



# Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

*A Voice of the Veterans*

*Week Ending Sunday, December 04, 2016*  
Volume 7, Issue 45

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## ***This-N-That***

Finally after several weeks of issues and problems on the Veterans-For-Change website, we now have our web links module completely changed out to a new module and its working 100% and better. In addition we've added another 49 new web links.

In addition the documents library has also been repaired and now you can view/download much, much faster.

More bandwidth has also been added to make the system operate faster. Polls have been moved from front page to its own tab and new polls will be added shortly.

We do apologize for the problems and delays all caused from the last few upgrades, so now you should have no issues with the system.

Makes me truly sick when I hear of more medical issues that could have easily been prevented arise from any medical professional not using good practices when performing any procedure where a disease or STD could easily be spread with cross contamination.

And the Tomah Wisconsin VA facility keeps on producing more and more problems and then turns around hides the name of the individual, and then to add insult to injury they PROMOTE and give a pay raise to the SOB!

A Department of Veterans Affairs dentist may have infected 592 Veterans with Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV, but instead of getting fired, he was rewarded with an administrative position at the agency.

The unnamed dentist at a VA facility in Tomah, Wis., refused to use the disposable, sterile equipment required of VA providers and instead used his own dental tools on patients, cleaning them himself and reusing them on hundreds of Veterans.

The thought of just one person being infected is bad enough, and yes could be considered a mistake, or poor judgment and maybe be worth a slap on the wrist, but to have over 500 patients potentially infected and to be rewarded is just insanity at it's best.

Veterans-For-Change has been pushing for years now to change employment rules and regulations to make ALL VA employee's an "At Will" hire meaning they can be terminated with or without cause so that the VA Healthcare workers can be cleaned out like they should be.

We've also been pushing hard to make it so that any promotion to an executive or administrative position be fully reviewed by no less than four other executives from different regions and all records be fully disclosed so intelligent and worthy staff are promoted to the right positions to avoid any further problems.

I am in the process of prepping my weekly fax blast to all 535 members of Congress and will be adding President Elect Donald Trump's team to advise of the growing list of problems needing serious attention within the VA Healthcare System.

And again I need your help! If you have been put in a situation where you may have been contaminated or exposed to situations where your health may have been placed at risk, please write to me and tell me your story, and as always we will redact any name or information that could directly identify you, but help us to better inform those we need to in order to grab their attention.

As you know we pride ourselves in maintaining confidentiality unless of course you specifically give us permission to use your name and location.

But the bottom line is we need your help to get their attention and force the various issues so we know we can obtain real change for the better.

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

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

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

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### ***Navy Announces Transgender Policy***

The Secretary of the Navy recently published guidance on the Department of the Navy's transgender policy in SECNAVINST 1000.11. Training will be provided to commands starting in November. Commands have also been provided the [DOD handbook on transgender service](#) to help Sailors understand gender transitions. The Navy's CO Toolkit is also [available online](#).

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### ***Military Exposures***

VA researchers found an association between exposure to herbicides and high blood pressure (hypertension) risk among Vietnam War era U.S. Army Chemical Corps Veterans. They also found an association between military service in Vietnam and hypertension risk among these Veterans.

Click [HERE](#) for more information.

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## ***Congress Reaches NDAA Agreement***

This week Congress finally reached an agreement on the National Defense Authorization Act for 2017. The House and Senate are scheduled to vote on the bill before they leave for the weekend. The President earlier had said he might veto the bill if it contains some of the provisions it does.

For active duty, reserve and retired members there are many good things, many neutral and some not so good provisions. Here are some of the highlights:

The conferees agreed to a NAUS-endorsed **2.1 percent pay hike**, up from the proposed 1.6 percent. The bigger pay hike is a good thing for those currently serving in uniform.

The proposal to do away with separate BAH payments to married military couples was not included. BAH, for now, will remain the same.

In the health care arena, NAUS is pleased to see the rejection of higher copays for prescription medicines.

TRICARE will be in for a large reorganization as the three current choices Prime, Standard and Extra will change. Prime which will remain, but Standard and Extra will be merged into one called Select.

One unpleasant feature of the new TRICARE will be that active duty family members and retirees, who join the services after 2017, would face a new annual enrollment fee and fixed dollar co-pays that will be part of Prime or Select.

As far as we can determine TRICARE for Life is unaffected.

Probably the most significant reforms will shift responsibility for running military clinics and hospitals from Army, Navy and Air Force to the Defense Health Agency, a consolidation to streamline redundant bureaucracies and standardized best practices and procedures across the health care system.

The bill also seeks to improve access to care by eliminating a requirement that patients be referred for outside urgent care, and by mandating that on-base urgent care be available through 11 p.m. daily.

While there are many details to be worked out, it is obvious that TRICARE will be undergoing massive changes and you need to be aware of how they may affect you and your family.

Other agreements in the NDAA include:

**Salary System:** DoD was ordered to produce a report by January 2018 on replacing basic pay and allowances with a military salary system, an idea raised often in past studies. This would be similar in nature to the current civilian system.

**Former Spouse Law:** Future divorce settlements would eliminate the current “windfall” and would calculate the ex-spouse share of retired pay based on member’s pay grade and years of service at time of divorce rather than at time of retirement as current law allows.

The bill uses retiree cost-of-living adjustments so ex-spouses’ shares keep pace with inflation.

**SBP Study:** Defense officials are ordered to study whether the insurance industry can offer a less costly government subsidized alternative to the military Survivor Benefit Plan.

**SSIA Extended:** Pushing a final solution to the SBP/DIC issue down the road, the bill extends through May 2018 the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance of \$310 a month payable to 62,000 surviving spouses who see their Survivor Benefit Plan payments reduced dollar for dollar by their VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

These are only highlights of the entire bill. As you can imagine the whole bill is massive. The medical and personnel portions alone amass more than 400 pages. Stay tuned for more info.

Source: NAUS

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### ***New House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman***

NAUS congratulates [Rep. Dr. Phil Roe \(R-TN\)](#) on his new position as HVAC Chairman. The House Republican Steering Committee on Thursday officially recommended Rep. Roe to chair the House Veterans' Affairs Committee next year. The full House Republican Conference ratified the recommendation at a closed-door meeting Friday morning, along with the other Steering Committee's picks for the other House committee chairmanships.

Source: NAUS

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### ***VA Scraps Proposal for Transgender Surgery***

The US Department of Veterans Affairs was forced to drop a proposal to provide gender confirmation surgeries for transgender veterans, due to the Office of Management and Budget's concerns about funding. The VA has been banned from performing the procedure since 1999. [Read the full article on Military.com](#).

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**To Contact your Members of Congress**

To Call your Representative: 202-225-2305

To call your Senator: 202-224-3841 or 202-224-3553

To call different members of Congress: 202-224-3121

Toll FREE Number: 866-272-6622



[Caregiver Action Network](#) is proud to be the organization that spearheads [National Family Caregivers Month](#) each November. One of the highlights this year is the release of CAN's new [COPD Caregiver Video Resource Center](#) for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) caregivers.

An estimated 15 million people in the United States have been diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Those caring for a loved one with COPD can find comfort in knowing that they are not alone by listening to the experiences of fellow caregivers. Caregivers may find new ways to help a loved one manage and cope with the disease, as well as advice on how to balance the many responsibilities of being a caregiver. [Click here for new COPD Caregiver resources.](#)

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***Operation Mail Call***

*Troops resting on long deployments  
- your support matters*



**Veterans-For-Change - Operation Mail Call**

Operation Mail Call needs your help! We need cards and letters to send to our troops currently serving on foreign soil.

Our men and women in uniform often go months without hugging their children, walking through the park with a significant other or enjoying Mom's home-cooked Sunday dinners.

Ask them where they'd go if they had a free plane ticket anywhere in the world, and the overwhelming majority would say, "home."

Of course, we can't replace the hugs, the love or the secret family chili recipe – but with your help, we can provide them a connection to their fellow Americans who are grateful for their service.

Now, we're hoping you'll take your support to the next level by sending more cards and letters. Hand made cards by your children, or class mates are a terrific means of putting smiles on their faces even if only for a moment.

Cards and Letters of encouragement to help boost moral and let them know we sincerely appreciate the job they are doing and look forward to they day they are all brought home. Your card or letter will show your appreciation and help thousands more American heroes feel connected to the people they love and the country they serve.

Please help us to make a powerful expression of how much their fellow Americans care about them.

Thank you so much for all you're doing to show our service men and women they are appreciated missed and loved.

If you're a school teacher, please contact me at my E-Mail address at the top, our troops love to hear from kids too!

For more information, visit: <http://veterans-for-change.org/5439-operation-mail-call-2>

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***DeCA: We'll Add Private Labels But Sustain Brand Savings***

Commissary shoppers will see no drop in savings on brand name items even as the Defense Commissary Agency begins to offer better prices through its own private label products, said DeCA Director Joseph H. Jeu. "We will be maintaining overall savings on branded products, so if patrons choose not to purchase a private label they will still be at least as well off as they were previously," Jeu explained. "Patrons who do choose to purchase private label will see their cost for the basket of goods they purchase come down further." For more details, see [this Military Advantage blog post](#).

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## ***Government Accountability Reports***

Depot Maintenance: Improvements to DOD's Biennial Core Report Could Better Inform Oversight and Funding Decisions. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-81>

Food Safety: FDA's Efforts to Evaluate and Respond to Business Concerns Regarding the Produce Rule. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-98R>

Renewable Fuel Standard: Low Expected Production Volumes Make It Unlikely That Advanced Biofuels Can Meet Increasing Targets. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-108>

Renewable Fuel Standard: Program Unlikely to Meet Its Targets for Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-94>

Whistleblower Protection: Additional Actions Would Improve Recording and Reporting of Appeals Data. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-110>

Combating Terrorism: U.S. Footprint Poses Challenges for the Advise and Assist Mission in Iraq. [http://www.gao.gov/restricted/restricted\\_reports](http://www.gao.gov/restricted/restricted_reports)

Enterprise Risk Management: Selected Agencies' Experiences Illustrate Good Practices in Managing Risk. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-63>

Federal Fees, Fines, and Penalties: Observations on Agency Spending Authorities. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-268T>

Littoral Combat Ship and Frigate: Congress Faced with Critical Acquisition Decisions. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-262T>

Overseas Contingency Operations: Observations on the Use of Force Management Levels in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-246T>

Renewable Fuel Standard: Program Unlikely to Meet Production or Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-264T>

Confidential Informants: Status of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's Efforts to Address a GAO Recommendation. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-265R>

Elder Abuse: The Extent of Abuse by Guardians Is Unknown, but Some Measures Exist to Help Protect Older Adults. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-33>

Federal Student Loans: Education Needs to Improve Its Income-Driven Repayment Plan Budget Estimates. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-22>

IT Workforce: Key Practices Help Ensure Strong Integrated Program Teams; Selected Departments Need to Assess Skill Gaps. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-8>

Radiation Portal Monitors: DHS's Fleet Is Lasting Longer than Expected, and Future Acquisitions Focus on Operational Efficiencies. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-57>

Elder Abuse: The Extent of Abuse by Guardians Is Unknown, but Some Measures Are Being Taken to Help Protect Older Adults. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-273T>

Army Pacific Pathways: Comprehensive Assessment and Planning Needed to Capture Benefits Relative to Costs and Enhance Value for Participating Units [Reissued on November 30, 2016]. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-126>

American Samoa: Alternatives for Raising Minimum Wages to Keep Pace with the Cost of Living and Reach the Federal Level. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-83>

Hazardous Materials Rail Shipments: A Review of Emergency Response Information in Selected Train Documents. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-130>

Motor Carriers: Establishing System for Self-Reporting Equipment Problems Appears Feasible, but Safety Benefits Questionable and Costs Unknown. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-132>

VA Health Care: Improved Monitoring Needed for Effective Oversight of Care for Women Veterans. <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-17-52>



## ***New VA Medical Center in New Orleans***

More than 11 years have passed since Hurricane Katrina and its devastating floods struck New Orleans, destroying most of the city's VA medical center. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert McDonald recently cut the ribbon to dedicate the 31-acre state-of-the-art New Orleans VA Medical Center campus. The new 1.6-million-square-foot facility will serve approximately 70,000 veteran patients. The medical center will provide 120 inpatient medical and surgical beds, 20 acute psychiatric beds, 40 rehabilitation beds, 20 hospice beds and 23 examination rooms. The outpatient clinics will serve some 500,000 outpatient visits a year.

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## ***US Court of Appeals to Hear Veterans Case***

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit has ordered oral argument in the Helman v. Department of Veterans Affairs case -- in which the constitutionality of the Veterans Accountability, Choice, and Access Act will be defended -- this upcoming Monday, December 5, at 10:00 A.M.

NAUS and a number of other VSOs got involved in this case as intervenors to defend both the Constitution and the rights of veterans nationwide who rely on VA facilities for their medical care. The Court accepted our petition to intervene and is now giving us the opportunity to present oral argument in defense of this critical statute. Michael T. Morley, a Washington, D.C., attorney who specializes in appellate and election law, will argue our position.

Due to the importance of the case, the court has extended oral argument time to a full hour; arguments usually are only thirty minutes. Moreover, as intervenors, we will be presenting our own argument opposing both Helman and the Government, both of whom are asking the Court to strike down the VACAA.

Following the argument, the Court will likely take 4-6 months, and possibly longer, to rule.

Without the participation of the intervening military and veterans groups, the Court likely would already have invalidated the VACAA at the joint request of Helman and the Government, and, in consequence, Helman, the former director of the scandal ridden Phoenix VA hospital, might be on her way to once again administering her style of care to sick and disabled veterans at the Arizona VA hospital.

Source: NAUS

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## ***Retirees Need Pre-Approval for Foreign Govt. Jobs***

Military retirees seeking any civil employment with a foreign government agency — or any instrumentality of a foreign government agency — must apply for permission in advance or risk losing their military retirement pay. Air Force Instruction 36-2913, [Request for Approval of Foreign Government Employment of Air Force Members](#), outlines the rules and necessary paperwork, as well as application instructions. The application package includes the Foreign Government Employment Memo, Foreign Government Employment Questionnaire and a Standard Form 312, *Nondisclosure Agreement* available on the [Foreign Government Employment page](#). Send questions to [afpc.retiree@us.af.mil](mailto:afpc.retiree@us.af.mil).

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### **Veteran Crisis Resources**

Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1  
Military Crisis Line 1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
National Call Center for Homeless Veterans  
1-877-4AID-VET (424.3838)  
VA Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274

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## ***Defense Health Agency to Expand Some TRICARE Coverage***

Effective early December, TRICARE coverage expands to include the care and treatment of beneficiaries requiring an auditory osseointegrated implant (AOI) to non-active duty family members.

In addition, TRICARE announced future coverage of the services and supplies needed to diagnose and treat illness or injury of the urinary system.

AOI is a prosthetic device implanted in the skull to transmit sounds to the inner ear. They are used when needed for significant hearing conditions resulting from trauma, birth defects or disease.

Injuries to the urinary system can include a blunt force, e.g., most commonly motor vehicle crashes, falls, or sports injuries or a penetrating force, e.g., most commonly gunshot or stab wounds, or surgery. Injuries to the urinary tract often occur together with injuries to other organs, especially abdominal organs. Illnesses can include bladder disease or cancer, urinary tract infections and chronic kidney disease.

These additions to coverage are on the heels of our recently expanded [preventive services](#) and care for [congestive heart failure](#) under the TRICARE cardiac rehabilitation benefit.

Source: NAUS

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## 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 a licensed Mental Health Worker, again where you can seek help or just ask questions.

We average 1,700 hits per day, and downloads average 1,400 per day with a total **3,105,446** 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 15,739 documents on-line (Updated: **11/09/16**)
- FAQ’s with more than 1,600 FAQ’s and answers (Updated: **02/20/16**)
- Multiple Forums
- Job Postings (Updated: **09/15/16**)
- Memorial Pages (Updated: **10/10/16**)
- News (Articles On-Line: **6,182**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than 3,493, Added 49 New Links (Updated: **12/01/16**)

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

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### ***The One Number to Remember for VA***

The Department of Veterans Affairs is introducing 1-844-MyVA311 (1-844-698-2311) as a source for veterans and their families who do not know what number to call. This new national toll-free number will help eliminate the feeling of frustration and confusion that veterans and their families have expressed when navigating the 1000-plus phone numbers that currently exist. With 1-844-MyVA311, veterans, families, and caregivers can access information about VA services like disability, pension, healthcare eligibility, enrollment, and burial benefits, in addition to a self-service locator to find the nearest VA facility. And if they are looking for immediate assistance with housing or are having a mental health crisis, MyVA311 will route callers to the Homeless Veteran help line and the Veterans Crisis Line. Meanwhile, all of the existing VA numbers will continue in service.

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<https://twitter.com/Veterans4Change>

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### ***Links to Other Stories***

- 1) [America's Veterans can't wait for slow change](#)
- 2) [Blood Pressure Study: Vietnam Era Veterans](#)
- 3) [Canine Companions launches pilot program to benefit Veterans](#)
- 4) [Dept. of Veterans Affairs Health Violation May Have Infected Nearly 600 Veterans with HIV](#)
- 5) [Non-Vet Jeff Miller poor choice for VA secretary](#)
- 6) [Regulations Keep Nursing Homes from Long-Term Care Contracts with VA](#)
- 7) [Tricare patients' deadline to switch pharmacy is Dec. 1](#)
- 8) [Trump asked to consider Slidell military lawyer for cabinet post](#)
- 9) [Trump considering Palin to lead Veterans Affairs](#)
- 10) [VA dentist keeps job after risking HIV infections with 592 Veterans](#)
- 11) [VA Disability Benefits – Veteran Insomnia](#)
- 12) [VA Disability Claims Involving a Nerve Condition \(Pt 1\)](#)
- 13) [VA Disability Claims and Nerve Conditions Part 2](#)
- 14) [VA Partners with Prostate Cancer Foundation to Expand Clinical Research](#)
- 15) [VA Partners with Prostate Cancer Foundation to Expand Clinical Research](#)
- 16) [What is Agent Orange?](#)

You can help VFC by reading articles posted and commenting at the bottom and rate the articles. If you don't have an account, sign up today, it's FREE. Your comments and rankings tell us what type of information you want most.

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

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Are you seeking employment? Been looking and not found the right job?

Well Veterans-For-Change is working hard to bring you more information on Job Fairs and Job postings available across the country.

<http://veterans-for-change.org/documents-library/category/167-job-fairs-job-postings>

If you're an employer and have a job to post, send and E-Mail to: [Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org](mailto:Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org)

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

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***PsychArmor Institute Expands the School for Military and Veteran Caregivers and Families Program***

**SAN DIEGO** – Psych Armor Institute (PAI) is pleased to announce the addition of 15 new, online courses to the “School for Military and Veteran Caregivers and Families” sponsored by USAA. These integral additions to the course suite are made available on an anytime, anywhere basis, free to all through the PAI learning portal at [www.psycharmor.org/caregivers](http://www.psycharmor.org/caregivers), thanks to the generous sponsorship of USAA.

“Collaborating with our partners to make this new content available has enabled PsychArmor Institute to raise the bar on our already best in industry suite of courses for caregivers,” said Dr. Carie Rodgers, Education Director, PsychArmor Institute.

Launched in partnership with the national Hidden Heroes campaign, the programs strives to bring information, practical tools and resources to the estimated 5.5 million military and veteran caregivers who bravely sacrifice so much to care for our nation’s wounded service members.

Under the direction of PsychArmor Institute Clinical Director, Dr. Heidi Kraft, “Invisible Wounds of War” is comprised of seven courses helping family members and caregivers understand the basics of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), depression, and substance abuse issues. A clinical psychologist as well as a U.S. Navy and Iraq War veteran, Dr. Kraft brings a unique perspectives and clinical insight to the program.

In addition, PAI partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs Caregiver Support Program to develop a series of courses previously only available in audio format. Designed with engaging animation, videos and narration, the informative programs cover such topics as the power of communication, accepting and reframing grief, coping with isolation and the importance of carving out time for self-care.

Finally, PAI, Operation Family Caregiver, and the VA Caregiver Support Program joined forces to provide “[The ABC’s of Respite](#)” for caregivers. Narrated by Meg Kabat, National Director, Caregiver Support Program, Department of Veteran Affairs, the course provides practical education concerning the different types of respite, options and logistics for caregivers when arranging respite, and specifics about respite for caregivers of military veterans.

“This is an extensive overview of material that will provide answers and further resources for caregivers of all types who might be considering finally asking for that much needed break,” explained Rodgers. All courses are free to everyone and available at <http://psycharmor.org/caregivers/>.



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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.

<https://gem.godaddy.com/signups/193302/join>

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***Veterans-For-Change, Inc.***

Riverside County, CA

Visit our website today

[www.Veterans-For-Change.org](http://www.Veterans-For-Change.org)

*Serving those who served!*

***Please pass on to all your Veteran Friends and Family***

Distribution	
Express Mail	144,669
Boston	73,026
Courtesy Copies	3,500
Department of VA	11,981
DoD	19,585
Face Book Pages	3,381
Google	21,662
Los Angeles	128,829
Microsoft	3,885
National Guard	2956
New York	155,622
Other Social Media	37,518
San Francisco	75,864
Twitter	37
US House of Reps & Staff	902
US Senators & Staff	102
University of So. California	4,781
US Air Force	15,311
US Army	48,890
US Marines	25,559

US Navy	20,927
Veterans	19,075,468
Washington DC	136,643
Yahoo	134
	20,011,232

**Please do not reply to this E-Mail, this is an unattended E-Mail address, please send all correspondence to: [Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org](mailto:Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org)**