



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, February 24, 2019

Volume 10, Issue 08



## **This-N-That**

Now, with the largest freshman class of Veteran lawmakers in a decade, Congress appears determined to lift the issue of burn pits from obscure medical journals and Veterans' websites to the floors and hearing rooms of Capitol Hill. Members are vowing to force the Pentagon and the Department of Veterans Affairs to deal with the issue.

Nice talk coming from Congress, but seriously can we or should we begin to trust their members to actually do the right thing, and not take decades to do it?

From June 2007 through Nov. 30, 2018, the Department of Veterans Affairs processed 11,581 disability compensation claims with at least one condition related to burn pit exposure, according to Curt Cashour, a department spokesman. Of those, 2,318 claims were granted.

But almost 44 percent of burn-pit-related claims were denied because the condition had not been officially diagnosed, while roughly 54 percent were “due to a lack of evidence establishing a connection to military service,” Mr. Cashour said.

How can anyone "service-connect" when none of the research had been done? And those research papers that had been completed and presented were treated just like Agent Orange and charged off as junk science!

And just like Agent Orange, some, if not most symptoms won't begin to show for years and possibly decades!

Clintonville resident Dave Nichol struggles with the symptoms of Parkinson's disease. He is convinced his condition is the result of exposure to Agent Orange during two tours of duty to Vietnam. But like thousands of other Navy Veterans who served on ships offshore, Dave's claims for disability benefits have been denied.

But a new federal court appeals court ruling has given Nichol reason to hope.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit has issued a 9-2 decision that says the same disability benefits offered to Veterans who had boots on the ground and who patrolled inland rivers should also be offered to sailors who served on ships offshore.

Agent Orange, a toxic defoliant, has been linked to numerous health conditions including Parkinson's. But the VA has cited a lack of science to connect the chemical to ships that were two miles or more offshore.

Here again, tons of evidence as emerged over the past decade or so, proving how contamination occurred and most if not all had been accepted, but for boots on the ground, and much can also be tied directly to Blue Water Veterans, and yet the fight continues.

What I and I'm sure, many can't understand is how Secretary Wilkie can or would fight so hard against the evidence? Proof is proof now matter how you look at it.

As announced a month ago 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.

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

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

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



**TWENTY TWO SOLDIERS**  
By Brian Crandall

Twenty two soldiers died today  
Their mind overwhelmed with fear  
Flagged casket lowered into the ground  
While loved ones shed a tear

[www.LoveOurVets.org](http://www.LoveOurVets.org)

Twenty two soldiers died today  
Their thoughts filled with despair  
I wish they'd found another way  
I wish they knew how much we care

Twenty two soldiers died today  
Keep fighting, yes they tried  
Too many souls are lost this way  
Each one a victim – of Suicide

♥

Please help spread awareness that there is help and hope.  
Love Our Vets - PTSD Family Support



# Veterans Wanted: Sitel Is Hiring Now

Grow your career with a leading customer experience provider. At Sitel, we offer military veterans an exciting range of career opportunities in our locations worldwide. Whether seeking a role as a customer service professional, a front-line supervisor or an executive, we embrace one thing – diversity. [View jobs now.](#)



## 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 **2,488** hits per day, and downloads average **1,704** per day with a total **4,744,513** visitors as of Friday.

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

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

- Documents Library with over **16,925** documents on-line (Updated: 02/11/19)
- 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: **8,223**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **4,701**, Added 16 New Links (Updated: 02/20/19)

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





## **~Veterans-For-Change Made Social Media Change from Face Book to MEWE~**

We had been on Face Book for many years and have moved to [MEWE.com](http://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](http://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](http://www.mewe.com/join/veterans-for-change)

### **HOMELESS HEROES PROGRAM OF VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE**

[www.mewe.com/join/homelessheroesprogramofveterans-for-change](http://www.mewe.com/join/homelessheroesprogramofveterans-for-change)

### **AMVETS GROUP**

[www.mewe.com/join/amvetsgroup](http://www.mewe.com/join/amvetsgroup)

### **VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP**

[www.mewe.com/join/veteranssocialgroup](http://www.mewe.com/join/veteranssocialgroup)

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

[www.mewe.com/join/usavetsupportinggodallwhoserveandserve](http://www.mewe.com/join/usavetsupportinggodallwhoserveandserve)

### **AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY**

[www.mewe.com/join/americansforsovereignty](http://www.mewe.com/join/americansforsovereignty)



## **H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act**

On January 8, 2019, Representative Gus Bilirakis (FL) introduced H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act. This bill would extend concurrent receipt authority to longevity retirees with service-connected disabilities rated less than 50 percent disabling. Under current law disabled veterans with longevity retirement from active military service who are also in receipt of a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability determination of 50 percent or higher may retain both military retirement pay and their compensation.

DAV strongly supports H.R. 303 as it would end the unfair policy of forcing many military longevity retirees to forfeit some of their retired pay in order to receive equal amounts of disability compensation from the VA. This legislation is in accord with DAV Resolution No. 104 and would eliminate concurrent receipt for all longevity retirees.

Please use the prepared electronic letter or draft your own to urge your Representative to support and cosponsor H.R. 303. 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**

**I ALWAYS  
WONDERED WHY  
SOMEBODY DIDN'T  
DO SOMETHING  
ABOUT THAT,  
THEN I REALIZED  
I AM SOMEBODY.**



## February's Featured Song

### Blowing In The Wind

By

**LT Bobby Ross**

LT Bobby Ross - Voice Of America

[Previous Featured Songs](#)



**Getting Married? Know your  
TRICARE Health Care Options**

Getting married? Congratulations! You and your family members may experience changes in TRICARE eligibility and coverage after getting married. A change in family composition, such as marriage, is a TRICARE Qualifying Life Event (QLE). A QLE allows you to make changes to your health plan enrollment outside of the fall annual TRICARE Open Season.

Read the full article [here](#).



**New High-Tech GI Bill Program  
Coming Soon**

A new pilot program from the Department of Veterans Affairs aims to help student veterans enroll in non-traditional programs that teach high-tech skills. Dubbed the Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC) program, it was announced Feb. 13. The program, set to start in April, focuses on high-tech skills that are in demand in today's workplace, the VA says. VET TEC will pay you a housing allowance and take care of tuition costs just like the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Classes must be in one of five areas: information science; computer programming; data processing; media applications; or computer software. Information on how to apply has not yet been released. Read more about the VET TEC program [here](#).



**CONTACT YOUR  
MEMBERS OF CONGRESS!**

**To Call your Representative:**

**202-225-2305**

**To Call your Senators:**

**202-224-3841 or 202-224-3553**

**To call Different Members of Congress:**

**202-224-3121**

**TOLL FREE: 866-272-6622**

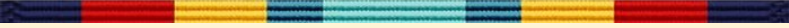
**PLEASE... STOP Making Excuses!**

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



## VA Touts Health Record Access for iPhone Users

Veterans using VA health care will soon be able to easily access their medical data using their [iPhone's built-in Health Records app](#), Department of Veterans Affairs officials said in a press release. Veterans' health care data will be integrated into the free app by this summer. Veterans will be able to see an aggregated view of all their VA health care data, including lab test results, medications, vital signs, medical procedures and more in the health app at anytime on their iPhone. Data from VA medical providers should be available on your mobile phone within 24 hours of receiving treatment. Read more about the upcoming feature [here](#).







**AMERICAN SOLDIERS**

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



## **Task Force Backs Merger of Exchange, Commissary Systems**

The Defense Commissary Agency and the military's three separate exchange services should be consolidated under a single resale enterprise for the purpose of streamlining above-store and back-of-store operations, according to a report the Defense Department is expected to endorse and send to Congress next month. Commissaries and exchanges would remain separate stores on base, officials said. Consolidation would focus on a new central governance structure and squeezing efficiencies and achieving synergies by merging back office and "above-store" functions that customers don't see. Doing so could save an estimated \$700 million to \$1.3 billion over the first five years, less about \$500 million in implementation costs, but then realize \$400 million to \$700 million a year in recurring savings after full transformation, officials said. Read more about the plan [here](#).



## **MISSION ACT - Veterans Community Care Network - Access Standards**

TREA advised you on February 1, 2019 of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) plans to publish new eligibility criteria for eligible veterans to use private sector care providers. Today, VA formally published

the proposed rule outlining who will have access to community care without preapproval, what type of care, and how it will be paid for.

**A 30-day public comment period exists and ends on March 25, 2019. TREA wants to hear from you and will consolidate comments received and submit them to VA by the March 25 deadline. Please provide your comments to TREA by March 19, 2019.**

TREA members should access the link [here](#) to view the February 1, 2019, Newsletter. The summary that follows will also assist you.

Eligibility for care under the new access standards will not be open to every veteran. Only those veterans who are enrolled in VA's healthcare system (Priority Group 1-8) in the preceding 24 months and used care during that time will be eligible. New enrollees and veterans who had not accessed VA healthcare in more than two years must go to a VA medical facility or get VA pre-authorization in order to receive VA-funded care.

Not all healthcare will be funded by VA without preauthorization. Eligible veterans must consider other factors and meet specific criteria to trigger entitlement to care under the new access standards.

While the 30-day public comment period ends on the March 25, 2019, the access standards will not be implemented until June 2019. Many questions exist. Will veterans be issued insurances card? How will participating private sector be identified? What impact will weather, city or rural traffic patterns have on average drive times?

**These are all valid concerns and underscore why these new access standards are important to TREA members. TREA is working to assure that the Mission Act is fully funded and by addressing the above issues and educating you, our members on implementation of the Mission Act.**

Below is the actual text of the summary and supplemental information of the proposed rule.

DEPartment of Veterans AFFAIRS 8320-01

38 CFR Part 17

RIN 2900-AQ46

Veterans Community Care Program

AGENCY: Department of Veterans Affairs.

ACTION: Proposed rule.

SUMMARY: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) proposes to amend its medical regulations to implement its authority for covered veterans to receive necessary hospital care, medical services, and

extended care services from non-VA entities or providers in the community. Section 101 of the John S. McCain III, Daniel K. Akaka, and Samuel R. Johnson VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Network Act of 2018 directs VA to implement a program to furnish such care and services to covered veterans through eligible entities and providers. This proposed rule would establish the criteria for determining when covered veterans may elect to receive such care and services through community health care entities or providers, as well as other parameters of this program.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Summary:

**Purpose of This Regulatory Action:** We propose to create new regulations to define and implement the Veterans Community Care Program authorized by section 1703 of title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.), as that statute will be amended by section 101 of the John S. McCain III, Daniel K. Akaka, and Samuel R. Johnson VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks (MISSION) Act of 2018, effective upon VA's issuance of implementing regulations. The Veterans Community Care Program will permit eligible veterans to elect to receive hospital care, medical services, and extended

care services from eligible entities and providers. The Veterans Community Care Program would replace the Veterans Choice Program and would be used as the exclusive authority that determines eligibility under which VA would authorize covered veterans (as defined later in this rulemaking) to receive community care through eligible entities or providers.

Summary of the Major Provisions of this Regulatory Action: This proposed rule-

Would establish the exclusive authority under which VA would authorize covered veterans to receive care in the community from eligible entities or providers at VA expense when such veterans meet established eligibility criteria.

Would define key terms used throughout the regulation. Many of these terms would be substantively similar to those defined in the Veterans Choice Program.

Would define eligibility criteria, including conditions under which covered veterans could elect to have VA authorize non-VA care through eligible entities or providers, subject to the availability of appropriations. In general, covered veterans would have to be enrolled in the VA health care system (or be eligible for care and services without enrolling) and would have to require care or services from an eligible entity or provider, as

proposed to be defined in sections 17.4005 and 17.4030 of title 38, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), because VA determined at least one of the following six conditions was met:

- o VA does not offer the required care or services;
- o VA does not operate a full-service medical facility in the State in which the veteran resides;
- o the veteran was eligible to receive care under the Veterans Choice Program and is eligible to receive care under certain grandfathering provisions;
- VA is not able to furnish care or services to a veteran in a manner that complies with VA's designated access standards;
- o the veteran and the referring clinician determine it is in the best medical interest of the veteran to receive care or services from an eligible entity or provider based on consideration of certain criteria VA proposes to establish; or
- o the veteran is seeking care or services from a VA medical service line that VA has determined is not providing care that complies with VA's standards for quality.

Would describe the process VA would use to identify medical service lines that are underperforming and that could be the basis for eligibility to receive non-VA care.

Would describe how non-VA care could be authorized through the election of a covered veteran who is

eligible to receive non-VA care. Eligible veterans could also identify a specific entity or provider to furnish such care. VA would be able to authorize emergency care under certain conditions within 72 hours of such care being furnished.

Would describe the effect of the Veterans Community Care Program on other benefits and services available to covered veterans. In general, no provision in this section would be construed to alter or modify any other provision of law establishing specific eligibility criteria for certain hospital care, medical services, or extended care services. VA would continue to pay for and fill prescriptions written by non-VA health care providers to the extent such prescriptions were immediately required and were covered by the VA medical benefits package. VA would continue to calculate veterans' VA copayments under applicable regulations.

Would establish those non-VA health care entities and providers that would be permitted to furnish care under the Veterans Community Care Program. The types of eligible entities or providers would be substantively identical to those presently permitted to participate under the Veterans Choice Program or in VA's other existing community care program.

Would clarify payment rates and methodologies for care and services furnished by non-VA health care entities and providers through the Veterans Community Care Program, to include rates for Critical Access



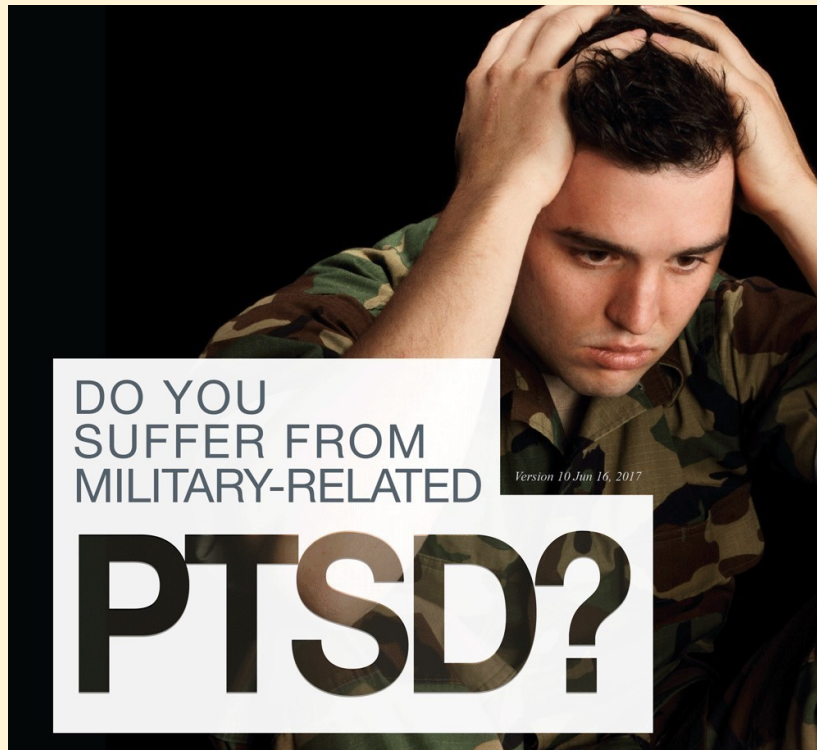
Hospitals as allowable under 42 U.S.C. 1395m, and other types of providers, including Federally Qualified Health Centers.

Would designate access standards that would be a basis for eligibility for non-VA care.

You can access the complete proposed rule with the following link.

<https://federalregister.gov/d/2019-03030>.





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



## **Survey Finds Toxic Conditions in Military Housing**

A [new poll of military families](#) living in base housing found that more than half of respondents said they had negative experiences living in privately managed housing, and some reported living in dangerous conditions that included mold, lead paint, faulty wiring, poor water quality and pestilence, such as mice and squirrels. The non-profit [Military Family Advisory Network](#) (MFAN) conducted an online survey from Jan. 30 to Feb. 6 to understand the scope of problems in military homes. Of the 14,558 respondents who now live in privately managed military housing or have resided in such homes in the past three years, nearly 56 percent said they had "negative or very negative experiences" with their houses. Read more about the survey results [here](#).



**Our values  
match yours.**



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



## **DOWN TO ONE MARINE**

On Nov. 15, 2003, an 85-year-old retired Marine Corps

Colonel died of congestive heart failure at his home in La Quinta, Calif., southeast of Palm Springs.

He was a combat veteran of World War II. Reason enough to honor him. But this Marine was a little different. This Marine was Mitchell Paige.

It's hard today to envision -- or, for the dwindling few, to remember -- what the world looked like on 26 Oct 1942.

The U.S. Navy was not the most powerful fighting force in the Pacific. Not by a long shot. So the Navy basically dumped a few thousand Marines on the beach at Guadalcanal.

As Platoon Sgt. Mitchell Paige and his 33 riflemen set about carefully placing their four water-cooled .30-caliber Browning machine guns, manning their section of the thin khaki line which was expected to defend Henderson Field against the assault of the night of 25 Oct 1942, it's unlikely anyone thought they were about to provide the definitive answer to that most desperate of questions:

How many able-bodied U.S. Marines does it take to hold a hill against over 2,000 desperate and motivated Japanese attackers?

Nor did the commanders of the Japanese Army, who

had swept everything before them for decades, expect their advance to be halted on some jungle ridge manned by one thin line of Marines in October of 1942.

But by the time the night was over, The Japanese 29th Infantry Regiment has lost 553 killed or missing and 479 wounded among its 2,554 men, historian David Lippman reports. The Japanese 16th Regiment's losses are uncounted, but the [US] 164th's burial parties handled 975 Japanese bodies. ... The American estimate of 2,200 Japanese dead is probably too low.

Among the 90 American dead and seriously wounded that night were all the men in Mitchell Paige's platoon; every one. As the night of endless attacks wore on, Paige moved up and down his line, pulling his dead and wounded comrades back into their foxholes and firing a few bursts from each of the four Brownings in turn, convincing the Japanese forces down the hill that the positions were still manned.

The citation for Paige's Medal of Honor Citation defines the event:

"When the enemy broke through the line directly in front of his position, P/Sgt. Paige, commanding a machine gun section with fearless determination, continued to direct the fire of his gunners until all his men were either killed or wounded. Alone, against the

deadly hail of Japanese shells, he fought with his gun and when it was destroyed, took over another, moving from gun to gun, never ceasing his withering fire."

In the end, Sgt. Paige picked up the last of the 40-pound, belt-fed Brownings (the same design which John M. Browning fired for a continuous 25 minutes until it ran out of ammunition, glowing cherry red, at its first U.S. Army demonstration) and did something for which the weapon was never designed.

Sgt Paige walked down the hill toward the place where he could hear the last Japanese survivors rallying to move around his flank, the belt-fed gun cradled under his arm, firing as he went.

The weapon did not fail.

At dawn, battalion executive officer Major Odell M. Conoley was first to discover the answer to our question: How many able-bodied Marines does it take to hold a hill against two regiments of motivated, combat-hardened Japanese infantrymen who have never known defeat?

On a hill where the bodies were piled like cordwood, Mitchell Paige alone sat upright behind his 30-caliber Browning, waiting to see what the dawn would bring.

One hill: one Marine!

But "In the early morning light, the enemy could be seen a few yards off, and vapor from the barrels of their machine guns was clearly visible," reports historian Lippman "It was decided to try to rush the position."

For the task, Major Conoley gathered together "three enlisted communication personnel, several riflemen, a few company runners who were at the point, together with a cook and a few messmen who had brought food to the position the evening before."

Joined by Paige, this ad hoc force of 17 Marines counterattacked at 5:40 a.m., discovering that this extremely short range allowed the optimum use of grenades. They cleared the ridge.

And that's where the previously unstoppable wave of Japanese conquests finally broke and began to recede. On an unnamed jungle ridge on an insignificant island no one had ever heard of, called Guadalcanal.

But who remembers, today, how close-run a thing it was, the ridge held by a single Marine, in the autumn of 1942?

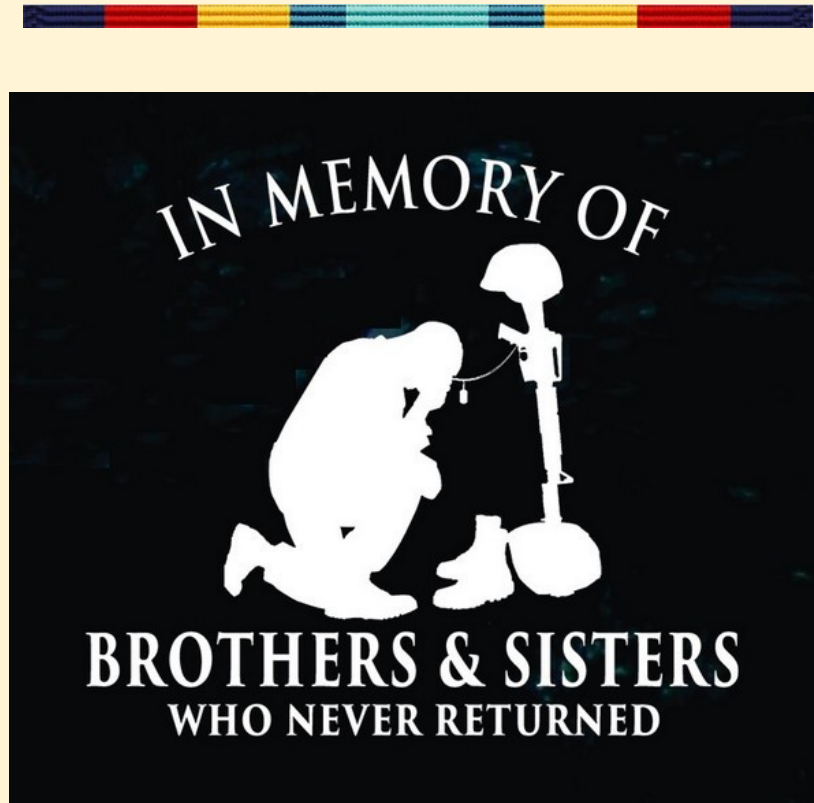
Sometime after, when the Hasbro Toy Co. telephoned asking permission to put the retired Colonel's face on

some kid's doll, Mitchell Paige thought they must be joking.

But they weren't. Today, that's his face on the little Marine they call "G.I. Joe."

NOW YOU KNOW THE REST OF THE STORY

Source: Tom Waskovich







## **H.R. 444, Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act of 2019**

On January 10, 2019, Representative Julia Brown (CA) introduced H.R. 444, the Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act of 2019.

Currently, veterans with service-connected disabilities or other employment handicaps are able to receive career development services through VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program up to 12 years after they separate from military service. H.R. 444 would remove the limiting 12-year-period for eligibility.

In agreement with DAV Resolution No. 310, we support this legislation to eliminate the 12-year-period of eligibility. By removing the limited eligibility period, H.R. 444 will provide veterans the flexibility to receive the support they have earned and deserve throughout their lifetime and thus help reduce unemployment for service-connected veterans.

Please use the prepared electronic letter or draft your own to urge your Member of Congress to support and cosponsor H.R. 444.

Standing up for veterans is vital and we thank you for your advocacy. Your actions help make DAV a highly influential and effective organization in Washington. Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.

### **Take Action**



## **Birth Defects Research for Children**

Hi Brother and Sister Veterans:

I am asking for your Chapter to consider a donation to the Birth Defects Research for Children organization of Orlando, Florida. Executive Director Betty Mekdeci has been helping our children and their parents for over thirty years. The Birth Defects Registry has shown the devastating effects of Agent Orange and other toxins on the kids. There are now over 10,000 registrants in the Registry, approximately 6,000 online and 4,000 in booklet form. There is so much more to say of their work on our children's, grandchildren's and eventual offspring not yet born that we should not let up in our support for BDRC. Check out their website at [www.birthdefects.org](http://www.birthdefects.org). Please refer to the letter (see below) sent to me from Betty Mekdeci, Executive Director of Birth Defect Research for Children, Inc..

Sincerely,

Vietnam Veterans of America  
New Jersey State Council  
Agent Orange/Dioxin Committee  
Michael Eckstein, Chairman  
Owen Martin, Vice-Chairman





We will always be our  
Brothers Keeper!



## Understanding Your TRICARE Explanation of Benefits

If you've ever visited the doctor or hospital and used your health benefits, you've probably received an explanation of benefits (EOB). An EOB is sent after the claim for your visit is processed. It's an itemized statement that breaks down the cost-shares and deductibles. While an EOB isn't a bill, it's still an important document to read through and understand.

Read the full article [here](#).



## **H.R. 1163 - VA Hiring Enhancement Act - Hiring top-quality Physicians to care for America's Veterans**

**TREA is supporting bipartisan legislation** to make the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) more competitive in recruiting top-quality physicians to care for America's veterans. VHA continues to face recruitment and retention challenges of highly qualified medical providers, with VHA reporting more than 40,000 vacant positions in 2018.

**TREA believes the bill is needed** for VA to attract the best providers by removing barriers, like non-compete agreements and bureaucratic on-boarding processes. Introduced by Rep. Vicky Hartzler (MO-04), if enacted,

the bill puts VHA on a level playing field with the private sector when it comes to hiring and recruiting timelines. Further, the legislation allows physicians who want to transition from the private sector to VA, to easily do so.

**TREA is working for you and believes: Veterans deserve the best care from the best providers and this bill will improve the quality of care our veterans receive.**

Highlights of H.R. 1163 include:

- **Allows VA to release physicians from non-compete agreements, provided they commit to VA service for at least one year;**
  - o Places VA on a level playing field by allowing VA to hire from private practices in the same manner that private sector offices hire from VA; and
  - o Boosts VA ability to hire local doctors, since non-compete contracts are often designed to prevent doctors from competing with their previous employer in the same local area.
- **Authorizes VA to make job offers up to 2 years prior to completion of residency;**
  - o Increases VA's competitiveness with private sector recruiters and improves post-residency job security for top medical residents that want to serve veterans;

- o Ensures quality care by making job offers contingent on meeting all VA requirements and enables VA to target needed specialties; and

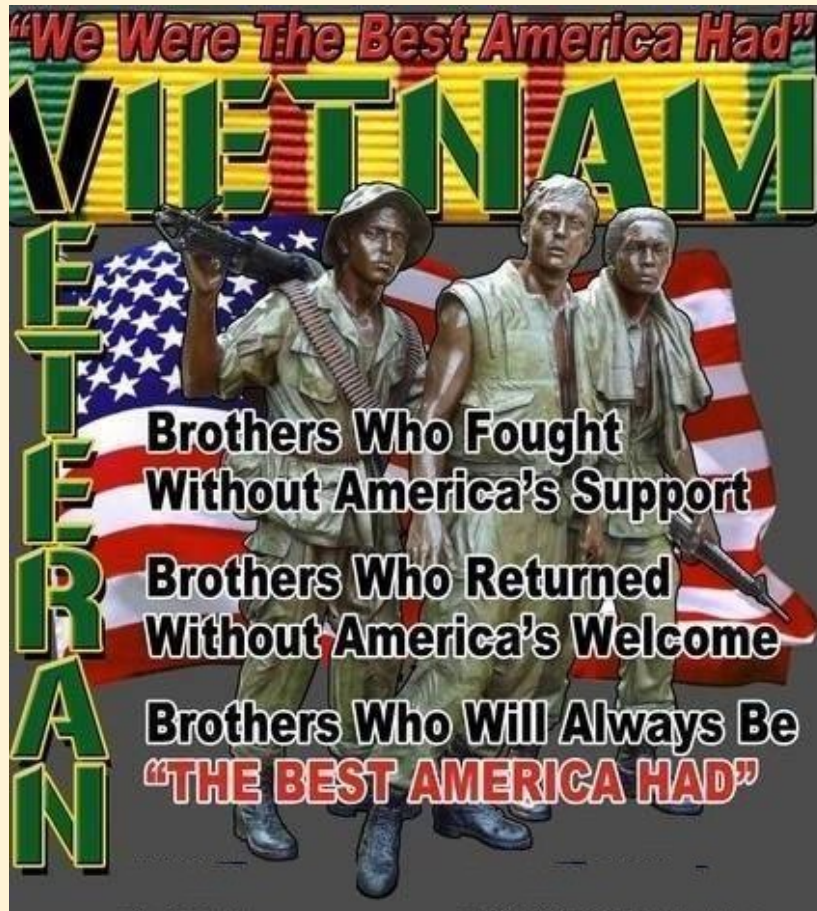
- o Allows for rapid on-boarding of doctors, since the hiring process starts sooner, doctors can start caring for veteran's sooner.

- **Updates statutory minimum requirements for VA physicians to include medical residency;**

- o Enforces federal law that already establishes minimum requirements for VA physicians by ensuring the right minimums are in place and that completion of residency is synonymous with "fully trained" for United States physicians; and

- o Guarantees that veterans are only cared for by doctors who have completed a full residency that leads to board eligibility in their medical specialty.





## Links to Other Stories

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.

1. [25 Things to Know about Service Connected Disability](#)



2. [7 Actions You Can Take to Prevent Your VA Rating from Being Reduced](#)
3. [Apple lets Veterans track their health records on the iPhone](#)
4. [As Congress begs for VA information, agency touts unprecedented level of transparency](#)
5. [Better care for the elderly](#)
6. [Blind Rehab Center Open House](#)
7. [Bradenton nonprofit gives Green Beret new teeth](#)
8. [Cerner updates progress on VA, DoD projects](#)
9. [Chinese American WWII Gold Medal Ceremony](#)
10. [Common weed killer glyphosate increases cancer risk by 41%, study says](#)
11. [Congress Poised to Help Veterans Exposed to 'Burn Pits' Over Decades of War](#)
12. [Death rates, bedsores, ER wait times: Where every VA hospital lags or leads other medical care](#)
13. [Did the VA lowball your VA PTSD rating? Here's how to find out.](#)
14. [For VA Whistleblowers, A Culture Of Fear And Retaliation](#)
15. [How a quick fix skyrocketed VA.gov satisfaction scores](#)
16. [How the VA Rates Mental Disorders](#)
17. [Large genome study leads to better understanding of high blood pressure](#)
18. [Lawmakers move to end 'barbaric' dog experiments at the VA](#)

19. Man charged with making threats and assaulting officers
20. McAllen Woman Charged in Multi-Million Dollar Kickback Conspiracy
21. Media Blackout: Trump Rescinded "Delegation Of Authority" To VA Under Secretaries, Asst. Secretaries & Other Key Officials
22. National Salute to Veteran Patients Week
23. New Veteran's home in North Little Rock cited for severe violations; state's Veterans Affairs department vows to appeal
24. No family would be at a WWII Veteran's Valentine's Day funeral. So, hundreds of strangers showed up
25. Pentec Health, Inc. to Pay \$17 Million to Settle False Claims Act Allegations
26. Plan to merge military commissaries is gaining traction despite frank critiques
27. Pritzker names second Veterans Affairs director in 2 weeks
28. Relationship impairment due to PTSD and depression has opposite effect on treatment-seeking in men and women
29. San Diego VA study testing cannabidiol—a compound derived from cannabis—for PTSD
30. The appeals process: Appeals at the regional office level
31. The VA is paying for a top official's cross-country

commute

32. VA official who exploited Veterans in fraud scam gets 11 years

33. VA's Rapid Appeals Modernization Program to end ahead of implementation of new Veteran appeals law

34. Veteran agency's secretive deal with former state senator possibly violated lobbying laws

35. Virtual training platform maintains, improves military surgeon's skills

36. West Los Angeles VA may finally be on track to help homeless Veterans

Check us out today: [www.veterans-for-change.org](http://www.veterans-for-change.org)




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**New App Helps Soldiers Access  
Personnel Records**


A new mobile app for the Integrated Personnel and Pay System-Army (IPPS-A) will let soldiers access their own personnel records on a smartphone or tablet. U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, or TRADOC, created a mobile team to screen and approve the new IPPS-A Mobile App on Jan. 18, 2019, according to a release. This month, the app was made available to National Guard soldiers in Pennsylvania; Virginia; and Washington, D.C. It will be released to all other Army regions in phases. Until now, soldiers had to use a Common Access Card, or CAC, to access their Army personnel record. This app allows soldiers to access their records "on the move." They can also submit help inquiries, ask for record updates, and monitor the status of personnel actions on the app. The app's creators are still collecting feedback to improve it as the rollout continues. Read more at the [Army website](#).



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Crisis Line**  
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## Coast Guard to Build New Heavy Icebreakers

Congress has restored funding for the Coast Guard to begin building its first new heavy icebreaker in 40 years. The funding was part of the \$333 billion spending bill the president signed last week, according to an article in Stars and Stripes. The Coast Guard will receive \$655 million to begin building an icebreaker to replace the aging Polar Star — its only working heavy icebreaker — and \$20 million more to begin buying materials for a second such vessel. “With the support of the administration and Congress, we plan to build a new fleet of six polar icebreakers — at least three of which must be heavy icebreakers — and we need the first new Polar Security Cutter immediately to meet America’s needs in the Arctic,” the Coast Guard said in a statement to USNI News. The Coast Guard has one operational heavy icebreaker and one that is inoperable. The service also has a medium icebreaker and a research vessel with light ice-breaking ability. This fleet is miniscule compared to Russia’s 40 icebreakers. Even China, which aims to create an Arctic trade route known as the “polar silk road,” has two heavy icebreakers and plans to acquire more. Read the article [here](#).





## **Air Force Misconduct Probe Database Now Tracks Junior Officers**

The Air Force has quietly expanded a database used to keep tabs on airmen under investigation to include all of its officer ranks. The Automated Case Tracking System, or ACTS, in use by the service since 2003, previously had applied only to field-grade officers — majors, lieutenant colonels and colonels — in line for promotion. Last year, the Air Force expanded the database tracking to second lieutenants and above. ACTS is primarily used to record and track Inspector General investigations, which must be reported up to the service level, per Defense Department and Air Force policy. Read more about the expansion [HERE](#).



## Bill to Increase Veterans in Infrastructure Introduced

Senators Gary Peters and John Cornyn recently introduced S. 492, the Disabled-Veterans Rebuilding Infrastructure to Vitalize our Economy (DRIVE) Act, which would create a goal that five percent of the federal funding for infrastructure projects be granted to service-connected disabled veteran owned small businesses (SDVOSBs). The VFW-supported DRIVE Act would increase SDVOSB's ability to compete for infrastructure contracts. [Read more](#) about the DRIVE Act.



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## DOD to Begin Water Contamination Study

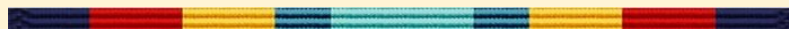
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in conjunction with the Department of Defense, announced this week that it will begin a formal review of water contamination on military bases in the coming months and is expected to continue through 2020. This initial study will specifically look at the levels of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in 10 affected locations. PFAS are chemicals that were used in firefighting foam on bases and are also present in many household products. PFAS have been linked to various cancers and developmental delays for babies and children. This study comes in the wake of a Pentagon report released last year that found dozens of DOD installations and surrounding communities had PFAS contaminated groundwater and well water. Sites being reviewed during the study include: Naval Air Warfare Center Warminster, Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, Shepherd Field Air National Guard Base, Peterson Air Force Base, Eielson Air Force Base, Barnes Air National Guard Base, Reese Technology Center, Stewart Air National Guard Base, New Castle Air National Guard Base, and Fairchild Air Force Base. [Learn more](#) about the Pentagon review of groundwater contamination.







1. Chukar Cherries Expands Recall Of Amaretto Rainier Ultra Dark Chocolate Cherries Pouches Due To Undeclared Milk
2. Concord Fresh Success Recall Mild Salsa Seasoning Mix Due To Undeclared Milk Allergen
3. Kingston Pharma, LLC Issues Voluntary Recall of All Lots of “DG™ Baby Gripe Water Due to Undissolved Ingredient, Citrus Flavonoid
4. Medtronic, Inc. Recalls Dual Chamber Implantable Pulse Generators (IPGs) Due to Possible Circuit Error
5. Nature’s Path Foods Recalls A Specific Production Run Of Envirokidz Choco Chimps, Gorilla Munch And Jungle Munch Cereals Due To Undeclared Gluten
6. Sid Wainer and Son Initiates Class 2 Recall for Jansal Valley Dukkah Due to Potential Glass Pieces
7. Smoked Alaska Seafoods, Inc. Recalls 6.5 oz Jars & Cans of Smoked Silver Salmon Because of Possible Health Risk



**New Public Safety Network  
Coming to Navy Bases**

The Navy plans to start using the public safety broadband network FirstNet across installations and special areas in the U.S., according to a Navy announcement released Feb. 12. First established by Congress in 2012, the First Responder Network Authority allows communication between first responders and emergency personnel over a national public safety broadband network, according to a release. FirstNet subscriptions, devices and services must be procured for each base through the General Services Administration. Current public safety communications systems will continue to operate as the FirstNet system is established. For more information, view this [Navy message](#).





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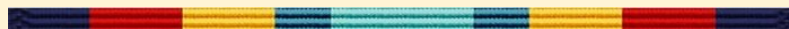
**Wreck of WWII Aircraft Carrier  
Hornet Discovered**

The wreck of the World War II aircraft carrier USS Hornet (CV-8) has been discovered off the Solomon Islands by a research organization set up by the late billionaire Paul Allen. The carrier was located in late January by the crew of the Research Vessel Petrel, resting on the floor of the South Pacific, according to a statement released Tuesday by Allen's Vulcan organization. Vulcan oversees Allen's network of organizations and initiatives, which includes R/V Petrel's research. Researchers used information from national and naval archives to find the ship, as well as action reports from other vessels involved in the fateful Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands in 1942. The wreck was found at a depth of nearly 17,500 feet. Read more about the discovery [here](#).



# Are You the VA's Next Deputy Policy Officer?

The Department of Veterans Affairs is looking for candidates to serve as the [Deputy Chief Policy and Planning Officer](#) (DCO) at the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Serving as principal deputy to the assistant deputy under secretary for health for policy and planning, the DCO develops and analyzes national health care policy and manages VA legislative and policy agendas, according to a release. Key responsibilities include executing the Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996, overseeing the Office of Rural Health, and managing and analyzing data. Visit [USAJobs](#) to apply for the position.



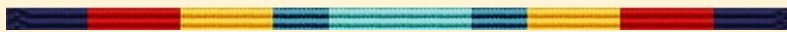
**Tax & Credit**  

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**Information**



1. Free tax preparation available for millions of families
2. Avoid the rush: Today marks busiest phone day of the year; check IRS.gov for answers to tax questions
3. EITC provides tax break for low to moderate income taxpayers
4. 2018 Tax Planning Guide
5. Farmers, fishermen face March 1 tax deadline; IRS encourages convenience of IRS Direct Pay



## **WWII Veteran would like to receive 100 b-day cards on his 100th birthday**

It would be SO great if sweet, smiling Joe received a lot more than just 100 birthday cards!

And just in case you are having trouble reading Joe's address it's:

Joe Cuba  
918 Midwestern Parkway  
Wichita Falls, TX 76302



**DOD 2017 Spouse Survey Release**

On Thursday, VFW Director of National Security and Foreign Affairs John Towles joined MilitaryOneSource and senior DOD officials to discuss the results of the 2017 Spouse Survey. The target population for the survey consisted of spouses of active duty members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force, including spouses of National Guard and Reserve members, who have at least six months of service and were below flag or general officer rank. The survey found that the majority of military spouses are satisfied with military life overall; however, this has declined slightly compared to the results from the 2012 and 2016 surveys. Additionally, it found that approximately 24 percent of military spouses are unemployed due primarily to barriers such as frequent permanent change of station moves, diminished access to child care, and the need to acquire state-specific licensure. [Read the results](#) of this year's survey and past surveys.



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## **New Appeals Process Launched This Week**

On Tuesday, VFW Washington Office Executive Director Bob Wallace, National Veterans Service Director Ryan Gallucci, Training & Quality Assurance Manager Lauren Barefoot, and Retired National Veterans Service Director Jerry Manar joined senior VA officials at VA central office for the kickoff of the new and improved appeals process. Starting this week, all veterans who disagree with their VA rating decision will have three new options to resolve their benefit disputes: request a higher-level review from a more experienced person, submit a supplemental claim with additional evidence, or appeal directly to the Board of Veterans' Appeals. Over the past four years, Mr. Manar and Ms. Barefoot have represented the VFW in negotiations with Congress, VA, and other veterans organizations to craft this new framework. The goal of the new process is to offer veterans greater flexibility and transparency to resolve benefit disputes in a timely manner, instead of waiting years for VA to adjudicate their appeals. The VFW will monitor the implementation and work with VA to resolve any issues that come up. [Read more](#) about appeals modernization.



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