article](#). For more on GI Bill benefits and how to use them, visit [Military.com's GI Bill section](#).



February's Featured Song

Blowing In The Wind

By

LT Bobby Ross

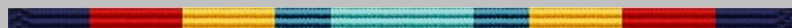
LT Bobby Ross - Voice Of America

Previous Featured Songs



**Record-setting Government
Shutdown Ends**

A three-week continuing resolution was signed into law last Friday to end the longest federal government shutdown in U.S. history. The shutdown forced some 800,000 federal employees to go without pay for more than a month, a third of whom are military veterans. VFW National, Departments and Posts stepped in to provide nearly \$100,000 in direct assistance relief to Coast Guard families facing financial hardships. A bipartisan group of lawmakers has been tasked with negotiating a long-term solution to the border security issues which caused the shutdown and threatens another if a lapse in appropriations occurs again on Feb. 15. The VFW thanks the advocates who took action to demand that their elected officials support paying America's Coast Guard. Stay tuned to the Action Corps Weekly for updates.



Employer Spotlight: Allstate Is Hiring Veterans Now

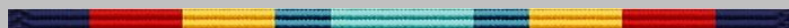
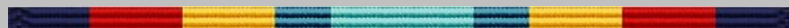
Allstate understands what drives you: a desire to help others, support your community and pursue excellence every day. We share your passions and are proud to offer you new opportunities to continue doing meaningful work. See [jobs for Veterans at Allstate](#).



Preventing Winter Injuries with TRICARE

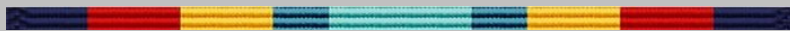
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says cold weather can cause extra strain on your heart. Outside of heart strain, cold-weather injuries such as hypothermia, frostbite, and falls can occur if you aren't careful. There are things you can do to help protect your health and safety. Know your TRICARE options for getting care. And follow these tips to prevent, spot, and treat winter injuries.

Read the full article [here](#).



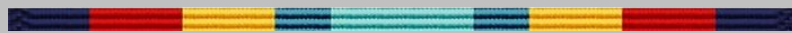
New Tax Military Laws

Some of the changes in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act have special implications for the military community. They include: (1) the standard deduction is increasing to \$24,000 for those who are married and filing jointly; (2) your itemized deductions are no longer limited if your adjusted gross income is over a certain amount; (3) the maximum credit increases to \$2,000 per qualifying child; (4) a new credit of up to \$500 is available for each of your dependents; and (5) Reserve service members can deduct unreimbursed travel expenses to attend drill duty only if it takes place more than 100 miles away from home. For more information, contact your base tax center or see this [article](#).



Navy Denies Claims Linked to Contaminated Water

The [U.S. Navy](#) is denying thousands of claims from service members and their families who were exposed to contaminated drinking water decades ago at [Camp Lejeune](#) in North Carolina. Navy Secretary Richard Spencer said that at least 4,400 claims totaling \$963 billion are being denied because there is no legal basis for paying them. He said it was a difficult decision but suggested that claimants could go to Capitol Hill to seek legislation providing restitution. Read more in this [article](#).



Get \$100k Coverage from Just \$7 a Month

Could your family survive without you? Because tomorrow is never guaranteed, protect your family's future now. Get \$100k [life insurance coverage](#) from just \$7 a month.



**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



Get Flu Shots for Free

Did you get your flu shot? If not, it is not too late. You and your family can get the [flu shot](#) at no cost at a [military hospital or clinic](#), a [participating network pharmacy](#), or from a [Tricare-authorized provider](#). The flu vaccine, when given by a pharmacist at a network pharmacy, is covered by the pharmacy benefit for free. You can still go to your primary care manager or Tricare provider for the flu shot if the pharmacy has restrictions or the shot is not available. The flu shot will be free, but you may have to pay copayments or cost-shares for the office visit. When in doubt, be sure to follow your plan's rules for [getting care](#). For more on free flu shots, read this [article](#).



Three Tips for Starting a New Year of Savings

As we begin the new year, it's a perfect time to evaluate your finances and plan for the next 12 months. Whether you're a military service member, veteran or military family member, a key component of your financial stability will be growing your savings. Here are three tips to [build up your savings and put you in a position to have a prosperous New Year.](#)



Support H.R. 95, Legislation to Allow Homeless Veterans to Stay with Their Children While Receiving Services

On the first day of Congress, the new Chair of the Health Subcommittee of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, Rep. Julia

Brownley, introduced H.R. 95 to modify the calculation of per diem payments the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) makes to homeless grant providers to include partial payment for each of a homeless veteran's minor dependents. This would better insure that a homeless veteran does not have to choose between treatment and keeping her or his family together.

VA's Homeless Grant and Per Diem (GPD) Program has long been an important source of transitional housing for homeless veterans. Generally operated by community providers who receive grant funding from VA, in 2017, these programs offered the homeless veteran population 12,500 beds devoted to providing supportive housing and/or supportive services. Veterans may enter these programs to address their medical and behavioral health issues, learn or re-learn independent living and vocational skills and seek services and benefits that help them recover from homelessness. Most veterans stay in transitional housing for about 6 months. VA

states that in 2017-14,500 veterans exited GPD for permanent housing.

This bill is in line with DAV Resolution No. 291, urging congress to continue to authorize and appropriate funds for competitive grants to community-based and public organizations including the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide health and supportive services to homeless veterans placed in permanent housing.

Please support H.R. 95 to assist our homeless veterans and their families. Please use the prepared letter to urge your Representative in Congress to support this critical legislation.

Take Action





AMERICAN SOLDIERS

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

Tricare Supplement: \$0 Rx & Out of Pocket Costs

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

New Website Gives Exclusive Military Travel Discounts

Military personnel, retirees and their family members now have access to an exclusive discount travel website managed by Priceline. [American Forces Travel](#) is a full-service travel booking site, offering hotel, flight, car rental, cruise and bundled or package deals that a Priceline spokesman said can save travelers an average of \$240 per person. The site is available to active-duty military, National Guard members, Reservists, retirees and family members, as well as 100 percent disabled veterans and civilian Defense Department employees. Read more in this [article](#). For more travel discounts for military families and veterans, visit this [Discount Center](#).





DO YOU
SUFFER FROM
MILITARY-RELATED

Version 10 Jun 16, 2017

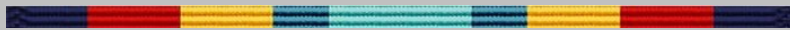
PTSD?

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



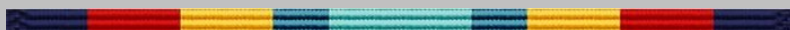
**Medal of Honor Recipient
Dies**

Nearly 50 years after receiving the Medal of Honor, Air Force legend Col. Joe M. Jackson passed away Jan. 12, 2019, at the age of 95. Known as an Air Force Hero of the Vietnam War, then Lt. Col. Jackson was awarded the prestigious medal on Jan. 16, 1969, by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Jackson was one of only two living, Air Force Medal of Honor recipients. For more information, read this [article](#).



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

Veterans don't need 20% down with the VA loan benefit. Don't waste this great benefit, plus VA loan rates are competitive. Find lenders [now](#).





Chairman Roe, Ranking Minority leader House Veterans Affairs Committee speaks out on Federal Appeals Court 9-2 favorable decision on Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans

Ranking Member Roe Statement on Ruling of
Procopio v. Wilkie

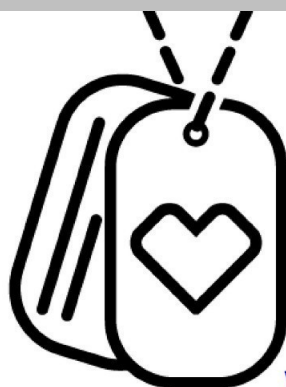
Washington, D.C. - Today, Rep. Phil Roe, M.D.
(R-Tenn.), Ranking Member of the House

Committee on Veterans' Affairs, released the following statement after a Federal Appeals Court ruled on Procopio v. Wilkie.

"The court's ruling on Procopio v. Wilkie is clear, VA must accept service in the territorial seas as qualifying for service in the Republic of Vietnam in regards to the Agent Orange Presumption. This is a big win for our Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans, and I am thrilled that these sailors will finally receive the recognition that they have earned the right to be considered for the Agent Orange presumption.

"While I am encouraged by this ruling, our fight for our Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans is not necessarily over. It is not clear how VA will interpret the definition of 'territorial seas.' That is the big question right now, and I have reached out to VA to find out the answer. Another big thing to note about this ruling is that if VA wanted to appeal it, the only option is to take it the Supreme Court.

"I have been reviewing the case with my counsel and am encouraged by what this could mean for our Vietnam Vets. Of course, there are still questions to be asked and things to be learned about potential implications this decision could have. When these servicemembers left for war and risked their lives for this country, many suffering disabilities as a result of their service, they were promised when they returned they would receive equitable benefits and support. Instead, they have been sitting around waiting for what was promised to them, and it is simply wrong they have had to wait so long. This issue is near and dear to my heart, and the one thing I know for a fact is that I will not rest until these deserving veterans are treated fairly."



**Our values
match yours.**



www.veterans-for-change.org



Sound Off: Have Your VA Wait Times Improved?

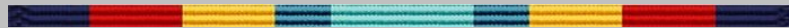
A new Journal of the American Medical Association report claims that wait times at [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) hospitals and clinics have dropped considerably and, at least in the big cities, are now shorter than you'd find in the private health care market. Critics complain that the data comes from VA sources, including [fired former VA secretary](#) Dr. David Shulkin, claiming the report's conclusions shouldn't be trusted. What's your experience been? [Sound off in this post.](#)



Department of Labor Program Connects Veterans to Careers

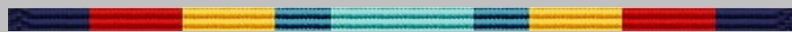
The Department of Labor (DOL) has launched the congressionally mandated [HIRE Vets](#) Medallion Award Program to recognize employers that are committed to retaining veterans in meaningful, family sustaining careers. These companies come from 44 states, and collectively they hired more than 8,350 veterans in 2017. The 2019 HIRE Vets Medallion Award Program will open to employers from January 31 through April 30, 2019. Visit HIREVets.gov to learn more about the 2019 program, requirements, and to see the [list of 2018 medallion award recipients](#). For more information, read the VA [VAntage Point Blog](#).





Blue Angels Reach Milestone

The U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels, reached a major milestone in their annual winter training, Jan. 19, when they completed their first set of training flights over the airfield at Naval Air Facility (NAF) El Centro, California. This is the first time in 2019 the Blue Angels held a full practice over the airfield, a critical step in preparing for the 2019 air show season. This is just one of many steps for the squadron on its road to the 2019 show season, which officially begins Mar. 16, with the NAF El Centro Annual Air Show. The team is scheduled to conduct 61 flight demonstrations at 32 locations across the country in 2019. For more information, including a show schedule, visit the [U.S. Navy Blue Angels website](#).



VA's Suicide Prevention Challenge

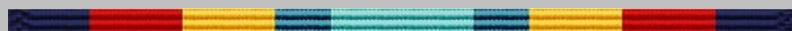
The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will convene for the inaugural Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Servicemembers, Veterans and their Families (SMVF) on Feb. 6, in Washington, D.C. Ten states were formally invited to participate in the Governor's Challenge, of which seven accepted. State leaders will meet to develop a plan to implement the [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#). For more information on VA's suicide prevention campaign, visit the [#BeThere website](#). For information on SAMHSA's suicide prevention efforts, visit SAMHSA's [Suicide Prevention Resource Center website](#).





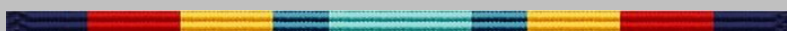
Navy Exchange Offers Way to Support Families

The Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM) recently presented a check for \$147,115 to the Navy Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS) representing money donated by NEX customers during a promotion held in fall 2018. Since 2011, NEXCOM has given customers the opportunity to purchase a \$5 benefit ticket at NEX stores, and those funds are then donated directly to NMCRS. The campaign is very popular with NEX customers. In return for a \$5 donation to Navy Marine Corps Relief Society, customers receive a card that entitled them to specific discounts for a one-time purchase at the NEX. Since its inception, NEX patrons have donated nearly \$2 million to the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society. For more information, visit the [NMCRS website](#).



VA to Host Veteran Sports Clinic

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that the [National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic](#) will take place March 31 to April 5 in Snowmass, Colorado. The annual clinic, hosted by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and [DAV \(Disabled American Veterans\)](#), serves as a world leader in adaptive winter sports instruction for injured Veterans, and promotes sports therapy and rehabilitation through adaptive Alpine and Nordic skiing, rock climbing, sled hockey, scuba diving and other adaptive sports and activities. For more information, visit the [National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic website](#).



Air Force Announces 'Fire Hack' Challenge

The Air Force Research Laboratory, United Kingdom Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) has announced the Swarm and Search AI Challenge: 2019 Fire Hack. Concurrent challenges in the U.S. and the U.K. will conclude with a final showdown taking place March 29-31, 2019. The theme of the challenge revolves around mapping wildfires and has the potential to minimize damage and save lives. U.S. registration began Jan. 15 and runs through Feb. 26. The online competition concludes March 15. For more information, visit the [Swarm and Search Challenge website](#).



Tricare and Your Pharmacy

The [Tricare Pharmacy Program](#) provides you the same prescription drug coverage with most [Tricare health plans](#). If you use the [US Family Health Plan](#), you have a separate pharmacy coverage. As always, active duty service members pay nothing out of pocket for their covered prescription drugs. If your drug falls into the non-covered category, you'll have to pay the full cost of the drug. Some reasons Tricare may not cover a drug include its effectiveness, safety, or cost. To learn more about your pharmacy benefit, visit the [Tricare Pharmacy webpage](#) and the [Express Scripts website](#).



Links to Other Stories

1. [Beneficiaries offer the gift of life through kidney donation](#)
2. [Blue Water Veterans Now Get Agent Orange Rights](#)
3. [BVA—RAPID TURNOVER OF STAFF](#)

ATTORNEYS BODES ILL FOR VETS

4. CBO Suggests Raising Tricare Fees, Cutting Veteran Benefits to Slash Deficit
5. Court rules VA got it wrong denying benefits to Vietnam War Navy Veterans
6. Helpful reforms are on the way at Veterans Affairs
7. Kansas man accused of defrauding government using disabled Veterans program
8. Man ordered to pay \$1 fine in scheme to bilk Veterans out of pensions
9. Naval Medical Center Camp Lejeune becomes first Level III trauma center in the Navy
10. Temperature-Stable Experimental Tuberculosis Vaccine Enters Clinical Testing
11. This is the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits transfer exception for your dependents
12. VA Inspector General Cites Poor Oversight of College Programs Approved for GI Benefits
13. VA to implement appeals modernization in February
14. VA's benefits appeals process will see a dramatic changeover next month
15. Veterans' eye care services – almost 2

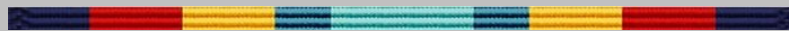
million in 2018

16. Winter safety tips to stay safe, healthy

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



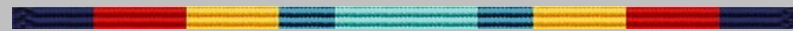
Family Donates Books to Offutt AFB

Col. John Watters Sr., a Selma, Alabama native, served in the Army, Army Air Corps and Air Force through World War II. His final assignment was as Gen. Curtis LeMay's Strategic Air Command commander, lead operational bombing planner. Upon Watters' Death, his family donated his extensive collection of military books to Offutt Air Force Base. The Watters' family library collection will be a significant resource for the 55th Wing. The books can be checked out by anyone on the base interested in learning about history.



New Resource Materials on Using Tricare

Do you have old or outdated Tricare brochures or handbooks laying around? If so, now is a great time to replace them with the new 2019 Tricare benefit resources. Visit the Tricare Publications [webpage](#) to get started. Tricare publishes handbooks, newsletters, brochures, fact sheets, and more. You can view, print, or download a variety of these Tricare resources. To find what you are looking for, select a category from the dropdown menu, and then select the search button. Or, find a resource by 'Publication Title'. New Tricare publications are added throughout the year and updated frequently to reflect [Tricare changes](#).

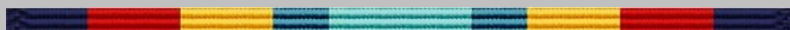


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Veterans Make Connections Through New Site

MakeTheConnection.net is an online resource designed to connect Veterans, their family members and friends, and other supporters with information, resources, and solutions to issues affecting their lives. At MakeTheConnection.net, you can select your branch of service, your combat experience and the era in which you served: World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Post 9-11. Your peers are there. You will see videos of Veterans sharing their very personal experiences, what they went through and how they recovered. For more information, read the [VA Vantage Point Blog](#).



New Law Benefits Veteran Entrepreneurs

Veteran entrepreneurs will benefit from a new law aimed at helping them grow their small businesses. The [Veterans Small Business Enhancement Act](#) was signed into law by President Trump earlier this month. The legislation adds veterans to the list of eligible recipients for federal surplus personal property, such as office equipment and furniture to specialized apparatuses including scientific devices and heavy machinery. The American Legion and other veterans services organizations (VSOs) supported the legislation.





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

FRIDAY 12 APRIL
Four Seasons Hotel 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 ***

SEATTLE



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

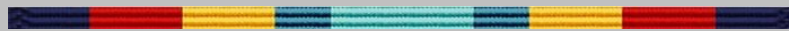
Individual Resume Review
Focused Career Consult
Corporate Hosted Sessions
Professional Head Shot
Interviews as Scheduled by Employers
Women Veterans Roundtable
Informal Q&A w/ Employer Panel
Welcome Reception w/ Employers
Breakfast & Lunch

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VA Expanding 3D Printing Network

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it continues to expand its national integrated virtual 3D printing network that began January 2017 at VA's [Puget Sound Healthcare System](#), growing it from just three hospitals with 3D printing capabilities in early 2017 to 20 at the close of 2018. This growing network allows VA health care staff to share ideas, solve problems and pool resources on best practice uses of 3D printing for improving Veterans' care. Prints of model kidneys for patients with renal cancer aid in presurgical planning. Occupational therapists are also using 3D printers to manufacture specialized hand orthotics and to provide same day fitting and delivery.



**Pennsylvania House
committee votes to better
protect Veterans' graves**

The Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee and its chairman, Rep. Steve Barrar, unanimously voted in favor of a resolution that would urge the president and Congress to preserve underwater graves of service members who died defending our nation. Currently, the graves are being dug up by people who are looking to steal the scrap metal of the boats' propellers because the metal is an unusual one that can yield \$1,000 a ton. "The irreverence for the Veteran bodies that rest with our ships that were sunk in the southeast Asia seas during World War II is disturbing," Barrar said. "It's my sincere hope that this resolution, after receiving support from the full House, gains the attention of our Pennsylvania Congress members, many of whom are new this legislative session. Our Veterans deserve to rest in peace." [READ MORE](#)



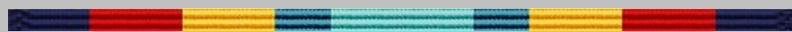
Office of Inspector General

1. Alternate Price Indexes for Cost-of-Living Adjustments Present Tradeoffs
2. Claims Costs and Federal and State Policies Drove Issuer Participation, Premiums, and Plan Design
3. Interior Should Address Factors Hindering Tribal Administration of Federal Programs



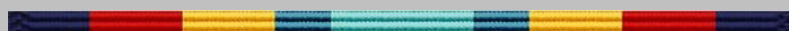
New VA Partnership Aims to Support Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it has partnered with [CaringBridge](#), a global nonprofit social network, to aid in veterans' communication with their support communities. CaringBridge provides free, secure, personal websites to assist family and friends in communicating with loved ones during any type of health journey. CaringBridge has also collaborated with VA medical centers and staff to offer training to help facilitate online outreach and support for veterans and their families. For more information on how veterans and their loved ones can use CaringBridge throughout their health journeys, visit the [CaringBridge website](#).

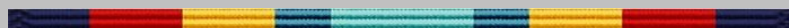


Tax cuts for South Carolina military retirees quickly advance in State House after McMaster push

Hours after his State of the State address calling for tax relief, a South Carolina legislative panel advanced a top priority of Gov. Henry McMaster — exempting the retirement income of military Veterans from the state's income taxes. A state House Ways and Means subcommittee voted unanimously to exempt retirement income for more than 38,000 retired Veterans, beginning in tax year 2021. "The time has come to re-double our commitment to our state's men and women in uniform," McMaster told lawmakers in his State of the State speech. "The exemption for Veterans is a key factor in the Pentagon's decisions on protecting and expanding a state's military bases, and expanding and bringing new missions and troops to our bases." [READ MORE](#)



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



VA Eye Care Services Available

All Veterans [enrolled in VA health care](#) are eligible for diagnostic, preventive and therapeutic eye care services. Veterans in all enrollment Priority Groups may be eligible to receive eyeglasses and/or medically necessary contact lenses. The need for an updated eyeglass prescription at VA expense is determined by the VA eye care provider ([optometrist or ophthalmologist](#)) for eligible veterans. In fiscal year 2018, VHA's Office of Specialty Care Services provided Eye Care (Optometry and Ophthalmology) Services for a record number of over 1.81 million veterans at about 381 VA medical facility sites. For more information, read the [VA Vantage Point Blog](#).



Audit finds California has mismanaged its Veterans home properties


California has "mismanaged" properties where its state-run Veterans homes are located, failing to charge market rents to private users and shortchanging programs that should benefit from the leases, a recent state audit concluded. The head of the California Department of Veterans Affairs agreed with the findings and said changes would be made, while a leading state lawmaker said she was pursuing legislation to make sure the properties were handled properly. [READ MORE](#)



U.S. FOOD & DRUG
ADMINISTRATION

1. [Drug Recalls](#)
2. [General Mills Recalls Five Pound Bags of Gold Medal Unbleached Flour](#)
3. [Hill's Pet Nutrition voluntarily recalls canned dog food due to potentially elevated vitamin D levels](#)

4. Nature's Rx Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Silver Bullet 10x to Undeclared PDE-5 Inhibitors in the Product
5. Oskri Organics Corporation Recalls All Nut Butters because of Possible Health Risk
6. Roche Diagnostics Recalls CoaguChek XS PT Test Strips Due to Inaccurate INR Test Results
7. Satur Farms' Recall of Baby Spinach Affects Prepared Food Items from Whole Foods Market Stores in Eight States
8. SL: Recall of Thrive Market Nut Butters Due to Potential Health Risk
9. Stryker Launches Voluntary Field Action for Specific Units of the LIFEPAK® 15 Monitor/Defibrillator
10. Tris Pharma Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Infants' Ibuprofen Concentrated Oral Suspension, USP (NSAID) 50 mg per 1.25 mL, Due to Potential Higher Concentrations of Ibuprofen
11. Tris Pharma, Inc Expands Its Voluntary Nationwide Retail Recall of Ibuprofen Oral Suspension Drops, USP, 50 mg per 1.25 mL, Due to Higher Concentration of Ibuprofen



'Blue water' Navy Veterans from Vietnam-era win Agent Orange benefits case

A federal appeals court in Washington sided with thousands of Vietnam War Veterans who were stationed offshore during the war and developed health problems linked to exposure to the toxic herbicide Agent Orange. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ruled overwhelmingly for these sailors, finding they are eligible for the same disability benefits as those who put boots on the ground or patrolled Vietnam's inland rivers. The 9-to-2 decision reverses a decade-old ruling by the court and applies to an estimated 52,000 Veterans nationwide. A court majority said Congress clearly intended to extend benefits to sailors who were stationed in the territorial seas and are known as "blue water" Navy Veterans.

[**READ MORE**](#)



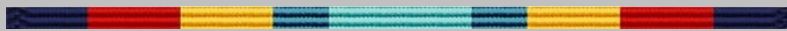
**Are you one of these
133,000 Vets who may
qualify for a tax refund
windfall? Don't wait to file
your claim**

If you're one of the more than 133,000 Veterans who received a notice last July that you might be eligible for refunds of federal taxes you paid on disability severance pay, take heed and do it before summer. By law, you have a year to file an amended return with the Internal Revenue Service to get the refund, said Army Lt. Col. David Dulaney, executive director of the Armed Forces Tax Council. If you need help in filing for the refund, seek help from a tax professional, he said. These refunds are the result of a law passed in 2016, the "Combat Veterans Tax Fairness Act," which went into effect in 2017. It applies to Veterans who received disability severance pay dating back to Jan. 17, 1991, with taxes withheld, and who also qualified for disability from the Veterans Affairs Department. [READ MORE](#)





SURVIVAL IS FUN



**Veterans urge committee to
take serious look at anti-
malaria drugs**

A committee of the National Academies of Sciences heard from Veterans recently urging them to take seriously their charge to investigate the long-term health effects of anti-malarial drugs. The committee was sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs to look into possible long-term neurological and psychiatric effects of the drugs — particularly of mefloquine (brand name Lariam), which has been linked to insomnia, depression, anxiety, severe nightmares and suicidal and homicidal ideation. The FDA ordered mefloquine labeled with a "black box" warning in 2013, noting that neurological side effects can occur at any time during use and can last for months to years after the drug is stopped. The drug was widely used to by U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, but was reclassified by the military as a drug-of-last-resort following the FDA's black box decision. [READ MORE](#)



Research: Face-to-face meetings pay off for job-hunting Veterans

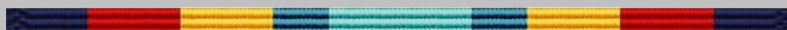
Over the last five years, the unemployment rate for more than 150,000 Veterans registered with WWP has dropped from 20 percent to 12 percent, according to staff working at the Wounded Warrior Project. In addition, the total salaries last year of Veterans who participated in WWP's Warriors To Work program reached \$103 million, the first time the number has topped \$100 million, according to the 2018 WWP's Annual Warrior Survey. To boost those numbers further, WWP is working to establish relationships with local and national companies to develop more opportunities for warriors to make direct contact with managers looking to hire, rather than going through the usual human resources contacts. [READ MORE](#)





**VA secretary predicts
controversy over upcoming
change to private-sector
care program**

Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie announced that he will unveil new rules this week stipulating when Veterans will be allowed to access private-sector medical care — a plan that he said would "revolutionize" the VA health system. The change is part of the VA Mission Act, a major reform bill that President Donald Trump has lauded as a means to give Veterans more choice about where to receive health care. The law instructs the VA secretary to create the new rules for private-sector care, with the potential to shift billions of dollars for Veterans' care to private medical facilities. Wilkie preempted the public release of the rules with a warning that they would likely spark controversy. [READ MORE](#)



**VA watchdog: Millions of GI
Bill dollars are going to
questionable schools —
and it could soon be
billions**

Millions of dollars have gone toward educating student Veterans at ineligible, delinquent schools, due to inadequate oversight by state-based agencies in charge of approving school programs for GI Bill funds, a recent audit by the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General found. Because of a lack of "effective controls to ensure the proper review, approval and monitoring of programs" at these agencies and the VA, investigators write that the VA "could not provide reasonable assurance" that students using the Post-9/11 GI Bill to pay for school received a quality education. Infractions by schools listed in the report include misleading claims about accreditation status or student outcomes that violated Federal Trade Commission advertising guidelines. [READ MORE](#)



Mission Act -- Access Standards to be Published

Last summer, Congress passed (with overwhelming bipartisan support) the VA

Mission Act, mandating that department officials consolidate the existing community care programs and come up with new eligibility rules. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will shortly publish draft rules providing criteria (drive time replaces miles/distance) for Veterans to use private sector health care options.

Timeline

VA plans to post the proposed rules in February in the Federal Register, where members of the public will be allowed to provide input. Under the law, the rules must be finalized by the beginning of March. The rules are scheduled to take effect in June 2019.

New Standards (Drive Time)

Under VA's proposed rules, Veterans who must drive more than 30 minutes to reach their VA mental health or primary care providers - or wait longer than 20 days for an appointment - would be allowed to use a private doctor. For specialty care, Veterans could go outside VA

for medical treatment if a VA provider was longer than a 60-minute drive away or there was longer than a 28-day wait. VA estimates the new rules would extend eligibility for community care from 8 percent of VA patients now to 20 percent for primary care and 30 percent for specialty care. VA estimates costs to increase by \$1.1 billion for fiscal year 2019, ending on September 30.

VA officials said the new rules are designed to give Veterans more options and insist that the changes will not significantly alter how the majority of Veterans in America get their care, since many are satisfied with their current care plans. Secretary Wilkie said "With VA's new access standards, the future of the VA health care system will lie in the hands of Veterans, exactly where it should be."

Drive times would be calculated according to a private-sector program based on Microsoft's Bing search engine maps. About 600,000 Veterans enrolled in VA health care are eligible for the existing community care programs. The

proposed expanded standards will raise that number to between 1.5 million and 2.1 million patients, according to the department.

Existing Standards (Miles/Distance)

These Mission Act changes replace the Veterans Choice Program, which was created in response to the 2014 VA wait-time scandal. Under that program, VA patients are now allowed to go outside the system when they live more than 40 miles driving distance from a VA facility or it is estimated their wait for a VA appointment is longer than 30 days.

NOTE:

VFC Newsletter members, please provide comments and feedback on your experiences. Do you currently use VA health care services? Have you experienced delays in scheduling appointments? Would you use private sector services if you were eligible?

TREA Legislative Affairs will continue to be


your voice. We will continue to obtain and share details to assure that you are informed and that access to VA and private sector care is properly funded.

Souce: TREA



Repeal of SBP/DIC Offset Reintroduced

The VFW-supported H.R. 553, Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act, which would repeal the requirement for surviving spouses to offset Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) benefits with Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) was reintroduced this past week. SBP and DIC are different benefits, which are earned for different reasons. The full repeal of this unjust offset remains a top legislative priority for the VFW. [Learn more about H.R. 553.](#)



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.

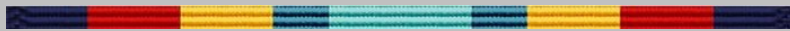


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Concurrent Receipt Legislation Reintroduced

This month, Congressman Gus Bilirakis and Senator Jon Tester reintroduced the VFW-supported Retired Pay Restoration Act, to ensure full concurrent receipt of military retirement pay and VA disability compensation. Presently, concurrent receipt of these benefits applies only to those with a 50 percent VA disability rating or higher. The VFW continues to advocate for the end of this offset for all military retirees regardless of their VA disability rating. [Learn more.](#)



MIA Update

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

U.S. Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Howard T.

Lurcott was a member of the 38th Bombardment Squadron, 30th Bombardment Group, stationed at Hawkins Field, Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands. On Jan. 21, 1944, the B-24J bomber aircraft he was

piloting crashed into Tarawa lagoon shortly after takeoff. Lurcott and the nine other servicemen aboard the aircraft were killed. Interment services are pending. [Read about Lurcott.](#)

Navy Seaman 1st Class Frank A. Hryniewicz 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 Hryniewicz. Interment services are pending. [Read about Hryniewicz.](#)

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