



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, April 07, 2019

Volume 10, Issue 14



This-N-That

This week has been a very busy week news wise as well as updated library folders on our website.

Total new files added are 285 of which 165 were added to the Agent Orange-Guam Library, just over 85,000 pages of information in 285 documents and roughly over 100,000 more documents coming on-line over the next few months. In addition although not many 4 more new web links have been added under the Web Links tab with several hundred more coming soon.

We're also looking for individuals who would be

interested in moderating our forums on-line. We want to bring them back to life again, so those who would be interested, please contact me.

We've already given a little bit of a face lift to it, and we're currently looking for a new template with a more modern and appealing style to it. Next week we'll publish a link to the various templates and with your help we might just find the one that best suite the Veterans-For-Change website.

We're also looking for a new website hosting service with a webmaster who is very familiar with Joomla. If you are that person or know someone who might be a good fit for us, again, do let me know.

Congratulations to Blue Water Navy, you beat them down, and beat them down good! Now it's a matter of implementation and Commander Wells will be meeting with SecVA Wilkie to sit down and discuss the matter.

In this newsletter there is a link to a petition to demand full accountability on the part of the VA and I do urge everyone to please, take the time and sign it.

If we can get their attention by the numbers of people responding then we have a better chance of improving the VA, forcing them to be accountable for all the funds provided through the budget, hire more staff, purchase modern and innovative equipment which is needed in many facilities and help stop all the nonsense going in

within their walls and do the jobs they were hired for, providing proper, efficient medical care.

It's still tax time! So if you've not already done your taxes, not even prepared, or don't know what all you need in order to get your taxes done and help to provide the best outcome, go to this link [Tax Deduction Finder and Problem Minimizer](#) and click on the GREEN download button.

This will provide you a rather detailed list of items to take with you to your tax preparer.

In this newsletter there are a number of action items, please take the time to click on the links and send off the various E-Mails to your Reps in DC asking for their support and passage.

Blue Water Navy Veterans have more than proven persistence and perseverance can and will produce positive results in the Veterans and their families favor.

I'd also request you follow up those E-Mails with a simple phone call to their DC office even if you don't think they listen, please don't use that excuse, the more attention we put to each of the action items throughout this newsletter, the less excuses they can come up with for not having made sure it comes to the floor and is voted on and with luck passed.

If you're not currently a subscriber to our newsletter

and are getting the link through other sources, please do subscribe today. And you can also follow us on Twitter as well as on MEWE the new social media platform that has no hassles, no suspensions, doesn't violate your 1st Amendment rights and has excellent customer service.

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



Demand VA Accountability

TELL CONGRESS: Make sure VA Completes the MISSION!

Take Action





STAY LIFTED ON ADJUDICATION OF APPEALS FOR COMPENSATION BASED ON ALLEGED EXPOSURE TO HERBICIDE AGENTS IN THE OFFSHORE WATERWAYS OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

1. REFERENCES

- a. 38 U.S.C. § 1116;
- b. 38 C.F.R. § 3.307(a)(6);
- c. Haas v. Peake, 525 F.3d 1168 (Fed. Cir. 2008)
- d. Procopio v. Wilkie, No. 17-1821 (U.S. Fed. Cir. Jan. 29, 2019);

e. Chairman's Memorandum 01-18-15, "Stay of Adjudication of Appeals for Compensation Based on Alleged Exposure to Herbicide Agents in the Offshore Waterways of the Republic of Vietnam" (Oct. 22, 2018).

1. PURPOSE OF THIS MEMORANDUM

The purpose of this memorandum is to rescind a stay on the adjudication of appeals which may be affected by the ruling of the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit (Federal Circuit) in *Procopio v. Wilkie*, No. 17-1821 (U.S. Fed. Cir.) imposed by Chairman's Memorandum 01-18-15, as well as to set forth procedures for the resumption of processing of cases affected by the stay.

1. BACKGROUND

a. Congress has established a presumption of exposure to herbicide agents for those veterans who, during active military, naval, or air service, "served in the Republic of Vietnam" during a period beginning on January 9 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975. 38 U.S.C. § 1116 (a)(1)(A). The Secretary of Veterans Affairs issued a regulation defining "service in the Republic of Vietnam" to include the "waters offshore" if the conditions of service involved duty or visitation in the Republic of Vietnam. 38 C.F.R. § 3.307 (a)(6)(iii). Both the statutory phrase "served in the Republic of Vietnam" and the implementing regulation were found ambiguous as applied to service in the waters

adjoining the landmass of Vietnam. *Haas v. Peake*, 525 F.3d

1168, 1184-85 (Fed. Cir. 2008). VA interpreted both the statute and regulation to require service on the actual landmass or on the inland waterways of the Republic of Vietnam, which the Federal Circuit found reasonable. *Id.* at 1189-93.

b. On January 29, 2019, the Federal Circuit issued an en banc decision in *Procopio v. Wilkie*, reversing its prior determination that VA's interpretation of the statute and regulation was reasonable. Instead, the Court held that the statutory phrase "the Republic of Vietnam" included the 12 nautical mile territorial sea of that nation. *Procopio*, slip op. at 10. By extension, the presumption of herbicide agent exposure extends to those veterans with service in the territorial seas of the Republic of Vietnam. On March 21, 2019, the Federal Circuit denied the Secretary's motion to stay the entry of mandate. Mandate was issued on March 22, 2019.

1. LIFTING OF STAY PROCEDURES

a. All cases with appeals pending before the Board that involve issues that were previously stayed by the Board pursuant to Chairman's Memorandum No. 01-18-15 will be distributed in a manner prescribed by the Chairman or her designee. Case distribution will be consistent with the Board's statutory requirements under 38 U.S.C. §§ 7107 and 7112 regarding

consideration of appeals in docket order, with certain exceptions. To the extent possible, cases will be redistributed to the Veterans Law Judge to whom they were previously assigned.

1. RESCISSIONS

a. Chairman's Memorandum No. 01-18-15 (Oct. 22, 2018) entitled "Stay of Adjudication of Appeals for Compensation Based on Alleged Exposure to Herbicide Agents in the Offshore Waterways of the Republic of Vietnam," is hereby rescinded in its entirety.

b. . This memorandum is effective until expressly rescinded, modified, or superseded.

Cheryl L. Mason
Chairman



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 **2,973** hits per day, and downloads average **2,967** per day with a total **4,860,621** 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 **17,210** documents on-

line (Updated: 04/04/19)

- 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: **8,380**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **4,709**, Added 4 New Links
(Updated: 04/05/19)

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





H.R. 1527, the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act

Representative Clay Higgins introduced H.R. 1527, the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act. This bill would provide veterans who are no longer capable of living independently an alternative to nursing home care, in which the veteran would continue to receive the care that they need in an intimate home-like environment through VA's Home-Based Primary Care program, and the Medical Foster Home (MFH) attendant program.

Started in 2000, VA Medical Foster Homes provide veterans who need nursing home level of care an alternative to being placed in a nursing home. VA Medical Foster Homes merge traditional adult foster care with comprehensive longitudinal care provided in the home by a VA interdisciplinary team that includes a physician, nurse, social worker, rehabilitation therapist, mental health provider, dietitian, and pharmacist. Since its inception, over 4,000 veterans have resided in Medical Foster Homes.

However, many service-connected veterans who wish

to reside in a VA Medical Foster Home are unable to do so because of substantial out-of-pocket costs of approximately \$1,500 to \$3,000 per month. Because VA does not have the authority to cover these costs, veterans are placed in nursing homes which VA pays for but cost more than twice as much.

As the veteran population continues to age, the need for long-term care services will continue to grow. Home-based community programs like MFHs will enable VA to meet the needs of aging veterans in a manner closer to independent living than institutionalized care. With the passage of this bill, veterans would have the option of care that more closely aligns with their independence while maintaining their quality of life.

This bill is in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 085, which calls for legislation to improve the comprehensive program of long-term services and supports for service-connected disabled veterans regardless of their disability ratings.

Please use the prepared letter to write your Representative to cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 1527, the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act. Thank you for your efforts and support of the Commander's Action Network.

Take Action



**WHICH WAY IS YOUR
CLAYMORE FACING**

It's a book based on my own personal insights from being a combat veteran of the Rhodesian Bush War to the many messes and losses I faced during my own postwar journey. It's based on my experiences of being witness to the veterans' deep pain, loss, and grief and their depression, stress, anxiety, anger, and everyday struggles to adjust to the unpredictable complexities of civilian life. It's based on the universal and timeless experience and shared comradeship of veterans gathering with veterans, no matter whether they come from special forces units or regular units. It's based on the stories of veterans' partners and children as they have desperately tried to find ways to understand and bridge the traumatic silence so typical of many veterans, as well as to deal with the war that returned home—the rage and reactivity, the alcohol and flashbacks. It's based on the deep feelings of loss veterans have felt as they've tried to connect with those they once knew but still love. It's based on supporting veterans and their families to create a map and find a compass that will help them operate in the bewildering and unpredictable confusion of civilian life.

Barry Zworestine

Barry's [Website](#)

Barry's [Book on VFC Site](#)





~Follow Veterans-For-Change on MEWE Social Media~

Follow us on [MEWE](#)! We've move to [MEWE](#) and after four months, membership has grown and the support staff at [MEWE](#) is responsive, open to suggestions and works very hard to protect your personal information.

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

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HOMELESS HEROES PROGRAM OF VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE

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

AMVETS GROUP

www.mewe.com/join/amvetsgroup

VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP

www.mewe.com/join/veteranssocialgroup

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

www.mewe.com/join/usavetsupportinggodallwhoserveandserve

AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY

www.mewe.com/join/americansforsovereignty



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



Sailors Will No Longer Need 12 Years of Good Conduct to Sport Gold Stripes

The Navy is rescinding its long-standing tradition requiring sailors to have 12 years of blemish-free conduct to rate gold stripes, officials announced March 25. Soon, it won't be so easy to spot enlisted sailors who've gotten into some trouble in the past. Starting June 1, sailors with less-than-perfect records will no longer be required to wear red service stripes and rating badges on their uniforms in place of gold. "All enlisted Sailors with 12 cumulative years of naval active or active reserve service are authorized to wear gold rating badges, and gold service stripes in lieu of red rating badges and stripes," Navy-wide [administrative 075/19](#) states. Read more about the change [here](#).





April's Featured Song

Finally Welcomed Home

By

LT Bobby Ross

LT Bobby Ross - Voice Of America

Previous Featured Songs



S. 514, the Deborah Sampson Act to Improve VA Services for Women Veterans

Senator Jon Tester (MT), Ranking Member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, introduced S. 514, the Deborah Sampson Act. This legislation, a comprehensive measure addressing gender disparities, aims to improve and expand Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) programs and services for women veterans.

The bill would permanently authorize counseling for veterans recently separated from military service and accompanying family members in group retreat settings, including in women-exclusive settings. It would extend the number of days, from seven to 14, VA may cover the cost of care for newborns of women veterans. It would also provide adoption assistance to veterans who have infertility conditions incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.

S. 514 aims to eliminate barriers to care by:

- Adding \$20 million to retrofit VA medical facilities to comply with environment of care deficiencies;
- Requiring every VA medical facility to have at least one full-time or part-time designated women's health provider on staff;
- Studying the staffing needs of Women Veteran

Program Managers in addition to determining the need for a Women Veterans Ombudsman;

- Conducting mini-residency training for women's health providers;
- Requiring VA to create a training module for community providers specific to women veterans' unique medical needs;
- Providing support services for women veterans seeking legal assistance;
- Authorizing grants for organizations supporting women veterans and their families;
- Requiring VA to report on its use of various primary care models serving women veterans;
- Requiring VA to provide information on staffing levels of women's health providers including PACT team members and gynecologists;
- Requiring data collection and reporting on all VA programs serving veterans, by gender and minority status;
- Requiring VA to report on the availability of prosthetics for women veterans; and
- Centralizing all information for women veterans in one easily accessible place on VA's website.

DAV's 2018 report, [Women Veterans: The Journey Ahead](#) identified many of these gaps in VA programs for women and calls for comprehensive VA women's health services that appropriately recognize and honor their military service and sacrifices. This bill is also consistent with DAV Resolution No. 019, which

supports enhanced medical services and benefits for women veterans.

Please contact your Senators to urge co-sponsorship and passage of S. 514. A letter has been prepared for this purpose or you may write your own to express your personal views.

As always, thank you for your advocacy and support of our nation's women veterans.

Take Action



VA to Drop Fight Against Blue Water Navy Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs will not appeal a January court ruling that [ordered it to provide health care and disability benefits](#) for 90,000 veterans who served on Navy ships during the Vietnam War, likely paving the way for "Blue Water Navy" sailors and Marines to receive Agent Orange-related compensation and VA-paid health care benefits. VA Secretary Robert Wilkie told members of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee on March 26 that he will recommend the Justice Department not fight the decision, handing a victory to ill former service members who fought for years to have their diseases recognized as related to exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange. Read more about the announcement [here](#).





H.R 445, Help Hire Our Heroes Act

On January 10, 2019, Representative Julia Brownley introduced H.R. 445, the Help Hire Our Heroes Act. This bill would amend the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 to make permanent the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP).

The VRAP was started in 2012 to provide training assistance to unemployed veterans between the ages of 35 and 60 who are no longer eligible for the GI Bill. It provided up to 12 months of training benefits at community colleges and technical schools in occupations that the Department of Labor has identified as "high demand." Since funding for this program expired in March 2014, the VA has not been able to enroll new veterans in VRAP. This program gap means that thousands of older, qualified veterans have been unable to access the resources which could help them find work.

This bill would strike the end dates of the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program and would replace it

with year to year authorizations. This bill is in accord with DAV Resolution No. 190 which seeks adequate funding and permanency for veterans' employment and training programs.

Please use the prepared letter to write to your Representative to cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 445, the Help Hire Our Heroes Act. Thank you for your efforts and support of the Commander's Action Network.

Take Action



Think You Know All Things Military? Play Our Daily Trivia

Play our daily military trivia challenge and you could win our monthly prize of an Amazon Fire TV Stick. [Test your knowledge now.](#)



VA to Announce Decision on New Agent Orange Presumptive Conditions

Several years after a scientific body recommended that the Department of Veterans Affairs consider adding four conditions — bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, hypertension and Parkinson's-like symptoms — to the list of qualifying diseases tied to Agent Orange, affected veterans may soon find out whether they are eligible for disability compensation and VA health care. During a Senate Veterans Affairs hearing March 26 on the VA budget, Dr. Richard Stone, the executive in charge of the Veterans Health Administration, said a decision on the three illnesses likely would come in the next 90 days. Read more about upcoming decision [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

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Is VGLI too much? Get \$400,000 life insurance coverage from just \$29 a month & [start protecting your family today.](#)



How Can Vets Compete in a Seller's Market?

It can be difficult for Veterans to compete with other buyers when there are more buyers than homes on the market. [Experienced real estate professionals can help close the gap.](#)



AMERICAN SOLDIERS

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



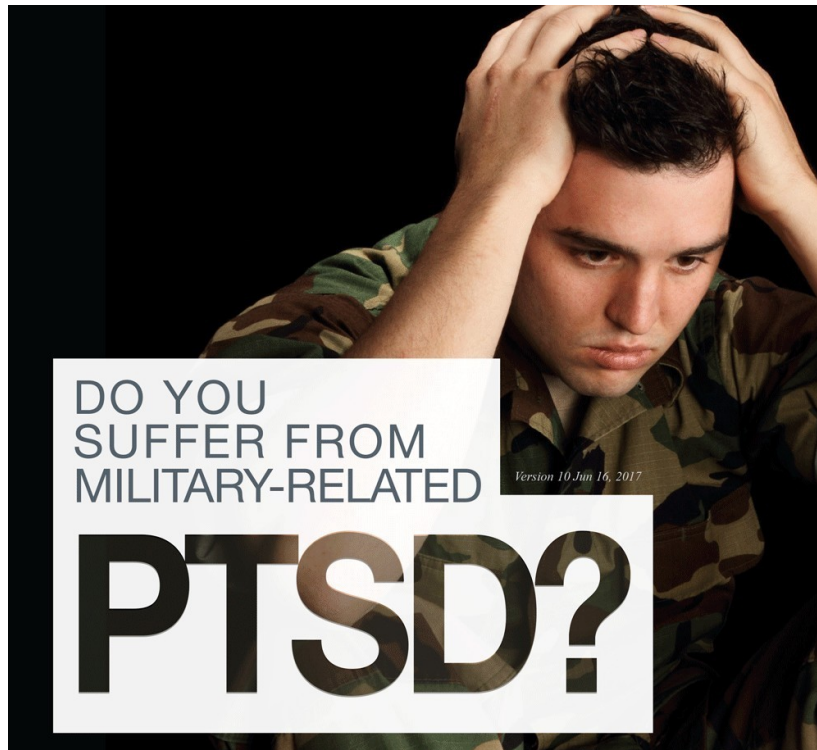
Bob Dole Promoted to Army Colonel at 95

Former U.S. Sen. Bob Dole of Kansas has been promoted from captain to colonel for his service in the Army during World War II. Both chambers of the U.S. Congress have unanimously passed a bill promoting the 95-year-old Dole. He earned two Purple Hearts and two Bronze Stars for valor for his service in the war. Dole was an infantry lieutenant in 1945 when he was wounded by German machine gun fire, which left him with limited use of his right arm. Dole represented Kansas in the U.S. House and Senate for a total of 35 years and ran unsuccessfully for president in 1996. Read more about the promotion [here](#).



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



S. 179/H.R. 712, Legislation Calling for Clinical Trials to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Medical Cannabis for Chronic Pain and PTSD

These companion bills, S. 179 and H.R. 712, would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to carry out a clinical trial of the effects of cannabis on health outcomes of adults with chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

These measures would require the VA Secretary to conduct clinical trials that look into whether cannabis is able to reduce symptoms associated with chronic pain such as inflammation, sleep disorders, spasticity, and agitation and effects on the use or dosage of opioids, benzodiazepines or alcohol for veterans with PTSD.

Research is necessary to determine the safety and efficacy of any drug. At this time there are few definitive answers about risks and benefits associated with the use of cannabis on various medical conditions and illnesses. Research is necessary to help clinicians better understand the safety and efficacy of cannabis use for certain conditions common in the veteran population such as chronic pain and posttraumatic stress.

These bills are in line with DAV Resolution No. 023

which calls for comprehensive and scientifically rigorous research by the VA into the therapeutic benefits and risks of cannabis, cannabis-derived products as a possible treatment for service-connected disabled veterans.

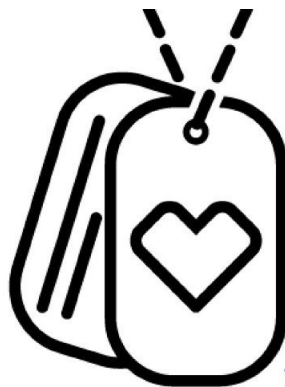
Thank you for your support of our nation's ill and injured veterans. Please use the letters below to ask your elected officials to support S. 179/H.R. 712.

Take Action



Vets in Congress Introduce Bill to Protect Gold Star Spouse Benefits

Three combat veterans in the House of Representatives want to change the law and allow military widows and widowers to retain their survivor benefit payments if they remarry – a proposal spouses say would let them raise their families and retain a connection they want to the military. The bill, H.R. 1911, or the Sgt. First Class Brian Woods Gold Star and Military Survivors Act, would also extend child care assistance to surviving spouses and give continued access to base facilities such commissaries, exchanges and fitness centers to those with dependent children who remarry. And it includes a provision to cover the cost of transporting the bodies of those killed in combat to their hometowns for services and later, to a national cemetery, if the family requests it. Currently, the government pays for one trip. Read more about the legislation [here](#).



**Our values
match yours.**



www.veterans-for-change.org



Your Environment and Your Body: How Exposure to Mold and Lead May Impact Your Health

A healthy environment is important to the health of your body. Possible exposure to lead or damp, moldy indoor spaces may impact your health. TRICARE covers the screenings, services, and supplies needed to diagnose and treat allergies, asthma, and respiratory illnesses. Blood lead level screenings are available for beneficiaries who are at a high risk for lead exposure.

Read the full article [here](#).



Up to \$484k Financing with Your VA Loan Benefit

Your VA loan benefit is ready to use and worth up to \$484k financing. Don't waste this great benefit. [Find lenders now](#).





**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



Marines Will Soon Have to Belt Out the 'Marines' Hymn' When They Hear It

Brace your ears: You're about to hear Devil Dogs in all keys singing about the halls of Montezuma and the shores of Tripoli the next time the "Marines' Hymn" is played in public. The commandant of the Marine Corps reportedly wants to hear more leathernecks proudly belting out the lyrics to their hymn. That's according to a March 29 report from Marine Corps Times about upcoming changes to the service's drills and ceremonies manual, which will include a new directive about the beloved and highly recognized hymn. Read more about the change [here](#).



Guard Responds to Historic Midwest Flooding

More than 340 members of the National Guard were dispatched to assist with flooding response in Nebraska, Missouri, Iowa and other states in the Midwest, according to a recent Army release. In Nebraska, more than 300 members of the Nebraska Guard assisted state and local officials with search and rescue operations, food and water distribution and first responder transport, using helicopters, Humvees and tactical trucks. They also airdropped bales of hay for hungry livestock. The Missouri Air National Guard has helped emplace sandbags to control flooding, while the South Dakota Army National Guard has worked with tribal authorities to bring clean drinking water to the Pine Ridge Reservation after flooding washed out a water line. Guard members will continue to assist until floodwaters recede. Read more at [Army.mil](https://www.army.mil).





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Never forget our fallen!



H.R. 553, Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act

On January 15, 2019, Congressman Joe Wilson introduced H.R. 553, the Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act. This bill would eliminate an unfair offset placed on many surviving spouses of service members who pass away during active duty or spouses of retirees who die of a service-connected disability.

Currently, purchased Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities are offset by the amount of any benefit payable under the VA Dependency and Indemnity

Compensation (DIC) program. SBP is not a government gratuity benefit; rather, it is a type of insurance purchased out-of-pocket by military retirees for their survivors while DIC is a VA benefit intended to provide spouses of veterans who died from a service-connected condition some semblance of financial security. Thousands of survivors of military retirees are adversely affected by this unfair offset between SBP and DIC benefits.

Upon the retiree's death, the SBP annuity is paid monthly to eligible beneficiaries; however, if a surviving spouse is also entitled to DIC, the SBP benefit is reduced by the amount of the DIC benefit (currently \$1,283.11 per month). In general, when DIC benefits are payable but the monthly rate is equal to, or greater than, the monthly SBP payment amount, beneficiaries lose the entire SBP payment.

This bill would eliminate the offset and allow surviving spouses to receive both the purchased SBP annuities and their earned DIC benefits. This bill is in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 014, which calls for Congress to repeal the offset between SBP annuity payments and DIC payments.

Please use the prepared letter to write your Representative to cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 553, the Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act. Thank you for your efforts and support of the

Commander's Action Network.

Take Action



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. 50th anniversary commemoration of Vietnam War to take place at Chattanooga National Cemetery
2. Army Veteran's history of Military Sexual Trauma
3. Battle erupts over allegations that retail lenders are overcharging Veterans for mortgages
4. Eat well, live well
5. Female Veteran denied in vitro fertilization benefits because she's single: "It's taking away my life dream"
6. In gentrifying Echo Park, the VA is forcing these homeless Veterans to leave
7. Innovative treatment for Vets with Type 2 diabetes
8. Lack of leadership to blame for the VA's botched 'Forever GI Bill' rollout, report says
9. Magazine honors VA's New Orleans Replacement Medical Center With 'Best of the Best Health Care' award
10. Many Vietnam Vets Don't Know They Now Qualify for Agent Orange Benefits
11. New Documentary Explores Agent Orange's Little-Known Medical Legacy For Civilians
12. New study finds rising VA employee engagement key to increased success at nearly 150 medical centers
13. No delay for new Veterans community care rules, despite concerns from advocates
14. The Shocking Health Effects Of Agent Orange Now A Legacy Of Military Death
15. The VA is 'close' to piloting tele-hearing capability

16. Two Senators Want to Revoke 'BRAC-Like' Review of VA Facilities
17. VA MISSION Act: What is the latest on community care?
18. VA offers \$15 million in grant funding to support adaptive sports for disabled Veterans
19. VA partners with Objective Zero Foundation
20. VA to Announce Decision on New Agent Orange Presumptive Conditions
21. Veterans harmed at VA nursing homes in 25 states, inspections find
22. Vets in Congress Introduce Bill to Protect Gold Star Spouse Benefits
23. Vietnam, US should work harder to overcome war consequences: US official
24. When Alcohol Use Becomes Alcohol Misuse: Supporting Service Member Self-Referral

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**Support SBP/DIC Offset Repeal
(S. 622/H.R. 553)!**

Sen. Doug Jones (AL) has introduced legislation (S. 622) that repeals the SBP/DIC offset for survivors, sometimes referred to as the "military widows tax." Earlier, Rep. Joe Wilson (SC) introduced similar legislation in the House, the "Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act" (H.R. 553).

SBP and DIC payments are paid for different reasons. The Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) is purchased by the retiree and is intended to provide a portion of retired pay to the survivor. Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is a special indemnity compensation paid to the survivor when a member's service causes his or her premature death. In such cases, the VA DIC should be added to the SBP the retiree paid for, not substituted for it. It should be noted as a matter of equity that surviving spouses of federal civilian retirees who are disabled veterans and die of military-service-connected causes can receive DIC without losing any of their federal civilian SBP benefits.

TAKE ACTION





National Guard in Top 25 Most Diverse Organizations

The National Guard Bureau is officially one of the 25 most diverse organizations in the nation. The ranking came from the Association of Employee Resource Groups and Diversity Councils, according to a recent Army release. The Guard, which has made the top 25 in the annual listing for five of the last six years, was listed as 14th on the list in 2013, and just second overall in 2016. The ranking for 2018 will be announced in early May. The ranking evaluates an organization's "impact, talent management and culture of inclusion as well as leadership commitment and communication efforts involving diversity issues." Read more at Army.mil.





TRICARE Fee Increases in 2019?

The FRA is thankful that the Administration's proposed FY2020 budget recently submitted to Congress does not include any TRICARE fee increases. Unfortunately, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) submitted a report to Congress in December recommending various TRICARE fee increases and other benefit cuts for military retirees and active duty military. Concern in Congress about the growing annual spending deficit for

the current and upcoming fiscal years is increasing and legislators may consider these drastic cuts to reduce the deficit. Some of the many recommendations in the report include:

- A new TRICARE-For-Life (TFL) annual enrollment fee of \$485 for individual coverage and \$970 for family coverage, and increased cost-shares
- Increasing TRICARE Prime and Select enrollment fees beyond the current annual CPI increase
- Reduce active duty BAH to 80 percent of actual cost
- Limit active duty annual pay increases
- Eliminate VA's Individual Unemployability payments to disabled veterans at the full retirement age for Social Security

Members can tell their legislators NOT to reduce the deficit on the backs of our active duty military, veterans, retirees and their families by going to the [FRA Action Center](#) and scroll down to Don't Enact CBO Proposed Budget Cuts! campaign listed on the Center.



U.S. Government
Accountability Office
Reports

1. Actions Needed to Enhance Compliance Efforts, Eliminate Overlapping Requirements, and Mitigate Burdens on U.S. Persons Abroad
2. Addressing IT Management Challenges Is Essential to Effectively Supporting the Department's Mission
3. DOD Faces Significant Challenges as it Seeks to Address Threats and Accelerate Space Programs
4. Important Progress Made, but More Work Needed to Strengthen DHS Management
5. Research on Health Care Costs of Untreated Conditions is Limited
6. U.S. Government Efforts to Strengthen Nonimmigrant Visa Security and Address High-Risk Air Travelers



**~We Proudly Support our
Military Personnel & Families~**



**Sexual Assault and Prevention
Month**

April is Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. The Navy will promote efforts and initiatives to reinforce the service's commitment to a culture of dignity and respect, where the crime of sexual assault is never tolerated, victims have access to comprehensive support and offenders are held appropriately accountable, according to a release. The theme this year is "Protecting Our People Protects Our Mission." The Navy will be using the opportunity to remind personnel at every level of leadership that they are personally responsible for demonstrating consistent professional and ethical behavior in all settings whether on duty, at home, or online. Read more at Navy.mil.



 **U.S. FOOD & DRUG**
ADMINISTRATION

1. Exposure to Lead
2. Henry Avocado Recalls Whole Avocados Because Of Possible Health Risk
3. Legacy Pharmaceutical Packaging, LLC Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Losartan Potassium Tablets, USP, 25mg, 50mg, And 100mg Due to The Detection of Trace Amounts Of N-Nitroso N-Methyl 4-Amino Butyric Acid (NMBA) Impurity Found in The Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API)
4. MedWatch: The FDA Safety Information and Adverse Event Reporting ProgramTwo Medical Technologies, Inc. Recalls o_two e700, e600 and e500 Automatic Transport Ventilators Due to Potential Risk of Fire
5. Theo Chocolate Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Milk in 3oz Sea Salt 70% Dark Chocolate Bars
6. Thomas Hammer Coffee Roasters Inc. Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Egg in Blueberry Bread
7. USA LESS Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of LEOPARD Miracle Honey Due to Presence of Undeclared Sildenafil
8. Your Environment and Your Body: How Exposure to Mold and Lead May Impact Your Health





SURVIVAL IS FUN



H.R. 1200, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2019

On February 13, 2019, Representative Elaine Luria (VA), Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial

Affairs and Ranking Member Michael Bost (IL), introduced H.R. 1200, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2019.

This bill, if enacted, would authorize a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for veterans in receipt of compensation and pension, and for survivors of veterans who died from service-incurred disabilities and are in receipt of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). It would provide a COLA increase by the same percentage as Social Security and would be effective December 1, 2019.

Receipt of annual COLA increments aids injured and ill veterans, their families, and their survivors to help maintain the value of their VA benefits against inflation. Without COLAs, these individuals, who sacrificed their own health and their family life for the good of our nation, may not be able to maintain a quality of life in their elder years. DAV strongly supports H.R. 1200 as it is in accord with DAV Resolution No. 031.

Take Action Today! Please use the prepared electronic letter or draft your own to urge your Representatives to support and co-sponsor H.R. 1200.

As always, we appreciate your support for DAV and your grassroots activism in participating in DAV CAN. Your advocacy helps 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



Tax & Credit Information



1. Before visiting an IRS office, taxpayers should call to make an appointment
2. Estimated taxes form and publication can help people pay the right amount in 2019
3. Frivolous tax arguments remain on IRS' 'Dirty Dozen' scams list for 2019
4. Here's what people should know about taking early withdrawals from retirement plans
5. IRS offers webinar on the importance of filing on time
6. IRS reminds those with foreign assets of annual April 15 FBAR deadline
7. Online tool lets taxpayers check the status of their refund
8. Tax Time Guide wrap-up: Tips on payment options, penalty waivers, refunds and more
9. Taxpayer Bill of Rights outlines rights for all taxpayers
10. Taxpayers interacting with the IRS should know their rights
11. Things taxpayers should know about claiming dependents
12. With new SALT limit, IRS explains tax treatment of state and local tax refunds
13. With the filing deadline close, here's why taxpayers should e-File





H.R. 663/S. 191, Burn Pits Accountability Act

On January 17, 2019, Representative Tulsi Gabbard (HI) introduced H.R. 663, the Burn Pits Accountability Act in the House and Senator Amy Klobuchar (MN) introduced a companion bill, S. 191, in the Senate.

Since the Persian Gulf War, a common waste disposal practice at military sites outside the United States was the use of burn pits. Smoke from these pits contained toxic substances that may have short- and long-term health effects, especially for those who were exposed for longer periods. Many service members reported acute symptoms of respiratory or eye irritation, gastrointestinal distress, or rashes during or shortly after exposure, but the research thus far has been inconclusive about whether there are longer lasting consequences to these exposures as many veterans, who are still struggling with health conditions that arose during or after military service believe.

Both bills would require the Secretary of Defense to ensure that periodic health assessments ascertain

whether a service member has been at a location when an open burn pit was used or exposed to toxic airborne chemicals. It will further require the Secretary to enter into an information sharing agreement with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA). If a service member was exposed, the VA Secretary will enroll the member into the VA Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry, unless the member elects not to enroll. In agreement with DAV Resolution No. 069, DAV supports H.R. 663 and S. 191-legislation that would ensure that exposure to burn pits and airborne chemicals are recognized by both the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs.

Thank you for all you do for America's wartime service-disabled veterans and their families.

Take Action



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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TRICARE Covers Banked Donor Milk for Sick Infants

TRICARE now covers prescribed banked donor milk for infants with certain serious health conditions. Your baby and you must meet certain criteria for TRICARE to cover banked donor milk. Covered banked donor milk comes from human milk banks accredited by the Human Milk Banking Association of North America.

Read the full article [here](#).





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