



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, April 26, 2020

Volume 11, Issue 17



## **This-N-That**

Good evening everyone,

With all that has been going on in my life the last two months, I've had no choice but to slow down, but not to worry, maybe 4-5 more weeks and I plan on all things being back to normal!

Our web master Kristijan has been working in the background making improvements, modifications and of course repairs so I've not managed to get much posted, but that will return to normal by this coming week.

I also wanted to reach out and say thank you for all the get well E-Mails and cards, they've truly made a difference in my life, so from the bottom of my heart, thank you!

I also need to send a shout out to Dennis Z, for all his help too! He has sent us another nine DVD's packed with documents which we will unload, tag and get online as quickly as possible.

As most of you know the VA in their infinite wisdom has move, removed, or hidden all DBQ's VA Forms and we've had an influx of VSO's and SO's asking us for them which we have some but not all of them so we are reaching out to all our readers and asking you help. If you know the form number(s) please send them to me and we can dig for them. If you have the actual forms that are blank please do send those to us too!

Last week we had discovered an error after the newsletter went out, somehow the entire legislative category got locked from non-subscribers as well as subscribers. In the process of making repairs, we did find two titles no longer existent so those too were removed and it's no open to any one.

We have chosen the front page look, but not sure when it will be installed hopefully this coming week.

There are several other issues on my mind that I need to continue to address:

- Homeless Veterans: If you have a program going on in your area we'd like to hear about it.
- Potential Suicide Vets: If you'd doing something to help reduce the numbers we' like to hear about this tii!
- Helping SR Vets: during this corona virus Pandemic, wed also like to hear about this too!

The Contact Us Page is working now fully operational for those who need to contact us.

If you have any ideas or thoughts, please do share them with us and we will certainly look at them and see if we can merge some or all of it into the new look.

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)

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**VA Committee Urges VA to Postpone  
Elimination of 48-Hour Rule**

On Monday, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (HVAC) sent a bipartisan letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie regarding VA's decision to repeal the 48-hour review policy. On April 24, VA intends to rescind a decades-long policy that allows accredited veteran service officers to review claims for accuracy prior to a veteran being notified of a ratings decision. In the letter, Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA) and Ranking Member David Roe (R-TN) requested information from Secretary Wilkie regarding any alternatives to the 48-hour review policy VA has considered and whether service officers would be provided with access to draft decisions before they are finalized. The VFW thanks Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Roe for their support in preventing this dangerous change. [Read the letter.](#)

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## **Catastrophic Cap Credit for Some TRICARE Households**

Since Jan. 1, 2018, enrollment fees for TRICARE Prime, TRICARE Select, and the US Family Health Plan (USFHP) haven't been applied to the annual TRICARE family catastrophic cap for certain households. The Defense Health Agency is working to fix this issue. This issue only affects those TRICARE-eligible households who exceeded or came close to exceeding their catastrophic cap in 2018, 2019, and 2020.

To learn more, [read the article](#).

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Links to Other Stories

- Veteran nurse surprised to see herself in framed drawing
- Coordinated interdisciplinary pain care for home-bound Veterans
- VA and Aunt René Veteran, 65, down 40 pounds... and working out!
- team up to care for Air Force Veteran
- Veterans can attend virtual events for National Vietnam War Veterans Day
- Creative writing program helps Veterans with PTSD
- Choose a career leading the Veterans' care revolution as a VAMC Director
- VR&E makes a difference one Veteran at a time

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



## **VA Partners with Treasury Department to Deliver Economic Impact Payments to Veterans and Survivors**

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today it is working directly with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and U.S. Treasury Department to ensure delivery of 'Economic Impact Payments' to Veterans and survivors who receive

Compensation and Pension (C&P) benefit payments from VA without additional paperwork or IRS filings.

The ‘Economic Impact Payments,’ authorized by the Treasury Department under the 2020 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, will be issued automatically to recipients of non-taxable VA benefits who did not file annual income tax returns for 2018 or 2019. VA and the IRS have been collaborating since the passage of the CARES Act to ensure Veterans receive their EIP.

“Many have expressed concern that Veterans and their beneficiaries would be overlooked during the distribution of Economic Impact Payments from the CARES Act simply because they don’t file an annual tax return,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This collaboration will ensure our Veterans receive CARES Act payments without any additional action or paperwork required.”

Economic Impact Payments will be automatic for non-tax filing VA beneficiaries. For VA beneficiaries who filed a Form 1040 for 2018 or 2019, those payments will also be automatic. No further action is needed. They can track the status of their payments on the Get My Payment tool on IRS.gov. For non-tax filing VA beneficiaries, please note their information will be loaded on this tool within the next few weeks.

For VA beneficiaries who didn't file a tax return in 2018 or 2019 and have a dependent, there is a special step they need to take, and the sooner the better. They should visit the [Non-Filer: Enter Payment Info Here](#) tool on IRS.gov. By quickly taking steps to enter information on the IRS website about them and their qualifying children, they can receive the \$500 per dependent child payment in addition to their \$1,200 individual payment.

VA recognizes that many non-tax filing beneficiaries have already begun using the IRS' EIP payment portal to provide the necessary data to IRS to receive their EIP. There will be no interruption to payments being processed using the IRS portal, and Veterans with internet access are encouraged to continue providing information and track their EIP through the IRS portal.

For those who do not have access, or choose not to use the IRS portal, their EIP will be processed without further action on their part.

While no date for distribution has been set at this time, VA is securely sharing necessary beneficiary data with Treasury which will allow Treasury to begin issuance of Economic Impact Payments.

For more information on CARES Act 'Economic Impact

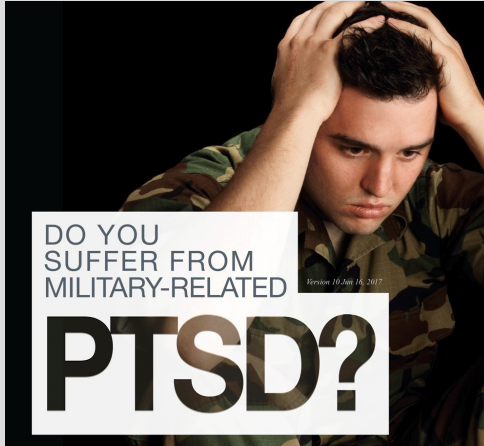


Payments, visit:

<https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/economic-impact-payments-what-you-need-to-know>.

Source: <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/index.cfm>

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DO YOU  
SUFFER FROM  
MILITARY-RELATED  
**PTSD?**

Version 10.2011 10.2017

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

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## POLL QUESTIONS

We'd truly appreciate if you would participate in the polls listed. They will give us an idea in which direction we need to progress! Simply Click [HERE](#).

How concerned are you about contracting coronavirus?

Did you know that the coronavirus is spread through the same methods as the common flu?

Have you received the flu vaccine this year?

Which Branch of Service did you serve?

Which war Era did you serve?

Were you exposed to:

Have you experienced any medical problems?

Have you filed a claim(s) with the VA?

How long did it take for your claim to be reviewed the first time?

Was your claim denied?

Have you filed an appeal?

What is your opinion of Sec VA Robert Wilkie?

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**Veterans-For-Change Web Site**

The Veterans-For-Change website has been around since 2009. The looks pretty much stay the same, but in the background our new webmaster has been making repairs to things that haven't worked properly in

over a year.

**There are still repairs being made, but the polls are now working 100% and there are five polls open to all to take.**

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 **5,021** hits per day, and downloads average **5,623** per day with a total **6,156,331** 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 **18,730** documents in **171+** Libraries, added **31** documents on-line (Updated: 04/19/20)
- FAQ's on-line with **1,790** FAQ's on 101 topics! (Updated 08/29/19 - [www.Veterans-for-change.org](http://www.Veterans-for-change.org) NEW)
- 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: **04/23/20**) (**3 Added**)
  - News (Articles On-Line: **9,669**)
  - Polls
  - Web Links, more than **7,461**, Added **55** New Links (Updated: **04/02/20**)

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



## **TRICARE Offers Telehealth Services for Mental Health Care**

The Military Health System is working to provide you with health options while you practice social distancing to combat the coronavirus pandemic. TRICARE covers telehealth services to include otherwise-covered mental health services.

To learn more, [read the article](#).



Below are links to all currently active pre-written E-Mails to many pieces of legislation. We ask that you go to each one, and send the pre-written E-Mails, and to also call your Reps or Senators and ask for their support on a weekly basis!

**You don't need to be Active Duty or a Veteran, in fact we ask all Veteran friends to also help!**

1. [Urge Congress to Pass the Retired Pay Restoration Act](#)
2. [S. 2966, the Rural Veterans Travel Enhancement Act of 2019](#)
3. [S. 1003, VET OPP Act to Reform VA Employment](#)

## Programs

4. H.R. 4574 - Pass the Veterans' Right to Breathe Act Now!
5. S. 2810, the Veterans Hearing Benefits Act of 2019
6. Support H.R.4985, the Veterans Residential Care Choice Act
7. New Concurrent Receipt Bills Introduced!
8. STOP Downsizing of Military Treatment facilities
9. Support H.R. 5610 and S. 3444 to add Agent Orange Presumptives
10. Temporarily Waive TRICARE Mail Order Campaign
11. Need Your Help on Recovery Rebate Checks
12. Put In Stimulus Bill a Waiver of Mail Order Copays During Pandemic
13. Ensure Service Members and Their Families Have Safe Quality Housing
14. H.R. 6591 - Support Veterans in Need of Emergency Care During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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## News Flash



## **A Letter to All on the Frontlines in the Battle Against COVID-19**

In the midst of this pandemic, one the likes of which we have never before seen, we, as veterans, are

transported back to memories of our service during the Vietnam War, the last time America witnessed this shocking loss of life. Although the environment and circumstances of our war are not precisely the same as yours, we see a direct correlation to the experiences, conditions, and fallout that we endured from our time in the “trenches.” We know from our wartime experiences the feelings of social isolation; little contact with family; the endless, incoming casualties; the stressful anxiety of making triage decisions; and the frustration of lacking critical medical equipment and personal safety items.

We remember the sadness of our hearts in not having the time to do all we wanted to do for the patients in our care. We see on your faces and hear in your voices the profound weight and sense of grief that you carry. We know that, along with these feelings, you have the added fear and threat of dealing with this unpredictable virus and the burden of potentially exposing family and friends.

We were not prepared for our war, just as you are facing situations unlike any you have experienced before. The daily chaos, anxiety, and stress of the shifts you work can be overwhelming at times with patients wherever you turn, all of whom need your care and attention. You are running a marathon with no



finish line in sight, even though you are running as fast as you can.

Your coworkers will be with you forever as you are sharing something that no one else will ever truly understand. This may well be the most intense experience of your life. This will change your life. Don't forget to take care of each other, because you have each other. However, when all is said and done, on the other side of this national crisis, you need to pause, reflect, and get in touch with yourself. We spent too many years after we came home from the war dealing with the denial of our feelings and memories.

One of the legacies of the Vietnam War is that society now accepts Post-traumatic Stress as a natural reaction to abnormal events. We discovered the importance of seeking professional help to explore the emotional residue created by our war. We had to take a deep dive into our feelings and search our souls in order to heal ourselves. We know this path—it is a life-long journey. Your loved ones are suffering and sacrificing in this fight. Don't forget to include them in this process. Family and friends are your first line of support and are critical to healing.

We write this letter because we believe we share a commonality of serving our nation in a time of uncertainty and need. You are the very essence of

what make America great. Your courage, determination, strength, and selfless sacrifice give us hope. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all. We salute you. You are not alone. We stand with you.

Chuck Byers, BSN

Chair, VVA Veterans Health Committee

U.S. Army Combat Medic RVN 67-68 Arizona

Marsha Tansey Four, RN

U.S. Army Nurse Corps Vietnam 1969-1970

Special Advisor to the VVA National President

Immediate Past National Vice President, VVA

Pennsylvania

Dr. Thomas C. Hall, PhD

U.S. Army Vietnam 68-71 National Chair

VVA PTSD Committee Missouri

Kate O'Hare-Palmer, RN, RD

U.S. Army Nurse Corps Vietnam (1968-1969)

National Chair of the VVA Women Veterans

Committee

California

Dr. Linda Spoonster Schwartz, RN, MSN, DrPH FAAN

U.S. Air Force Nurse Corps (1968- 1986)

Special Advisor to the VVA National President

Connecticut

Rick Weidman,  
Executive Director for Policy and Government Affairs  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
U.S. Army Combat Medic RVN 1969 Maryland

Postscript:

It is important to know that this letter was a spontaneous effort by a group of Vietnam veterans deeply touched by your videos, the news reports, and daily body counts. They cannot be in the trenches this time, so they looked for a way to help. The sentiments expressed in this letter reflect the thoughts and feelings of our many of our members. As a New Yorker, there is so much more that could be said. Most importantly, I want to thank you all. As stated in the letter, we stand with you now and in the future. We are all in this together. Be safe out there!

--John Rowan, National President, Vietnam Veterans of America, U.S. Air Force

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**MHS - Defending the Homeland:  
Proning made easy at Keesler Air Force  
Base**

COVID-19 has presented many challenges to the medical community. Among those challenges is treating patients with respiratory failure. Adult respiratory distress syndrome, or ARDS, is a complication of COVID-19 among intensive care unit patients. To address this issue, a team from the Air Force's 81st Medical Group, or MDG.

[Read More](#)

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**~~Follow us on MEWE ~~**

Follow us on MEWE! The support staff at MEWE is responsive, open to suggestions and works very hard to protect your personal information.

We hope you will join us on this new site.

VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE

HOMELESS HEROES PROGRAM OF VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE

AMVETS GROUP

VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP

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

AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY



HOME *of the* FREE  
BECAUSE *of the* BRAVE

*Honoring those who served*

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## **Be Cyber Aware: COVID-19 Myths vs. Facts**

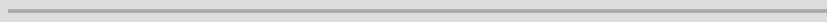
While your attention is focused on staying safe and healthy at this time, don't take your eye off cybersecurity measures. Whether you're working from home or browsing social media sites, you're a target for scammers taking advantage of the COVID-19 national health emergency. Here are some myths vs. facts to help you stay safe, not sorry.

To learn more, [read the article](#).

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## **VFW-Supported Bill to Protect Student Veterans Sent to Become Law**

This week, the Senate passed H.R. 6322, the [Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020](#), which was previously passed by the House. If signed into law, the bill would ensure student veterans who are engaged in work study programs can continue to receive their work payment checks, along with their housing payment allowance. This bill would also make sure student veterans whose schools are closing due to the COVID-19 crisis are not penalized any months of their GI Bill entitlements while this pandemic is still impacting the country. The VFW would like to thank Chairmen Takano and Moran, along with Ranking Members Roe and Tester for making sure that in this uncertain time, veterans are still being taken care of. [Read the release.](#)





## **With TRICARE, Help From a Nurse is Just a Call Away**

With the impact that COVID-19 and social distancing is having on everyday life, you may be unsure how to get the care you need for any medical concern. With TRICARE and the Military Health System Nurse Advice Line, you can.

To learn more, [read the article](#).

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## **I am Navy Medicine: Stopping the spread of COVID-19**

Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Donald Cooney, assigned to Navy Medicine Readiness and Training Command (NMRTC) Bremerton and working at...

[Read More Here](#)

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**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)**

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## **Memorial unveiling**

The National POW/MIA Monument to those from the Vietnam War unveiling is now virtual. Ralph Galati, former prisoner of war in the Hanoi Hilton, will be a featured speaker at the online event. The event is noon March 29 on the Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pvvmfund/>.

Source

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## **Executive in Charge of VHA Expresses Gratitude for VSOs**

Dr. Richard Stone, Executive in Charge of the Veterans Health Administration sent out a video earlier this week expressing his gratitude for the Veteran Service Organization (VSOs). Throughout the world, VFW members are [#StillServing](#) our fellow veterans, and communities even during the COVID pandemic by holding blood drives, performing well-being checks, linking national mental health resources to those who may require their aid, and relaying critical updates and resources. [Listen to the message.](#)

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## Office of Inspector General

1. [Priority Open Recommendations: Department of Labor](#)
2. [Immigration Detention: Care of Pregnant Women in DHS Facilities](#)



### **Special alert for benefit recipients who don't file a tax return and have dependents**

SSA, RRB recipients with eligible children need to act by Wednesday to quickly add money to their automatic

## Economic Impact Payment; IRS asks for help in the 'Plus \$500 Push'

IR-2020-76, April 20, 2020

WASHINGTON – The Internal Revenue Service today issued a special alert for several groups of federal benefit recipients to act by this Wednesday, April 22, if they didn't file a tax return in 2018 or 2019 and have dependents so they can quickly receive the full amount of their Economic Impact Payment.

Their \$1,200 payments will be issued soon and, in order to add the \$500 per eligible child amount to these payments, the IRS needs the dependent information before the payments are issued. Otherwise, their payment at this time will be \$1,200 and, by law, the additional \$500 per eligible child amount would be paid in association with a return filing for tax year 2020.

Following extensive work by the IRS and other government agencies, \$1,200 automatic payments will be starting soon for those receiving Social Security retirement, survivor or disability benefits (SSDI), Railroad Retirement benefits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Veterans Affairs beneficiaries who didn't file a tax return in the last two years. No action is needed by these groups; they will automatically receive their \$1,200 payment.

For those benefit recipients with children who aren't required to file a tax return, an extra step is needed to quickly add \$500 per eligible child onto their automatic payment of \$1,200.

For people in these groups who have a qualifying child and didn't file a 2018 or 2019 tax return, they have a limited window to register to have \$500 per eligible child added automatically to their soon-to-be-received \$1,200 Economic Impact Payment. A quick trip to a Z on IRS.gov by noon Eastern time, Wednesday, April 22, for some of these groups may help put all of their eligible Economic Income Payment into a single payment.

“We want to ‘Plus \$500’ these recipients with children so they can get their maximum Economic Impact Payment of \$1,200 plus \$500 for each eligible child as quickly as possible,” said IRS Commissioner Chuck Rettig. “They’ll get \$1,200 automatically, but they need to act quickly and register at IRS.gov to get the extra \$500 per child added to their payment. These groups don’t normally have a return filing obligation and may not realize they qualify for a larger payment. We’re asking people and organizations throughout the country to share this information widely and help the IRS with the Plus \$500 Push.”

To help spread the word to recipients with children about this special “Plus \$500 Push,” the IRS has additional material available on a special partners page that can be shared with friends, family members and community groups. This effort will focus on the initial April 22 deadline and continue this spring to reach as many people as possible since the child payments will continue to be made in the weeks and months ahead.

Have a child but don’t file a tax return? Visit [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) now

Those receiving federal benefits – including Social Security retirement, survivor or disability benefits (SSDI), Railroad Retirement benefits, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Veterans Administration benefits – who have with children and who weren’t required file a tax return in 2018 or 2019 should visit the Non-Filer: Enter Payment Info Here tool on [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov). By quickly taking steps to enter information on the IRS website about them and their qualifying children, they can receive the \$500 per dependent child payment automatically in addition to their \$1,200 individual payment. Otherwise, their payment at this time will be \$1,200 and, by law, the additional \$500 per eligible child amount would be paid in association with a return filing for tax year 2020.

First window affects SSA/RRB recipients with children; SSI and VA recipients have slightly more time to add \$500 to automatic payments

For certain SSA / RRB beneficiaries who don't normally file a tax return and do not register with the IRS by April 22, they will still be eligible to receive the separate payment of \$500 per qualifying child. For those who miss the April 22 deadline, their payment at this time will be \$1,200 and, by law, the additional \$500 per eligible child amount would be paid in association with a return filing for tax year 2020. They will not be eligible to use the Non-Filer tool to add eligible children once their \$1,200 payment has been issued.

SSI and VA beneficiaries have some additional time beyond April 22 to add their children since their \$1,200 automatic payments will be made at a later date. SSI recipients will receive their automatic payments in early May, and the VA payment schedule for beneficiaries who receive Compensation and Pension (C&P) benefit payments is still being determined. If they have children and aren't required to file a tax return, both groups are urged to use the Non-Filer tool as soon as possible. Once their \$1,200 payment has been issued, they will not be eligible to use the Non-Filer tool to add eligible children. Their payment will be \$1,200 and, by

law, the additional \$500 per eligible child amount would be paid in association with a return filing for tax year 2020.

No action needed by most taxpayers

The Treasury Department will make these automatic payments to SSA, SSI, RRB and VA recipients. Recipients will generally receive the automatic \$1,200 payments by direct deposit, Direct Express debit card or by paper check, just as they would normally receive their benefits.

For information about Social Security retirement, survivors and disability insurance beneficiaries, please visit the SSA website at [SSA.gov](https://www.ssa.gov). For more information related to veterans and their beneficiaries who receive Compensation and Pension (C&P) benefit payments from VA, please visit [VA.gov](https://www.va.gov).

General IRS information about the Economic Impact Payments is available on a [special section of IRS.gov](#).

Watch out for scams related to Economic Impact Payments

The IRS urges taxpayers to be on the lookout for scams related to the Economic Impact Payments. There is no fee required to receive these payments.

Source

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## No Copayments for COVID-19 Testing

Under the H.R. 6201, the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#), TRICARE will waive copays for approved COVID-19 testing that is ordered by a doctor. Beneficiaries are not responsible for copays for tests (and related provider services and supplies) furnished on or after the date of enactment. Claims that were filed with a copay will be reprocessed to remove the copayment or cost share. Beneficiaries who already paid a copay for now-covered tests can file for reimbursement by filing a [factual appeal](#). [Learn more about TRICARE and COVID-19.](#)

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**Early detection support for troops  
during COVID-19**



The quick spread of COVID-19 has caused many health organizations including the Defense Health Agency's Armed Forces Health Surveillance Division to innovate...

[Read More Here](#)

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## **Medical lab workers ensure readiness and wellness behind the scenes**

Medical laboratory professionals usually work behind the scenes, performing vital duties to ensure the health and readiness of the force. But they come front and center this week...

[Source](#)

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## **Eligible Alaska Native Veterans Can Receive Acres of Federal Land**

Due to the [John D. Dingle, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act](#), the Alaska Native Veterans Program of 2019 will provide the opportunity for eligible Vietnam-era veterans or their heirs to select 2.5 to 160 acres of Federal land in Alaska. Eligible veterans cannot apply yet, but they can act now to ensure they receive applications later this year. [Learn more.](#)

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## **Mortgage Forbearance During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The Department of Housing and Urban Development has partnered with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to produce a “What You Need to Know: Mortgage Forbearance” video to educate consumers who may have difficulty making on-time mortgage payments due to the national coronavirus emergency. [Learn more.](#)

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## Catastrophic Cap Credit for Some TRICARE Households

Since Jan. 1, 2018, enrollment fees for [TRICARE Prime](#), [TRICARE Select](#), and the [US Family Health Plan](#) (USFHP) haven't been applied to the annual TRICARE family [catastrophic cap](#) for certain households. The Defense Health Agency is working to fix this issue. This issue only affects those TRICARE-eligible households who exceeded or came close to exceeding their catastrophic cap in 2018, 2019, and 2020. [Learn more.](#)

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## Some TRICARE Beneficiaries Will Get a Refund

The Defense Health Agency (DHA) announced that many TRICARE Prime, TRICARE Select, and US Family Health Plan beneficiaries will receive notices stating they may be eligible for refunds if they paid more than \$2,400 out of pocket towards their annual maximum payment in 2018, 2019, and 2020. This issue only affects those TRICARE-eligible households who exceeded or came close to exceeding their catastrophic cap in 2018, 2019, and 2020.

In 2018, the DHA directed that the annual fee paid by retirees no longer counted toward the yearly out-of-pocket max. That meant some families were faced with an increase of about \$600 in their yearly TRICARE spending, up to \$3,600 for most retirees.

Retirees, who are eligible should be getting a refund notification letter from TRICARE's contractors - HealthNet in the west region and Humana in the east. The reimbursements are paid in the form of an account credit that applies to future enrollment fees. Retirees will have the option of requesting a cash refund.

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## **VA and IRS Working to Get COVID-19 Payments to Veterans**

The recently enacted Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES-H.R.748, P.L.116-

136) allows the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to work directly with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and U.S. Treasury Department to ensure the delivery of Economic Impact Payments (EIP) to veterans and survivors who receive VA Compensation and Pension (C&P) benefit payments. This will be done without the beneficiary doing additional paperwork or IRS filings.

This law authorizes the Treasury Department to automatically issue to recipients of non-taxable VA benefits who did not file annual income tax returns for 2018 or 2019. The VA and the IRS have been collaborating since the passage of the Act (3/27/20) to ensure veterans receive their EIP. "Many have expressed concern that veterans and their beneficiaries would be overlooked during the distribution of Economic Impact Payments from the CARES Act simply because they don't file an annual tax return," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This collaboration will ensure our veterans receive CARES Act payments without any additional action or paperwork required." EIP will be automatic for non-tax filing VA beneficiaries. For VA beneficiaries who filed Form 1040 for 2018 or 2019, payments will be automatic, no further action is needed. Payment status can be tracked online with the, "Get My Payment" tool on IRS.gov. For non-tax filing VA beneficiaries, please note your information will be available on this site

within the next few weeks.

For VA beneficiaries who didn't file a tax return in 2018 or 2019 and have a dependent, there is a special step you need to take, and the sooner the better. You should visit the Non-Filer: Enter Payment Info Here tool on the [IRS website](#). By quickly taking steps to enter information on the IRS website about you and your qualifying children, you can receive the \$500 per dependent payment in addition to your \$1,200 individual payment. The VA claims that many non-tax filing beneficiaries have already begun using the [IRS EIP Payment portal](#) to provide the necessary data to the IRS. There will be no interruption to payments being processed using the IRS portal, and veterans with internet access are encouraged to continue providing information and track their EIP. For those who do not have access, or choose not to use the IRS portal, your EIP will be processed without any further action. While no date for distribution has been set at this time, the VA is securely sharing necessary beneficiary data with the treasury, which will start EIP distribution. For more information on CARES Act 'Economic Impact Payments,' [go online](#).

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## **Ranking Member Roe, Chairman Takano Call on VA to Postpone Changes to Disability Claims Process**

Today, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Ranking Member Dr. Phil Roe (R-Tenn.) and Chairman Mark Takano (D-Calif.) sent a bipartisan letter with to Secretary Wilkie calling on VA to postpone their planned elimination of the 48-hour review period in the disability claims process and work with Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) to consider alternatives to a complete elimination of this review. Six major VSOs already expressed their concern over the decision in a letter to Secretary Wilkie, stating that "VA made this decision without consulting with VSO partners about the impact this change would have on veterans" in addition to changing rules "amidst the chaos of the COVID-19 crisis."



In their letter, the Members wrote, “Our country is facing an unprecedented emergency in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, we urge the Department to consider postponing any change to the 48-hour review period until after VA, VSOs and Congress are able to have a more thorough discussion about this policy change.”

“VSOs as well as other representatives and agents, provide veterans and their loved ones with invaluable assistance while navigating the Department’s disability claims process,” the Members wrote. “The 48-hour review period provides a brief opportunity for VSOs to review rating decisions for errors or technical corrections before the decisions are finalized, thereby quickly and efficiently improving the accuracy of claims and reducing the need for appeals. VSOs tell me that elimination of this review period could result in delayed benefits for veterans and an increase in appeals or other formal corrective action.”

The full text of the letter can be found [here](#) and below:

The Honorable Robert Wilkie  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to voice concerns and request information about the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) plan to eliminate a quality control step in the disability claims process, known as the 48-hour review period. While we appreciate the legal considerations influencing VA's decision to revoke this review period, we fear the timing of this decision may create additional hardship for veterans and Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) who currently rely on this process to provide better services to veterans and their families. To preserve the value of the 48-hour review period, we urge you to work with VSOs to consider alternatives to a complete elimination of this opportunity for pre-decisional review.

VSOs as well as other representatives and agents, provide veterans and their loved ones with invaluable assistance while navigating the Department's disability claims process. The 48-hour review period provides a brief opportunity for VSOs to review rating decisions for errors or technical corrections before the decisions are finalized, thereby quickly and efficiently improving the accuracy of claims and reducing the need for appeals. VSOs believe that elimination of this review period could result in delayed benefits for veterans and an increase in appeals or other formal corrective

action.

VA is currently phasing out this quality review mechanism while the Department, veterans, and VSOs are struggling with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, VSOs have recently migrated their staffs to remote work locations following closure of Regional Offices and are working with fewer resources amidst an ever-changing crisis climate. Our country is facing an unprecedented emergency in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, I urge the Department to consider postponing any change to the 48-hour review period until after VA, VSOs and Congress are able to have a more thorough discussion about this policy change.

Until then, please provide the following information regarding the 48-hour review period:

1. Following VA's proposed elimination of the 48-hour review, how will a VSO representative be notified when a draft rating decision is uploaded into the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS)? Will a draft decision be uploaded in every case and how long will it remain there before it is finalized?
2. Has VA considered any alternatives to the 48-hour review period to preserve a VSO representative's ability to identify significant errors prior to promulgation of a rating decision?

3. We understand that one consideration is the complaint by attorneys who do not have the same access to the 48-hour review period for their veteran clients. What technological and privacy challenges prevent expansion of the 48-hour review period to attorney representatives?

4. What access, if any, to VBMS do attorneys currently enjoy? What is the estimated cost of providing private attorneys access to VBMS and is the access equal to that of VSOs?

Thank you for your attention and assistance. We ask that you provide a response by April 27, 2020.

[Source](#)

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## **HVAC Chairman and Ranking Member Ask VA to Postpone Changes to Claims Process**

House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Mark Takano (Calif.) and Ranking Member Dr. Phil Roe (Tenn.) sent a bipartisan letter to Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Robert Wilkie calling on the VA to postpone their planned elimination of the 48-hour review period in the disability claims process and work with Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) to consider alternatives to a complete elimination of this review. Six major

VSOs expressed their concern with the decision in a letter to Secretary Wilkie, stating that "VA made this decision without consulting with VSO partners about the impact this change would have on veterans" in addition to changing rules "amidst the chaos of the COVID-19 crisis."

They wrote, "Our country is facing an unprecedented emergency in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, we urge the Department to consider postponing any change to the 48-hour review period until after VA, VSOs and Congress are able to have a more thorough discussion about this policy change."

"VSOs as well as other representatives and agents, provide veterans and their loved ones with invaluable assistance while navigating the Department's disability claims process," the members wrote. "The 48-hour review period provides a brief opportunity for VSOs to review rating decisions for errors or technical corrections before the decisions are finalized, thereby quickly and efficiently improving the accuracy of claims and reducing the need for appeals. VSOs tell me that elimination of this review period could result in delayed benefits for veterans and an increase in appeals or other formal corrective action."

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## **Many Veterans to Get Letter from VA on Medical Cost Reimbursement**

Certain veterans who were denied reimbursement for non-department emergency medical care will be getting a letter from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) informing them that they will be reimbursed for veteran's emergency room expenses if they were not covered by private insurance.

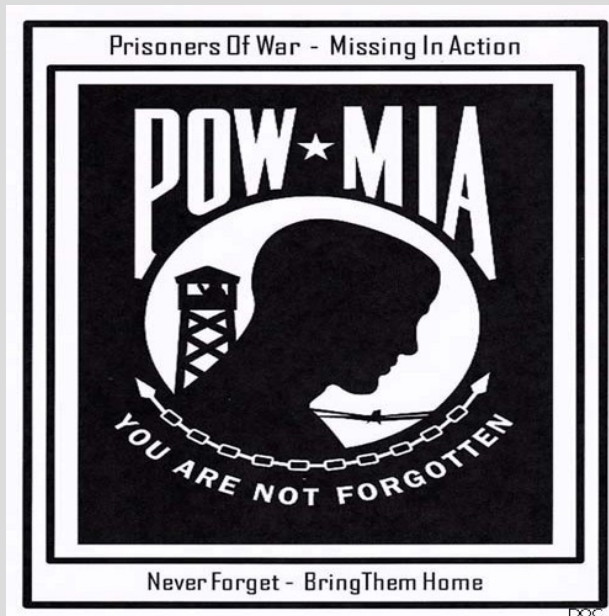
On Sept. 9, 2019, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims ruled (18-6091) that the VA's current regulation for veterans seeking non-department medical care violates existing federal law. They ordered VA officials to re-examine more than 72,000 rejected claims and update their rules, arguing the VA has a responsibility to cover the costs of the unexpected medical visits. This case (*Wolfie v Wilkie*) was first reported in the Sept. 20, 2019 issue of

## NewsBytes.

The case centers on veterans whose unpaid emergency room expenses were denied by VA officials under existing policies. The plaintiffs' bills had part of their bills paid for by other insurance but were left with several thousand dollars of personal costs.

VA officials argued in court that they did not need to handle the unpaid balance because the veterans were primarily covered under other insurance plans. The court ruled that violates both existing law and past legal precedent. The ruling invalidated all VA decisions denying reimbursement for deductibles and co-insurance costs not covered in emergency visits at non-VA facilities. VA officials have estimated that full compliance with the court order could cost between \$1.8 billion and \$6.5 billion. Reimbursements may date back to cases decided by the VA in 2016. The letters come as many veterans are facing new debts related to work interruptions and other financial problems related to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. However, processing of the claims is likely to take several months and may be stalled further by ongoing legal appeals.

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## **Treasury Partners with Veterans Affairs to Deliver Economic Impact Payments to Veterans Automatically**

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of the Treasury and IRS announced today that they are working directly with the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (VA) to ensure Veterans and their beneficiaries who receive Compensation and Pension (C&P) benefit payments will receive their [Economic Impact Payments](#) automatically and without additional paperwork.

“Economic Impact Payments will be issued automatically to our Veterans and their families who did not file tax returns for 2018 or 2019,” said Secretary Steven T. Mnuchin. “The Treasury, IRS and VA are working hard to ensure our nation’s heroes receive



these payments quickly and without any additional action or paperwork.”

Many non-tax filing beneficiaries have already begun using the “[Non-Filers: Enter Payment Info](#)” tool to provide basic personal information to receive their EIP. There will be no interruption to payments being processed using this online tool. Veterans with Internet access are encouraged to continue providing information.

For those who do not have access, or choose not to use the “Non-Filers: Enter Payment Info” tool, their EIP will be processed with no further action required from them.

For more information on ‘Economic Impact Payments click [here](#).

Source: Tom Lasser

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## **Important Update on Economic Impact Payments**

## The IRS Has Announced That Veterans and Survivors Who Do Not File Federal Taxes, BUT Who Have Dependent Children, Must Make a Special Filing

Many veterans who qualify for Economic Impact Payments, and who already filed tax returns for 2018 or 2019, have begun to receive direct deposit payments, and others will soon begin receiving checks in the mail.

Furthermore, last Friday, April 17, the Department of Veterans Affairs [announced](#) an agreement with the IRS so that veterans and survivors who receive VA disability compensation, pension or DIC (Disability and Indemnity Compensation) but do not file federal taxes will also soon begin receiving their Economic Impact Payments, \$1,200 per person, or \$2,400 per couple.

However, for people in these groups who have a qualifying child and didn't file a 2018 or 2019 tax return, the IRS requires you to use its [special non-filer tool](#) as soon as possible in order to assure that the additional \$500 per eligible dependent child is included with your automatic Economic Impact Payment.

[Further information about how to make these special filings, including any deadlines, as well as other information regarding the Economic Impact Payments can be found on IRS.gov.](#)

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## **Eligible Veterans Will Automatically Receive Stimulus Checks, Following Calls from Tester & Moran**

This is a critical step in removing an unnecessary burden from our nation's heroes, and will help our

vulnerable population of veterans and survivors get through this unprecedented time”

(U.S. Senate) – Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee Ranking Member Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Chairman Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) released the following joint statement after the Treasury Department and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) clarified that eligible veterans who do not file income taxes will receive their stimulus checks:

“We’re glad that the Treasury Department answered our call to provide veterans and survivors—who aren’t normally required to file annual tax returns—with the same access to swift financial relief as everyone else during this crisis,” said Senators Tester and Moran. “This is a critical step in removing an unnecessary burden from our nation’s heroes, and will help our vulnerable population of veterans and survivors get through this unprecedented time. Moving forward, we must ensure that Washington provides veterans with their promised payments quickly, and without any additional bureaucratic hurdles.”

Senators Tester and Moran have led the effort in Congress to ensure veterans were provided their Economic Impact Payments in a timely manner without having to file additional burdensome paperwork.

Earlier this month, the [Senators urged](#) VA Under Secretary for Benefits, Dr. Paul Lawrence, to develop a plan between the VA and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to provide veterans and VA beneficiaries their stimulus checks under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Tester additionally joined 45 colleagues in a [letter to the Trump Administration](#), highlighting the urgent need to provide eligible recipients direct cash assistance.

[Source](#)

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The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced five new identifications for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

**Army Sgt. Lloyd A. Alumbaugh**, 21, was a member of Ambulance Company, 7th Medical Battalion, 7th

Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 28, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. [Read about Alumbaugh.](#)

**Army Cpl. Charles E. Hiltibran**, 19, was a member of Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. [Read about Hiltibran.](#)

**Army Pfc. Louis N. Crosby**, 18, was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 1, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. [Read about Crosby.](#)

**Army Pfc. Bill F. Hobbs**, 20, was a member of Heavy Mortar Company, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was killed in action on November 30, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. [Read about Hobbs.](#)

**Army Cpl. Ralph S. Boughman**, 21, was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on

Dec. 2, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. [Read about Boughman.](#)



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