



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, March 24, 2019

Volume 10, Issue 12



## **This-N-That**

There is or seems to be quite a bit of controversy over the \$220 Billion Dollar Budget for the VA. While it certainly will help tremendously I myself along with many others believe it's just more that will vanish into thin air due to high levels of mismanagement and fraud.

We have a VA Secretary who claims one thing one minute, then turns and says/does the exact opposite later, and now he's announced he would like to head up or at least move to the Pentagon! To me showing he never wanted the Sec VA position except to use it

as a stepping stone to another job.

Further down 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.

It might not go anywhere, but it sure doesn't hurt to participate and lets see can we make or help make this happen.

The Sec VA, Wilkie also now wants to change the threshold on qualifications for those contaminated by drinking water which will only make it all the more difficult to prove and be awarded benefits and healthcare, and this is just not acceptable.

If you recall, Camp LeJeune was the first base to have been badly contaminated dating back to 1957, and since there was a bill passed to provide care for the Veteran and family members, however, absolutely NO financial benefits, and many who have applied are still being denied.

So we desperately need full accountability within the VA, up to and including leasing of VA Land to private organizations and businesses. We need that land to add clinics and facilities to help Veterans, not make it more difficult, and sending them to people who don't

know, don't understand, and really don't care as long as they get paid.

On another note, which I truly had forgotten and reminded by one of the attorney's I work with from time to time and even though I do tell people all the time, when you attend a C&P, it needs to be done by a licensed doctor not a Nurse Practitioner. Reason being is that medical notes will NOT be accepted by Social Security when applying for benefits through them.

So if you attend a C&P and the person is not a doctor, try to get it rescheduled to be done by a licensed physician!

It's tax time again. 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.

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)



## **Demand VA Accountability**

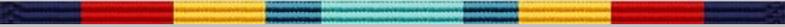
TELL CONGRESS: Make sure VA Completes the MISSION!

**Take Action**



## **House Introduces Bill to Expedite VA Leases**

Last week, Congresswoman Julia Brownley (D-Calif.) introduced a bill to bypass unnecessary hurdles in VA's leasing authority. The common sense legislation would align VA's ability to authorize leases with those of other federal agencies, thereby eliminating a bureaucratic roadblock. The Build a Better VA Act would make it much easier for Congress to authorize medical facility leases. For years, the VFW has asked Congress to modify VA's leasing authority and we applaud Congresswoman Brownley for her efforts to make this happen. Read the [press release](#).



## 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 **2,802** hits per day, and downloads

average **2,328** per day with a total **4,814,855** visitors as of Friday.

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

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

- Documents Library with over **16,925** documents on-line (Updated: 02/11/19)
- FAQ's with more than **1,600** FAQ's and answers
- Multiple Forums
  - o Afghanistan Veterans
  - o FMP - Foreign Medial Program
  - o Gulf War & Desert Storm Veterans
  - o Iraq Veterans
  - o Korean Veterans
  - o Men Veterans Forum
  - o Mental Health for Veterans (*Counselor Needed*)
  - o Political Issues
  - o Suggestion Box
  - o The Mess Hall
  - o VA Hospitals and Medical Centers
  - o Veteran Affairs
  - o Vietnam Veterans

- o Welcome Mat
- o Women Veterans Forum
- o WW II Veterans
- Job Postings
- Memorial Pages (Updated: 10/30/18) (37 Added)
- News (Articles On-Line: **8,312**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **4,702**, Added 2 New Links (Updated: 03/13/19)

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



## Spring Travel? TRICARE Goes With You

If you're planning a trip this spring, remember that TRICARE travels with you. Whether traveling stateside or overseas, make sure you know what to do in case you or your loved ones become sick or injured on vacation. Learn the rules for getting care and costs associated with your TRICARE health plan, so you can make informed decisions while traveling.

Read the full article [here](#).



## **Military Sexual Assault Task Force**

This past week, Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan agreed to support the recommendation of Senator Martha McSally (R-Ariz.) to immediately establish a Department of Defense task force to eliminate sexual assault inside the U.S. military. The task force will be led by Senator McSally and will be comprised of military personnel and civilian advisors. It is expected to deliver its preliminary recommendations in time for the FY 2020 National Defense Authorization Act mark-up.



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

We had been on Face Book for many years and have moved to [MEWE.com](http://MEWE.com) for a number of reasons.

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

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

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

We know most people don't like change, however, this new Social Media Site, [MEWE.COM](http://MEWE.COM) has no advertisers, truly respects privacy and protects your security far better than Face Book ever could. They also have a fantastic customer service group who actually does respond to your messages, suggestions, ideas and more!

We hope you will join us on this new site.

### **VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE**

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

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

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

### **AMVETS GROUP**

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

### **VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP**

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

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

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

**AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY**

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



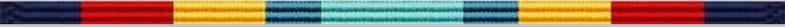
## **H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act**

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

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

Please use the prepared electronic letter or draft your own to urge your Representative to support and cosponsor H.R. 303. As always, we appreciate your support for DAV and your grassroots activism in participating in DAV CAN. Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.

**Take Action**



## **Air Force General Tapped for Top NATO Position**

President Trump has nominated Air Force General Tod D. Wolters for appointment as the next Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and Commander of the U.S. European Command. Currently, General Wolters serves as the Commander Allied Air Command; Commander, U.S. Air Forces in Europe - Air Forces Africa. If confirmed, he will be replacing General Curtis Scaparrotti who has served as the SACEUR since late spring of 2016. [Learn more.](#)



## **Cuts to Military Medical Force Included in Pentagon Budget**

Patients at military hospitals and clinics can expect to see far fewer uniformed doctors when they go for appointments on base under a Defense Department plan to convert thousands of uniformed health care billets to civilian positions. President Donald Trump's proposed fiscal 2020 DoD budget introduces a proposal to eliminate "roughly 15,000" uniformed health care jobs within the services, converting them to civil service positions. The effort is part of an overall modernization strategy for the military health system, Pentagon officials said March 12 while unveiling the department's \$545 billion proposed base budget. The proposal must be approved by the House and Senate, a process that's likely to stretch into late this year. Read more on about the plan [here](#).



## **March's Featured Song**

**JACK**

By

LT Bobby Ross

**LT Bobby Ross - Voice Of America**

**Previous Featured Songs**



**2020 Budget Proposal Has Largest  
Troop Pay Raise in a Decade**

The White House March 11 backed a 3.1 percent pay raise for the military as part of its overall defense spending proposal of \$750 billion for fiscal 2020. The roughly 5 percent increase for defense, up from a total \$716 billion defense budget enacted in fiscal 2019, was included in the record \$4.75 trillion budget request for all government spending for fiscal 2020 that President Donald Trump sent to Congress. According to the Pentagon, the military pay increase for 2010 was 3.4 percent. The increase must be approved by both the House and the Senate before it becomes law. The approval process will likely stretch into late this year. Read more about the proposal [here](#).





The Semper Fi Fund is excited to announce the:  
**LCpl Parsons Welcome Home Fund  
for Vietnam Veterans**

The Semper Fi Fund expanded our mission to care for veterans from all US military service branches who are catastrophically wounded, ill, or injured from combat operations in Vietnam.

**\*Eligibility criteria**

- Blind/legally blind
- ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease)
- Amputation (loss of any limb or extremities)
- PTSD (combat related) – 70% or greater VA rating
- Paralyzed (paraplegia, quadriplegia, hemiplegia)
- Severe Traumatic Brain Injury (cannot function independently)
- Severe illness linked to Agent Orange exposure (recognized by the VA)

**Documents required**

- Copy of DD214
- Photo ID (front/back)
- LCpl Parsons Welcome Home Fund Application
- VA rating decision letter and/or signed note from medical provider stating diagnosis

**Assistance may be provided in the following areas**

- Housing grant (adaptive housing, home modification/repair, rent, mortgage, utilities)
- Transportation grant (adaptive transportation, vehicle modification/repair)
- Medical Care grant (not covered by insurance, Medicare, or the VA)
- Funeral/Cremation Expense

*\*must have one or more of the conditions*



For more information, please call  
760-725-3680 or contact us at  
[Vwestcoastcw@semperfifund.org](mailto:Vwestcoastcw@semperfifund.org)



**Medal of Honor for Soldier Killed  
Taking Out Suicide Bomber in Iraq**

An Army infantryman who gave his life to shield other soldiers from an insurgent strapped with a bomb will receive the Medal of Honor on March 27, the White House announced March 12.

Staff Sgt. Travis W. Atkins, an infantryman belonging to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, out of Fort Drum, New York, was killed June 1, 2007, while deployed to Iraq. Atkins was previously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Army's second-highest award for valor. This award represents an upgrade. Read more about the award 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**



## First Data is Hiring Veterans

The skills you gained in uniform may easily translate into a civilian career at First Data. Whether you seek a position in Information Technology, Customer Service, Operations, Sales and Marketing or Finance and Accounting, we may have the right fit for you. Read more about our [job opportunities for Veterans](#).



## Ranking Member Roe Introduces Bipartisan Legislation to Expand Vet Center Eligibility

Cosponsored by the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Chairman Levin

Washington, D.C. - Today, Rep. Phil Roe, M.D. (R-Tenn.) Ranking Member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs introduced the Vet Center Eligibility Expansion Act. The bill is cosponsored by Rep. Mike Levin (D-Cali.), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, and supported by the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS).

"It is imperative that we do all we can to reduce the number of suicides among those who served our country," said Roe. "By allowing members of the

National Guard, Reserve, and Coast Guard who are not currently eligible to access care at Vet Centers, we can rest assured that all those who serve in response to an emergency at the national, state, or local level are able to access the counseling, services, and support that they need and come one step closer to eliminating suicide among these brave men and women.”

“We must do more to address the epidemic of suicide among veterans in this country, and we can start by ensuring all servicemembers have the mental health support they need when they return to civilian life,” said Levin. “Currently, National Guard, Coast Guard, and reserve servicemembers are exempt from receiving readjustment counseling services at VA Medical Centers, but they often face emotionally challenging deployments to natural disasters or civil disorders that require counseling. This bipartisan legislation is an important step in closing the mental health care gap for those servicemembers, and I will continue to work with my colleagues on ways to address tragic rates of suicide among our nation’s heroes.”

“We applaud Congressmen Phil Roe and Mike Levin for seeking to expand Vet Center access to National Guard and Reserve members who might be considering suicide as a final option,” said Sergeant Major (Retired) Frank Yoakum, Executive Director,

EANGUS. "This expanded eligibility is a great step toward reaching our Members who have served their State and country and are in need of someone to talk to as they consider one of life's biggest decisions."

**Background:**

This bill would expand the eligibility to receive counseling from VA Vet Centers to members of the National Guard and Reserves or Coast Guard who served during emergency situations in the wake of a national emergency, major disaster, civil disorder, or drug interdiction operation. [Click here for more information.](#)



**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)**



**SGLI Enough? VGLI Too Much? Get  
\$400k Coverage from Just \$28 a Month**

Because tomorrow is never guaranteed, protect your family's future now. [Get \\$400,000 life insurance coverage from just \\$28 a month.](#)





## **AMERICAN SOLDIERS**

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



## **Get to Know Your TRICARE Prime Plan**

TRICARE Prime is similar to a health maintenance organization, or HMO plan. This means you get most of your care from an assigned or selected primary care manager (PCM). This PCM refers you to specialists for care that he or she can't provide and works with your TRICARE regional contractor for referrals and authorizations. TRICARE Prime differs from TRICARE Select, the other TRICARE enrollment health plan.

Read the full article [here](#).



## **DoD Employees Could Owe IRS Thousands After PCS Moves**

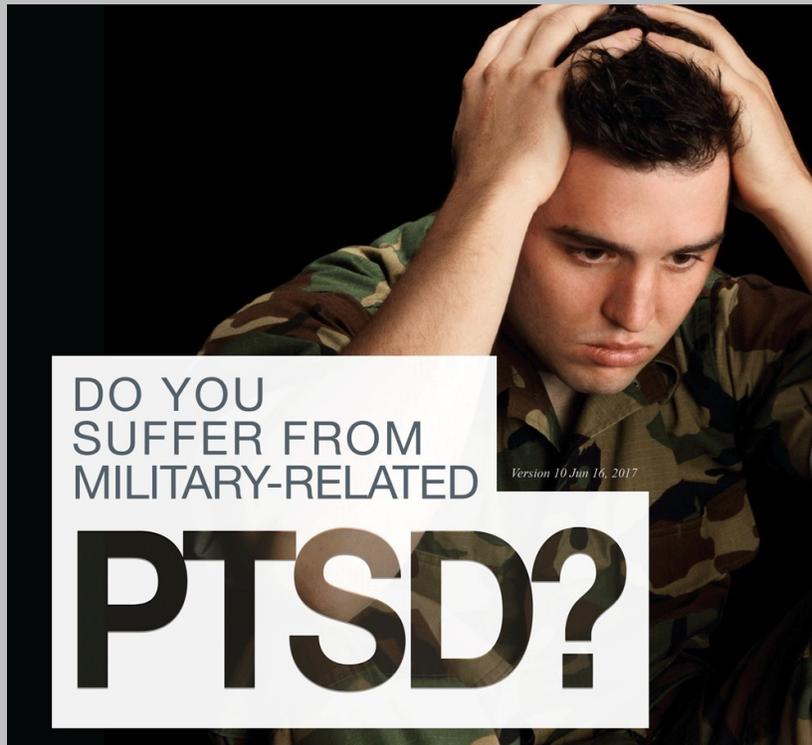
Defense Department civilians who made permanent-change-of-station moves within the past two years soon will receive debt notices that also will include unanticipated interest charges and potential state tax penalties because of a 2017 tax law change, military officials in Europe said. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service office is now calculating amounts owed by affected employees with a plan to mail debt letters in the coming fall, Army officials said. Once the letters are received, employees will have 45 days to pay the entire amounts owed or to work with DFAS to determine payment plans, they said. Read more about the changes and debt letters [here](#).



## Why the Navy is Deploying With a Bunch of Louisville Sluggers

It's not often sailors get permission to take a baseball bat to a multimillion-dollar aircraft carrier. But when the Navy's aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman sailed into the Arctic Circle for the first time in nearly three decades, its crew was ordered to do just that. The Truman sailed into the Arctic Circle on Oct. 19 to conduct operations in the Norwegian Sea. After years of operations in warmer climates, leaders had to think carefully about the gear they'd need to survive operations in the frigid conditions. In one of the guides they read in preparation was a tip for the Truman's crew from a savvy sailor who knew what it would take to combat ice buildup on the flattop. "[It said] 'Hey, when you get out to do this, when you head on out, don't forget to bring a bunch of baseball bats,'" said Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John Richardson. "'There's nothing like bashing ice off struts and masts and bulkheads like a baseball bat, so bring a bunch of Louisville Sluggers.' And we did." Read more about the plan [here](#).





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



## **Your Opinion Matters: Take a Quick Survey**

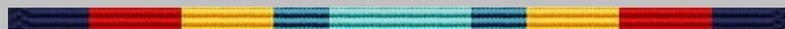
Your feedback is important to us. In our continued effort to serve the needs of our members, Military.com invites you to rate your current experience with us.

**[Take the survey now.](#)**



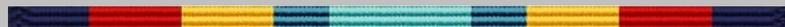
## As Commissary Sales Plummet, Pentagon Seeks 21 Percent Subsidy Cut

Defense Department officials have preached three goals for the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) over the last several years of cost-cutting reforms: preserve shopper savings; reduce taxpayer support, and reverse an alarming slide in sales, which have fallen 25 percent since peaking at more than \$6 billion in 2012. In what might be seen as a stunning disregard for number three, to reverse the exodus of patrons, the Trump administration's fiscal 2020 defense budget asks Congress to slash funding for commissaries by \$271 million, or 21 percent. If lawmakers agree, appropriated dollars on which stores still depend would fall to \$995 million next year, a 30 percent cut overall over three years to a benefit still prized as a key element of military compensation — grocery discounts. Read more about the proposed cut [here](#).



## Navy Names New Ship Class After Navajo Nation

A new class of U.S. Navy towing, salvage and rescue ships will be named Navajo in recognition of the Diné people. Secretary of the Navy Richard V. Spencer announced the name March 12 in honor of the contributions the Navajo people have made to U.S. military forces. The release states the new class will be based on existing commercial towing offshore vessel designs and will replace the current T-ATF 166 and T-ARS 50 class ships. The first ship in the class will be named USNA Navajo and designated T-ATS 6. Gulf Island Fabrication Inc. was awarded the \$63.5 million contract for design and construction, which will take place at the company's shipyard in Houma, Louisiana. It is scheduled for completion in March 2021. Read more about the new ship class [here](#).



## **Marine Corps Removes Tuition Assistance Restrictions**

The Marine Corps has become the last service to remove time-in-service requirements for members wishing to use their Tuition Assistance (TA) benefits. According to Marine administrative message 150/19, released March 11, "effective immediately, there is no minimum time in service requirement for the utilization of TA. Additionally, Marines in an awaiting training (MAT) status are eligible to participate in the program." Previously, all Marines required a minimum time in service of 24 months per active-duty base date before being eligible to use their TA benefit. Read more about the change [here](#).



## **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**



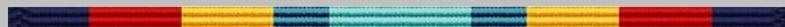
**Your Tricare Supplement: Eliminate  
Your Out of Pocket Costs**

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



## **Your Tricare Supplement: Eliminate Your Out of Pocket Costs**

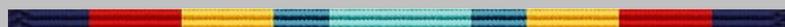
Get a Tricare supplement that pays your cost shares and can pay 100% of covered excess charges. [Get valuable coverage now.](#)



## **How Does Divorce Affect Your TRICARE Benefit?**

Closing the chapter on a marriage can be a confusing time. If you're going through a divorce, you may be wondering about your TRICARE benefits. Divorce, annulment, or dissolution of a marriage is a TRICARE Qualifying Life Event (QLE). This QLE allows you and family members to make changes to your TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select health plan outside of TRICARE Open Season.

Read the full article [here](#).



## Tricare Restricts Purchases of Deluxe Breast Pumps

The Defense Health Agency (DHA) has updated its Tricare policy manual to clarify [what types of breast pumps and supplies are covered](#) by the Defense Department's health program. The changes affirm coverage of breast pumps for new mothers and adoptive mothers, an initiative that began in late 2014, and allow expecting moms to access the benefit starting at the 27th week of pregnancy, or when the baby is born, if premature. The revised policy, announced March 11, limits coverage of breast pump kits to one per birth and excludes those considered to have luxury features. The new policy allows only the breast pump and the following replacement parts without an additional prescription: two bottles and caps or locking rings once a year after a birth event; one replacement power adapter per birth event and none within the first 12 months; 12 valves or membranes; one set of flanges per birth event; one set of tubing; and 90 breast milk bags every 30 days after the birth. The caps placed on breast pump purchases by Tricare are as follows: for personal use, \$312.84 in the U.S. and \$500 overseas; for hospital grade (as required by a doctor), \$1,501.65 in the U.S. and \$3,003.30 overseas. Read more about the policy change [here](#).



## **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. [Burial program for Veterans in Texas reaches milestone, as 100th unaccompanied Veteran laid to rest](#)
2. [Celebrating female Veterans – past, present & future](#)
3. [Elevating Social Work in the Military](#)
4. [Military Doctors Told Them It Was Just "Female Problems." Weeks Later, They Were In The Hospital](#)
5. [Pentagon May Tap Military Pay, Pensions for Border Wall](#)
6. [Precision health initiative brings genetic testing to Veterans](#)
7. [President Trump signs the executive order to empower Veterans and end Veteran suicide](#)
8. [Secretary Wilkie testifies that VA will accelerate disability benefits claims processing for Purple Heart Medal recipients](#)
9. [Sudden cardiac death in young athletes](#)
10. [The new plan to prevent Veteran suicides: new](#)

grants, better research, more community focus

11. The VA Is Privatizing Veterans' Health Care While Launching a Campaign to Deny It
12. Tide is finally turning for Vietnam War's 'Blue Water Veterans'
13. Too much pressure: Hypertension a leading cause of heart disease
14. Treated Like a 'Piece of Meat': Female Veterans Endure Harassment at the VA
15. Trump wants a huge increase in VA spending, but some Vet groups are still unhappy. Here's why.
16. VA chief Robert Wilkie has pushed to be the next Pentagon chief
17. VA pays \$950,000 to patient of ex-Iowa surgeon hired despite incompetence allegations
18. VA selects 18 medical facilities to start 'high reliability' journey
19. VA strengthens care and benefits for Veterans with \$220 billion budget
20. VA Struggles To Unlock The Reasons Behind High Suicide Rates Among Older Veterans
21. VA Waited 10 Months to Tell Vet He Had Cancer
22. Veterans Pension Eligibility
23. Veterans want autonomy in health care choices

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



## CalVet Celebrates Women's Military History Week

Sacramento – March 18 – 24, 2019 is Women's Military History Week in the state of California. Each year, the third week of March is highlighted as a time to recognize the important accomplishments of women who have served in the armed forces of the United States, as well as celebrate the many milestones achieved by women who are currently serving.

“Women have been an important part of military service since the Revolutionary War and it's important we honor their sacrifices, their many contributions, and their ongoing commitment to our great country,” said Lindsey Sin, Deputy Secretary of Women Veterans Affairs.

During this week and throughout the entire month of March, many events are taking place all over California to recognize and honor our women veterans and women service members. Read Governor Newsom's commemorative message in recognition of Women's Military History Week [here](#).

All week CalVet will be honoring women warriors and sharing their stories on [social media](#).



## No New Tricare Fees in Proposed DoD Budget

In the past several years, Tricare beneficiaries have seen significant increases to their health programs. But the 2020 budget proposal contains no additional health care fee increases for users of Tricare Prime, Tricare Select and Tricare for Life, meaning that if the budget passes as written and Congress does not include additional fees, beneficiaries can expect their health care costs to be stable next year. Tricare cost shares are adjusted slightly each year, but do not require congressional approval. In addition, fees for premium-based plans may change slightly year to year, as can the enrollment fees for retirees on Tricare Prime. Read about the budget proposal [here](#).



## Proposed VA Budget Will Not Expand Private Care Funding, Officials Say

Roughly a fifth of President Donald Trump's proposed \$87 billion fiscal 2020 budget for Department of Veterans Affairs medical care would go to its community-care programs, an allocation VA officials say is consistent with previous years and not an expansion of private care. Eager to point out that the VA is committed to providing the majority of its health care services to veterans within its own medical facilities, officials said March 11 the department has budgeted for an increase in care both at VA facilities and in the private sector for fiscal 2020 and 2021. Read more about the VA budget proposal [here](#).



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**Navy Carriers Celebrate 25 Years of Gender-Integrated Crews**

As women make inroads into military ground combat positions previously closed to them, one naval community is celebrating a milestone in gender-integrated operations: 25 years ago this month, the Navy ordered the first assignment of women to a combat ship. Sixty-three women were detailed to the carrier Dwight D. Eisenhower, homeported in Norfolk, Virginia. Women make up roughly 19 percent of the U.S. Navy, and those serving on ships operate in an environment where they can excel based on ability, and opportunities are unrestricted. Read more about gender-integrated carrier crews [HERE](#).



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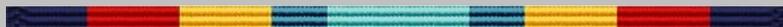
VeteransCrisisLine.net

 **Veterans  
Crisis Line**  
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1



## Air Force Officer Launches to International Space Station

An Air Force officer and astronaut who was part of an aborted space flight mission last year is finally en route to the International Space Station. Col. Nick Hague is one of three astronauts, two American and one Russian, who successfully launched March 14 from Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. According to an Air Force release, Hague will join the Expedition 59 crew, conducting hundreds of research investigations and tech demonstrations to advance scientific knowledge. The initial Oct. 11 mission was aborted when a rocket booster failed to detach after the astronauts reached zero gravity. The other astronauts on the mission are Christina Koch of NASA and Russian cosmonaut Alexey Ovchinin. [Read more at AF.mil.](#)



**The 9,000 Transgender Troops in Uniform Will Continue to Serve**

Beginning April 12, transgender individuals with gender dysphoria or who have initiated treatment or swapped genders will no longer be able to join the U.S. military, in most cases. The Defense Department released a policy March 12 that allows the roughly 1,000 existing transgender troops who have gender dysphoria or have transitioned to remain in the military and continue seeking career opportunities, such as promotions, advanced training, transfers and officer accessions. About 9,000 individuals identified themselves as transgender in a recent survey of active-duty troops, yet just 1,000 personnel have been diagnosed with gender dysphoria, Pentagon officials said March 13 during a call with reporters. Read more about the policy change [here](#).



**Office of Inspector General**

1. Addressing Policy Gaps Could Improve Pilot Design and Evaluation for Postal Innovations
2. Available Data Show Privately-Insured Patients Are at Financial Risk
3. DHS Can Take Additional Steps to Manage Fraud Risks Related to School Recertification and Program Oversight
4. DHS Should Improve the Quality of Unlawful Border Entry Information and Other Metric Reporting
5. Enrollment Remains Concentrated among Few Issuers, including in Exchanges
6. Government-wide Political Appointee Data and Some Ethics Oversight Procedures at Interior and SBA Could Be Improved
7. Including Users Early and Often in Software Development Could Benefit Programs
8. Research & Development Coordination Has Improved, but Additional Actions Needed to Track and Evaluate Projects
9. Revised Analytic Approach Needed to Support Force Structure Decision-Making
10. Update on CBP Public-Private Partnership Programs



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

1. Ata Int. Inc. Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of BLUEFUSION Capsules, due to presence of Undeclared Sildenafil, Tadalafil, Desmethyl carbodenafil, Dithiodesmethyl carbodenafil, Scutellarin and Daidzein
2. Better Made Snack Foods Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Milk In 10 Ounce \$3.99 Original Potato Chips
3. Blood pressure medication recalled after possible cancer causing impurity detected, says FDA
4. Cook Medical Inc. Recalls Transseptal Needle Due to Risk of Detached Plastic Fragments
5. Cybersecurity Vulnerabilities Affecting Medtronic Implantable Cardiac Devices, Programmers, and Home Monitors: FDA Safety Communication
6. Drug Recalls
7. FDA Warning Issued for Investigational Venetoclax Use in Myeloma Trials
8. FDA Warns about the risks associated with the investigational use of Venclexta in Multiple Myeloma
9. Food Recall Alerts
10. Hill's Pet Nutrition Expands Voluntary Recall of Select Canned Dog Food for Elevated Vitamin D
11. Hospira, Inc. Issues a Voluntary Nationwide Recall of 8.4% Sodium Bicarbonate Injection, USP Due to the Presence of Particulate Matter
12. Kingston Pharma, LLC RECALLS " DG™/health NATURALS baby Cough Syrup + Mucus" Because of

## Possible Health Risk

13. Legacy Pharmaceutical Packaging, LLC Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Losartan Potassium Tablets, USP, 50mg 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)
14. Mylan Institutional LLC Initiates Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Levoleucovorin Injection Due to the Presence of Particulate Matter
15. Ripple Effect: Repackaged Losartan Recalled Due to Impurity
16. Snak Club Honey Bliss Nut Mix recalled due to undeclared allergen
17. Stokes Healthcare Inc. Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Pilocarpine 0.1% Ophthalmic Solution Due to a High Level of Preservative
18. Surtidoras Bakery Inc. Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Milk in Marble Muffin, Banana Muffin, and Blueberry Muffin
19. UPDATE: Treatment of Peripheral Arterial Disease with Paclitaxel-Coated Balloons and Paclitaxel-Eluting Stents Potentially Associated with Increased Mortality - Letter to Health Care Providers





**SURVIVAL IS FUN**



**Online DoD Health Assessments for  
Navy are Here**

The Navy has instituted the new online Periodic Health Assessment for regular health requirements.

Previously, service members were required to fill out a paper form. The new process also includes a required annual mental health assessment (MHA) and requires an in-person review of the mental health assessment with a provider. The new online assessment can be accessed on the ePHA website by home or by government computer and a Common Access Card is recommended but not needed. Users can also opt to create a username and password. Full details about the new program are in the [Navy's official message](#).



## **VVA to President Trump: Help us Heal our Nation**

Statement by Vietnam Veterans of America National President John Rowan:

On the eve of Vietnam Veterans Day, March 29, we are chagrined by the President's inability to let a fellow Vietnam veteran rest in peace.

Every day we live our founding principle, "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."

We have succeeded in teaching our fellow Americans that warriors don't make policy.

They have learned to separate the war from the warrior.

The era of spurning veterans is past. We have made sure of it.

Our experience has taught us how fear and hatred corrode the soul and imprison the spirit.

We have forgiven those who have condemned us for answering our country's call.

We have forgiven those who received educational and medical deferments from serving in the war.

We have forgiven Hollywood for its negative portrayal of veterans. We are proud of the warmth, respect, and honor that our newest veterans receive today.

And we are greatly saddened by the President's inability to let a Vietnam War hero rest in peace.

Mr. Trump, it's time to move on. Help us heal our Nation and honor those who have served and sacrificed.

Mokie Pratt Porter  
Director of Communications  
Vietnam Veterans of America



## CalVet to Assist Veterans with Pathway to Citizenship

**WHO:** The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) with community partners including the Ventura County Veteran Services Office, El Concilio Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the Office of Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin.

**WHAT:** Veterans of the U.S. Armed forces may be eligible for expedited citizenship due to their military service. The day long event will assist each veteran individually with the process of citizenship or naturalization. Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin plans to open the workshop with words of support to veterans and their families.

**WHEN:** Saturday, March 23, 2019, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

**WHERE:** Blanchard Community Library, 119 N 8th Street, Santa Paula, CA

**EVENT:** CalVet has partnered with the Santa Paula community to provide legal assistance and instruction to veterans seeking citizenship and/or naturalization services. Veterans will also have the opportunity to learn about additional state and federal benefits

through their military service.

**BACKGROUND:** Last March CalVet's Minority and Underrepresented Veterans Division launched the Pathway to Citizenship program in partnership with the Governor's Office and community immigration services. Since then, more than 60 veterans and their families have received assistance with citizenship and naturalization services.

The next workshop is scheduled for April 13, in San Diego County, at the Escondido Military and Veterans Resource Center.

For more information, visit the Minority Veterans Affairs web page at [www.CalVet.ca.gov](http://www.CalVet.ca.gov).



# Tax & Credit Information



1. Avoid improper claims for business credits; topic makes this year's IRS 'Dirty Dozen' list
2. Before visiting an IRS office, taxpayers should call to make an appointment
3. Failure to report offshore funds remains a crime; IRS includes topic on its 2019 'Dirty Dozen' scams list
4. Frivolous tax arguments remain on IRS' 'Dirty Dozen' scams list for 2019
5. IRS Retirement Plan Correction Program
6. IRS warns of new phone scam using Taxpayer Advocate Service numbers
7. Phony IRS calls increase during filing season
8. Revenue Procedure 2019-5 updated
9. Tax Time Guide: Protect personal, financial and tax information



## **VA MISSION Act: What is the latest on community care?**

How VA is transforming Veteran community care under the **VA MISSION Act of 2018** and what to expect.

**VA MISSION ACT** featured graphic - text reads:  
Upcoming improvements to Veteran community care and what to expect.

**VA MISSION Act:** What is the latest on community care?

How VA is transforming Veteran community care under the VA MISSION Act of 2018 and what to expect.

Last June, President Trump signed landmark legislation, known as the VA MISSION Act of 2018, that makes dramatic improvements to how Veterans receive community care---health care provided outside of VA. VA's goal is to give Veterans greater choice over their health care, allowing VA to deliver world-class, seamless customer service either through a VA facility or community provider.

While the law affects many other VA programs, the changes to community care are among the most complex and far-reaching in recent history. After the legislation was enacted, VA immediately began taking the steps needed to implement the vast changes required.

### **Current Activities**

Understanding the enormous scale of VA health care operations and VA's responsibility for America's Veterans, VA has been working hard on many large, interrelated tasks to implement the new Veteran community care program by June 2019.

**These tasks include the following:**

- Design and launch a new internal operating structure for community care, including the new urgent care/walk-in care benefit

- Propose access standards as one of the six eligibility criteria for community care

o VA's proposed rules for the new Veterans community care program, including access standards, are currently open for public comment until March 25, 2019

- Award contracts to Third Party Administrators (TPAs) to manage regions of VA's new Community Care Network (CCN)

- Plan to implement Veterans Care Agreements to allow VA to purchase hospital care, medical services, or extended care services in certain situations

- Define competency standards for certain conditions applicable to community providers to make sure Veterans are getting high-quality care when they receive care outside of VA

- Set up new requirements for prompt payments to community providers

- Draft regulations to implement the law

## **What to Expect**

So what can Veterans expect when the new program starts this summer? Given the magnitude of the changes, VA is working hard to make sure the rollout

goes smoothly. If you are a Veteran enrolled in VA health care, or a Veteran who can receive care without needing to enroll, you can expect:

- To continue to have access to community care under current programs and then transition to the new program when regulations are final and published
- To follow an improved process to receive community care under the new program, with better access to community providers and improvements to customer service, such as more streamlined eligibility requirements
- A new benefit that provides eligible Veterans with access to urgent, non-emergency care for non-life-threatening conditions in VA's network of community providers
- Improved care coordination as VA transitions to a single information technology system that better links together VA and community providers
- Your provider to receive timely payments for bills as VA transitions to better claims processing systems

## **Going Forward**

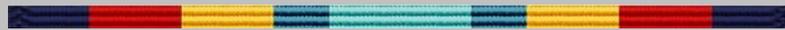
VA will be providing regular updates on community care as part of this series of articles. Community care will continue to supplement VA health care as part of VA's broad commitment to modernize and strengthen the VA health care system, expand access, and

ensure timely delivery of care to America's Veterans. VA health care regularly outperforms the private sector, and VA staff are experienced and devoted to meeting Veterans' specific needs. VA believes Veterans will continue to choose VA when they need timely, high-quality care.

## Resources

- Fact Sheet -- Veteran Community Care -- General Information (VA MISSION Act of 2018)
- VA's proposed rules for Veteran community care now open for public comment

## Source



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## MIA Update

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency did not announce any identifications or recovery updates this week.



**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!**



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)**

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