

RAO

BULLETIN

15 August 2013

PDF Edition

THIS BULLETIN CONTAINS THE FOLLOWING ARTICLES

<u>Pg</u>	<u>Article</u>	<u>Subject</u>
03 ==	Fort Irwin Dress Code -----	(Off-Duty Servicemembers & Family)
03 ==	NDU Foundation -----	(Offering Veterans Venture Forum 29 OCT)
04 ==	Gmail Privacy Issue -----	(Class-Action Lawsuit)
05 ==	RP~China Dispute [04] -----	(U.S. Military Presence in RP Talks)
05 ==	Air Force Collaboratory -----	(AF Seeks Public Input)
06 ==	Izumo -----	(Japan Launches Flat-Top Destroyer)
07 ==	Vet Refuses Medical Care -----	(95 Year old Tased, Shot & Killed)
09 ==	Military Pay & Benefits [01] --	(Pay Suspension for Capital Crimes)
09 ==	Contractors & Builders -----	(Hiring Tips)
11 ==	Legionnaires Disease [02] -----	(3rd VA OIG Report Results)
12 ==	Sequestration [34] -----	(Defense Review Cuts Deep)
13 ==	Sequestration [35] --	(Military Retiree Civilian Employee Pensions)
15 ==	Sequestration [36] -----	(Commissary Furloughs to End)
15 ==	Sequestration [37] -----	-(Veteran Care Threatened)
15 ==	SBA Vet Issues [33] -----	(VA Contract Approval Authority)
16 ==	Military Exchange Magazine Policy: -----	(Will No Longer Stock)
18 ==	VA Claims Backlog [110] -----	(VA, ABA and LSC Partnership)
19 ==	VA Health Care Access [06] -----	(ACA Impact)
19 ==	VA End of Life Care [03] -----	(Citation of Honor)
21 ==	VA Data Breaches [50] -----	(98% Involve Physical Paper)
21 ==	VA Loans -----	(5 Myths)
22 ==	VA FDC [01] -----	(Retroactive Compensation)
23 ==	VA Education -----	(8 Keys to Success Program)
25 ==	VA Urinary Incontinence [01] -	(Higher Incidence in Younger Vets)
26 ==	VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse [77] -----	(Reported 1 thru 15 Aug 2013)
27 ==	DoD/VA VLER [09] -----	(Isn't Going To Happen)
27 ==	DoD/VA PTSD/TBI -----	(Joint Research Consortia)
28 ==	Agent Orange Lawsuits [15] -----	(BWNVVA/MVA vs. Shinseki)
29 ==	Vet Toxic Exposure C-123 Aircraft [03] -----	(VA Claim Denials)
30 ==	Vet Toxic Exposure C-123 Aircraft [04] --	(VA 1st Denial Reversal)
31 ==	TRICARE Prime [24] -----	(1 Oct Service Area Reductions)

- 32 == TRICARE Webiner --- (Options Available After Loss of Eligibility)
- 32 == TRICARE Autism Care [06] ----- (ABA Policies Clarified)
- 33 == TRICARE For Life [01] ----- (Use of VA Facilities)
- 34 == TRDP [14] ----- (Premium Payment Methods Change)
- 35 == Defense Health Agency [04] ----- (No Time Line for Reforms)
- 36 == FBI Scam ----- (Ransomware Virus)
- 37 == Emergency Scams ----- (How to Avoid)
- 38 == Medal of Honor Citations ----- (Davila~Rudolph B, WWII)
- 39 == Mobilized Reserve 6 AUG 2013 ----- (Decrease of 769)
- 40 == Vet Hiring Fairs ----- (15 Aug thru 30 SEP 2013)
- 41 == Vet Jobs [120] ----- (Bits & Pieces)
- 42 == Vet Job Inside Connection: ----- (Uncle Harry or Aunt Mary)
- 44 == Vet Sleep Disorders [01] ----- (Survey Results)
- 45 == WWII Pre War Events ----- (March on Rome)
- 46 == WWII Vets [48] ----- (Charles Eldon Prigmore)
- 47 == POW/MIA [50] ----- (Identified 1 thru 15 AUG 2013)
- 49 == POW/MIA [51] ----- (USS Oklahoma Unknowns)
- 51 == Spanish American War Image 40 ----- (Horse Training)
- 52 == Saving Money ----- (Stain Removal)
- 53 == Notes of Interest ----- (15 Aug 2013)
- 54 == Medicare Fraud [127] ----- (Disclosures 1-15 Aug 2013)
- 55 == Medicaid Fraud [91] ----- (Disclosures 1-15 Aug 2013)
- 56 == State Veteran's Benefits ----- (New Hampshire 2013)
- 57 == Military Entitlements ----- (Impact on Readiness)
- 58 == Military Food Stamps ----- (Stripped from 5K Military Families)
- 59 == Military History Anniversaries ----- (Aug 16-31 Summary)
- 63 == Military Trivia [80] ----- (First Atomic Bomb Blast)
- 65 == Tax Burden for Alaska Retirees ----- (As of Aug 2013)
- 66 == Social Security ----- (Bits and Pieces 01)
- 67 == Aviation Art ----- (After the Battle)
- 68 == Reserve Retirement Age [26] ---- (H.R. 2907 Early Retirement Pay)
- 68 == Vet Airport Screening ----- (Obama Signs H.R.1344)
- 68 == Vet Benefit Legislation [02] ----- (Omnibus Bill Clears SVAC)
- 70 == Veteran Legislation 113th Congress ----- (As of 13 AUG 2013)
- 72 == Veteran Hearing/Mark-up Schedule ----- (As of 14 Aug 2013)
- 72 == House Vet Bill Progress ----- (1-15 Aug 2013)
- 73 == The Good Old Days ----- (Over the Counter Meds)
- 73 == Have You Heard? ----- (Joys of Aging!)
- 73 == Military Lingo/Jargon/Slang ----- (015)
- 74-== Interesting Ideas ----- (Grape Ice Cubes)

Attachment - Veteran Legislation as of 13 Aug 2013

Attachment - State Veteran's Benefits NH 2013

Attachment - C-123 Toxic Exposure

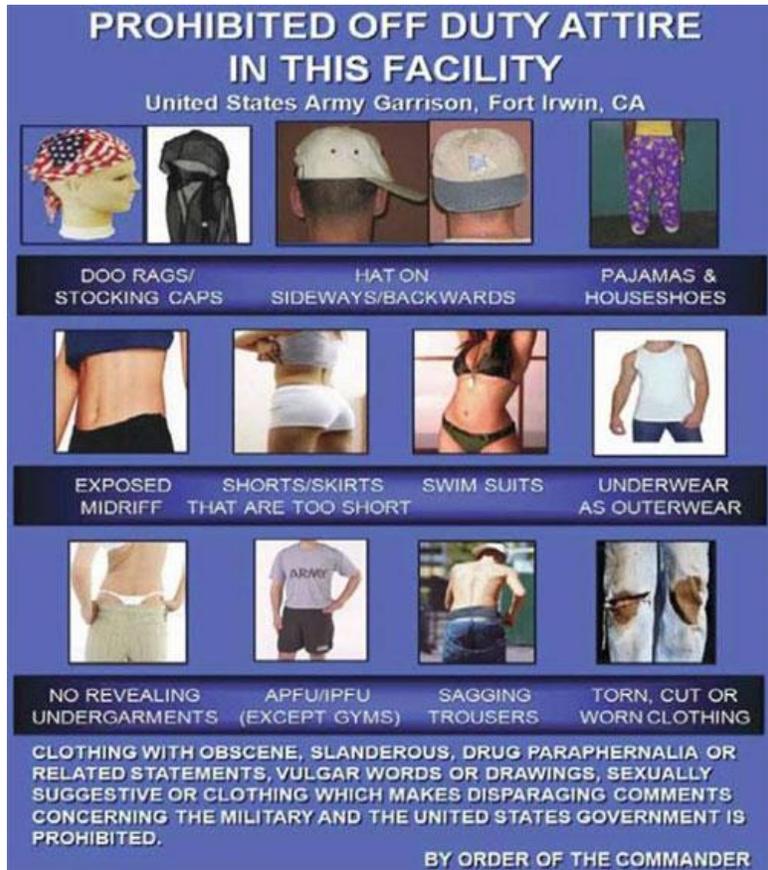
Attachment - The Good Old Days



Fort Irwin Dress Code ► Off-Duty Servicemembers & Family

A new dress code for off-duty servicemembers and family at Fort Irwin, an isolated California Army post, has raised the ire of military spouses who wonder if the military really has the right to tell them how to dress. The dress code, which is illustrated on the poster below and has been placed on buildings around Fort Irwin, bans things like ripped

jeans, backward hats, pajama pants, very short shirts and shorts and sagging pants. The new policy gives programs and facilities on Irwin, such as the commissary, the right to deny service to anyone not meeting the dress code. Fort Irwin is far from the only installation, Army or otherwise, to have a dress code. Navy bases in Japan enforce a strict dress code that prohibits active wear, such as running shorts, from being worn in the commissary and elsewhere, among other things. And the US Army bases on Hawaii prohibit items such as see-through clothing.



[Source: Military.com | Spouse Buzz | 7 Aug 2013 ++]

NDU Foundation ► Offering Veterans Venture Forum 29 OCT

The National Defense University Foundation (NDUF), in Washington, D.C., is offering to put veterans with young businesses or ideas for new businesses in touch with investors willing to put up money to get the ventures off the ground. The Veterans Venture Forum was announced last week by the foundation, which is the outreach arm of the National Defense University. "Our goal is to give military veterans an opportunity to meet directly with experienced investors and pitch their business plans," said Cathleen Pearl, the NDU Foundation president. The foundation plans a Capstone Day in partnership with Angel Venture Forum on 29 OCT at Fort McNair, the university's home, for a limited number of entrepreneurs selected from applicants to pitch their ideas directly to investors. Leading up to that event will be the NDU Foundation Boot Camp for Entrepreneurs, a series of training sessions where entrepreneurs can learn how to develop business plans and recognize the challenges and

opportunities of start-up ventures. Interested veterans can register for the Veterans Venture Forum and the boot camp at <http://veteransventureforum.eventbrite.com>.

The NDUF, established in 1982 as a non-profit organization, provides private sector support for the National Defense University in mission-oriented areas otherwise not funded by government appropriations. The University, by federal law, cannot solicit or hold private funds and depends on the Foundation for additional financial resources and program support worthy of any great educational institution. Through a comprehensive and nationwide fundraising and outreach program, the Foundation solicits philanthropic individuals, corporations, and organizations committed to a secure and strong America. Additionally, NDUF in collaboration with the NDU develops and manages outreach programs that help educate and engage the American public for a better understanding of critical national security issues. [Source: NGAUS Washington Report 13 Aug 2013 ++]

Gmail Privacy Issue ► Class-Action Lawsuit

Google's attorneys told a federal judge that its practice of reading Gmail users' emails to pick which ads it shows is like a secretary opening a business letter. Consumer Watchdog posted Google's filing at the U.S. District Court of Northern California (<http://www.consumerwatchdog.org/resources/googlemotion061313.pdf>), which says in part:

Just as a sender of a letter to a business colleague cannot be surprised that the recipient's assistant opens the letter, people who use Web-based email today cannot be surprised if their communications are processed by the recipient's ECS provider in the course of delivery. Indeed, "a person has no legitimate expectation of privacy in information he voluntarily turns over to third parties." Smith v. Maryland, 442 U.S. 735, 743-44 (1979).

The filing seeks to dismiss a class-action lawsuit that says Google is violating federal and state wiretap laws by reading user emails to make ad decisions. "Google's brief uses a wrong-headed analogy; sending an email is like giving a letter to the post office," says John M. Simpson, Consumer Watchdog's Privacy Project director. "I expect the post office to deliver the letter based on the address written on the envelope. I don't expect the mail carrier to open my letter and read it." Or to then shove junk mail in your mailbox based on the letter's contents, one might add. Consumer Watchdog suggests people stop using Gmail if they are concerned about privacy. While it's not a direct response to the lawsuit, a new Microsoft-commissioned study found that 90 percent of email users agree with the statement, "my inbox should be my most private place on the Internet." The results were shared alongside the company's digs against Google's recent practice of sending users advertisements that look like email messages. Microsoft calls them 'Gspam'. "They look like regular emails, with a sender, subject line, and bolded 'unread' font, but they are definitely not – they are Gspam ads from Google," Microsoft-run Scroogled.com says. [Source: MoneyTalksNews | Brandon Ballenger | 12 Aug 2013 ++]

RP~China Dispute Update 04 ► U.S. Military Presence in RP Talks

A proposed increase in the U.S. military presence in the Philippines, including the pre-positioning of equipment, will help the country defend its territorial waters amid a conflict with China in the South China Sea, officials said 12 AUG. The countries will start talks 14 AUG in Manila on an agreement that will allow more American troops to rotate through Philippine military bases, government negotiator Carlos Sorreta said. Hundreds of American troops already have been stationed in the southern Philippines for counter-terrorism training since 2002 and also hold

annual combat exercises with Filipino troops dealing with Muslim and communist insurgents, along with al-Qaida-linked militants. But the focus of the Philippine military has increasingly turned to external threats as territorial spats involving China, the Philippines and Vietnam heated up in recent years in the potentially oil- and gas-rich waters.

Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario said the Philippines was bent on resorting to diplomacy to resolve the disputes, but stressed the government would do everything to protect its territory. "Our region needs to know that we are steadfastly for peace," del Rosario said. "But that we stand ready to tap every resource, to call on every alliance, to do what is necessary, to defend what is ours, to secure our nation and to keep our people safe." Del Rosario spoke at a news conference with Defense Secretary Voltaire Gazmin to present the four-member government team that will negotiate the agreement for the deployment of more American forces in Philippine military camps besides those in the south of the country. Gazmin said the bigger U.S. presence would not be permanent and would comply with the constitution, which bans the permanent basing of foreign troops. While the ill-equipped Philippine military tries to modernize, a larger U.S. military presence would serve as an added deterrent against foreign intrusions in the country's territorial waters, del Rosario said. Another government negotiator, Defense Undersecretary Pio Lorenzo Batino, said the Philippines would want to be able to use temporarily deployed U.S. military equipment for maritime security, maritime domain awareness and humanitarian assistance.

The presence of foreign troops is a sensitive issue in the Philippines, a former American colony. The Philippine Senate voted in 1991 to close down major U.S. bases at Subic and Clark, near Manila. In 1999, it ratified a pact with the United States allowing temporary visits by American forces, paving the way for hundreds of U.S. forces to hold combat exercises with Filipino troops in the south. Simmering territorial tensions in the South China Sea have since shifted the focus on the Philippines' poorly guarded maritime frontiers. Last year, China took control of a lagoon off the northwestern Philippines, which Manila says falls within its 200-mile (322-kilometer) exclusive economic zone. China has also demanded that the Philippines pull out of another shoal farther south, near Mischief Reef, which Chinese troops occupied in 1995 amid Manila's protests.

The U.S. says it takes no sides in the disputes but has backed a Philippine move to seek U.N. arbitration and a proposed regional nonaggression pact. China has criticized the Philippines for escalating the disputes and warned against any outside intervention. Manila's desire to bolster its external defense has dovetailed with Washington's intention to pivot away from years of heavy military engagement in the Middle East to Asia, partly as a counterweight to China's rising clout. The U.S. realignment also involves the deployment of up to 2,500 U.S. Marines in northern Australia and the stationing of U.S. combat vessels in Singapore. [Source: Associated Press| by Jim Gomez | 12 Aug 2013 ++]

Air Force Collaboratory ► AF Seeks Public Input

For the first time in its history, the U.S. Air Force is seeking input from the public to help solve three real-world, unclassified projects. Known as "The Air Force Collaboratory," this Air Force initiative is now available at the Air Force Collaboratory website at www.airforce.com/collaboratory. The educational online platform will offer the public an opportunity to engage with Airmen. The Air Force Collaboratory features three projects that will challenge participants to be creative and inventive as they work to find solutions. The three projects are

- **"Search and Rescue 2.0,"** which will be active for collaboration from Aug. 1 to Sept. 30, solicits participants to develop new technologies through rapid prototyping for search and rescue operations to help save lives trapped in collapsed structures.

- **"Mind of a Quadrotor,"** which will be active for collaboration from Sept. 1 to Oct. 31, challenges participants to help build a system that allows a quadrotor to navigate its surroundings with minimal human interaction.
- **"Launch of GPS IIF,"** which will be active for collaboration from Oct. 1 to Nov. 30, tests participants to determine the most effective location within the GPS satellite constellation to launch the Air Force's newest GPS satellite.

These real world projects will highlight current and future Air Force technologies," said Johnson. "Technology changes the way we fly, fight and win. We want to illustrate the high-tech nature of the Air Force through this project," said Col. Marcus Johnson, Strategic Marketing Division chief. "The goal of this project is to inspire STEM-inclined students and educators to engage, collaborate and solve real-world challenges faced by our Airmen today." To be a part of this Air Force initiative sign up at the The Air Force Collaboratory website at www.airforce.com/collaboratory. [Source: Air Education and Training Command Week of August 12, 2013 ++]

Izumo ► Japan Launches Flat-Top Destroyer

Japan on 6 AUG unveiled its biggest warship since World War II, a huge flat-top destroyer that has raised eyebrows in China and elsewhere because it bears a strong resemblance to a conventional aircraft carrier. The ship, which has a flight deck that is nearly 250 meters (820 feet) long, is designed to carry up to 14 helicopters. Japanese officials say it will be used in national defense - particularly in anti-submarine warfare and border-area surveillance missions - and to bolster the nation's ability to transport personnel and supplies in response to large-scale natural disasters, like the devastating earthquake and tsunami in 2011. Though the ship - dubbed "Izumo" - has been in the works since 2009, its unveiling comes as Japan and China are locked in a dispute over several small islands located between southern Japan and Taiwan. For months, ships from both countries have been conducting patrols around the isles, called the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyutai in China.



The destroyer Izumo is Japan's largest boat since the end of World War II

The tensions over the islands, along with China's heavy spending on defense and military modernization, have heightened calls in Japan for beefed-up naval and air forces. China recently began operating an aircraft carrier that it refurbished after purchasing from Russia, and is reportedly moving forward with the construction of another that is domestically built. Japan, China and Taiwan all claim the islands. Though technically a destroyer, some experts believe the new Japanese ship could potentially be used in the future to launch fighter jets or other aircraft that have the ability to take off vertically. That would be a departure for Japan, which has one of the best equipped and best trained naval forces in the Pacific but which has not sought to build aircraft carriers of its own because of

constitutional restrictions that limit its military forces to a defensive role. Japan says it has no plans to use the ship in that manner. The Izumo does not have catapults for launching fighters, nor does it have a "ski-jump" ramp on its flight deck for fixed-wing aircraft launches. [Source: Associated Press | Eric Talmadge | 6 Aug 2013 ++]

Vet Refuses Medical Care ► 95 Year old Tased, Shot & Killed

When John Wrana was a young man, fit and strong and fighting in World War II with the U.S. Army Air Corps, did he ever think his life would end this way? Wrana allegedly became combative after finding out that he was going to be committed for medical treatment. He did not want the treatment because of the risk involved and was fearful that he would end up on life support. The paramedics were called. They brought in the Park Forest police Just a few weeks shy of his 96th birthday, in need of a walker to move about, police came through the door of his retirement home with a Taser and a shotgun. First they tased him, but that didn't work. So they fired a shotgun, hitting him in the stomach with a bean-bag round. He was struck with such force that he bled to death internally, according to the Cook County medical examiner. In an interview 8 AUG with Wrana's family attorney Nicholas Grapas, a former prosecutor, said, "The Japanese military couldn't get him at the age he was touchable, in a uniform in the war. It took 70 years later for the Park Forest police to do the job."



John Wrana and his wife, Helen in 2005. Helen died in 2005.

Wrana's family wants answers. The Illinois State Police are investigating the horrific incident but won't comment, and neither will the Park Forest police pending the outcome of the inquiry. Grapas said he wasn't at the scene, and maybe the police have a good explanation. But common sense tells him that cops don't need a Taser or a shotgun to subdue a 95-year-old man. And after doing some digging, he found there are two versions of events: The police version, and a new picture that raises questions of whether John Wrana was killed unnecessarily. The Park Forest police version is that on the night of 26 JUL, John Wrana, a resident of the Victory Centre senior living facility, threatened staff and paramedics with a 2-foot-long metal shoehorn and a metal cane. The police statement neglects to mention that the old man also used a walker, at least according to photographs supplied by Grapas. "Attempts were made verbally to have the resident comply with demands to drop the articles, to no avail," the police statement reads. "The resident then armed himself with a 12-inch butcher type kitchen knife."

But lawyer Grapas says that Wrana's family never saw a knife in his room and that staff also told him Wrana didn't have such a knife. "So where did the knife come from?" Grapas asked. The police statement leaves the impression that the staff was under threat, leaving police with no choice other than to shoot him. But according to Maria Oliva, an executive with Pathway Senior Living, the staff was kept out of the room after police arrived. So

there was no imminent threat to staff. "The staff was not inside once the police were on the scene," Oliva told us. "At different times the staff were in there, but not when they were called. They (the police) were in charge at that point." Police said there had been threats made against the staff. But Grapsas said he was told that staff begged to be allowed to try to calm down the old man. "If there were threats to the staff, why did the staff want to intervene and say, 'Let us handle this; we'll get him calmed down'?" he asked. Grapsas says he was told that police used a riot shield to come through the door before shooting bean-bag rounds at the old man as he sat in his chair.



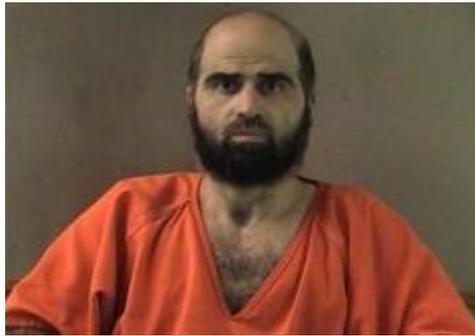
104 Apartment Supportive Living Community

Riot shields are used to push back mobs of angry young protesters in the streets, or against dangerous convicts in prison cells, not to subdue an old, old man in a chair. "At some point, I'm told there were between five and seven police officers, they went back to the room with a riot shield in hand, entered the door and shot him with a shotgun that contained bean-bag rounds," Grapsas said. If this is true and police had a riot shield, why on earth would they need a shotgun? Most veteran cops I talked to suspect this is a case of unnecessary force. I've never met a police officer who couldn't handle a 95-year-old man in a walker. And John Wrana wasn't Jason Bourne. He was an old war veteran who didn't want to be pushed around. But one senior police official who has trained police recruits in defensive tactics had a different take. "When I first heard it, I was like, 'C'mon,'" he said. "Then I thought it through. We don't know what occurred. We don't know what information they had at that time. If you don't have all of the facts, it's hard to judge someone. ... Anyone can be dangerous."

Sharon Mangerson, 74, doesn't see her stepfather as dangerous. Wrana and Mangerson's mother, Helen, were married for more than 30 years. Helen died in 2005. So Wrana lived with step-daughter in the south suburbs until his health — and her health — began to fail. She said he was a fiercely independent member of the greatest generation, honorably discharged as a sergeant after serving in India and Burma during the war. "He was a very vital 95-year-old, let me tell you. He still played cards. He taught the 70-year-olds how to play gin rummy," she said in an interview. "I used to admire him so much because he was able to keep doing those type of things. As independent as they come, trust me." On the night of the incident, he wound up at Advocate Christ Medical Center. The doctor was on the phone with Mangerson, telling her that even if Wrana survived surgery, he'd likely be on life support. Wrana wanted to talk to her. The doctor held the phone up to his ear, she said. "He just said, 'Thank you for everything you've done for me. I love you and goodbye,'" Mangerson recalled, her voice cracking. "That was it." Will the family ever get an explanation? "I want answers," she said. "I want someone held accountable." [Source: Chicago Tribune | Jack Kass | Aug 2013 ++]

Military Pay & Benefits Update 01 ► Pay Suspension Bill for Capital Crimes

Some members of Congress think it's time to cut off the cash to Army Maj. Nidal Hasan. On the eve of opening statements in the court-martial of Hasan, the defendant in the 2009 Fort Hood shooting rampage, lawmakers have proposed suspending military pay for service men and women charged with certain crimes. They say they are frustrated that Hasan, the Army psychiatrist charged with multiple counts of premeditated murder and attempted premeditated murder in one of the worst mass shootings on a military base, has received paychecks totaling nearly \$300,000 while locked up. "It is outrageous that taxpayers continue to pay an accused terrorist that killed more than a dozen people," said U.S. Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX). "Does anyone think this make sense? You are innocent until proven guilty in this country, but that doesn't mean you should be rewarded while awaiting trial." The Stop Pay for Violent Offenders Act has been filed in the U.S. House — to let the military suspend pay for those arrested and charged with rape, sexual assault or a capital offense — by Reps. Tim Griffin (R-AR) Tom Rooney (R-FL), and Frank Wolf (E-VA).



Maj. Nidal Hasan

"The fact that the sole suspect in this attack, Nidal Hasan, a major in the U.S. Army, has continued to draw his Army salary — costing taxpayers more than \$278,000 — is outrageous," Griffin said. Current law lets the military stop paying civilian employees, but officials say they can't stop paying military members on active service, such as Hasan, unless they are convicted. "This bill would correct a huge oversight that has allowed military personnel charged with a serious crime to continue to receive their pay while awaiting trial," Wolf said. "Does anybody really think it's right that Nidal Hasan has collected more than \$200,000 in taxpayer dollars since being charged in the Fort Hood shootings?" The bill is drawing mixed reactions. It would withhold military members' salaries during the court process, but anyone acquitted would receive full salary payment. "Our bill is simple — if you're awaiting trial for a serious crime, you can't collect a salary from the American taxpayer," said Rooney, a former prosecutor at Fort Hood. [Source: Fort Worth Star-Telegram | Anna M. Tinsley | 4 Aug 2013 ++]

Contractors & Builders ► **Hiring Tips**

Every year, thousands of American families face major home damage from tornadoes, hurricanes, fires and other disasters. If you're one of them, homeowners insurance can give you the second chance you need to rebuild. But getting the work done isn't as easy as just writing a check. Choosing a reliable, professional contractor or homebuilder is the first step to a successful recovery. Here are 12 tips to help you avoid costly mistakes when choosing and working with contractors and builders:

1. **Beware of disaster chasers.** In the wake of a natural disaster, it's common for contractors to roll into the area, looking to capitalize on widespread home damage. While many of these companies are reputable, others are fly-by-

night operations lacking the qualifications to do the job right. The Better Business Bureau warns against door-to-door contractors who use high-pressure sales tactics or offer you unbelievable deals.

2. **Seek referrals.** Talk to friends who have used building contractors in your area. Ask your county's building inspector for recommendations. You can also check for reputable local contractors with the National Association of the Remodeling Industry at <http://www.nari.org/> , National Association of Home Builders at <http://www.nahb.org> or Better Business Bureau at <http://www.bbb.org>.
3. **Check credentials.** Call your local Better Business Bureau to find out how long a company has been in business. Google the name of the company's owner; sometimes, unscrupulous contractors will go out of business and then start back up under a new company name. If your state requires contractors to be licensed, registered or bonded, contact the appropriate regulatory agency at <http://www.contractor-license.org> to make sure the person you choose meets the requirements.
4. **Visit current job sites of a builder or contractor.** Are they clean? How do workers handle tools and materials? Are dust covers used to protect belongings? Remember, they'll work the same way on your turf. While you're at it, visit the contractor's permanent office to make sure it's equally professional.
5. **Ask contractors to provide their insurance information.** Companies should carry workers' compensation, property damage and personal liability insurance. Ask for the documents, and look for expiration dates when they come to do your bid -- you don't want coverage to expire before your project is done.
6. **Don't forget the subcontractors.** General contractors may hire other specialized companies, called subcontractors, to work for them. If so, make sure they, too, have all the necessary licenses and insurance. And have your contractor specify in the work contract whom they will hire as subcontractors.
7. **Get estimates in writing.** Get bids from at least three reputable contractors. If prices differ wildly, find out why and don't automatically choose the lowest price. Sometimes you get what you pay for: Radically cheaper bids might mean the contractor will use cheaper materials, hire fewer workers and put a lower priority on repairing your home.
8. **Understand the timing.** Ask how soon the work can begin. Especially after a major disaster, some contractors might be booked solid and unable to start on your project until months later. On the bright side, this could be a sign of a quality contractor who is in high demand. If a contractor can start tomorrow, there might be a reason that the business has no other customers.
9. **Seal deals in writing.** Make sure the start and completion dates, project scope, materials, costs, payment schedule and all promises are specified in the contract.
10. **Read and understand the work contract.** Don't assume anything. If you're unsure about the jargon, or any of the wording, let an attorney review the contract for you.
11. **Never pay in cash.** Use a credit card or check, and keep receipts. That way, you have proof of payment all along the way.
12. **Don't pay too much upfront.** Typically, contractors will ask for 20%-30% before work begins. If they ask for much more, walk away. And whatever you do, don't pay the final installment until all work is completed to your satisfaction.

[Source: Money Matters | Military.com | 25 Jul 2013 ++]

Legionnaires Disease Update 02 ► 3rd VA OIG Report Results

It's not just Pittsburgh. Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals across the country failed to follow policies designed to stop the spread of Legionnaires' disease, according to a VA Office of Inspector General's report released on 1 AUG. More than one-third of VA hospitals and clinical care facilities did not conduct proper planning and risk assessment required by a 2008 national VA directive to control the Legionella bacteria. If inhaled in water mist, the bacteria can become a potentially deadly form of pneumonia known as Legionnaires' disease. "The report shows a clear lack of understanding at VA facilities across the country about proper protocol when testing for Legionella," Sen. Bob Casey Jr. (D-PA) wrote in an email to the Tribune-Review.

Casey, along with Rep. Tim Murphy (R-PA-18) requested the nationwide investigation after a Legionnaires' outbreak in the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System sickened at least 21 veterans, at least five of whom died, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The full scope of the Pittsburgh outbreak remains murky. VA workers at the University Drive campus in Oakland found alarmingly high levels of Legionella bacteria in the water system as far back as 2007, a Trib investigation revealed, but the VA and the CDC did not review those records or the medical records of veterans hospitalized there before the February 2011 to November 2012 outbreak. At least one family believes their loved one was killed in the outbreak but went uncounted by the CDC. Casey has asked the CDC to review the matter.

The report released on Thursday is the third produced by the Inspector General in response to the outbreak. At least one more, a criminal probe, is under way. Nine of the 16 VA facilities with a history of hospital-acquired Legionnaires' — meaning patients caught the disease at the facilities — failed to follow the clinical and environmental testing guidelines spelled out in the 2008 directive, according to the report. Three Pittsburgh facilities — the H. John Heinz III hospital in O'Hara, University Drive hospital in Oakland and the Highland Drive hospital, which no longer takes patients — are among those that failed to follow the rules, the report found. A Trib investigation in March and Inspector General's report in April documented in greater detail the mistakes by VA Pittsburgh leaders that helped lead to the outbreak. "This report is troubling proof that the mismanagement and incompetence that led to the Pittsburgh Legionnaires' disease tragedy is present at numerous VA medical centers across the country. The report very clearly documents how VA facilities put patients at risk by ignoring internal VA policies as well as federal guidelines governing infectious disease management and reporting," said Rep. Jeff Miller, (R-FL), chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

The report is based on surveys that 182 VA hospitals returned to the Inspector General documenting their Legionella prevention efforts in 2012. That year, as an outbreak gripped VA Pittsburgh hospitals, testing for the disease at the Heinz and University Drive hospitals far exceeded any other in the country. Of the 15,169 urine tests conducted at all VA hospitals to determine the presence of Legionella bacteria, more than 1,200 were conducted in Pittsburgh. No other hospital conducted more than 900. VA Pittsburgh accounted for about one-third of the 3,091 respiratory cultures taken that year, the report found. Pittsburgh had more Legionnaires' patients than anywhere else. Eighteen of the 112 patients identified by the Inspector General were in Pittsburgh, more than three times the next-highest number of cases — five — that were identified at the VA Medical Center in Washington. Investigators identified only four of those 112 Legionnaires' patients who definitely caught the disease from VA hospitals, the report said. It did not identify which hospitals those patients visited, but the CDC investigation of Pittsburgh's outbreak identified four patients who definitely acquired the disease in VA Pittsburgh facilities in 2012. The CDC report identified nine others who probably acquired the disease there.

“The inspector general's findings only bolster the case for significant reform at (the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System) and around the country, and the need to pass legislation to require the VA to report outbreaks of infectious diseases to appropriate public officials,” Casey said. Casey and Murphy have introduced bills that would require VA hospitals to comply with the same reporting requirements that apply to most hospitals to tighten oversight. The national VA is revising its guidelines for Legionella prevention in response to the Pittsburgh outbreak. The Inspector General suggested that those revisions simplify guidelines and provide “guidance, education and monitoring” to make sure they're followed. In addition, the IG recommended the VA expand the number of facilities that should take extra steps to combat Legionnaires'. VA Undersecretary of Health Dr. Robert Petzel concurred with the recommendations and said they would be implemented within a year. [Source: Pittsburgh Tribune-Review | Mike Wereschagin | 2 Aug 2013 ++]

Sequestration Update 34: ► Defense Review Cuts Deep

On 31 JUL, SecDef Chuck Hagel outlined the results of the Pentagon’s Strategic Choices and Management Review (SCMR) – a four-month directed review of budget planning options in light of sequestration. The various SCMR budget cutting options were developed based on three budget scenarios:

- The President’s FY 2014 budget submission which includes a \$150 billion cut over ten years
- An “in-between” budget that would reduce the Pentagon’s budget by \$250 billion over ten year
- A budget based on the full impact of the Budget Control Act’s sequester (approximately \$500 billion over ten years)

The SCMR developed a package of cut options in three major areas:

- Management efficiencies and overhead reductions
- Compensation reforms
- Changes to force structure and modernization plans

The Pentagon has already started in one area. In late July, the Pentagon announced one initiative under way as a result of the SCMR – a 20 percent reduction in the DoD’s major headquarters budgets. This initiative includes a goal of reducing civilian and military billets by 20 percent. Additionally, Hagel highlighted Congress’ reluctance to accept two budget cutting measures included in the FY 2014 budget submission – another round of base realignment and closure (BRAC) rounds and TRICARE fee increases. Hagel stated “DoD has no choice but to consider compensation changes of greater magnitude for military and civilian personnel” if the Pentagon is forced to face the fiscal challenges of a sequester-level budget. Compensation options include (but are not limited to):

- Increase military retiree health care use of private-sector insurance
- Change basic allowance for housing so currently serving pay more of their housing costs
- Reduce overseas cost of living adjustments
- Continue to limit military and civilian pay raises
- Eliminate civilian pensions for retired military personnel serving in the federal service
- End subsidies for commissaries
- Restrict availability of unemployment benefits

Hagel reiterated that the Pentagon was “not announcing any compensation changes today” but did state that Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, General Martin Dempsey (USA), will lead an effort to develop a package of compensation cuts to the tune of \$50 billion over the next decade. A parallel effort led by senior OSD staff will review civilian pay and benefits. End strength was also a big target for savings if the sequester continues. The SCMR options included downsizing the Army from a planned 490,000 to as low as 380,000; Marine Corps from

182,000 to as low as 150,000; and Army reserves from 550,000 to as low as 490,000. Force structure options included reducing up to five Air Force tactical squadrons, cutting the C-130 fleet and retiring older bombers. The Navy could see a reduction in the number of carrier strike groups from 11 to eight. Hagel discussed how the Pentagon will have to seek proper balance between capacity (measured in the number of brigades, ships, squadrons, and battalions) and capability (the ability to modernize weapons systems) before making recommendations to the President in the FY 2015 budget. Hagel closed stating, "If these abrupt [sequestration] cuts remain, we risk fielding a force that over the next few years is unprepared due to a lack of training, maintenance, and the latest equipment."

Congress needs to reconsider sequestration. Threatened budget cuts under the 2011 Budget Control Act were designed to be so onerous and senseless that a deal would be struck to prevent mindless budget slashing, with DoD shouldering 50 percent of the cuts. Yet a budget deal was never reached. Here we are, over halfway through the first year of cuts, and there is too little discussion or movement toward securing a bipartisan agreement to avoid devastating sequestration effects not only for FY 2014, but for the next nine years. Congress and the administration need to act now so that the Pentagon can plan and execute both long- and short-term programs. Military readiness and national security should not be used as pawns in the game of political brinkmanship. [Source: MOAA Leg Up 2 Aug 2013 ++]

Sequestration Update 35: ► Military Retiree Civilian Employee Pensions

To address long-term sequester cuts, the Defense Department is mulling numerous reductions that will affect civilian employees, including doing away with civilian employee pensions for military retirees who go back to work for the government as civilian employees. The savings could be almost \$100 billion over 10 years when combined with a halt to commissary subsidies and restrictions on the availability of unemployment benefits, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel told reporters last week in summarizing the recommendations of the newly completed Strategic Choices and Management Review. "A sequester-level scenario would compel us to consider these changes because there would be no realistic alternative that did not pose unacceptable risk to national security," Hagel said. As of March, more than 134,000 military retirees held civilian jobs at DoD, according to the Office of Personnel Management. For the Pentagon, axing civilian pensions would save money by reducing the amount it has to contribute into the Federal Employees Retirement System and the Civil Service Retirement System, said Larry Korb, who oversaw manpower issues as an assistant Defense secretary during the Reagan administration.

While Korb does not take the idea seriously, he sees it as an attempt by DoD to draw attention to a pension program that often lets soldiers, sailors and airmen retire from the military after 20 years, then return to DoD as civilian employees making more money for doing the same job. Hagel did not say how aggressively DoD would seek to implement such a step or how much it could save. A Pentagon spokesman later declined to provide additional detail. But the head of the National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE) blasted the idea as ill-conceived and completely unfair. "No civilian employee should receive lower total compensation because they served in the military, ever," NARFE President Joseph Beaudoin said in a statement. "This proposal should be rejected completely as an option, even under the worst budget scenarios." The Defense Department is absorbing a \$37 billion cut under this year's sequester and could face a \$52 billion reduction if a second round ensues next year, according to Hagel. He commissioned the strategic choices and management review in March both to help DoD prepare for another sequester and to shape military spending plans through 2019. Other possible cuts include:

- Consolidation of regional combatant commands.
- Defense agency mission cuts.
- Consolidation of information technology programs.



Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel answers reporters' questions during a Pentagon news briefing on the Strategic Choices and Management Review.

Because pay and benefits consumes roughly half of DoD's budget, top officials will put together a package of compensation proposals for both military personnel and civilian employees that would begin to take effect in the 2015 budget. Hagel's announcement came as some 650,000 DoD civilians continue to face one-day-a-week unpaid furloughs that are supposed to add up to 11 days by the end of the fiscal year in September. But the Pentagon continues to look for money from other sources to reduce that total, Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton Carter said at a congressional hearing last week. If surplus funds do turn up by September, "we have two priorities," Carter told members of the House Armed Services Committee. "One is to restore maintenance and the other is to relax furloughs." Should next year bring another sequester, however, reductions-in-force are possible, he reiterated. In a 31 JUL memo, Carter also fleshed out Hagel's earlier order for long-term cuts at the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff and the military services' headquarters. Besides striving to reduce spending by 20 percent from 2015 through 2019, those offices should seek to cut "authorized government civilian staff" by the same proportion, Carter wrote.

Tighter budgets have so far scarcely dented the size of both civilian and military headquarters staffs. Some analysts question whether Hagel will be any more successful, particularly since he will likely have left the Pentagon long before 2019. In the memo, Carter said the cuts should be spaced out proportionally over the five-year period and also fall on contract services, information technology and other support functions. Carter's memo drew a scathing protest from the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents many DoD civilian workers. Imposing "arbitrary cuts and focusing almost exclusively on civilian and military personnel are failed approaches to downsizing," AFGE President J. David Cox wrote in an Aug. 1 letter to Hagel, adding that Carter should have included a specific target for contract employees cuts. [Source: FederalTimes | Sean Reily | 4 Aug 2013 ++]

Sequestration Update 36: ► Commissary Furloughs to End

The Defense Department's cancellation of remaining furlough days will allow commissaries worldwide to resume normal hours after 17 AUG affected by the furlough, either closing one day a week or operating with a reduced staff that, at some locations, caused longer-than-normal checkout times. The Defense Department's decision, announced

Monday, to cut the number of civilian furlough days from 11 to six will enable stores to return to their regular schedules the week of 18 to 24 AUG, Joseph H. JEU, DECA's director and chief executive officer, said in a news release. The furloughs began 8 JUL and were taken at the rate of one day a week. That means the sixth and last furlough day for most of the military's grocery stores will be 12 AUG. Since the furloughs started, 210 commissaries, including 29 overseas, have been shuttered one day a week. DECA kept 37 overseas commissaries open during the shutdown by staffing stores with local nationals, who were not subject to the unpaid furlough. Most stores were closed Mondays during the furlough period. More than 14,000 of DECA's U.S. civilian employees worldwide were affected by the furlough, according to DECA. With the end of the furlough, JEU asked that customers be patient as product delivery schedules return to normal. Customers at some commissaries have been frustrated by long lines and empty shelves. "We will do everything possible to ensure that our shelves are properly stocked with the products our customers want when they shop," JEU was quoted as saying in the release. "However, there will be a short adjustment period as our stores settle back into their pre-furlough operating and delivery routines." [Source: Stars and Stripes| Jennifer H. Svan | 8 Aug 2013 ++]

Sequestration Update 37: ► Veteran Care Threatened

President Barack Obama told a gathering of disabled veterans 10 AUG that the budget battle looming in Washington, D.C., puts care for veterans at risk. Although the Department of Veterans Affairs was exempted from the across-the-board cuts known as sequestration, the president said it still has the ability to impact VA benefits. "The best way to protect the VA care you have earned is to get rid of the sequester altogether," he told 3,400 attendees at the annual conference of Disabled American Veterans in Orlando, Fla. "Congress needs to come together and agree on a responsible plan that reduces our deficits and keeps our promises to our veterans and keeps our promises to future generations." The government is now facing the possibility of not having a budget approved by the end of the fiscal year on 30 SEP. Currently in recess, Congress will have only a few weeks to hammer out a budget when it returns. Obama said the backlog of veteran claims, which was 600,000 earlier this year, is still too large, but has been reduced in recent months. He pointed out that new veterans enter the system every day while aging veterans of the Vietnam era seek more care. Plus, he noted, the VA cares for the offspring of veterans even after the former service member has died. He said benefits are going to children of World War I and Spanish-American War veterans. One daughter of a Civil War veteran is receiving benefits, just as children of the 9/11 generation will. "This time of war may be coming to an end, but the job of caring for our veterans goes on," he said. "And our work caring for our newest veterans has only just begun." [Source: NGAUS Washington Report 13 Aug 2013 ++]

SBA Vet Issues Update 33 ► VA Contract Approval Authority

U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman (R-CO) will introduce a bill in AUG that strips the Department of Veterans Affairs of its control over a program that decides who qualifies to bid for contracts set aside by the agency for veteran small businesses. The measure is a direct response to an outcry from the veteran community, which has accused the VA of a "gotcha" mentality with a program created to weed out fraud. That mentality, critics say, has caused legitimate small businesses to be frozen out of opportunities and in some cases branded as shams. "Service-disabled veteran small business owners have paid a hefty price for our nation, and the least we can do is ensure that programs intended to encourage entrepreneurship do not themselves become yet another obstacle to success," Coffman said in an emailed statement. "Many of the certification, appellate, and excessive cost problems at the VA have been well-

documented by veterans, and even by the Government Accountability Office. It's past time to create a clear and transparent set of rules and processes for the government to follow."

The bill, a copy of which was obtained by Washington Business Journal, would transfer to the Small Business Administration control and administration of the Vets First program — which verifies the status of veteran-owned and service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses for the purposes of bidding on VA contracts. In fiscal 2012, 42 percent of the 4,500 applicants were denied verification as service-disabled, veteran-owned small businesses by the VA's Center for Veterans Enterprise. Beyond concerns about fairness, the program costs money to run. According to the House Small Business Committee, which was expected to release the bill 31 JUL as a joint effort with the House Veterans Affairs Committee, the VA is currently spending about \$33 million per year on the verification program, and has more than 120 employees devoted to the process. This duplicates efforts already under way through similar programs operated by the SBA.

"It's important that there's a single standard that would remove the confusion for veterans, and set the stage for consistent determinations" about a contractor's status, said Marc Goldschmitt, CEO of Goldschmitt and Associates LLC and a member of advocacy groups VET Force and the National Veterans Small Business Coalition. Practically speaking, he added, it also will allow companies to submit documentation once to the SBA and have that documentation available for all of the programs that they might apply for, streamlining the process significantly. The bill also provides veterans that are denied from the program with the opportunity to appeal the decision through the SBA's Office of Hearings and Appeals — an option that previously was not available. And it addresses some uncertainty about what happens to a small business owned by a service-disabled veteran when he or she dies. So will the bill pass? "Considering that the veteran community would strongly support these initiatives, and that it appears that they'd be palatable to the House and probably Senate, I believe there will be quick action and passage of the bill," Goldschmitt said. [Source: Washington business Journal | Jill R. Aitoro | 30 Jul 2013 ++]

Military Exchange Magazine Policy ► Will No Longer Stock

Adult magazines including Playboy and Penthouse will no longer be sold at Army and Air Force exchanges. The Army and Air Force Exchange Service announced that it would pull 891 publications from shelves at their facilities because of lackluster sales and to save space for more popular merchandise. The decision, which affects a range of magazines, not just the nude pubs, came about a week after the Pentagon said it did not consider skin mags like Playboy, Penthouse and Nude Magazine "sexually explicit." That decision sparked criticism from Morality in Media, a faith-based group opposed to porn --and lots of media coverage. "The decision to no longer stock the material is a business decision driven by time, money, and energy required to facilitate buying habits, combined with decreasing demand," said Army Lt. Col. Antwan C. Williams, AAFES public affairs chief, in a statement to American Forces Press Service, the Defense Department's news service.

Williams specifically cited as factors the growth of digital publications and slumping sales of hard copies in stores. In addition to Playboy and Penthouse, AAFES also will no longer sell American Curves, Tattoo, The Saturday Evening Post, SpongeBob Comics and Home Buyers Guide, among others. The removal of the magazines will free up 33 percent more space for other offerings, said Chris Ward, a spokesman for AAFES. The Exchange also is adjusting its other inventory, including giftware, DVDs, video games and music, he said. While Morality in Media questioned the timing and purported reason for the decision, the group also declared victory in its effort to stop the sale of "sexually exploitative magazines" on many military bases. "Hopefully the other branches will follow suit or Secretary [Chuck] Hagel will order their removal from all bases," said Dawn Hawkins, executive director of

Morality in Media, in a statement. “No one in DoD has influenced the Exchange’s magazine selection,” Ward said, when asked if AAFES had talked to the Pentagon about its decision.

AAFES runs more than 3,100 facilities around the world, has annual revenue of \$9.2 billion and employs 40,662 civilian and military personnel. The Exchange, which ultimately reports to the Army and Air Force leadership, operates several businesses on military installations, including gas stations, convenience stores, restaurants and theaters. In a July 22 letter to Morality in Media, Defense said it was legal for the department to sell certain nude magazines like Playboy and Penthouse because they were “adult sophisticate” material and not “sexually explicit.” The 1996 Military Honor and Decency Act prohibits the sale or rental of sexually explicit material on Defense property. Title 10, Section 2495b of the U.S. Code defines sexually explicit material as being “an audio recording, a film or video recording, or a periodical with visual depictions, produced in any medium, the dominant theme of which depicts or describes nudity, including sexual or excretory activities or organs, in a lascivious way.” Morality in Media, led by CEO and President Patrick Trueman, said that response from the Pentagon would be “hilarious if it were not so tragic.”

Iris Somberg, a spokeswoman for Morality in Media, said the group was not seeking to get any more material removed from military shelves. She added that the organization does not believe that looking at nude magazines at the exchanges “causes sexual assault” but “it’s a contributing factor.” The military community has a long-standing problem with sexual harassment and violence within its ranks. The 2012 documentary *The Invisible War* and several recent allegations of assault and retaliation have prompted calls for reform from many lawmakers and others. F.E. Vollrath, the Pentagon’s assistant secretary for readiness and force management, said in his July 22 letter to Morality in Media that the department “is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment on our installations for the entire military community.” Navy Secretary Ray Mabus in June ordered a “comprehensive visual inspection” of all the service’s properties to remove salacious photos and other offensive items from workplaces. Somberg questioned the rationale behind selling magazines like Playboy but banning similar items from the workplace. “It’s a bit hypocritical,” she said. Defense did not immediately reply to a question about whether the Navy Service Exchange would pull any racy magazines off its shelves in light of the AAFES decision. [Source: GovExec.com | Kellie Lunney | 31 Jul 2013 ++]





VA Claims Backlog Update 110 ► VA, ABA and LSC Partnership

The Department of Veterans Affairs, the American Bar Association (ABA) and the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) announced 9 AUG a new partnership and pilot program aimed at reducing the claims backlog and making it easier for unrepresented Veterans to receive assistance developing their claims for disability pay. “Ending the backlog is an ‘all hands on deck’ effort that requires teamwork, both in and out of government,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “This partnership between VA, ABA and LSC is aimed at surging resources to deliver earned benefits to Veterans more quickly.” In the coming months, ABA and LSC attorneys will provide free assistance to a targeted group of unrepresented Veterans who request their help gathering and obtaining evidence required by law to support their disability claims.

The development of the claim is often the longest part of the process that determines whether a Veteran is entitled to VA compensation. These steps can take more than 200 days in the rating decision process. The pilot will offer pro bono attorney assistance to Veterans with claims pending at the St. Petersburg and Chicago Regional Offices who do not currently have an authorized representative. Veterans will choose whether to accept this pro-bono assistance. Similar Veterans with claims pending at other VA regional offices may also be considered for the pilot, if warranted. “The ABA is proud to take the lead in connecting veterans with pro bono attorneys who will help them receive the aid our nation owes them for their selfless courage,” said ABA President Laurel Bellows. “We hope that our initial focus on Chicago and St. Petersburg can swiftly be expanded across the nation.”

The claims selected for this pilot program, which are currently -- or will soon be -- part of the claims backlog, will vary in terms of complexity and degree of completeness. VA will accredit the attorneys who choose to participate, and the ABA and LSC will provide them with specialized training that will enable them to help evaluate and develop Veterans claims and make those claims ready for a rating decision. The two initial pilot sites were selected based on proximity to ABA headquarters, and the opportunity for the biggest impact on the backlog. In the coming months, VA will identify eligible Veterans to participate in the pilot program and send letters advising them of all their options for representation to help them advance their claims - from Veteran Service Organizations, attorneys and claims agents, to pro bono attorneys participating in this pilot. The VA letter will inform Veterans of a 1-800 hotline and website to connect them to an attorney who is willing to assist with their claim, free of charge.

Under the partnership, the ABA and LSC will match interested Veterans and attorneys on several factors, including geographic location, complexity of the claim and the Veteran’s and attorney’s preferences on the nature and scope of representation. VA is continuing to implement several initiatives to meet the Department’s goal to eliminate the claims backlog in 2015. As a result of these initiatives, VA’s total claims inventory has dropped to its lowest levels since March 2011. The number of claims in the VA backlog – claims pending more than 125 days – has been reduced by 18 percent, compared to the highest point in March 2013. Veterans can learn more about disability benefits on the joint Department of Defense-VA web portal, *eBenefits*, at www.ebenefits.va.gov/. [Source: VA News Release 9 Aug 2013 ++]

VA Health Care Access Update 06 ► ACA Impact

The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched an awareness campaign and a new website <http://www.va.gov/aca> to let Veterans know what the Affordable Care Act means for them and their families. Veterans receiving health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs will see no change in their benefits or out-of-pocket costs when portions of the Affordable Care Act take effect next year. “VA wants all Veterans to receive health care that improves their health and well-being,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “If you are enrolled in VA health care, you do not need to take any additional steps to meet the health care law coverage standards. If you are not enrolled in VA health care, you can apply at any time.” “VA encourages eligible Veterans who are not enrolled in VA’s health care system to take advantage of the world-class care we provide to the men and women who have served this Nation in uniform,” Shinseki added.

Veterans can apply for VA health care at any time by visiting <http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll>, calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387), or visiting their local VA health care facility. Full details on eligibility are available at http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book. VA’s health care system for Veterans has no enrollment fee, no monthly premiums and no deductibles. Most Veterans also have no out-of-pocket costs, though some may have small copayments for some health care or prescription drugs. “VA will continue to provide Veterans with high quality, comprehensive health care and other benefits they have earned through their service,” said Dr. Robert Petzel, VA’s chief physician and under secretary for health. The Affordable Care Act was created to expand access to coverage, reduce rising health care costs, and improve health care quality and care coordination. The Affordable Care Act creates new opportunities for coverage for uninsured Veterans and their families.

There are more than 1.3 million Veterans and more than 950,000 spouses and children of Veterans without health insurance. Most uninsured Veterans are eligible for VA health care. For those who are not eligible for VA care – such as Veterans’ family members – the law created a new Health Insurance Marketplace. In 2014, the Marketplace will be a new way to shop for and purchase private health insurance. People who purchase insurance through the Marketplace may be able to lower the costs of health insurance coverage by paying lower monthly premiums. For more information, visit <http://www.healthcare.gov>. For information about VA health care and the Affordable Care Act, VA encourages Veterans and family members to visit the new website at <http://www.va.gov/aca>, or call 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. or Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Eastern time. The new website includes a Health Benefits Explorer, where Veterans can learn about the benefits they can receive if they enroll in VA care. [Source: VA Press Release 6 AUG 2013 ++]

VA End of Life Care Update 03 ► Citation of Honor

The American Hospital Association has awarded a Citation of Honor to the Veterans Health Administration for building and expanding the infrastructure to provide palliative and end-of-life care services to Veterans throughout the country and working with community-based providers to complement its services. VHA exemplifies the best in health care, providing compassionate care and helping patients and families facing complex health challenges, according to the American Hospital Association.

In 2002, nearly a third of VA’s medical centers were making no referrals to community hospices, and most centers had no palliative care team. Today, VA has a wide-ranging, innovative palliative care program that builds on

the nation’s largest integrated health system’s advanced information technology capabilities and culture of performance improvement to care for Veterans with serious illness and their families. Each of the VA’s 21 regions has a palliative care program manager and clinical champion, and each of its 152 medical centers has an interdisciplinary palliative care team. All are supported by three national quality centers. “The program began with a small nucleus of committed people,” says Scott T. Shreve, National Director, VA Hospice and Palliative Care, “and grew by focusing on what worked rather than what didn’t. We identified regional champions and we gave them the resources to really make things happen.” It’s about proactively meeting the needs of an individual patient.



Veterans, family members, volunteers, the massage therapist, and the hospice unit team with Dr. Scott Shreve, send an important reminder from the Lebanon, Pennsylvania, VA Medical Center hospice unit

Because Veterans also receive care from community providers, it’s not enough to change the VA system itself. Ensuring non-VA providers understand the special problems faced by Veterans at the end of life — such as when traumatic memories from combat come to light — is critical. Through the VA’s collaboration with the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, the We Honor Veterans program creates collaborative models to increase all Veterans’ access to community hospice and palliative services designed to meet their needs. A powerful tool for internal improvement is the nationwide Bereaved Family Survey, which offers leaders of VA’s 21 regional networks feedback on how end-of-life care services are satisfying families. Mary Zuccaro, who oversees VA palliative and hospice services in northern California, northwest Nevada and Hawaii, depends on those metrics to “take the temperature” of the program. “I look through it for themes of where did we make a difference and where did we miss the boat. I disseminate that through all our programs.”

The VA program focuses on both technology and simple human kindness. The Care Assessment Need score, for instance, is a robust predictive model that scans the electronic medical record to identify Veterans “at-risk” for needing supportive services rather than waiting for a clinician to notice the need. The VA Medical Foster Home program is a lower tech solution to keep Veterans out of nursing homes. In this program, families “adopt” a seriously ill Veteran under the close watch of VA clinicians. “The future for VA is proactive, personalized and patient-driven care,” says Dr. Madhulika Agarwal, Deputy Under Secretary for Health Policy and Services for the Veterans Health Administration. “It’s about proactively meeting the needs of an individual patient, which is based on their preferences and their goals. That is what our focus needs to be.” [Source: VA Health News | Hans Petersen | 1 Aug 2013 ++]

VA Data Breaches Update 50 ► 98% Involve Physical Paper

The leading cause of data breaches at the Department of Veterans Affairs continues to be paper-based records, according to VA Acting Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology Stephen Warren. Warren briefed reporters 8 AUG on the data breach reports his agency submitted to Congress for April, May and June, and stated that while theft of electronic devices containing patient information is rare and "holding steady," upwards of 98 percent of data breaches continue to involve "physical paper." Problematic paper records include documentation misplaced, mishandled or improperly mailed by agency employees – VA's data breach report over the three-month period suggests such mistakes happen hundreds of times per month. In many such cases, a veteran's claim – containing Social Security numbers, address, compensation and pension claim ratings – is exposed publicly or sent to the wrong veteran.

Warren said instances where veterans' information is not kept private are regrettable, but added that the error rate is actually low considering the VA's large number of patients – it sends out millions of packages per month and has "the best" error rate in the health care industry for mispackaging or mishandling. Patients that experience privacy issues are frequently offered credit protection services from VA. "We are constantly reinforcing the fact" that health care matters, Warren said, emphasizing that every data breach report is investigated and analyzed. The VA's Data Breach Core Team, created in 2008, makes use of key players in several of the department's components to review monthly data breaches, assessing risk based on National Institute of Standards and Technology-developed standards. Over the three-month period, no data breaches were classified as high risk, and most were rated as low risk. Between April and June, VA reported six missing personal computers, 68 missing Blackberries and 27 missing laptops, three of which were unencrypted. Based on the reports, it does not appear that private information, with the potential exception of the names of some veterans, was compromised. The stolen or misplaced electronic devices did not have access to VA's network.

While VA has come under fire in the past for putting vets' data at risk electronically, Warren said the theft or disappearance of electronic devices is "holding steady" and remains low, despite 900,000 connected devices on its networks. He said people tend to steal laptops indiscriminately for their street value rather than in hopes of profiting from veterans' private information. "People like laptops because you can sell them easily; folks are taking them for commodity of the things," Warren said. When it comes to electronic data breaches, he said, "we haven't really seen new trends." [Source: FCW | Frank Konkel | 8 Aug 2013 ++]

VA Loans Update 02 ► 5 Myths

Five VA home loan myths can be dismissed about the federally-backed, zero down loan program. The below facts dispel them:

Myth #1 – VA purchase loans are not for short-sale or foreclosed real estate.

Myth #2 – Surviving spouses don't qualify for VA mortgages.

Myth #3 – Military members deployed overseas can't get a VA-guaranteed loan.

Myth #4 – All realtors are good VA home loan advisors.

Myth #5 – VA loans take forever to close.

Fact #1: VA home loans can be used to purchase foreclosed and short-sale with as little as no money down. VA-eligible borrowers may have an advantage over those who need up to 20% cash down to qualify for conventional loans. A VA appraiser is trained to certify value and safety and can spot red flags of distressed properties.

Fact #2: Veterans, active duty and certain surviving spouses are eligible for VA home loan benefits. Qualified (refer to <https://www.directvaloans.com/va-loan-questions/deceased-veterans-va-loan-spouse-eligibility>) surviving spouses may borrow up to \$417,000 (more in high-cost counties) with no money down. And, surviving spouses are exempt from paying the VA funding fee.

Fact #3: Military members deployed overseas can sign a document called power of attorney or (POA) designating a spouse or someone else to act as on their behalf for a VA loan transaction. The POA grants permission for the attorney in fact to sign on behalf of the VA-eligible borrower. The service member must give intent to obtain a VA loan through an email, letter or other correspondence. Only a spouse can satisfy the occupancy rule (move in within 60 days of closing) in a deployed servicemember's stead. Otherwise, the borrower serving away from home will be granted an extension of up to 12 months to occupy the home.

Fact #4: A VA certification for real estate agents does not exist. Therefore, a real estate agent should not be used as a reliable source for VA loan information. Real estate agents who are not well-informed about VA loans can even unintentionally dissuade VA-eligible borrowers from choosing the program which may be best for them. A VA specialty lender, one whose majority product is VA-backed loans, can provide reliable VA loan facts.

Fact #5: If a lender is specialized in VA home loans, then closing can often happen within 30 days. The VA-approved lender is given flexibility to decide on its own whether a borrower is a satisfactory credit risk. Even a borrower with extenuating circumstances may close quickly.
[Source: Military.com| Money Matters | 25 Jul 2013 ++]

VA FDC Program Update 01 ► Retroactive Compensation

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced 1 AUG that veterans filing an original fully developed claim (FDC) for service-connected disability compensation may be entitled to up to one-year of retroactive disability benefits. The retroactive benefits, which are in effect Aug. 6, 2013, through Aug. 5, 2015, are a result of a comprehensive legislative package passed by Congress and signed into law by President Barack Obama last year. "VA strongly encourages veterans to work with veterans service organizations to file fully developed claims and participate in this initiative, since it means more money in eligible veterans' pockets simply by providing VA the information it needs up front," said Allison A. Hickey, Undersecretary for Benefits. "At the same time, it helps reduce the inventory of pending claims by speeding the process."

Filing an FDC is typically the fastest way for veterans to receive a decision on their claims because fully developed claims require veterans to provide all supporting evidence in their possession when they submit their claims. Often, this is evidence that VA legally must attempt to collect on the veteran's behalf, which is already in the veteran's possession, or is evidence the veteran could easily obtain, like private treatment records. When veterans submit such evidence with their claims, it significantly reduces the amount of time VA spends gathering evidence from them or other sources -- often the longest part of the claims process. While VA will still make efforts to obtain federal records on the veterans' behalf, the submittal of non-federal records [and any federal records the veteran may have] with the claim allows VA to issue a decision to the veteran more quickly. Typically, VA processes FDCs in half the time it takes for a traditionally filed claim.

FDCs can be filed digitally through the joint, DOD-VA online portal, eBenefits. VA encourages veterans who cannot file online to work with an accredited veterans service organization that can file claims digitally on veterans' behalf. While submitting an FDC provides a faster decision for any compensation or pension claim, only veterans who are submitting their very first compensation claim as an FDC are potentially eligible for up to one year of retroactive disability benefits under the newly implemented law. FDCs help eliminate VA's claims backlog because they increase production of claims decisions and decrease waiting times. Also, VA assigns FDCs a higher priority than other claims which means veterans receive decisions to their claim faster than traditional claims. VA continues to prioritize other specific categories of claims, including those of seriously wounded, terminally ill, Medal of Honor recipients, former prisoners of war, the homeless and those experiencing extreme financial hardship. As part of its drive to eliminate the claims backlog in 2015, VA also gives a priority to claims more than a year old.

In May, VA announced a new partnership with veterans service organizations and others known as the "Community of Practice," an effort that seeks to reduce the compensation claims backlog for veterans by increasing the number of FDCs filed by veterans and their advocates. VA is continuing to implement several initiatives to meet the Department's goal to eliminate the claims backlog in 2015. In May, VA announced that it was mandating overtime for claims processors in its 56 regional benefits offices to increase production of compensation claims decisions through the end of fiscal year 2013. In April, VA launched an initiative to expedite disability compensation claims decisions for veterans who have waited a year or longer. As a result of these initiatives, VA's total claims inventory remains at lower levels not seen since August 2011. The number of claims in the VA backlog -- claims pending over 125 days -- has been reduced by 17 percent compared to the highest point in March 2013. [Source: VA News Release 1 Aug 2013 ++]

VA Education ► 8 Keys to Success Program

As part of the Obama administration's ongoing effort to foster postsecondary educational opportunities and dramatically improve employment outcomes for returning service members, the Department of Education (ED) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced 10 AUG a challenge to education institutions to adopt best practices supporting educational success. More than 250 community colleges and universities across the country have immediately answered the call to implementing the "8 Keys to Success" to help Veterans on campus. President Obama introduced the "8 Keys to Success" on Saturday at the Disabled American Veterans National Convention in Orlando, Fla. "We're announcing what we call '8 Keys to Success' -- specific steps that schools can take to truly welcome and encourage our Veterans," President Obama said. "And so far, more than 250 community colleges and universities have signed on, and today I'm calling on schools across America to join us in this effort. Let's help our Veterans get that degree, get that credential and compete for the high-skilled jobs of tomorrow."

With the more than 250 institutions leading the way, the "8 Keys to Success" can aid Veterans in their effort to afford and complete their college degrees, certificates, industry-recognized credentials and licenses in preparation for jobs in high-growth sectors of the economy. To help draft the "8 Keys to Success," ED convened more than 100 experts to review approaches that could be scaled and replicated to foster Veterans' success on campus and via distance learning. A wide range of stakeholders participated in the discussions including non-profit organizations, foundations, Veterans service organizations and, importantly, Veterans who had recently completed postsecondary education in a range of disciplines. Best practices learned from existing programs at ED and VA provided the foundation for the "8 Keys to Success," specifically best practices from the highly successful VA "VetSuccess on Campus" programs. "This is a major step forward in the administration's work to encourage institutions of higher education to support Veterans with access to the courses and resources they need to ensure that they graduate and get good jobs," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. The "8 Keys to Success" include the following:

- 1) Create a culture of trust and connectedness across the campus community to promote well-being and success for Veterans.
- 2) Ensure consistent and sustained support from campus leadership.
- 3) Implement an early alert system to ensure all Veterans receive academic, career, and financial advice before challenges become overwhelming.
- 4) Coordinate and centralize campus efforts for all Veterans, together with the creation of a designated space (even if limited in size).
- 5) Collaborate with local communities and organizations, including government agencies, to align and coordinate various services for Veterans.
- 6) Use a uniform set of data tools to collect and track information on Veterans, including demographics, retention and degree completion.
- 7) Provide comprehensive professional development for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to Veterans.
- 8) Develop systems that ensure sustainability of effective practices for Veterans.

More than 250 community colleges and universities in 24 different states and D.C. will fully adopt the “8 Keys to Success” and more are expected to rise to the challenge in the coming months. At Western Nevada College, for example, the school hosts a “Veterans Orientation” to make sure returning service members begin college on the right track, and that every Veteran has a counselor assigned to work with him or her on adjusting to the classroom environment, performance expectations, personal challenges and program completion. “This commitment made by colleges and universities will help Veterans better transition from military service into the classroom, graduate, and find a good job to help strengthen our economy,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Given the opportunity, Veterans will succeed because they possess exceptional character, team-building skills, discipline, and leadership.”

Another example of postsecondary institutions working to implement the keys is Virginia’s Community Colleges, where schools are leveraging partnerships to connect Veterans with jobs and careers in high-growth, high-demand fields. “These partnerships bring together local businesses, community colleges, workforce investment boards, the Virginia Employment Commission, other state government agencies, and nonprofit providers of social services all in support of Virginia’s Veterans,” said Glenn DuBois, Chancellor of Virginia's Community Colleges. “The keys to success provide a helpful set of recommendations for moving forward.” The keys build on the administration’s work to provide Veterans and military families with a high-quality, affordable education. In April 2012, President Obama signed an executive order establishing the Principles of Excellence (POE), which provide protections for our nation’s military, Veterans, and their families. To further Veterans’ success in higher education and employment, the VA is also expanding its [VetSuccess on Campus](#) (VSOC) and Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) programs, which connect Veterans to VA resources. Thousands of colleges and universities are developing or expanding their Veterans Success Centers as a result of the VA’s VSOC and VITAL investments. VSOC is currently located at 32 campus sites in 16 states and is expanding to additional campuses in 2013.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill has also played a large role in helping returning service members attend college. VA has issued approximately \$30 billion in Post 9/11 GI-Bill benefit payments since its inception in August 2009, and helped nearly one million service members, Veterans, and their families pursue an education. The Post-9/11 GI Bill is the most extensive educational assistance program since the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the GI Bill, was signed into law. The administration will continue to build on its work to ensure Veterans’ success by acting on our nation’s commitment to place higher education within reach for all who are willing to work for it. Federal agencies, colleges and universities, and their many partners are united in their determination to make sure this generation of Veterans, active-duty service members and their families are aware of

and take advantage of all the benefits and resources provided by a grateful nation. [Source: VA News Release 12 Aug 2013 ++]

VA Urinary Incontinence Update 01 ► Higher Incidence in Younger Vets

In a U.S. national survey, men age 55 and younger with a history of military service were three times more likely than men who had never served to report urinary incontinence. Conditions more common in combat veterans, including traumatic brain injuries and depression, are also linked with urinary incontinence, so screening even young male vets for urinary problems may be worthwhile, the researchers point out in the Journal of Urology. Still, lead author Dr. Camille Vaughan of the Atlanta VA Medical Center in Decatur, Georgia, told Reuters Health, "We were surprised the association was only present in the younger age cohort." Her team considered urge incontinence, which is a frequent feeling of needing to urinate - so much so that it's difficult to make it to the bathroom in time - according to Vaughan, as opposed to stress incontinence, which is leakage of urine during a sneeze or cough, for example.

Urge incontinence is the most common form of urinary incontinence among men, and is thought to affect more than 30 million U.S. adults, according to Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. Urinary troubles become more common with age and with health conditions including bladder cancer, infection, nervous system diseases like multiple sclerosis and some medications. Previous research analyzing Veterans Administration medical records had found no extra risk for urinary incontinence among vets. But since men might not seek treatment for mild or moderate incontinence, Vaughan and her colleagues looked to an annual health survey covering a nationally representative sample of the population. In the survey, men completed questionnaires and in-person interviews. Vaughan's team analyzed data on 4,700 men over the age of 20 gathered between 2005 and 2008. Nearly one quarter of the men had served in the military.

Overall, the researchers found, 10 percent of the men with no military background reported urinary incontinence, compared to 18 percent of men with military experience. In general, men with incontinence were more likely to be overweight, depressed and to have enlarged prostates, prostate cancer and multiple other chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. And when the researchers separated the men into three age groups - 55 years old or younger, 56 to 69 and 70 or above - they found no differences in the rates of incontinence between men in the two older groups based on their military history. Among those 55 and younger, however, nine percent of military men reported moderate to severe urinary incontinence, compared to three percent of the other men.

There are two possible explanations for the link between urinary incontinence and military service: physical and psychological, according to Dr. Christopher Amling of the urology department of Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, who was not involved in the study. Blast forces like those suffered in combat might physically affect the bladder and increase the risk of urinary incontinence, he told Reuters Health. Psychological stress is also linked to bladder irritation, which is tied to urinary incontinence, he said, adding that post-traumatic stress may have the same effect. Brain health is closely linked to urinary function, he said. "We know that urinary incontinence can be associated with brain disorders of many kinds, including traumatic brain injury, depression or other psychiatric diagnosis." More study is needed to further investigate the connection, Amling said, but perhaps the most curious finding was that the phenomenon was only seen among men under age 56. The study cannot prove that military service caused the incontinence. The younger veterans with urinary problems may have been different from the civilians in other ways not accounted for by the analysis.

The increased risk in the younger age group held, however, even after researchers adjusted for weight, depression, prostate conditions and other chronic diseases. If the problem is tied to military service, the finding could mean that urinary repercussions of military service wear off over time, Vaughan suggested. Amling said the results might indicate that combat itself may have changed over the past decades, and young men serving in the military now face different kinds of stress than those experienced by men who served 20 or 30 years ago. The link may exist for military women as well, but more data is needed for that group, Vaughan said. In the meantime, Vaughan said, "military men should be aware that treatments for urinary symptoms like incontinence are available, and should talk to their healthcare providers if they are experiencing bothersome symptoms." Urinary symptoms can be treated with medications, lifestyle changes or surgery, which is why it is important to talk about these symptoms with your healthcare provider, she said. [Source: Reuters Health | Kathryn Doyle | 9 Aug 2013 ++]

VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse Update 77: Reported 1 thru 15 Aug 2013

- **Seattle WA** -- Two former Veteran Affairs employees who skimmed money from inflated travel reimbursement claims were sentenced to prison 30 JUL. U.S. District Judge James L. Robart sentenced **Nick Hall**, 47, to nearly four years in prison, while 33-year-old **Keishjuan Daniels** is facing just over three years behind bars. Hall and Daniels operated their scheme under a program that allows veterans to claim reimbursement for driven miles during medical visits, if there isn't a Veterans Affairs medical facility in their hometown. Prosecutors said Hall and Daniels managed to recruit a few veterans to claim inflated mileage counts. The two then created fake hometown addresses for veterans in places far away from Seattle, such as Pullman, Port Angeles and Port Townsend. Hall and Daniels would then get half the money reimbursed to their recruits. The men would also create vouchers for visits that never happened.

Starting in 2010 and over 18 months, Hall and Daniels hauled in over \$180,000 from their scheme. "Not only did these defendants recruit vulnerable veterans into criminal activity, they stole resources critically needed to help our men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan," said U.S. Attorney Jenny A. Durkan in a statement. "Following the arrests in this case the average monthly cost of larger travel vouchers was cut almost in half here, and sent a deterrent message everywhere: Don't cheat our wounded warriors." Robart also ordered the men to pay back the \$180,000. The case in Seattle is not isolated and problems with inflated mileage claims have popped up nationwide since the reimbursement increased from 11 cents to 41.5 cents. Nationwide over the last 18 months the Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General has conducted 225 investigations and arrested 125 people for fraud in the travel benefits program, prosecutors said. [Source: Associated Press article 30 Jul 2013 ++]

- **Pensacola FL** — A federal judge in Florida has set a Sept. 9 trial date for an Alabama man accused of stealing money from the Department of Veterans Affairs. WAAO reports that John "**Randy**" **Franklin** of Andalusia has pleaded not guilty to charges accusing him of stealing \$75,246 from the Department of Veterans Affairs. He is also accused of making false statements when he said he had no money other than his VA benefits. Prosecutors say Franklin had at least four cashier checks worth \$25,000 each. Franklin is free on bond while awaiting trial in Pensacola, Fla. U.S. Attorney Tony Joseph says that if Franklin is convicted, he faces up to 10 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine and forfeiture of property traceable to the \$75,246. [Source: Associated Press article 2 Aug 2013 ++]

DoD/VA VLER Update 09 ► Isn't Going To Happen

In April 2009, President Barack Obama called for a Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) system for all Americans, and said the first step to achieve it would be integration of electronic health records for the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs into a single joint and seamless system. That joint VA-Defense health record system isn't going to happen, senior administration officials conceded at a combined hearing in July of the House armed services and veterans affairs committees. "It is a tough path, and we decided to get off it," said Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics. "The cost for that would have been exorbitant. The last estimate I saw was \$28 billion life-cycle costs." The revised goal is to modernize still separate VA and DoD electronic record systems so they can share medical data and patient information to improve care delivery and claims processing.

Members of Congress ripped this compromise when it was first unveiled last February by then-Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. By April, lawmakers had raised enough fuss that even the new defense chief, Hagel, expressed public displeasure at the compromise. He put Kendall in charge of a fresh review of plans to integrate health records. A month later, review results were announced in a statement that sounded very familiar to followers of the e-record controversy. Kendall, in effect, endorsed the earlier compromise that Hagel and Congress had disparaged. VA will pursue its own plan to modernize Vista, its popular electronic medical record system, while Defense officials will "pursue a full and open competition for a core set of capabilities for health care management software modernization." Meanwhile, in the "near term," both departments will work to achieve "enhanced interoperability," the statement said.

At the combined hearing of House committees, Republicans and Democrats took turns pressing Kendall, other Defense officials and VA's own team of medical records and information technology experts, on the separate courses they set and how they differ from Obama's original vision and what both departments had touted until late last year. Rep. Michael H. Michaud of Maine, ranking Democrat on the veterans affairs committee, said Defense officials were abandoning the goal of an "integrated" record system with VA, in favor of keeping two separate systems and trying to make them "interoperable" using commercial software. Kendall said it was the best business decision DoD could make. [Source: The News-Tribune | Tom Philpott | 3 Aug 2013 ++]

DoD/VA ► PTSD/TBI Joint Research Consortia

In response to President Obama's Executive Order, the Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) highlighted today the establishment of two joint research consortia, at a combined investment of \$107 million to research the diagnosis and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) over a five-year period. "VA is proud to join with its partners in the federal government and the academic community to support the President's vision and invest in research that could lead to innovative, new treatments for TBI and PTSD," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We must do all we can to deliver the high-quality care our Service members and Veterans have earned and deserve." The Consortium to Alleviate PTSD (CAP), a collaborative effort between the University of Texas Health Science Center – San Antonio, San Antonio Military Medical Center, and the Boston VA Medical Center will attempt to develop the most effective diagnostic, prognostic, novel treatment, and rehabilitative strategies to treat acute PTSD and prevent chronic PTSD.

The Chronic Effects of Neurotrauma Consortium (CENC), a collaborative effort between Virginia Commonwealth University, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, and the Richmond VA Medical Center will examine the factors which influence the chronic effects of mTBI and common comorbidities in order to improve diagnostic and treatment options. A key point will be to further the understanding of the

relationship between mTBI and neurodegenerative disease. Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 2.5 million American service members have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Military service exposes service members to a variety of stressors, including risk to life, exposure to death, injury, sustained threat of injury, and the day-to-day family stress inherent in all phases of the military life cycle.

To improve prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health conditions, the President released an Executive Order directing the Federal agencies to develop a coordinated National Research Action Plan. The Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the Department of Education (ED) came forward with a wide-reaching plan to improve scientific understanding, effective treatment, and reduce occurrences of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury, co-occurring conditions and suicide.

Click [here](#) to see To read the Administration’s new fact sheet on the National Research Action Plan for Improving Access to Mental Health Services for Veterans, Service Members, and Military Families refer to http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/nrap_fact_sheet_082013.pdf. [Source: A News Release 10 Aug 2013 ++]

Agent Orange Lawsuits Update 15 ► BWNVVA/MVA vs. Shinseki

In a new suit filed in federal court in Washington DC, two veterans organizations have filed suit against the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Eric Shinseki, for failing to provide benefits to a group of Vietnam War veterans who served aboard ship off the coast of Vietnam. Over a hundred thousand of these Blue Water veterans were exposed to Agent Orange through their drinking water while providing gunfire support, air support and logistic support in the territorial seas off the coast of the republic of Vietnam. The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Association, (BWNVVA) a not for profit corporation chartered to advance the cause of the Blue Water Navy veterans, along with Military-Veterans Advocacy (MVA) another non-profit who advocated for veterans, filed the 32 page suit charging that the Secretary ignored scientific evidence which showed the presence of Agent Orange in the waters off shore as well as solid proof that the shipboard distillation process, which converted saltwater to potable drinking water, enriched the effect of the dioxin.



As a "blue water sailor," Ralph Steele has a higher burden to prove Agent Orange-related illnesses than his counterparts who served ashore

Attorney John Wells, who brought the suit, is a retired Navy Commander and served as Chief Engineer on three Navy ships. “I am very familiar with the naval operations at the time and the distillation equipment that enriched the dioxin.” Wells said. “We have taken this evidence to two separate committees of the Institute of Medicine, and they

agree that the distillation process, based on Henry's law of thermodynamics, would have co-distilled and enriched the dioxin. This confirmed an earlier study by the University of Queensland." Wells is the Executive Director of MVA and previously serves as Director of Legal and Legislative Affairs for the BWNVVA. After retiring as a surface warfare officer he opened a law practice in Slidell Louisiana with emphasis on military and veterans law. John Paul Rossie, a retired Information Technology expert, served in the Navy off the coast of Vietnam. Rossie has served the BWNVVA since its inception as its Executive Director. He said as follows: "Sea service personnel operating in the war zone were given a straight shot of Agent Orange into their drinking water. They drank it, showered in it and had their food prepared with it," Rossie continued, "but the VA has just ignored them. Now they are dying and leaving their families without the VA compensation that they earned."

Prior to 2002, the Blue Water Navy veterans were granted the presumption of exposure. This was rescinded based on a 1997 VA General Counsel's opinion that concluded the words "service in the Republic of Vietnam" meant "service in-country." Australia, an American ally in Vietnam, has been granting benefits to their naval personnel since 2003. The Blue Water Navy veterans actually won a restoration in benefits from the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims in 2006 but that decision was set aside on administrative law grounds by the United States Court for the Federal Circuit in 2008. "This suit covers different grounds," Wells noted. "We are not attacking the lack of rulemaking as was the case in the previous suit, but we are showing that the Secretary's decision was arbitrary and capricious, unsupported by substantial evidence and in violation of existing law. The VA currently grants the presumption of exposure for ships that steamed into inland waterways that they have arbitrarily defined as rivers. What the VA either did not know or intentionally ignored, is that the 1958 Convention on the Territorial Seas and the Contiguous Zone, which the United States has signed and ratified, includes bays and harbors as inland waterways. Additionally the treaty makes the territorial seas part of the sovereign territory of the nation.

"I sat down with John Gingrich, who at the time was the Chief of Staff for the VA and showed him a picture of Da Nang Harbor (attached), which is surrounded on three sides by land. He thought that the harbor was covered. I had to show him his own manual which specifically excepted the harbors. He agreed that the VA's position did not make sense and agreed to re-visit it. Instead last December, the VA published a Notice saying that they would not change their policy. The VA did not return the telephone calls I made to them after the notice was published." The plight of the Blue Water Navy veterans has support in Congress. Presently 127 members of the House (including Rep Mike Michaud (D-ME) ranking member of the Veterans Affairs Committee) are co-sponsoring a bill by Rep. Chris Gibson (R-NY) to restore the presumption of exposure to those who served in the territorial seas of the Republic of Vietnam. "We are heartened by the bi-partisan support of this bill," Rossie said, "but despite the support, it is still stalled in Committee. So while we are continuing to gather support in Congress, we felt the need to also move forward in court. Our people are dropping like flies and we need to try any avenue we can to obtain these benefits." Point of Contact: John B. Wells. Direct Line 985 290 6940 Email JohnLawEsq@msn.com. [Source: Salem-News.com | John B. Wells | 3 Aug 2013 ++]

Vet Toxic Exposure~C-123 Aircraft Update 03 ► VA Claim Denials

The Department of Veterans Affairs is defending itself against charges that it inappropriately denies claims from C-123 crew members who say they were exposed to Agent Orange after the Vietnam War. According to a lengthy 3 AUG article in *The Washington Post*, the aircraft used to drop the defoliant on the jungles of Vietnam from 1962 to 1971 were flown after the war by reserve-component crews, some of whom now claim illnesses they suffer were caused by exposure to the chemical. Members of the C-123 Veterans Association say they should be eligible for the same compensation as Vietnam veterans who came in contact with Agent Orange and now receive compensation for a range of ailments and conditions. Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC), the ranking

Republican on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, have asked the VA's Office of Inspector General to review the department's denial of the airmen's claims. "It appears that [the VA] does, in fact, plan to deny any C-123 claims regardless of the evidence submitted in a particular case," the lawmakers wrote in a letter. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki responded to Burr in a letter saying, "VA does not have a 'blanket policy' for denying claims" filed by the C-123 veterans in the National Guard and Reserve. To see the entire Washington Post article and more on the C-123 issue go to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**C-123 Toxic Exposure**". [Source: NGAUS Washington Report 6 Aug 2013 ++]

Vet Toxic Exposure~C-123 Aircraft Update 04 ► VA 1st Denial Reversal

The Department of Veterans Affairs has reversed its denial of Agent Orange-related disability benefits for an Air Force veteran who flew on potentially contaminated C-123 aircraft after the Vietnam War, a decision advocates describe as the first of its kind for veterans seeking compensation for postwar exposure to the toxic defoliant. Paul Bailey, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel who is gravely ill with cancer, received notice Monday that he would receive "a total grant of benefits" for cancer associated with his 1970s-era service in the United States aboard the aircraft, which had been used to spray the toxic defoliant during the war. "The preponderance of the evidence suggests that you were exposed to herbicide onboard U.S. Air Force C-123K aircraft," said the VA decision, dated 31 JUL. "Reasonable doubt in regards to the exposure to certain herbicide, to include Agent Orange, as the result of occupational hazards onboard C-123K aircraft is resolved in your favor."

While stationed at Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts in the 1970s, Bailey often flew the most famous of the C-123s, known as Patches for the holes left by enemy fire. After it was retired to a museum, tests by Air Force toxicologists in 1994 found that Patches was "heavily contaminated" with dioxin. Bailey's claim for disability benefits was denied in February by the office in Manchester, N.H., which wrote that "VA regulations do not allow us to concede exposure to herbicides for Veterans who claim they were exposed to herbicides after the Vietnam war while flying in aircraft used to spray these chemicals." Bailey appealed the decision in April. Bailey was featured in a recent Washington Post article about a controversy concerning C-123 aircraft, many of which were destroyed in 2010 by the Air Force. Tests in the 1990s showed that some of the planes might still be contaminated with TCDD dioxin, a carcinogen associated with Agent Orange. Bailey, 67, who suffers from prostate cancer and metastatic cancer of the pelvis and ribs, said the disability compensation will allow his wife to stay in their New home after he dies. "The financial and emotional support this provides is just tremendous," he said in a telephone interview Wednesday. "It takes a huge burden off me."

Wes Carter, a retired Air Force major and friend of Bailey's who heads the C-123 Veterans Association said the decision is "greatly significant". The organization contends that postwar crews should be eligible for the same disability compensation for Agent Orange exposure provided to military veterans who served in Vietnam during the war. Several C-123 veterans in recent years have been granted disability benefits after appealing denials to the Board of Veterans' Appeals, an administrative tribunal. But Bailey's case marks "the first time an award has been made short of the BVA," Carter said. Rick Weidman, executive director for policy and government affairs for the Vietnam Veterans of America, called the decision "fantastic news" and added: "That's the first case we've heard of that's been successful." Sen. Richard Burr (NC), the ranking Republican on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, was also pleased with the reversal. "I hope this is a sign that VA will start to make decisions on these claims based on the weight of information submitted in each case, rather than blanket-denying every claim from C-123 veterans," he said.

VA said there is no policy against C-123 claims. The department said in a statement that it does not track whether there have been previous claims granted for C-123 crew members but that the ruling in the Bailey case **does not establish a precedent**. “Where cases are not clear cut, reasonable doubt is always decided in the claimant’s favor,” the agency said. In a statement 7 AUG addressing the VA reversal, Brad Mayes, director of the Manchester office, said “the issues described in Lt. Col. Bailey’s claim illustrate the difficulty VA faces when evaluating whether a particular veteran’s claim of Agent Orange exposure outside of Vietnam has merit. VA considers these issues on an individual basis, along with any other evidence available.” Burr said he is “concerned that there are other veterans who did not receive this same level of attention to their claims.” [Source: Washington Post | Steve Vogel | 7 Aug 2013 ++]

TRICARE Prime Update 24 ► 1 Oct Service Area Reductions

The Defense Department will reduce the number of TRICARE Prime service areas in the United States beginning 1 OCT, affecting about 171,000 retirees and their family members. Those beneficiaries, who mostly reside more than 40 miles from a military clinic or hospital, received a letter earlier this year explaining their options. They will receive a second letter later this month. TRICARE Management Activity officials said changing the location of Prime service areas has been planned since 2007 as part of the move to the third-generation of managed care support contracts and will allow them to continue their commitment to making high-quality health care available while supporting DOD efforts to control the rising cost of health care for 9.6 million beneficiaries. Health care under TRICARE Prime costs about \$600 more annually per enrollee, but on average, each member of a family of three using TRICARE Standard will pay only about \$20 more per month than if they were using Prime. “The first thing TRICARE beneficiaries should know about the reduction in the number of Prime service areas is that it doesn’t mean they’re losing their TRICARE benefit,” said Dr. Jonathan Woodson, assistant secretary of defense for health affairs. “Next, it’s important to remember this change does not affect most of the more than 5 million people using TRICARE Prime, and [it affects] none of our active duty members and their families.”

All affected beneficiaries will receive a letter this month following up on their initial notification to ensure they have the time and information to make important decisions about their future health care options, officials said. Current details on Prime service areas and the option for beneficiaries to sign for email updates are available at <http://www.tricare.mil/PSA>. A ZIP code tool is available on the site to help beneficiaries determine if they live in an affected area. As always, officials noted, TRICARE beneficiaries still are covered by TRICARE Standard. For those living within 100 miles of a remaining Prime service area, re-enrolling in Prime may be an option, depending on availability. To do this, beneficiaries must waive their drive-time standards, and they may have to travel long distances for primary and specialty care. “I urge all impacted beneficiaries to carefully consider their health care options – they should talk them over with family members and their current health care provider,” Woodson said. “Many beneficiaries may be able to continue with their current provider using the Standard benefit. Being close to your health care team usually offers the best and safest access to care.”

Those enrolled in TRICARE Prime are assigned a primary care provider who manages their health care. Retirees pay an annual enrollment fee and have low out-of-pocket costs under this plan. TRICARE Standard is an open-choice option with no monthly premiums and no need for referrals, but it has cost shares and an annual deductible. The Prime service areas being eliminated are not close to existing military treatment facilities or base realignment and closure sites, officials said. Prolonged protests resulted in a staggered transition, they added, and all Prime service areas were retained until all three new regional contracts were in place. The West region completed the transition April 1. To provide affected beneficiaries with enough time to plan, Defense Department officials elected to delay the Prime service area reductions until Oct. 1. [Source: TMA News Release 7 Aug 2013 ++]

TRICARE Webiner ► Options Available After Loss of Eligibility

TRICARE and Military OneSource will host a webinar, to discuss health plan options available to beneficiaries after they lose TRICARE eligibility, on Thursday, August 15, 2013, 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. EDT. During this time of transition, many service members leaving active duty before retiring want to know what their options are to maintain health care coverage for themselves and their families. Mr. Mark Ellis is a senior health program analyst with the TRICARE Management Activity who manages the Continued Health Care Benefit and TRICARE Young Adult programs. These programs offer transitional health care coverage to former service members and their family members after they lose eligibility for TRICARE. Mr. Ellis has 35 years of experience working in the Military Health System. To register for TRICARE's webinar with Military OneSource go to <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/715477570>. Registration is on a first-come, first-served basis and is limited due to system capacity. Participants must avoid sharing personal health information when asking a question. To get other useful information about TRICARE eligibility visit www.tricare.mil and answer a couple of easy questions to enter your profile. [Source: TRICARE News Release at <http://www.tricare.mil> 12 Aug 2013 ++]

TRICARE Autism Care Update 06 ► ABA Policies Clarified

TRICARE Management Activity (TMA) held a briefing to clarify Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) policies across the TRICARE Basic (Medical) program, the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) Demonstration, and the new Autism Pilot program for non-active duty family members (NADFM.s.) No new policy changes were announced. However, in response to beneficiary concerns that online TRICARE manuals (<http://manuals.tricare.osd.mil/DisplayManual.aspx?SeriesId=T3TOM&TO08=101#TO08>) still reflect the 25 JUN policy changes that were subsequently reversed, TMA repeatedly stated that the current online versions are incorrect and it will take time to complete the revisions. TMA assured briefing participants that Managed Care Support Coordinators have been directed via a formal letter to make no change in delivery of ABA under the TRICARE Basic Program or ECHO Autism Demonstration.

Non-active duty family members who desire ABA reinforcement services can access care under the new Autism Pilot program. The referral and authorization process outlined in the 25 JUN TRICARE policy manual will apply to the Autism Pilot program only. During the briefing, TMA officials stated that one of the Autism Pilot objectives is to test the feasibility of expanding these additional requirements to all TRICARE ABA therapy beneficiaries. To recap, the current TRICARE policies for accessing ABA are as follows:

- There is **no change** for active duty family members receiving ABA for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) under the TRICARE Basic program. TRICARE Basic requires that ABA be delivered by Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs.)
- There is **no change** for active duty family members enrolled in the ECHO Autism Demonstration who are receiving ABA reinforcement from Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts (BCaBAs) or ABA Tutors. There is **no change** in out-of-pocket costs for active duty family members utilizing the ECHO ABA Demo.
- There is **no change** for non-active duty family members (i.e., retiree dependents and participants in TRICARE Reserve Select, TRICARE Retired Reserve, TRICARE Young Adult and the Continued Health Care Benefit Program) currently receiving ABA under the TRICARE Basic program.

- Non-active duty family members can access ABA reinforcement via the Pilot program. To receive ABA under the Pilot, NADFM beneficiaries must first receive an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis from a TRICARE-authorized physician Primary Care Manager (PCM) or specialized ASD provider. The diagnosing physician will then provide a referral for an ABA assessment. The ABA assessment must be performed by a BCBA and must include two standardized baseline tests, the ADOS-2 and the Vineland Behavioral Scale. Once the initial assessment is completed and a treatment plan is developed, the diagnosing physician can submit a referral for ABA treatment. All ABA therapy, including the initial assessment, requires prior authorization from a TRICARE regional contractor. Since the pilot is currently set to run for only one year, there is no procedure for obtaining a reauthorization.

[Source: NMFA eNewsletter 13 Aug 2013 ++]

TRICARE For Life Update 01 ► Use of VA Facilities

Many TRICARE For Life (TFL) beneficiaries use Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities for care related to their service connected disabilities. But, as TFL is a comprehensive Medicare wraparound coverage, beneficiaries are reminded they run the risk of unexpected out-of-pocket costs if they use a VA facility for care not related to a service connected disability. By law, Medicare can't pay for care at a government facility, such as the VA. When a TFL beneficiary chooses to obtain care from a provider that Medicare can't pay, TRICARE can only pay up to 20 percent of the TRICARE-allowable charge. The TFL beneficiary is responsible for paying the VA the remaining 80%. Beneficiaries who have been getting care at a VA facility that is not related to a service connected disability should talk to a VA representative about other VA options, including how VA can work with other health insurance (OHI) plans.

As part of the intake process at VA facilities after October 1, 2013, TFL beneficiaries will be asked if they're using their VA or TFL benefit or if they have other health insurance (OHI). When electing to use their TFL benefit at the VA, they will also be informed they must pay the remaining bill after TRICARE pays its portion of the TRICARE-allowable charge. They may be asked to sign a form indicating they understand their responsibility. TRICARE and the VA recommend getting care for service-connected disability at a VA facility. For other care, TFL beneficiaries may still consider using their VA benefit or they should use TFL with a Medicare-certified provider. When using Medicare providers, TFL beneficiaries typically have no out-of-pocket costs for services covered by both Medicare and TRICARE. For more information about TFL, beneficiaries may contact the TFL support contractor Wisconsin Physicians Service (WPS) at 1-866-773-0404 or visit www.tricare.mil/tfl to learn more about using TFL. To find Medicare-certified providers visit www.tricare.mil/findaprovider. For more information about the VA, visit www.va.gov/health. [Source: TRICARE News Release 14 Aug 2013 ++]

Editor Note: Since the above TRICARE News Release is not clear on whether or not vets eligible for TFL and rated 50% or more service connected have to pay for VA medical care that is not service connected, I called VA Billing at 1(866)-802-6381 for clarification. They advised that any TFL eligible veteran who is also eligible for VA care will not have to pay for 80% of that care as long as they have declared they are seeking treatment as a veteran and not as a TFL beneficiary. Veterans rated service connected less than 50%, combat veterans within their 5 year eligibility window, and low income vets will only be subject to the VA minimum \$50 per visit plus pharmaceutical fees. Vets rated 50% and above will not pay any VA or TFL copays.

TRDP Update 14 ► Premium Payment Methods Change

The new TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) beginning January 1, 2014 includes a number of Government directed changes that enhance the program's benefits and ensure premiums are as affordable as possible. One of these changes requires Delta Dental to verify enrollment eligibility with the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) and initiate an allotment (automatic deduction) for enrollees receiving retirement pay. In September 2013, Delta Dental will request allotments for enrollees receiving military retired pay, but aren't having premiums deducted through an allotment. With verification through the appropriate finance center, allotments will begin for the October 2013 billing cycle. Enrollees not receiving retirement pay will need to establish an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) and encouraged to do so for the October 1, 2013 billing cycle. EFTs can be established by:

1. Logging onto the Consumer Toolkit® at <https://www.ddfgptoolkits.com/ipWeb/appmanager/ct/desktop>
2. Selecting "Billing Transaction."
3. Completing and submitting an EFT authorization.

For additional TRDP related information about EFT authorizations, see the following TRDP Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) About Premium Payments:

1. Why am I required to pay my TRDP premiums through an allotment from my retirement pay? And why is this requirement just now being implemented? Title 10 of the United States Code, Section 1076(c) requires that TRDP enrollees who are entitled to retirement pay have their monthly premiums deducted from their pay through allotment, provided retirement pay is available to the enrollee. System enhancements put into effect under the new contract now give the TRDP the ability to verify information in order to allow full compliance with this requirement.

2. I don't want to pay my TRDP premiums through allotment. What are my other options? There are two options for payment of your TRDP premiums: The primary option, as mentioned above, is through a government-mandated allotment from your retirement pay. If you are not receiving retirement pay or have reached your allowed allotments, you must set up an electronic funds transfer (EFT) to pay your monthly premiums in order to maintain your TRDP coverage. If neither of these two options is suitable for you, you will lose your coverage under the TRDP.

3. I don't want to pay my TRDP premiums through EFT. What are my other options? There are two options for payment of your TRDP premiums: The primary option, as mentioned above, is through a government-mandated allotment from your retirement pay. If you are not receiving retirement pay or have reached your allowed allotments, you must set up an electronic funds transfer (EFT) to pay your monthly premiums in order to maintain your TRDP coverage. If neither of these two options is suitable for you, you will lose your coverage under the TRDP.

4. Why can't I pay my TRDP premiums with a coupon booklet anymore? Coupon booklets are not among the options available for payment of your monthly TRDP premiums under the new contract. As a result, we will no longer print or issue coupon books as a method of payment of your TRDP premiums.

5. I can't establish an EFT—my bank will not allow me to because of previous overdrafts. What are my options? The only option for enrollees who are not receiving retired pay or have reached their allowable allotments is EFT. If this is not a suitable option for you, unfortunately you will lose your coverage under the TRDP.

6. If I pay my premiums with my late notice (dunning letter), will I be allowed to stay enrolled in the TRDP? Late notices with the correct premium payment will be accepted through December 31, 2013. If you have not established an allotment or EFT by January 1, 2014, you will lose your coverage under the TRDP.

7. What day of the month will the EFT draft post to my account? The transfer of funds by EFT will take place on the 7th of every month or the following business day if the 7th is a non-business day (i.e., Saturday or Sunday) or holiday.

8. Can I set up my own payment method through my bank, either by credit card or using my bank's online bill-pay system? No. Credit cards, checks, and online bill-pay are not acceptable methods for payment of your monthly TRDP premiums.

9. What happens if I continue to make my premium payments by sending a check or money order? We will continue to accept checks and money orders for premium payments until December 31, 2013. Any checks or money orders received after that date will be returned to you.

10. Can I continue to make payments through the online Consumer Toolkit®? No, you will not be able to make TRDP premium payments through the online Consumer Toolkit after December 1, 2013. In keeping with the new premium payment requirements, payment of your TRDP premiums will no longer be a function that is available through the Consumer Toolkit.

11. What if I can't set up an EFT because I don't have a bank account? If you do not have a bank or credit union account that would enable you to set up an EFT, you will lose your coverage under the TRDP.

12. What if I already have other retirement pay allotments, and there will not be enough of my pay left to cover the allotment for my monthly TRDP premium? If your retirement pay is insufficient to allow the allotment for your TRDP premium, your other option for payment is to set up an EFT.

13. Can I pay my TRDP premiums for the year in advance, in one lump sum? No. Your TRDP premiums will be paid monthly, either through allotment from your retirement pay or through EFT.

14. How can I get a receipt for my premium payments? You can view and print a statement of the total premiums you have paid to-date by logging into the Consumer Toolkit.

Other TRDP FAQs

FAQs: Enhanced-Overseas Program <http://www.trdp.org/enr/osfaq.html>

FAQs: Enrollees <http://www.trdp.org/enr/faq.html>

FAQs: Prospective Enrollees <http://www.trdp.org/pro/faq.html>

FAQs: Premium Changes <http://www.trdp.org/enr/faq-premium-change.html>

FAQs: Premium Payment Requirements <http://www.trdp.org/enr/faq-premium-payments.html>

[Source: Air Force Retiree Services at <http://www.retirees.af.mil/> 9 Aug 2013 ++]

Defense Health Agency Update 04 ► No Time Line for Reforms

The new Defense Health Agency (DHA), which begins operations on 1 OCT, expects to save \$2.4 billion over the next six years by consolidation of functions previously performed by the three services and the TRICARE Management Activity. DHA already has a staff of over 1,000 and, headed by Air Force LtGen Douglas Robb, expects it will achieve these savings by providing common shared services for TRICARE, information technology and facilities management. DoD believes it will achieve its biggest savings from consolidation, \$787 billion over the six years, by central management of TRICARE and by eliminating expensive walk-in service centers at the 56 hospitals operated by the three services. The plan is for the centers to be replaced by toll-free call centers and Internet resources, which will save an estimated 80 percent per encounter than the walk-in centers. An additional estimated \$672 million in savings would be expected through consolidation of all IT services, including management, infrastructure and applications for 230,000 users of the Military Health System. Other savings would accrue from standardizing contracts and supplies for all the medical logistic systems. A needed fix will be to standardize its product catalog and to upgrade the medical logistics IT system to enable real time reporting and reduce off-catalog purchases. One other move would be to decrease the use of retail pharmacies for prescriptions by increasing reliance on mail order and military hospital pharmacies. No time line was given for this to happen. [Source: NAUS Weekly Update 2 Aug 2013 ++]

FBI Scam ► Ransomware Virus

Watch out, Mac users. A new version of a common computer virus is now targeting you. This malware poses as the FBI and tries to extort hundreds of dollars from victims. How the Scam Works:

You are surfing the Internet, and a window pops up. It appears to be from the FBI accusing you of violating US law and, as a result, locking your computer. The message says you need to pay a \$200 (or more) fine with a prepaid money card. Do so, and you will get the code to unlock your machine. The warning looks real. It uses legal language, bears the FBI seal and has "fbi.gov" in the URL. When you try to close your web browser, it only causes more windows with warning messages to appear.



Despite its official appearance, the pop up is a scam. Like other malware, it is installed on your computer when you open a malicious attachment, click on a link in an email or visit a scam website. It is later triggered by searching for certain terms. The "ransomware" virus preys on users' anxiety about viewing common, but illegal or unsavory, online content, such as pirated videos or pornography. The virus has been fooling PC users since spring 2012. But the newest version is targeting OS X Mac users. If you have received such a pop up, do not follow payment instructions. Instead, file a complaint with the FBI using the website <http://www.ic3.gov/default.aspx>.

How to Deal with the Virus: As always, make sure your computer's operating system and browser are up to date with the latest security protections. And run a virus scan if you may have downloaded anything suspicious. Here's how you can unfreeze your computer if you encounter this virus:

- **Mac Users:** Click on the Safari menu and choosing "reset Safari." Make sure all check boxes are selected or hold down the Shift key while relaunching Safari. This will prevent Safari from reopening windows and tabs from the previous session. Victims can also disable the reopening feature across OS X from the General pane of System Preferences.

- **PC Users:** Turn off your computer and start it again in "safe mode." Then follow Window's instructions at <http://windows.microsoft.com/en-us/windows7/what-is-system-restore> to do a "System Restore".

For More Information read the complete FBI warning at <http://www.ic3.gov/media/2013/130718-2.aspx>. And to find out more about scams, check out BBB Scam Stopper at <http://www.bbb.org/scam-stopper>. [Source: BBB Scam

Alert 2 Aug 2013 ++]

Emergency Scams ► How to Avoid

Summer is high travel season. This means it's also peak time for emergency scams. These scams play off of peoples' emotions and desire to help others in need. Scammers impersonate their victims' loved ones. Then, they make up an urgent situation and plead for help, and money. How the Scam Works:

- You answer the phone. The person on the other end claims to be a family member who was arrested while traveling overseas. They tell you to wire \$1,000 in order to post bail and hire a local attorney.
- You think the call sounds suspicious. But the caller provides you with convincing details. For example, he may know family names and other personal information, such as school or employer names and details about the trip.
- The information is so persuasive that you wire the money. A week later, your family member returns home... safe and sound. He/she was never in trouble, and you are out \$1,000.

Emergency scams come in all shapes and sizes. There's the Grandparent Scam where con artists contact the elderly claiming to be their grandchild (or niece/nephew), urgently asking for money. Con artists also hack into email accounts and then target friends and family with frantic requests for money, claiming injury, a lost or stolen wallet, arrest, etc. They can do the same by hacking social media accounts. The emergency scam is classic con, but the popularity of Facebook and other social media has given scammers an advantage. Scammers can offer extremely plausible stories and many have done their research - they often have custom scams based on a victim's profession or family and can often name details about your family members. Be aware of what information about you and your family is posted online, so you won't be caught off guard. **How do you Protect Yourself from an Emergency Scam:**

1. Resist the urge to act immediately, no matter how dramatic the story is.
2. Always check out the story with other family and friends, even if you've been told to keep it a secret.
3. Do not call the phone number provided by the caller, call the phone number for the family member or friend that you know to be genuine. Do not call the phone number provided by the caller.
4. Spot a scammer by asking questions that would be hard for an impostor to answer correctly.
5. Know what you (and your family members) are sharing online. You may not have control over your family's social media accounts, but familiarize yourself with what they are sharing online. If you want to can learn about Facebook privacy settings go to <https://www.facebook.com/help/445588775451827>.

[Source: BBB Scam Alert 11 Jul 2013 ++]

Medal of Honor Citations ► Rudolph B. Davila, WWII



Davila, Rudolph B.

***Rank and organization:* Staff Sergeant, U.S. Army, Company H, 7th Infantry.**

***Place and date:* Artena, Italy, May 28, 1944**

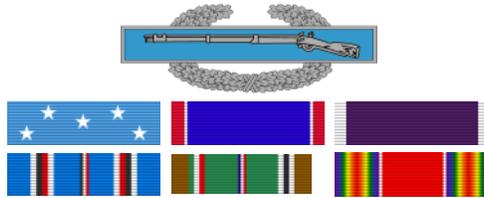
***Entered service at:* Los Angeles, Calif.**

***Born:* April 27, 1916, El Paso, TX**

Citation:

Staff Sergeant Rudolph B. Davila distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in action, on 28 May 1944, near Artena, Italy. During the offensive which broke through the German mountain strongholds surrounding the Anzio beachhead, Staff Sergeant Davila risked death to provide heavy weapons support for a beleaguered rifle company. Caught on an exposed hillside by heavy, grazing fire from a well-entrenched German force, his machine gunners were reluctant to risk putting their guns into action. Crawling fifty yards to the nearest machine gun, Staff Sergeant Davila set it up alone and opened fire on the enemy. In order to observe the effect of his fire, Sergeant Davila fired from the kneeling position, ignoring the enemy fire that struck the tripod and passed between his legs. Ordering a gunner to take over, he crawled forward to a vantage point and directed the firefight with hand and arm signals until both hostile machine guns were silenced. Bringing his three remaining machine guns into action, he drove the enemy to a reserve position two hundred yards to the rear. When he received a painful wound in the leg, he dashed to a burned tank and, despite the crash of bullets on the hull, engaged a second enemy force from the tank's turret. Dismounting, he advanced 130 yards in short rushes, crawled 20 yards and charged into an enemy-held house to eliminate the defending force of five with a hand grenade and rifle fire. Climbing to the attic, he straddled a large shell hole in the wall and opened fire on the enemy. Although the walls of the house were crumbling, he continued to fire until he had destroyed two more machine guns. His intrepid actions brought desperately needed heavy weapons support to a hard-pressed rifle company and silenced four machine gunners, which forced the enemy to abandon their prepared positions. Staff Sergeant Davila's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit on him, his unit, and the United States Army.

Davila received a battlefield commission to Lieutenant and even though a Captain in the rifle company said he would recommend Davila for the Medal of Honor, the highest honor for battlefield valor, Davila was instead awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Army's second highest military honor. Davila continued to serve with his company after he recovered from his leg wound. A few months after the Artena attack, Davila found himself in France's Vosges Mountains. He received a chest wound from a shell which ricocheted off a tree as he was ordering his men to storm a German tank. The tank shell caused injuries that left his right arm paralyzed. Davila was treated for his wounds at a hospital in Modesto, California. There he met a nurse by the name of Harriet and three months later they were married. He continued his education and earned a bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Southern California, and became a high school history teacher in Los Angeles. He moved to Vista in 1977 with his wife after he retired from teaching.



His wife, Harriet Davila, lobbied Army officials to award the Medal of Honor to her husband based on the actions he performed during the Allied offensive in Italy, after she became aware of her husband's heroic actions. For years, she petitioned the government for her husband's medal — making phone calls, writing letters and researching military records to prove her husband deserved the Medal of Honor. No reply ever came. In 1996, Hawaii Senator Daniel Akaka secured a Congressionally mandated review of records for Asian-Americans who had earned the Distinguished Service Cross in World War II. Congress reviewed the records to determine whether they were unfairly denied the military's highest award for valor. On June 21, 2000, President Bill Clinton, bestowed the Medal of Honor on Davila and 21 other World War II servicemen of Asian descent at a White House ceremony. Only seven of 22 recipients were still alive when the medals were handed out. Previously only two of the 40,000-plus Asian-Americans who served in World War II had been awarded the Medal of Honor. Army Secretary Louis Caldera inducted the soldiers into the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes on June 22.

Harriet Davila, his wife, had died six months before, on December 25, 1999. Subsequently, Davila was honored by the city of Vista. He served as the guest speaker at the Veterans of Foreign Wars' Memorial Day ceremony in 2001. Davila died of cancer on January 26, 2002, in Vista, California. He was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery. At the time of his death Davila was survived by his three sons, Roland, Jeffrey, Gregg and two daughters Jill and Tana, and nine grandchildren. [Source: <http://www.history.army.mil/html/moh/wwII-a-f.html> & http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolph_Davila Aug 2013 ++]

Mobilized Reserve 6 AUG 2013 ► Decrease of 769

The Department of Defense announced the current number of reservists on active duty as of 6 AUG 2013. The net collective result is 769 fewer reservists mobilized than last reported in the 1 AUG 2013 RAO Bulletin. At any given time, services may activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 36,777; Navy Reserve 4,402; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve 7,913; Marine Corps Reserve 2,284; and the Coast Guard Reserve 542. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 52,687 including both units and individual augmentees. Since 911 there have been 878,970 reservists activated for duty. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently

activated may be found online at <http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2013/docs/Mobilization-Weekly-Report-130806.pdf>. [Source: DoD News Release No. 572-13 dtd 8 AUG 2013 ++]

Vet Hiring Fairs ► 15 Aug thru 30 SEP 2013

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce's (USCC) Hiring Our Heroes program **employment workshops** are available in conjunction with hundreds of their hiring fairs. These workshops are designed to help veterans and military spouses and include resume writing, interview skills, and one-on-one mentoring. For details of each click on the link next to the date in the below list. If it will not open refer to www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/events. **To participate, sign up for the workshop in addition to registering for the hiring fairs which are presently scheduled for:** For more information about the USCC Hiring Our Heroes Program, Military Spouse Program, Transition Assistance, GE Employment Workshops, Resume Engine, etc. visit the USCC website at <http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes/events>

Veterans Hiring Fair

August 16, 2013 – Helena, MT
August 16, 2013 – Honolulu, HI
August 20, 2013 – Cedar Rapids, IA
August 20, 2013 – Nashville, TN
August 21, 2013 – Fort Polk, LA Military Spouse Hiring Fair
August 21, 2013 – Sioux Falls, SD
August 22, 2013 – Devens, MA
August 27, 2013 – Houston, TX
August 27, 2013 – Lafayette, LA
September 4, 2013 – Beaufort, SC
September 5, 2013 – Quantico, VA Military Spouse Hiring Fair
September 9, 2013 – West Point, NY Military Spouse Networking Event
September 10, 2013 – Peekskill (Camp Smith), NY
September 10, 2013 – Charlotte, NC
September 10, 2013 – Tucson, AZ
September 12, 2013 – Boise, ID
September 12, 2013 – Provo, UT
September 12, 2013 – JBLM, WA Military Spouse Hiring Fair
September 12, 2013 – Trenton, NJ
September 17, 2013 – Portsmouth, NH
September 17, 2013 – Baton Rouge, LA
September 19, 2013 – Lewiston, ME
September 19, 2013 – Camp Pendleton, CA
September 19, 2013 – Richmond, VA
September 20, 2013 – Spokane, WA
September 25, 2013 – Morgantown, WV
September 26, 2013 – Sidney, OH
September 26, 2013 – Cheyenne, WY

Note: A key tactic that most job-seekers overlook when attending a job or career fair is to Stop at every table! One mistake we all make on occasion is to generalize. For example, people assume that health-care companies are only hiring health-care workers, or that insurance companies only need agents. So when they encounter these tables or displays, they typically say nothing and keep moving. Also, sell yourself! Be an extrovert and your own agent! Finally, your mission is fact-finding and networking. By spending time at each table, one learns to overcome stereotypes that lead to erroneous assumptions [Source: U.S. Chamber of Commerce Assn 14 Aug 2013 ++]

Vet Jobs Update 120 ► Bits & Pieces

1. **Want Ads.** The following new companies to VetJobs have great jobs that need filing and they prefer to hire veterans! You can apply for the jobs in the ‘Search Jobs’ block on VetJobs at <http://www.vetjobs.com>:

- BH Management, Dallas, TX - Construction Project Coordinator
- Sheriff’s Department, San Diego County, CA - Telecommunications Technician Trainee
- Amazon positions nationally: Fulfillment Associate Richmond, VA; Breinigsville, PA; Dallas, TX; Oakland, CA; Spartanburg, SC; Wilmington, DE and Charleston, TN
- Amazon positions Oakland, CA and Dallas, TX - Non-Inventory Receiver:
- UNIVAR, Harrisburg, PA - Class A Truck Mechanics

2. **Oil & Gas Hiring Growing Steadily.** Wanted Analytics (<http://www.wantedanalytics.com>) reports that over the past few months hiring demand in the oil and gas extraction industry have been growing steadily. In June, there were more than 5,000 jobs available in in this industry, representing a 41% year-over-year increase when compared to June of 2012. Houston had the most jobs, followed by Oklahoma City, Bakersfield, Dallas, and New Orleans.

3. **Trucking.** A rebounding American economy is good news for job seekers in almost every industry, but it's great news for those who are considering a career in truck driving. "Because of the uptick in manufacturing production, more raw materials need to be shipped to plants," says Mike Hinz, vice president at Schneider National, one of the nation's largest truckload carriers. "Once those raw materials are turned into finished products, those goods need to be moved to distribution centers and stores." With a new study from the American Trucking Associations confirming that trucking is still the most popular shipping mode (carrying nearly 70 percent of all freight moving in the United States), the increased demand on the manufacturing front translates into even greater demand for folks to sit at the wheel of the trucks that haul their goods. In fact, truck driving is among the fastest growing job sectors in the country, with many analysts saying that over 130,000 positions are waiting to be filled right now. This number is only projected to increase, due to the impending retirements of the large number of baby boomers working in trucking. Safe, professional drivers—especially those with military backgrounds—have no problem finding a well-paying job. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the average salary for a truck driver was \$54,154 in 2011.

4. **Franchise Ownership.** Veterans interested in learning about franchise ownership are invited to join a FREE webinar “Veterans Exploring Franchise Ownership”. Learn how you can leverage your military experience through franchise ownership and how your unique qualifications improve your chances for success. Senior Franchise Consultant, Laurie Pollock, and retired Army Captain and 2-time franchise owner, Christian Germain, will explain how to evaluate franchise opportunities, the training and support franchisors offer, as well as discounts for veterans – including one franchise in particular that is waiving the entire franchise fee for qualified veterans. They’ll open up the lines at the end of the webinar to answer your individual questions. The next webinar date will be in September. Interested veterans who want assistance can request a one-on-one consultation. Always free! Contact lauriepollock@franchise.com or call 800-818-9929

5. **The Rosie Network.** Are you a military spouse or veteran entrepreneur? If so, The Rosie Network wants you. They are a non-profit founded by military spouses to promote the entrepreneurial efforts of military spouses and U.S. veterans, National Guard and Coast Guard, active-duty, retired or reserve. With over 20 million shoppers online daily and over 70% of those preferring to give their business to a veteran and/or military spouse-owned company - where can the public go to find these businesses? Come this September, The Rosie Network.org is where. With the launch of this free web-based search tool, the American public will be able to easily locate products and/or services provided by military spouses or veteran-owned companies. So just what does The Rosie Network bring to you - the business owner? A free and easy place for those patriotic customers to find you and a webpage designed by us which you customize to suit your needs. You can upload a Photo Gallery, provide Testimonials and much more! Already have a website? Provide a link and still take advantage of their search tool. The service to you is free. To sign-up register at <http://www.TheRosieNetwork.org> and let your customers find you!

6. **Worst U.S. Companies to Work For.** A survey of the worst U.S. companies to work for is topped by RadioShack (5th), Dollar General (4th), Dillard's (3rd), Express Scripts (2nd) and in the top position for a second year in a row, the satellite TV provider Dish. The survey comes from 24/7 Wall Street, which writes, "In reviews at Glassdoor, [Dish] employees regularly complained about very poor pay despite their difficult work in unpleasant conditions. By far, the most common criticisms were the low salaries relative to the type of work and very poor benefits. One manager on Glassdoor said that he had never seen employees treated so poorly. "The benefits are pitiful and the salaries are not current with industry -- I should know as I work in a [department] that sees the salaries." None of these companies have recruited on VetJobs! To view the list go to <http://247wallst.com/special-report/2013/07/19/americas-worst-companies-to-work-for-2/2/>.

[Source: VetJobs Veteran Eagle | Issue 14:08 | 1 Aug 2013 ++]

Vet Job Inside Connection ► Uncle Harry or Aunt Mary

Before you can interview for a job you have to get your foot in the door. Turning a piece of paper (your resume) into a chance to compete for the opportunity (the interview) is often the hardest part of a job search and almost impossible to do without help. Where do you get this assistance? Let's fast-forward and take a look. Pretend your search has ended and you are about to accept an offer--congratulations! Now look in your rear view mirror at your relationship and identify that one individual who deserves most of the credit for helping you get your foot in the door. Who was that person? It was your Uncle Harry or Aunt Mary. Uncle Who are these people? He or she was the one who was willing to go to bat for you. He or she helped you open the door, helped you keep it open, shepherded your resume, and coached you through the process. This person could be an actual relative or simply a pseudonym for someone else, known or unknown to you at the beginning of your search. Regardless, you have to source and connect with an Uncle Harry or Aunt Mary inside that company in order to have any chance of an interview. There are seven proven avenues to make that connection.

First Avenue – Inside Connections. Make a list of people you know who hold influential positions in companies that are of interest to you. The word influential is critical. If you are not careful, your resume will end up in the round file in the personnel office. Having the Vice President of Operations looking out for you is altogether different from your cousin Vinnie who handles security at the front gate. Assuming there are positions available for which you are qualified, your Uncle Harry will get you the interview. Depending on your relationship with him, in addition to making the right connections, he will give you insights on both the position and the interviewer. Remember, however, Uncle Harry is doing you a favor. Make sure you are well prepared for the interview. Your performance will reflect back on him.

Second Avenue – The Internet. Think of all the potential Aunt Marys who are floating around out there in cyberspace! The key to using the Internet as an interview generation tool is selectivity. Utilize resources that specifically target your military community or background. Employers who are predisposed to hire the military profile will utilize these sites and will be much more receptive to your posting or inquiry. Social and professional networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn have also developed as legitimate job search and career development platforms, but you must exercise caution with respect to content and postings. Make sure the accessible information presents you to a potential employer in a positive way.

Third Avenue – Recruitment Advertising. Also known as the help wanted ads and classifieds, this is the most traditional and also least effective method of finding your Uncle Harry. Although tedious, it is easy. Many experts will tell you that by the time an opening shows up in the classifieds, it is probably filled or a viable candidate has already been identified. The company is running the ad for either public relations purposes or EEOC requirements. One good reason to use the classifieds is to support a very specific geographic job search. If you must live in Chicago, then pay attention to the classifieds in the Sunday Chicago Tribune. In addition to the specific ads, see which companies are buying the most column inches of recruitment advertising. Whether or not you are qualified for the positions listed, a lot of advertising indicates growth, and growth means opportunity, and there are probably opportunities available beyond the ones being advertised.

Fourth Avenue – Alumni Associations. Most trade schools, colleges and universities offer their alumni some sort of post-graduation career guidance and counseling. Some offer very sophisticated, web-based, and national career transition assistance. Other use much less formal or geographically specific programs. Regardless, contact your school or alumni association to see what programs are available. These programs are typically sponsored by either the office of alumni affairs or the alumni association. Consider joining the association and participating in alumni events in your city or the cities in which you would like to live. Look for links to social networking sites. Whether it's through a formal transition assistance program or an informal chat over coffee, perhaps you could run into your Aunt Mary.

Fifth Avenue – Networking. The concept behind networking is simple--whom do you know and whom do they know? In theory, any two people can be connected by tracking the relationships between four or fewer other people. The same theory explains why networking can be such a powerful job-hunting tool. Given the power of the Internet and the advent of social and professional networking sites, the number of degrees necessary to make the connection is falling rapidly. Expand the network enough and you will find Uncle Harry. A tremendous amount of work is required to make networking effective. You must constantly ask people for help, make phone calls to people that do not know you, overcome the feeling that you are imposing, and find yourself bumping up against closed doors. To increase your odds of success, target communities that are likely to be receptive to your requests for assistance. For example, try alumni groups, classmates, shipmates, fraternities or sororities. Finding some commonality will enhance the chances of the network actually producing your Uncle Harry.

Sixth Avenue – Professional Societies. Professional societies offer an approach similar to that of alumni associations. Organizations such as The Military Officers Association, the Retired Enlisted Association, the Non-commissioned Officers Association, the Navy League, the Association of the U. S. Army, Veterans of Modern Warfare, and Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America can be valuable resources. Already a member? Give them a call or visit their website to see what type of services they offer. Not a member? Perhaps this is the excuse you need to become one. Remember, there is a strong likelihood that Aunt Mary is already a member in good standing!

Seventh Avenue – Placement Companies. Also known as employment agencies, headhunters, or search firms, these organizations can be a very powerful tool. A professional, experienced recruiter or counselor at a placement firm can be your Uncle Harry connection at a company where you do not already have one. Placement firms

establish and maintain relationships with hundreds of companies. They are aware of available positions in their client companies and can strongly influence interview activity there. The client companies value these services and pay the fees. In most cases the job seeker should never be asked to pay the fee or sign a contract. No placement firm can satisfy the needs of every individual. They all specialize in one way or another. Many are geographically specific. Others focus on a particular industry segment or category of job. Still others focus on a specific population, such as enlisted technicians, junior military officers, retirees, aviators, or nuclear power.

[Source: Military.com Jun 2013 ++]

Vet Sleep Disorders Update 01 ► Survey Results

Many veterans are “severely sleep-deprived” and are often kept awake by persistent thoughts and pain, according to ‘Effect of Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) Therapy on Nightmares in Patients with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Obstructive Sleep Apnea, p. A305’ survey (<http://myvetadvisor.com/vetadvisorjohns-hopkins-national-veteran-sleep-survey-results>) released 1 AUG. Conducted by the firm VetAdvisor and a sleep expert at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, the online survey questioned more than 2,800 veterans from each branch of the military, though it was a not a nationally representative sample. Survey respondents slept an average of 5.6 hours; by comparison, the general population typically sleeps 6.7 hours. Though surviving sleep deprivation may have once been a point of pride for these veterans, it now leaves the majority of them feeling tired, fatigued or sleepy during the day. Seventy percent had trouble falling or staying asleep while three-quarters reported experiencing the clinical criteria for insomnia. Enlisted soldiers reported higher rates of insomnia than officers, and combat veterans were more likely to experience nightmares and sleep-disrupting vigilance than those who hadn’t “engaged the enemy.”

Dan Frank, CEO of VetAdvisor and a Navy veteran, said he wasn’t that surprised by the survey’s results. His firm works with companies and government agencies to provide free professional and wellness coaching services to veterans, and complaints about poor sleep often come up. VetAdvisor coaches find that difficulty sleeping is an indicator of other problems that are more difficult to discuss, like post-traumatic stress disorder, unemployment or financial concerns. Veterans can be reluctant to seek medical help for sleep issues. The survey found that while most participants received healthcare from the Department of Veterans Affairs, 28 percent hadn’t discussed their sleeplessness with a provider. They feared taking sleep medication, didn’t like going to the doctor, worried that treatments wouldn’t be successful, and didn’t want to be “labeled.” Some veterans tried to informally treat their symptoms by using alcohol or over-the-counter medication.

At the Sleep Wake Disorders Center at John D. Dingell Veteran’s Administration Medical Center in Detroit, physicians stress that medication isn’t the first course of treatment. Doctors first try to determine whether poor sleep is caused by insomnia, sleep apnea, prescription drug use, or perhaps an undiagnosed condition like PTSD, lung disease or heart failure. Patients with sleep apnea are routinely given an overnight breathing aid known as continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP). The preliminary results of a small study on CPAP use, published in an abstract of the journal SLEEP, found that patients with PTSD and sleep apnea reported fewer nightmares after wearing the device consistently overnight. Refer to <http://myvetadvisor.com/vetadvisorjohns-hopkins-national-veteran-sleep-survey-results/>

Patients with insomnia receive cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which can help “retrain” a restless or anxious mind and change the way a person sleeps, said Dr. Susmita Chowdhuri, chief of the Detroit VA’s sleep medicine section. Studies have shown CBT to be more effective for long-term treatment of insomnia than sleeping pills.

There are significant hazards to letting a sleep disorder go untreated. Persistent sleep apnea can lead to an increased risk of developing high blood pressure and cardiac disease. It may also put patients at risk for stroke and diabetes. Insomnia can worsen depression, and sleeping less than seven hours a night may be associated with increased mortality risk. A recent study (<http://www.journalsleep.org/ViewAbstract.aspx?pid=29003>) in the journal SLEEP found that insomnia symptoms prior to deployment are associated with the subsequent development of PTSD, depression and anxiety. “It is extremely important that a veteran gets evaluated and examined,” says Dr. Chowdhuri. “Sleep occupies 30 percent of our entire lifetime — it’s a really important component.” If you have a sleep disorder you should review:

- VA instructions on how to help improve your sleep at https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/anonymous.portal?nfpb=true&pageLabel=healthyLiving&contentPage=healthy_living/sleep_suggestions_ISI_5.htm.
- The VA primer on PTSD and sleep at <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/sleep-and-ptsd.asp>.
- Test your sleep IQ at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsdr/patpub/patpub-a.htm> courtesy of the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research.

[Source: Forbes Pharma & Healthcare | Rebecca Ruiz | 1 Aug 2013 ++]

WWII Pre-war Events ► March on Rome



Italian Fascist leader Benito Mussolini, center, hands on hips, with members of the fascist Party, in Rome, Italy, Oct. 28, 1922, following their March on Rome. This march was an act of intimidation, where thousands of fascist blackshirts occupied strategic positions throughout much of Italy. Following the march, King Emanuele III asked Mussolini to form a new government, clearing the way towards a dictatorship.

WWII Vets 48 ► Charles Eldon Prigmore

More than 70 years have passed since Charles Eldon Prigmore, a former master sergeant with the U.S. Army, endured the atrocities of the Bataan Death March in the early months of World War II. “I was on my back in a ditch when a Japanese soldier thought I was dead,” said Prigmore, 93, from the HomeCare, Kamana living facility in Apple Valley. “Just as he raised his bayonet to stab me to make sure I was dead, I opened my eyes, rolled to one side and he missed me by inches.” As a prisoner of war, Prigmore survived the death march in the Philippines where some 75,000 Filipinos and Americans began a brutal 65-mile trek north to Camp O’Donnell. On 25 MAY 2013, representatives from the Adjutant General’s office in Sacramento presented Prigmore with a dozen military service medals, which Prigmore had never received. Among the medals were the Bronze Star Medal and certificate, and the Prisoner of War Medal. Victorville



At age 93, Charles Eldon Prigmore received long-overdue military medals

During his military career, Prigmore had a Top Secret classification. He was captured by Japanese troops in April 1942. “We had long conversations about life and death as we waited for the Japanese to arrive,” Prigmore said. “We were all out of food and ammunition, and the general said we had to surrender that portion of the Philippines.” As the long hot march began, Prigmore said Japanese guards shot or bayoneted any prisoner who fell, attempted to escape or stopped to drink from a puddle. Approximately 7,000 to 10,000 POWs — the majority who were Filipinos— died during the march as a result of physical abuse, illness or murder at the hands of Japanese troops. Prigmore, whose hearing and memory remains sharp, said he could not remember how many days it took to complete the walk because “in conditions like that, you can’t keep track of time.” During his 3½ years as a POW, he received a bowl of rice a day to eat. Prigmore’s weight dropped to 70 pounds from 190 pounds in a matter of months. “After the empty bamboo barracks were filled with dead bodies, the Japanese would lay them outside,” Prigmore said. “We lost about 150 men every day. There were bodies everywhere.”

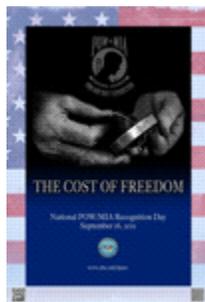
During his captivity, Prigmore said he would often think about the green fields of Kansas and the love he left behind. Prigmore’s daughter, Pam Gerbitz, said her father proposed to his mother, Ruth, when he was 9-years old. “She was 8-years-old and they grew up on neighboring farms in Winfield, Kan.,” Gerbitz said. “They dated all through school and they were married in 1946, a year after he got back.” Later in the war, he was transported by sea to a POW camp near Nagoya, Japan. Prigmore said he survived one of the unmarked “Japanese Hell Ships,” which were bombed by the Americans as hundreds of prisoners were being shipped to different camps. About a year into his captivity at the new camp, Prigmore said he remembered the day a Japanese spokesman announced they had

surrendered to the Americans. "He said that the war was over and that they had no further need for us," said Prigmore, as he cried loudly. "He left the barracks, and you could have heard a pin drop."

As American planes picked up prisoners bound for the U.S., Prigmore said he was shocked to see the devastation left by U.S. Army Air Force, which left nearly 6 square miles of Nagoya in ruins. Gerbitz said her father, who is on hospice, divorced his mother 57 years ago. "They're both very ill, so I had to put them in the same facility," Gerbitz said. "That's a long story, but this was the best place for them." Prigmore, whose favorite songs are "Don't Fence Me In" and "Sentimental Journey," said the word "freedom" will always have a special place in his heart. "It's an honor to receive the medals and to serve my country, but some guys didn't get a medal," said Prigmore, as his eyes grew sleepy. "Some guys didn't get anything but death. Remember them." [Source: Victorville Daily Press | Rene De La Cruz | 28 May 2013 ++]

POW/MIA Update 50 ► Identified 1 thru 15 AUG 2013

"Keeping the Promise", "Fulfill their Trust" and "No one left behind" are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century are: World War II (73,000+), Korean War (7,900+), Cold War (126), Vietnam War (1,655), 1991 Gulf War (0), and OEF/OIF (6). Over 600 Defense Department men and women -- both military and civilian -- work in organizations around the world as part of DoD's personnel recovery and personnel accounting communities. They are all dedicated to the single mission of finding and bringing our missing personnel home. For a listing of all personnel accounted for since 2007 refer to http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/accounted_for. For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) web site at <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> or call (703) 699-1420. The remains of the following MIA/POW's have been recovered, identified, and scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin:



Family members seeking more information about missing loved ones may call the following Service Casualty Offices: U.S. Air Force (800) 531-5501, U.S. Army (800) 892-2490, U.S. Marine Corps (800) 847-1597, U.S. Navy (800) 443-9298, or U.S. Department of State (202) 647-5470. The remains of the following MIA/POW's have been recovered, identified, and scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin:

Vietnam

- None

Korea

- The DPMO announced 2 AUG that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing from the Korean War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army Sgt. 1st Class **William Robinson**, 26, of Denison, Texas, will be buried Aug. 7, in Indiantown Gap, Pa. In late Nov. 1950 Robinson and elements of the 31st Regimental Combat Team (RCT) were deployed along the east of the Chosin Reservoir near Sinhung-ri, South Hamgyong Province, in North Korea. On Nov. 29, 1950, remnants of the 31st RCT, known historically as Task Force Faith, began a fighting withdrawal to a more defensible position near the Hagaru-ri, south of the reservoir. It was during this withdrawal, Robinson was reported missing. Between 1991 and 1994, North Korea gave the United States 208 boxes of remains believed to contain the remains of 200-400 U.S. service members. North Korean documents, turned over with some of the boxes, indicated that some of the human remains were recovered from the area where Robinson was last seen. In the identification of Robinson, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence, and forensic identification tools such as dental comparisons and mitochondrial DNA – which matched Robinson’s brother.
- The DPMO announced 8 AUG that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing from the Korean War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. U.S. Marine Corps Pfc. **Jonathan R. Posey Jr.**, 20, of Dallas, will be buried 12 AUG in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. In Dec. 1950 Posey, assigned to L Battery, 4th Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, was serving provisionally as an infantryman with the 7th Marine Regiment at Yudam-ni in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir. On Dec. 2, 1950, Posey was killed in action while the 5th and 7th Marine Regiments withdrew to Hagaru-ri. In 1954, United Nations and Communist Forces exchanged the remains of war dead in what came to be called “Operation Glory.” All remains recovered in Operation Glory were turned over to the Army Central Identification Unit for analysis. Those which were unable to be identified were interred as unknowns at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii, known as the “Punchbowl.” In 2012, analysts from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) reevaluated Posey’s records and determined that portions of the remains recovered from Operation Glory should be exhumed for identification. To identify the remains, scientists from JPAC used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools, such as dental and radiograph comparison, which matched Posey’s records. Using modern technology, identifications continue to be made from remains that were previously turned over by North Korean officials. Today, more than 7,900 Americans remain unaccounted for from the Korean War.

World War II

- The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced 2 AUG that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, lost in World War II, have been identified and are being returned to his family for burial with full military honors along with his fellow crew member. Army Air Force Sgt. **Dominick J. Licari**, 31, of Frankfort, N.Y., will be buried on Aug. 6, in Frankfort, N.Y. On March 13, 1944, Licari was a crew member of an A-20G Havoc bomber that failed to return to base in a country now known as Papua New Guinea. The aircraft crashed after attacking enemy targets on the island. Licari died along with crewmember 2nd Lt. Valorie L. Pollard. In 2012 the A-20G crash site in the mountains of Papua New Guinea was excavated and the remains of Licari and Pollard were recovered. To identify the remains of Licari, scientists from Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools such as dental comparisons and mitochondrial DNA, which matched Licari’s brother. There are more than 400,000 American service members that were killed during WWII, and the remains of more than 73,000 were never recovered or identified.

Note: POW/MIA Day Posters Now Available: Order your 2013 POW/MIA Recognition Day posters from the Defense POW/MIA Office before they run out. Each full-color poster measures 11x16-inches, and shipping is free. Limit is 20 posters per order. Place your order online at http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/pow_day.

[Source: http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/news/news_releases/ Jul 2013 ++]

POW/MIA Update 51 ► USS Oklahoma Unknowns

The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command wants to take the unprecedented step of exhuming all of the Dec. 7, 1941, casualties of the USS Oklahoma buried as "unknowns" at Punchbowl cemetery — more than 330 crew members — to help it reach a higher number of annual identifications mandated by Congress. But the Hawaii-based military command, known as JPAC, is getting resistance from the Navy, which prefers to maintain the "sanctity" of the graves at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, officials said. Further, the Navy would like to take the partial and commingled remains of more than 100 Oklahoma crew members who were disinterred in 2003 from a single casket at Punchbowl, possibly rebury them at a memorial and grave site to be created on Ford Island, and invite family members to an interment ceremony on Dec. 7, 2014.



Righting operations on the capsized USS Oklahoma at Pearl Harbor in March, 1943.

JPAC, on the other hand, said it also wants to disinter and try to identify crewmen from the battleships California and West Virginia. "We've actually already done most of the legwork on the request for the California and the West Virginia and some of the others," said John Byrd, director of JPAC's Central Identification Laboratory. "So we have gotten our ducks in a row to pursue those, but we're waiting for the Oklahoma issue to move forward before we proceed with the others." There are other unknowns who Byrd said may be candidates for exhumation, including about 100 casualties from the Battle of Tarawa in 1943 and nearly 400 service members, mostly soldiers, who died in 1945 as captives on the Japanese "hell ship" Enoura Maru. The contradictory JPAC and Navy goals have set up a conflict that might be settled by an unlikely party: the Army, which actually has "next-of-kin" authority over all unknowns at Punchbowl, regardless of service.

JPAC, headquartered at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, was established to investigate, search for and identify Americans missing from past wars as an extension of the soldier's creed to leave no man behind. The pace of that effort has come under fire in recent years, with JPAC averaging only about 69 identifications a year and the families of the missing growing old and dying. In the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress required JPAC to make 200 identifications annually by 2015. Technology and procedural advancements have made it possible to identify a greater number of unknowns from Punchbowl, JPAC said. A recent Government Accountability Office study reported JPAC as saying that it has the potential to achieve more than 100 identifications from disinterments annually, but only to the extent that disinterments are not a detriment to JPAC's field operations worldwide. JPAC can make recoveries from Punchbowl, which is practically in its backyard, at a fraction of the cost needed for overseas missions to remote locations.

Several months ago JPAC made a request to the Army to disinter all of the more than 330 Oklahoma crew members whose remains are commingled — meaning the bones of many individuals are together — and buried in more than 50 graves at Punchbowl, said Byrd, the lab director. The plan is to lay out the remains at a \$5 million satellite lab opened by JPAC in June at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska. So far, JPAC has received no word back from the Army, Byrd said. "The Navy leadership, secretary of the Navy's office, from what we understand, is against it," Byrd said. "Now, they don't have the ultimate authority — the Army has the authority — but the Army, as a courtesy, has gone to the Navy and asked them what is their feeling on this. 'Do you want to do it or not?' And I think the Navy said no." The Navy confirmed it is opposed to the disinterments. The service contends that during any identification process the unknown sailors and Marines would be "outside the sanctity of the grave" again (they were buried in Nuuanu or Halawa before being moved to Punchbowl) and that DNA testing and accounting could take many years and still leave some crew members unidentified. Still, the Navy can only make a recommendation to the Army.

Punchbowl Director Gene Castagnetti said Army Secretary John McHugh visited the cemetery recently and "was very interested in trying to fulfill the congressional mandate (of 200 identifications annually)." Castagnetti said there are 466 unknowns at Punchbowl from the Dec. 7, 1941, attack; 2,090 total from World War II; and 810 from the Korean War. JPAC expects it will have made 40 Korean War disinterments this fiscal year, which runs through September. Research by Pearl Harbor survivor Ray Emory, who lives in Kahala, led to the 2003 disinterment of a USS Oklahoma casket with commingled remains. Five crew members were identified and sent home to families. But incomplete sets of bones of more than 100 men were also found, complicating further identifications and putting the brakes on other exhumations from the ship, which represents the single largest group of buried unknowns from the Pearl Harbor attack. Robert Newberry, then-deputy assistant secretary of defense for POW/ Missing Personnel Affairs, wrote in a 2009 memo that disinterment of additional Oklahoma caskets would not occur until progress was made identifying those already exhumed. "Identifying the remains of unknowns already recovered and buried with honor in U.S. national cemeteries at home and abroad must take a lower priority" than recovering Americans "that still lie in the foreign countries in which they fell," he added.

The JPAC lab's Byrd said identity data exist for as many as 20 more individuals out of that one exhumed Oklahoma casket. "But you know, the lab's position is that we don't want to make any more identifications until we exhume the rest of the (Oklahoma) remains and do a proper (bones) segregation," he said. The Navy would prefer to bury the remains of those 100 crew members, possibly on Ford Island in conjunction with a memorial. "Obviously, we want to identify those remains and return them to their families, so we wouldn't necessarily be in favor of that," said JPAC spokesman Lee Tucker. The technology exists now to identify many of the Oklahoma unknowns, and JPAC has developed standard operating procedures for working on large quantities of remains with Korean War casualties, Byrd said.



The grave of an unidentified Pearl Harbor casualty at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

Emotions remain high among veterans and family members. Paul Goodyear, a 95-year-old survivor of the Oklahoma who was aboard when it was pounded by Japanese torpedoes, is a strong proponent of exhuming his shipmates. "About 135 percent," Goodyear said of the interest level in identifications. "Not only amongst the families, but amongst the little towns, the communities that these kids came from." Goodyear said he has seen entire towns turn out with banners and fire trucks for the return of missing service members from World War II. "I cannot tell you how many brothers and sisters, grandsons and granddaughters are just dying to have those kids home," the Arizona man said. Eighty-year-old Bob Valley, a Michigan resident who lost his 19-year-old brother, Lowell, on the Oklahoma and is part of the USS Oklahoma Family Inc. group, would also like to see the Oklahoma unknowns disinterred. His brother was a fireman down in the boiler room on the port side, which he said took the brunt of nine to 12 torpedoes. Eventually the big ship rolled on its side. "I've talked to some of the other firemen that survived and they were on the other side ... and they said those guys never had a chance. I mean, they were killed instantly with those torpedoes," Valley said. "That's all that we've been able to find out, because he's just (missing in action)." If all the Oklahoma casualties are disinterred, there's a possibility his brother could be identified. "I'd love to bring my brother home," Valley said. [Source: The Honolulu Star-Advertiser | William Cole | 12 aug 2013 ++]

Spanish American War Images 40 ► Horse Training



9th United States Cavalry training horses for Spanish-American war (ca. 1898)

Saving Money ► Stain Removal

Before you go and buy an expensive stain remover try the following methods of removing stains using common items found in most kitchen cupboards:

Stains On Clothes

- A mix of equal parts of ammonia, liquid dish detergent and water in a spray bottle is touted as an effective stain remover for clothes. Spray it on and wash later, after it dries. Refer to <http://loriaalexander.blogspot.com/2012/03/cheap-clothes-stain-remover.html>
- Lightly scrub a stain or stubborn dirt with dish detergent, then soak the clothes overnight in a bucket of water and 1/4 cup of baking soda. Refer to <http://thekrazycouponlady.com/family/stained-childrens-clothes-my-secret-homemade-stain-removing-solution/>
- Use hydrogen peroxide (3 percent) for removing stains from clothing and other fabrics. Mix together one part hydrogen peroxide and two parts Dawn dish detergent. A spray bottle is the preferred method of application. Refer to <http://modernmom.com/homemade-miracle-cleaner>.
- Combine lemon juice and salt to treat a stain on a favorite white blouse, then reapplied lemon juice and hung it in the sun. Refer to <http://www.mnn.com/your-home/at-home/blogs/lemon-juice-salt-and-the-sun-work-together-to-fight-stains>
- Use a lemon juice application that will work on a rainy day. Refer to http://www.ehow.com/how_5862895_remove-stains-lemon-juice.html
- A mixture of lemon juice and water will also remove pit stains. Just be sure you wash the clothes quickly after applying. Refer to <http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/home/lemon-aid-natures-all-purpose-stain-remover.htm>
- Two crushed aspirin dissolved in a cup of hot water is good for removing perspiration stains. Refer to <http://www.housecleaningcentral.com/en/cleaning-tips/stain-removal/stain-home-remedy.html>
- WD-40 Lubricant can remove grease, oil, crayon and lipstick from clothes. Who knew? "Spray some on, wait 10 minutes, and then work in undiluted liquid dishwashing soap and launder as usual," author Linda Cobb writes in a very informative article. Refer to <http://www.tipsonhomeandstyle.com/home/how-to-remove-stains-using-common-household-products>.
- A 30-minute soak in milk will take out lipstick and ink. refer to <http://greenliving.nationalgeographic.com/homemade-laundry-stain-cleaner-ideas-2678.html>
- Unflavored meat tenderizer is a good stain remover for protein-based stains like blood. Make a paste with a little water.

Other Stains

- Keep a spray bottle of half white vinegar and half water for many cleaning tasks, including removing hard water stains.
- Idiva says body lotion can remove crayon and other tough marks on walls. Refer to <http://idiva.com/photogallery-work-life/top-10-home-remedies-for-stain-removal/7659/8>
- A common eraser can remove pen marks from a leather purse. Refer to <http://idiva.com/photogallery-work-life/top-10-home-remedies-for-stain-removal/7659/9>
- Half a lemon dipped in salt will eliminate stains from the copper bottoms of pots and pans. Rub lightly. That combination of lemon juice and salt is also said to remove rust stains from a variety of surfaces.

- To remove a water ring from the dining room table: mix mayonnaise with some cigarette ash and leave it on the stain overnight. Refer to <http://www.wisebread.com/secret-homemade-stain-removers-that-kick-butt>
- Baking soda, rubbed dry into stains or mixed with water to make a paste, works on many types of stains. Refer to <http://greenliving.nationalgeographic.com/homemade-laundry-stain-cleaner-ideas-2678.html>
- For a mystery stain mix a teaspoon of 3 percent hydrogen peroxide with a little cream of tartar or a dab of non-gel toothpaste. Refer to <http://www.rd.com/home/homemade-stain-removal-solutions>

Some Important Advice

- For some essential advice whenever you're trying out a new stain removal recipe on a surface you haven't used it on before, refer to <http://www.housecleaningcentral.com/en/cleaning-tips/stain-removal/stain-home-remedy.html>
- Test it in a hidden spot just in case. Many types of fabrics are not suited for home stain removal techniques, including rayon, silk, satin or velvet. Refer to <http://abclocal.go.com/wls/story?section=resources&id=8477982>
- Act as soon as you can to remove the stain before it sets.
- Quickly blot with an absorbent material. Do not rub.

[Source: MoneyTalksNews | Karen Datko | 17 May 2013 ++]

Notes of Interest ► 1 thru 15 Aug 2013

- **News.** VA News is on demand on the VA Home page at <http://www.va.gov>. Just click on “Media Room,” then on “videos.” It is on the VA YouTube page, which can be accessed by clicking on the YouTube icon on the VA home page.
- **Debt Traps.** Check out the video on the Senate Special Committee on Aging hearing on payday loans at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGyx_ojdc&utm_source=DCS+Congressional+E-mail+Marketing+System&utm_medium=Email&utm_term=http%3a%2f%2fwww.youtube.com%2fwatch%3fv%3dxGyx_ojdc&utm_campaign=Debt+Traps.
- **GI Bill.** To find out how much of your GI Bill benefit remains call VA Education Services at 1(888)-442-4551 and provide your SSN. Be prepared for a lengthy wait to get through.
- **Military Pay Nostalgia.** For those who have forgotten how little they earned in service and still were able to get along check out <http://www.dfas.mil/militarymembers/payentitlements/militarypaytables.html> for the years 1949 to present.
- **Sequestration.** The Navy has decided that it will not repair the nuclear-powered submarine USS Miami (SSN-775) after concluding that the cost of repairing damage from a fire set by a civilian worker is more than it can afford due to mandated budget cuts.
- **Cruise Ship Crime.** Taking a cruise. If you want to check out their reported alleged crimes go to:
 - Carnival <http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=140690&p=irol-VoluntaryReport>
 - Norwegian <http://www.ncl.com/about/voluntary-reporting-statistics>
 - Royal Caribbean http://www.royalcaribbean.com/contentPage.do?pagename=royal_caribbean_cruise_ship_crime_allegation_statistics.
- **Tribute.** Check out the Oak Ridge Boys tribute at Arlington National Cemetery to GI Joe and Lilly at <http://silverandgoldandthee.net/V/Lil.html>.

[Source: Various 1-15 Aug 2013 ++]



Medicare Fraud Update 127 ► Disclosures 1-15 Aug 2013

- **Detroit MI** — Under the category of "You've Got to Be Kidding Me" comes Dr. **Farid Fata**. The feds claim that the 48-year-old oncologist from Oakland Township submitted false claims to Medicare for services that were medically unnecessary, including chemotherapy treatments for patients. He was arrested 6 AUG. "Dr. Fata allegedly perpetrated a brazen and dangerous fraud that time and again jeopardized his patients' wellbeing," "The conduct alleged by the defendant endangered patient safety through misdiagnoses, over- or mis-prescription of chemotherapy and other treatments, and delay of hospital care for patients with serious injuries." Dr. Fata owns and operates Michigan Hematology Oncology Centers (MHO), which has offices in Clarkston, Bloomfield Hills, Lapeer, Sterling Heights, Troy and Oak Park..



Dr. Farid Fata

Authorities allege that Dr. Fata allegedly submitted fraudulent claims to Medicare for medically unnecessary services, including chemotherapy treatments, Positron Emission Tomograph (PET) scans and a variety of cancer and hematology treatments for patients who did not need them. As part of the scheme, he allegedly falsified and directed others to falsify documents to justify cancer treatments for billing purposes. MHO billed Medicare for approximately \$35 million dollars over a two-year period, approximately \$25 million of which is attributable to Dr. Fata. The complaint further alleges that Dr. Fata administered unnecessary chemotherapy to patients in remission; gave deliberate misdiagnoses of patients as having cancer to justify unnecessary cancer treatment; administered chemotherapy to end-of-life patients who would not have benefited from the treatment; deliberately misdiagnosed patients without cancer to justify expensive testing; fabricated other diagnoses such as anemia and fatigue to justify unnecessary hematology treatments, and distributed controlled substances to patients without medical necessity or administered dangerous levels."

- **Miami FL** — Two health care clinic owners pleaded guilty 13 AUG in connection with an \$8 million health care fraud scheme involving the now-defunct home health care company Flores Home Health Care Inc. **Miguel Jimenez**, 43, and **Marina Sanchez Pajon**, 29, pleaded guilty each to one count of conspiracy to commit health care fraud. At sentencing, scheduled for Oct. 30, 2013, Jimenez and Pajon each face a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison. Jimenez and Pajon, who are married, were owners and operators of Flores Home Health, a Miami home health care agency that purported to provide home health and physical

therapy services to Medicare beneficiaries. The couple operated Flores Home Health for the purpose of billing Medicare for, among other things, expensive physical therapy and home health care services that were not medically necessary and/or were not provided. Jimenez’s primary role at Flores Home Health involved controlling the company and running and overseeing the schemes conducted through Flores Home Health. Both Jimenez and Pajon were responsible for negotiating and paying kickbacks and bribes, interacting with patient recruiters, and coordinating and overseeing the submission of fraudulent claims submitted to the Medicare program. Jimenez, Pajon and their co-conspirators paid kickbacks and bribes to patient recruiters in return for the recruiters providing patients to Flores Home Health for home health and therapy services that were medically unnecessary and/or not provided. They also paid kickbacks and bribes to co-conspirators in doctors’ offices and clinics in exchange for home health and therapy prescriptions, medical certifications, and other documentation. Jimenez, Pajon, and their co-conspirators used the prescriptions, medical certifications, and other documentation to fraudulently bill Medicare for home health care services that Jimenez and Pajon knew were in violation of federal criminal laws. From approximately October 2009 through approximately June 2012, Flores Home Health was paid approximately \$8 million by Medicare for fraudulent care claims for home health services that were not medically necessary and/or not provided.

[Source: Various 1-14 Aug 2013 ++]

Medicaid Fraud Update 91 ► Disclosures 1-15 Aug 2013

- **New Jersey** — For the second time in two years, State Comptroller Matthew Boxer has found that a company that manages Medicaid patient care for the state is failing in its responsibility to oversee fraud prevention efforts. Boxer’s office released a report yesterday criticizing **UnitedHealthCare** for failing to hire or train the appropriate number of fraud investigators required by its contract with the state. Their efforts recovered only \$1.6 million in improper payments, representing less than a tenth of a percent of the \$1.7 billion state Medicaid premium payments to the company. The audit covered the years 2009 and 2010 – the same time period for which Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield was criticized in a similar report released in 2011. “With billions of tax dollars flowing through New Jersey’s Medicaid program, our state relies on its Medicaid HMOs to fulfill their oversight responsibilities in an aggressive manner,” Boxer said in a statement. “This is another audit that shows an HMO failing to live up to requirements designed to combat fraud and lower state Medicaid costs.”
- **Newark NJ** — Twin brothers who once owned a northern New Jersey pharmacy have admitted reaping at least \$1.5 million in illicit gains by defrauding patients, Medicaid and insurance companies for the past 15 years. Federal prosecutors say **Robert and William Carlucci**, both 69-year-old Florham Park residents, pleaded guilty 6 AUG to separate complaints charging them with conspiring to commit health care fraud. They each face up to 10 years in prison when they are sentenced Nov. 12. The defendants also agreed to pay \$1.5 million in restitution, prosecutors said. Robert Carlucci also forfeiting \$849,568, while William Carlucci is forfeiting \$558,717. The brothers previously owned the West Orange Pharmacy. Along with another unnamed conspirator, they participated in a variety of schemes designed to cheat customers and bilk insurance companies. Among the schemes they used were under-filling prescriptions and then billing Medicaid and other insurance companies for the fully filled prescription. Without informing the patients, the conspirators also substituted generic drugs for the brand-name drugs prescribed by the patients’ physicians. Then they billed Medicaid and other insurance companies for the full amount of the brand-name drugs. The conspirators also filled outstanding refills on a given prescription without the patients’ knowledge, then billed Medicaid and the private insurers for the refills. The conspirators purchased

prescription drugs from non-licensed wholesalers at a substantial discount to the drugs' wholesale price, then dispensed these discounted drugs to patients and billed Medicaid and private insurers for the full costs associated with the drugs.

- **New Hampshire** — A quadriplegic doctor once celebrated for helping patients persevere through physical challenges similar to his own pleaded guilty 6 AUG to billing New Hampshire Medicaid for more than \$150,000 in services he never received. But quadriplegic **Robert Seung-Bok Lee** will likely spend little time, if any, at the state prison, where his attorney argued it would cost more to care for Lee's medical needs than the 48-year-old man ever stole from the state. A prosecutor from the state attorney general's office had asked for Lee to serve his sentence at the state prison, and he told the judge that Lee should pay for a portion of the steep costs associated with his incarceration himself. Lee has billed for services on 400 separate occasions over more than eight years while he wasn't living in New Hampshire. In June of 2006 he bought a \$700,000 waterfront condo in Baltimore. ... Bank records show that he traveled. He bought theater tickets when he was in Boston. He ate out at expensive restaurants. He got hair cuts at fancy salons." Lee first started billing for medical services — at the time, legally — in 1994 while a student at what was then known as Dartmouth Medical School in Hanover, Blodgett said. Lee has been a quadriplegic since he was 18 after dislocating one of his cervical vertebrae in a gymnastics accident just days after earning a spot on Korea's Olympic gymnastics team, according to a 2005 article in Johns Hopkins Medicine magazine.
- **Shelby OH** — The wife of a former Cleveland County assistant district attorney and judicial candidate was sentenced 8 AUG to six years in prison. **Linda Smoot Radeker**, 72, of Shelby admitted to overseeing a health care scheme that defrauded Medicaid of at least \$6.1 million. In September 2012, Radeker pleaded guilty to one count of health care fraud conspiracy and two counts of money laundering. In her plea agreement filed with the court, Radeker admitted that from 2008 to 2011 she obtained at least \$6.1 million in fraudulent reimbursement payments from false claims submitted to Medicaid. Radeker was also sentenced to two years of court supervision and ordered to pay \$6,156,674.68 as restitution. According to filed court documents and the sentencing hearing, Radeker, a licensed professional counselor enrolled with North Carolina Medicaid, falsely claimed in billings submitted to Medicaid that she was the attending clinician for services provided to Medicaid recipients, when no such services were provided. Radeker "rented out" her Medicaid provider number to a network of co-conspirators operating in Cleveland and Gaston counties and elsewhere and, in return, kept a percentage of the fraudulent Medicaid reimbursements, sometimes as much as 50 percent. Rodnisha Sade Cannon of Charlotte and Victoria Brewton of Shelby have also pleaded guilty for their involvement in the scheme
- **Orlando FL** — In less than six months, **Janie Vittini** went from shopping at luxury stores and living in a posh downtown condo, to life in a state prison cell. The 29-year-old was arrested in March when state investigators said she ran a \$3 million Medicaid fraud scheme through her Winter Park-area business, Improving Together Inc. Vittini and her employees were supposed to help guide people through mental-health-service programs. But authorities said Vittini billed the Medicaid program for hundreds of services never rendered. Vittini pleaded guilty to charges of racketeering and identity theft. She was sentenced last month to about three years in prison. Authorities said in some instances, Vittini promised people a \$25 gift card in exchange for their private Medicaid information. One woman told investigators she met Vittini at a shopping center, where Vittini set up a tent and handed out condoms and other items in exchange for Medicaid numbers. The woman said she was told she would receive a gift card in if she wrote information from her Medicaid card on one of Vittini's forms. She never received the gift card, and investigators tracked more than 100 claims made by Improving Together for the woman's boyfriend -- who never received any services from the agency. From January 2012 to March 27, 2013, more than \$3 million in deposits were

made from the Medicaid program to bank accounts associated with Improving Together and Vittini. Vittini made \$608,000 in debit-card purchases during that time and withdrew about \$162,000. Authorities said she bought homes, luxury vehicles and lived in a posh condo at The Vue at Lake Eola. Several of Vittini's employees were also arrested. According to recently filed court documents, Vittini agreed to testify in those cases.

- **Missoula MT** — A 48-year-old Hungry Horse woman who pleaded guilty to illegally receiving Medicaid and Social Security disability benefits by hiding assets has been sentenced to eight months in prison and ordered to pay \$82,000 in restitution. **Yvonne Owens-Morris** was sentenced 8 AUG by U.S. District Judge Dana Christensen in Missoula. Court records say Owens-Morris qualified for benefits after reporting she received \$300 per month from a family member, received food stamps, had \$100 in the bank and two vehicles worth a total of \$4,500. Investigators found she didn't report receiving \$87,000 in proceeds from the sale of a bar or a \$101,000 insurance settlement she received after being injured in a fall. Prosecutors say she also did not disclose a \$2,600 investment account or her interest in Texas property valued at more than \$47,000.
- **Hammond IN** — A northwestern Indiana woman who pleaded guilty to stealing \$1.86 million from Medicaid by billing for medical services she never provided has been sentenced to three years in prison. A federal judge ordered 46-year-old **Phyllis Lark**, of Hammond, to pay restitution even though her attorney, Walter Alvarez, who said it's unlikely she will ever do so. Lark asked the court for leniency, saying she broke the law to support her daughter and help disabled neighbors. But U.S. District Judge Joseph Van Bokkelen said she stole out of greed. Alvarez says Lark used the Social Security numbers of deceased people for the fraudulent billing.
- **U.S.** — Louisiana recovered more than \$124 million in fraudulent Medicaid payments during the last fiscal year, leading the nation in recovery efforts, according to federal health officials. The federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services reported that Louisiana's recovery rate of nearly 2 percent of all Medicaid dollars spent was the highest of any state. On average, states recover less than 0.6 percent of their respective Medicaid budgets.

[Source: Various 1-14 Aug 2013 ++]

State Veteran's Benefits ► New Hampshire

The state of **New Hampshire** provides several benefits to veterans as indicated below. To obtain information on these refer to the attachment to this Bulletin titled, "**Veteran State Benefits – NH**" for an overview of the below those benefits. Benefits are available to veterans who are residents of the state. For a more detailed explanation of each refer to <http://www.nh.gov/nhveterans>.

- Housing Benefits
- Financial Assistance Benefits
- Employment Benefits
- Education Benefits
- Other State Veteran Benefits

[Source: <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-state-benefits/new-hampshire-state-veterans-benefits.html> Aug 2013 ++]

Military Entitlements ► **Impact on Readiness**

The Pentagon and President Obama understand that military entitlements are killing readiness. So why doesn't Congress? Members of Congress rarely miss an opportunity to trumpet their support for the troops, and the 2014 Defense Appropriations bill passed 24 JUL by the House trumpeted away. Health coverage for life with minimal cost sharing? Check. Retiree pensions? Check. Generous housing allowances, grocery discounts, tuition assistance, tax breaks and more? Check. That's just a small recompense to the men and women who risk their lives for us, right? Not exactly. America has arrived at a moment when the honorable instinct to keep boosting military compensation risks harming the very men and women Congress claims to be helping. The reality is that the U.S. doesn't have one sacred contract with our troops: It has two. In addition to generous care and compensation, we owe them the best possible preparation for combat—weapons and other technologies that outmatch the enemy, excellent intelligence, training and logistics support. When they fight, our troops should prevail quickly and decisively.

These two noble promises are now in direct conflict. Defense entitlements are well on their way to crowding out military readiness and capacity, a fact even the Pentagon has acknowledged. But lawmakers refuse to address this challenge. Unless Congress reverses budget sequestration and restores three years' worth of additional cuts, the Pentagon is in for more belt tightening. The Navy will retire more ships over the next five years than it will build. The fleet now stands at about 285. (At the height of the post-Soviet "peace dividend" era, it was 375.) The Air Force is even worse off. The U.S. has fewer than one-third the number of bombers it had during the Vietnam era. Most of the Air Force's planes are B-1s and B-52s that predate modern stealth technology, and even the stealthy B-2s are nearly two decades old. Troop numbers are also declining. By the end of fiscal year 2014, active duty Army and Marine Corps personnel are set to decrease by about 13% and 10%, respectively, from 2010 levels. Some of these cuts may be acceptable, even necessary, but sequestration will soon make the situation much worse. Mandatory and arbitrary cuts are already forcing many service members to "take the summer off," forgoing crucial training time. Additional automatic cuts looming for 2014 will mean more downtime.

Now consider the realities of Defense Department entitlements: Between fiscal year 2001 and 2012, the inflation-adjusted compensation cost per active-duty service member grew by 56%. From 2000 to 2010, defense health-care costs skyrocketed nearly 180%, to \$49.8 billion from \$17.8 billion—more than double the rate of the national increase. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office projects that military health-care costs will nearly double again by 2030. Some benefits should remain unassailable. Solid salaries, world-class health care for our service members and their families, educational benefits through the GI Bill for those returning to civilian life, and Veterans Administration services for the disabled (which are resourced outside the defense budget) must not be threatened. But it is time to reconsider other benefits. Doing so will not make sequestration a good idea, though it may lead to fewer cuts elsewhere that harm readiness.

The Tricare program, highly subsidized health care for military retirees, supposedly honors a promise made many years ago by some military recruiters to provide service members free health care for life. Setting aside that such a promise was never officially made, Tricare is incentivizing overuse of the health-care system. In 2004, for example, the rate at which Tricare recipients used outpatient services was 44% higher than in civilian plans; the inpatient rate was 60% higher. That is unsustainable, and it is the main reason President Obama has promised to veto the House appropriations bill unless Tricare fees for military retirees are raised. Military retirees receive an extremely generous pension. For example, under the "High-3" retirement system—one option available for troops who entered the military after Sept. 8, 1980—retired active-duty forces receive 50% of an average of their three highest years of basic pay after 20 years of service, up to a maximum of 75% of their "High-3" pay after 30 years of service, along with an annual cost of living adjustment determined by the Consumer Price Index. Begun in an era when those

leaving the military often struggled in the workforce, the military retirement system is long overdue for an overhaul. It cost the Pentagon nearly \$20 billion in 2011 and does nothing to address the fact that the vast majority of combat veterans (who are officially "veterans" but not "retirees") don't serve a full 20 years—and therefore get zero pension. In other words, those who deploy overseas and fight are often getting nothing while those who may well have stayed stateside for two decades before leaving the military get a very generous post-service pension.

Conveniences like commissaries also need rethinking in the era of Wal-Mart and Home Depot. So does military pay, which should generally track the rate of inflation but need not increase faster (as it often has of late), given the solid and generous compensation packages already provided to service members. There is plenty more to consider, including addressing the 20% excess capacity in military bases and the bloat in the roughly 760,000-strong civilian workforce, which has grown even as the uniformed military has shrunk. A 10% cut to that bureaucracy, implemented intelligently and without furloughs, is sensible and fair. This sort of prioritizing—something every American family does in hard times—apparently hasn't occurred to Congress. The fact that the two pacts with Americans in uniform are on a collision course has been shrugged off. Even the Pentagon's own requests for base closures, increases in health-care premiums, and a slowdown in the growth of military pay were ignored in the appropriations bill just passed by the House. It is important that the U.S. maintains its contract with those who serve by providing them generous pay and benefits. But it is unfair to those very same troops to undercut the other sacred contract we have with them, which demands they have access to the best weapons and training so they are ready for whatever the nation asks of them next.

Source: The above article published by the American Enterprise Institute (SEI) was picked up by the WSJ and published in their 25 JUL edition. The authors Ms. Eaglen is a resident fellow and defense analyst at the American Enterprise Institute. Mr. O'Hanlon, a scholar at the Brookings Institution, is the author of "Healing the Wounded Giant: Maintaining Military Preeminence While Cutting the Defense Budget" (Brookings Institution Press, 2013).

Military Food Stamps ► Stripped from 5K Military Families

The House action that stripped food stamp funding from a massive farm bill would threaten vital assistance for about 5,000 military families, mostly from the junior enlisted ranks, Pentagon officials said 12 JUL.. A Department of Agriculture report last year showed that more than 5,000 of the 48 million Americans receiving SNAP (Supplementary Nutritional Assistance Program) food stamps listed their employment status as "active duty military," the Pentagon officials said. "Military members who receive SNAP tend to be made up of members in junior pay grades with larger than average household sizes," said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Nate Christensen, a Defense Department spokesman. "Military members normally 'promote out' of the need for additional subsistence benefits, due to the corresponding statement. "It's a small population but it's a vulnerable population," Joye Raezer, executive director of the National Military Families Association, said of the active duty military families receiving food stamps. Older recruits who already have several children and join the military because of the poor job market tend to need SNAP, Raezer said. "If you're junior enlisted and you're single, fine," Raezer said, but if the servicemember has children and a non-working spouse, "you're going to be on food stamps." "It gets tough, even with a housing allowance," Raezer said.



The 5,000 military families receiving food stamps was a tiny percentage of the 48 million recipients nationwide, but it was a major increase over the previous year when the Department of Agriculture reported that only 1,000 recipients listed "active duty military" as their employment status. In addition, the Defense Commissary Agency reported that food stamps were being redeemed at base commissaries at a record pace. Last year, \$99 million in food stamps were cashed in at bases by military families, disabled vets and others with military identification, and more than \$53 million in food stamps were cashed in this year through June, according to Defense Commissary Agency data provided to the Huffington Post. The concerns over the threat of a food stamp funding cutoff were raised by the 218-208 vote in the House 11 JUL that passed a \$500 billion farm bill that stripped out \$80 billion in SNAP funding. It was the first time since 1973 that a farm bill failed to join farm subsidies and food stamp funding. Rep. Frank Lucas (R-OK), the House Agriculture Committee chairman, said he would introduce a separate food stamp bill "as soon as I can achieve a consensus," but consensus could be difficult to reach in the gridlocked Congress. Democrats charged that the bill would devastate poor families and the White House threatened a veto of the farm bill if the House and Senate failed to reach a compromise that would restore SNAP funding. White House Press Secretary Jay Carney said that House Republicans were using poor children as pawns "in the name of deficit reduction. It smacks of hypocrisy to me." [Source: Military.com | Richard Sisk | 13 Jul 2013 ++]

Military History Anniversaries ► Aug 16–31 Summary

Significant August events in U.S. Military History are:

- Aug 16 0000 – National Airborne Day.
- Aug 16 1777 – American Revolution: The Americans led by General John Stark rout British and Brunswick troops under Friedrich Baum at the Battle of Bennington in Walloomsac, New York.
- Aug 16 1780 – American Revolution: American troops are badly defeated by the British at the Battle of Camden, South Carolina.
- Aug 16 1812 – War of 1812: American General William Hull surrenders Fort Detroit without a fight to the British Army.
- Aug 16 1914 – WW1: Battle of Cer begins.
- Aug 16 1942 – WW2: The two-person crew of the U.S. naval blimp L-8 disappears without a trace on a routine anti-submarine patrol over the Pacific Ocean. The blimp drifts without her crew and crash-lands in Daly City, California.
- Aug 16 1945 – WW2: Lieutenant General Jonathan Wainwright, who was taken prisoner by the Japanese on Corregidor on 6 MAY 42 is released from a POW camp in Manchuria by U.S. troops.
- Aug 16 1964 – Vietnam : A coup d'état replaces Duong Van Minh with General Nguyen Khanh as President of South Vietnam. A new constitution is established with aid from the U.S. Embassy.
- Aug 16 1966 – Vietnam: The House Un-American Activities Committee begins investigations of Americans who have aided the Viet Cong. The committee intends to introduce legislation making these activities illegal. Anti-war demonstrators disrupt the meeting and 50 people are arrested.

- Aug 17 1862 – Indian Wars: The Dakota War of 1862 begins in Minnesota as Lakota warriors attack white settlements along the Minnesota River.
- Aug 17 1862 – Civil War: Major General J.E.B. Stuart is assigned command of all the cavalry of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia.
- Aug 17 1863 – Civil War: In Charleston, South Carolina, Union batteries and ships bombard Confederate–held Fort Sumter.
- Aug 17 1864 – Civil War: Battle of Gainesville – Confederate forces defeat Union troops near Gainesville, Florida.
- Aug 17 1942 – WW2: U.S. Marines raid the Japanese–held Pacific island of Makin (Butaritari).
- Aug 17 1943 – WW2: Allied forces complete the conquest of Sicily.
- Aug 17 1943 – WW2: The U.S. Eighth Air Force suffers the loss of 60 bombers on the Schweinfurt–Regensburg mission.
- Aug 17 1943 – WW2: The U.S. Seventh Army under General George S. Patton arrives in Messina, Italy, followed several hours later by the British 8th Army under Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery, thus completing the Allied conquest of Sicily.
- Aug 17 1950 – Korea: Hill 303 massacre: American POWs were massacred by North Korean Army.
- Aug 18 1864 – Civil War: Battle of Globe Tavern – Union forces try to cut a vital Confederate supply–line into Petersburg, Virginia, by attacking the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad.
- Aug 18 1914 – WWI: Germany declares war on Russia while President Woodrow Wilson issues his Proclamation of Neutrality
- Aug 18 1951 – Korea: Battle of Bloody Ridge began which continued until 5 SEP
- Aug 18 1965 – Vietnam: Operation Starlite begins – United States Marines destroy a Viet Cong stronghold on the Van Tuong peninsula in the first major American ground battle of the war.
- Aug 18 1971 – Vietnam: Australia and New Zealand decide to withdraw their troops from Vietnam.
- Aug 19 1812 – War of 1812: The USS Constitution earns the nickname "Old Ironsides" during the battle off Nova Scotia that saw her defeat the HMS Guerriere.
- Aug 19 1944 – WW2: Liberation of Paris – Paris rises against German occupation with the help of Allied troops.
- Aug 19 1960 – Cold War: In Moscow, downed American U–2 pilot Francis Gary Powers is sentenced to ten years imprisonment by the Soviet Union for espionage.
- Aug 19 2010 – OIF: Operation Iraqi Freedom ends, with the last of the United States brigade combat teams crossing the border to Kuwait.
- Aug 20 1944 – WW2: 168 captured allied airmen, including Phil Lamason, accused by the Gestapo of being "terror fliers", arrive at Buchenwald concentration camp.
- Aug 20 1950 – Korea: United Nations repel an offensive by North Korean divisions attempting to cross the Naktong River and assault the city of Taegu.
- Aug 21 1778 – American Revolution: British forces begin besieging the French outpost at Pondicherry.
- Aug 21 1852 – Tlingit Indians destroy Fort Selkirk, Yukon Territory.
- Aug 21 1863 – Civil War: Lawrence, Kansas is destroyed by Confederate guerrillas Quantrill's Raiders in the Lawrence Massacre.
- Aug 21 1918 – WWI: The Second Battle of the Somme begins.
- Aug 21 1942 – WW2: Guadalcanal campaign – U.S. Marines turn back the first major Japanese ground attack on Guadalcanal in the Battle of Tenaru.
- Aug 22 1777 – American Revolution: British forces abandon the Siege of Fort Stanwix after hearing rumors of Continental Army reinforcements.
- Aug 22 1945 – Vietnam: Conflict in Vietnam begins when a group of Free French parachute into southern Indochina, in response to a successful coup by communist guerilla Ho Chi Minh.

- Aug 23 1775 – American Revolution: King George III delivers his Proclamation of Rebellion to the Court of St. James's stating that the American colonies have proceeded to a state of open and avowed rebellion.
- Aug 23 1864 – Civil War: The Union Navy captures Fort Morgan, Alabama, thus breaking Confederate dominance of all ports on the Gulf of Mexico.
- Aug 23 1950 – Korea: Up to 77,000 members of the U.S. Army Organized Reserve Corps are called involuntarily to active duty to fight the Korean War.
- Aug 23 1994 – WWI: Eugene Bullard, the only black pilot in World War I, is posthumously commissioned as Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force.
- Aug 24 1814 – War of 1812: British troops invade Washington, D.C. and during the Burning of Washington the White House is set ablaze, though not burned to the ground; as well as several other buildings.
- Aug 24 1942 – WW2: The Battle of the Eastern Solomons – Japanese aircraft carrier Ryujo is sunk and US carrier USS Enterprise heavily damaged.
- Aug 24 1944 – WW2: Allied troops begin the attack on Paris.
- Aug 24 1944 – WW2: USS Harder (SS-257) sunk by Japanese Coast Defense Vessel No. 22 off west coast of Luzon, Philippines. 79 killed
- Aug 25 1921 – WWI: The U.S., which never ratified the Versailles Treaty ending World War I, finally signs a peace treaty with Germany.
- Aug 25 1942 – WW2: Battle of Milne Bay, Papua New Guinea.
- Aug 25 1942 – WW2: Second day of the Battle of the Eastern Solomons. A Japanese naval transport convoy headed towards Guadalcanal is turned-back by an Allied air attack, losing one destroyer and one transport sunk, and one light cruiser heavily damaged.
- Aug 25 1944 – WW2: Paris is liberated by the Allies.
- Aug 25 1945 – Cold War: Ten days after World War II ends with Japan announcing its surrender, armed supporters of the Communist Party of China kill Baptist missionary John Birch, regarded by some of the American right as the first victim of the Cold War.
- Aug 26 1942 – WW2: First black Marine (Howard Perry) entered first recruit training camp (Montford Point, NC) for black Marines.
- Aug 26 1949 – USS Cochino (SS-345) foundered after a battery explosion during a severe storm off northern Norway. 1 died
- Aug 27 1776 – American Revolution: British defeat Americans in Battle of Long Island.
- Aug 27 1943 – WW2: Japanese forces evacuate New Georgia Island in the Pacific Theater of Operations.
- Aug 27 1945 – WW2: B-29 Superfortress bombers begin to drop supplies into Allied POW camps in China.
- Aug 27 1945 – WW2: US troops land in Japan after Japanese surrender.
- Aug 28 1862 – Civil War: 3 day Second Battle of Bull Run starts. Also known as the Battle of Second Manassas.
- Aug 29 1778 – American Revolution: British and American forces battle indecisively at the Battle of Rhode Island.
- Aug 29 1861 – Civil War: US Navy squadron captures forts at Hatteras Inlet, North Carolina.
- Aug 29 1916 – Congress creates US Naval Reserve
- Aug 29 1942 – WW2: The American Red Cross announces that Japan has refused to allow safe conduct for the passage of ships with supplies for American POWs.
- Aug 29 1944 – WW2: 15,000 American troops liberating Paris march down Avenue des Champs Elysees.
- Aug 29 1949 – Cold War: Soviet atomic bomb project – The Soviet Union tests its first atomic bomb, known as First Lightning or Joe 1, at Semipalatinsk, Kazakhstan.
- Aug 29 1990 – Iraq: Saddam Hussein declares America can't beat Iraq

- Aug 29 2007 – USAF nuclear weapons incident: Six cruise missiles armed with nuclear warheads are flown without proper authorization from Minot Air Force Base to Barksdale Air Force Base.
- Aug 30 1813 – Creek Indians massacre over 500 whites at Fort Mims Alabama.
- Aug 30 1862 – Civil War – Battle of Richmond: Confederates under Edmund Kirby Smith rout Union forces under General Horatio Wright.
- Aug 30 1963 – Cold War: The Hotline between the leaders of the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union goes into operation.
- Aug 31 1864 – Civil War: Union forces led by General William T. Sherman launch an assault on Atlanta, Georgia.
- Aug 31 1941 – WW2: 23 U-boats sunk (80,000 ton) this month
- Aug 31 1942 – WW2: U boats sunk 108 ships (544,000 ton) this month
- Aug 31 1951 – Korea: The 1st Marine Division begins its attack on Bloody Ridge. The 4 day battle results in 2,700 Marine casualties.

[Source: Various Aug 2013 ++]

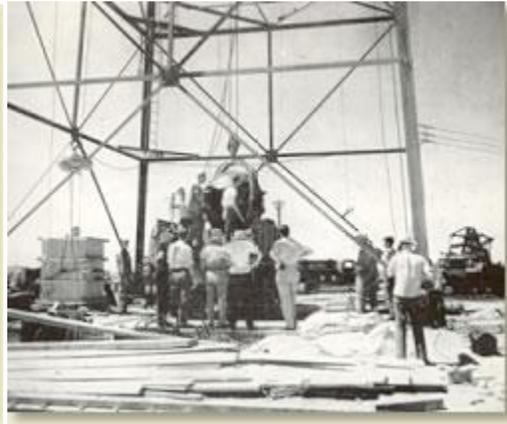
Military Trivia 80 ► First Atomic Bomb Blast

The events that took place in a remote area of New Mexico during the predawn hours of July 16, 1945 forever changed the world. In the early morning darkness the incredible destructive powers of the atom were first unleashed and what had been merely theoretical became reality. The test was the culmination of three years' planning and development within the super secret Manhattan Project headed by General Leslie R. Groves. Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer directed the scientific team headquartered at Los Alamos, New Mexico. An isolated corner of the Alamogordo Bombing and Gunnery Range located 230 miles south of Los Alamos was selected for the test that was given the code-name "Trinity."

(1)



(2)



(1) General Leslie R. Groves (left) and Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer

(2) The bomb is unloaded at the base of the tower. July 13, 1945

Even before the bomb was tested, a second bomb was secretly dispatched to the Pacific for an attack on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Preparations for the test included the building of a steel tower that would suspend the bomb one hundred feet above ground. Many were apprehensive - there were concerns that the blast might launch a cataclysmic reaction in the upper atmosphere leading to world destruction. Some feared the consequences of radio-

active fallout on civilian populations surrounding the test site. Still others feared the test would be an outright dud. Observers were sent to surrounding towns to monitor the results of the blast and medical teams were kept on alert. Finally, the rains that had delayed the test for almost two weeks subsided and in the darkness of that July morning history was made.

Following is an account by General Thomas Farrell of his pre and post detonation observations. He was in an observation hut close to the blast along with a hand-full of scientists and other personnel

"The scene inside the shelter was dramatic beyond words. In and around the shelter were some twenty-odd people concerned with last minute arrangements prior to firing the shot. Included were: Dr. Oppenheimer, the Director who had borne the great scientific burden of developing the weapon from the raw materials made in Tennessee and Washington and a dozen of his key assistants - Dr. Kistiakowsky, who developed the highly special explosives; Dr. Bainbridge, who supervised all the detailed arrangements for the test; Dr. Hubbard, the weather expert, and several others. Besides these, there were a handful of soldiers, two or three Army officers and one Naval officer. The shelter was cluttered with a great variety of instruments and radios.

For some hectic two hours preceding the blast, General Groves stayed with the Director, walking with him and steadying his tense excitement. Every time the Director would be about to explode because of some untoward happening, General Groves would take him off and walk with him in the rain, counseling with him and reassuring him that everything would be all right. At twenty minutes before zero hour, General Groves left for his station at the base camp, first because it provided a better observation point and second, because of our rule that he and I must not be together in situations where there is an element of danger, which existed at both points. Just after General Groves left, announcements began to be broadcast of the interval remaining before the blast. They were sent by radio to the other groups participating in and observing the test. As the time interval grew smaller and changed from minutes to seconds, the tension increased by leaps and bounds. Everyone in that room knew the awful potentialities of the thing that they thought was about to happen. The scientists felt that their figuring must be right and that the bomb had to go off but there was in everyone's mind a strong measure of doubt. The feeling of many could be expressed by "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.' We were reaching into the unknown and we did not know what might come of it. It can be safely said that most of those present - Christian, Jew and Atheist - were praying and praying harder than they had ever prayed before. If the shot were successful, it was a justification of the several years of intensive effort of tens of thousands of people statesmen, scientists, engineers, manufacturers, soldiers, and many others in every walk of life.



The blast,.034 seconds after detonation

In that brief instant in the remote New Mexico desert the tremendous effort of the brains and brawn of all these people came suddenly and startlingly to the fullest fruition. Dr. Oppenheimer, on whom had rested a very heavy burden, grew tenser as the last seconds ticked off. He scarce breathed. He held on to a post to steady himself. For the last few seconds, he stared directly ahead and then when the announcer shouted 'Now!' and there came this tremendous burst of light followed shortly thereafter by the deep growling roar of the explosion, his face relaxed

into an expression of tremendous relief. Several of the observers standing back of the shelter to watch the lighting effects were knocked flat by the blast.

The tension in the room let up and all started congratulating each other. Everyone sensed 'This is it!' No matter what might happen now all knew that the impossible scientific job had been done. Atomic fission would no longer be hidden in the cloisters of the theoretical physicists' dreams. It was almost full grown at birth. It was a great new force to be used for good or for evil. There was a feeling in that shelter that those concerned with its nativity should dedicate their lives to the mission that it would always be used for good and never for evil. Dr. Kistiakowsky, the impulsive Russian, [actually an American and a Harvard professor] threw his arms around Dr. Oppenheimer and embraced him with shouts of glee. Others were equally enthusiastic. All the pent-up emotions were released in those few minutes and all seemed to sense immediately that the explosion had far exceeded the most optimistic expectations and wildest hopes of the scientists. All seemed to feel that they had been present at the birth of a new age - The Age of Atomic Energy - and felt their profound responsibility to help in guiding into right channels the tremendous forces which had been unleashed for the first time in history. As to the present war, there was a feeling that no matter what else might happen, we now had the means to insure its speedy conclusion and save thousands of American lives." [Source: Jul 2013 <http://eyewitnesstohistory.com/atomicest.htm> Jul 2013 ++]

Tax Burden for Alaska Retirees ► As of Aug 2013

Many people planning to retire use the presence or absence of a state income tax as a litmus test for a retirement destination. This is a serious miscalculation since higher sales and property taxes can more than offset the lack of a state income tax. The lack of a state income tax doesn't necessarily ensure a low total tax burden. States raise revenue in many ways including sales taxes, excise taxes, license taxes, income taxes, intangible taxes, property taxes, estate taxes and inheritance taxes. Depending on where you live, you may end up paying all of them or just a few. Following are the taxes you can expect to pay if you retire in **Alaska**.

Sales Taxes

State Sales Tax: The state currently does not have a sales and use tax. However, 62 municipalities impose local sales taxes that range up to 7.5%. Typical sales tax rates are from 2% – 5%.

Gasoline Tax: 26.4 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Diesel Fuel Tax: 32.4 cents/gallon (Includes all taxes)

Cigarette Tax: \$2.00/pack of 20 (Anchorage – add \$3.45)

Personal Income Taxes

No state income tax

Retirement Income: Not taxed.

Property Taxes

Alaska is the only state in the United States where a large part of the land mass is not subject to a property tax. Although property tax is the primary method of raising revenues for most of the larger municipalities in the state, smaller municipalities favor a sales tax. This is due primarily to the fact that the smaller incorporated areas lack a tax base large enough to support the property tax. The unincorporated areas of the state do not have the legal authority to levy a tax. Of the 18 Boroughs, only 14 levy a property tax. Only 11 Cities located outside of Boroughs levy a property tax. Therefore, only 25 municipalities in Alaska (either cities or boroughs) levy a property tax. These 25 municipalities can be found on the Directory of Taxing Jurisdictions at http://commerce.alaska.gov/dnn/dcra/home_dnnredirect.html.

Alaska taxes both real and personal property. There are several municipalities that have chosen to exempt some or all categories of personal property. For a listing of those municipalities and categories, see the Alaska Taxable information site <http://commerce.alaska.gov/dnn/dcra/Home.aspx>. Homeowners 65 and older (or surviving spouses 60 and older) are exempt from municipal taxes on the first \$150,000 of the assessed value of their property. This also applies to disabled veterans. The average assessed value exempted from taxes for senior citizens and disabled veterans is \$134,520 which equated to a tax exemption of \$1,839 for 2010. In 2010, the total full value for all municipalities (over 750 in population) was \$98.1 billion (including TAPS — Trans-Alaska Pipeline). With a statewide population of 692,314 the per capita full value was \$141,644. Intangible personal property is exempt from taxation. Call 907-269-6620 (Anchorage) or 907-465-2320 (Juneau) for details.

Inheritance and Estate Taxes

There is no inheritance tax and the estate tax is limited to federal estate tax collection.

For further information go to the Alaska Department of Revenue site <http://www.revenue.state.ak.us> or call 907-465-2300 [Source: <http://www.retirementliving.com/taxes-alabama-iowa> Aug 2013 ++]

Social Security ► Bits and Pieces 01

1. **New Study: Seniors Lose 31% Of Their Buying Power.** According to the study, the Social Security Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) has increased benefits just 38% since 2000, while typical senior expenses have jumped 81 percent, more than twice as much. Seniors with average Social Security benefits in 2000 received about \$816 per month, a figure that rose to \$1,129.80 by 2013. However, those seniors would require a Social Security benefit of \$1,477.00 per month in 2013 just to maintain their 2000 level of buying power. The top ten fastest rising senior costs are listed at <http://seniorsleague.org/2013/new-study-seniors-lose-31-of-their-buying-power-2>.

2. **Hospital Observations Stays Leave More Seniors With Huge Costs.** After spending four days at a local hospital being treated for a broken elbow and pelvis, 93-year-old Lois Frarie went to a nearby nursing home to build up her strength. Her family was later shocked to learn they would have to pay thousands of dollars out-of-pocket since two of the days she spent in the hospital were considered "observation care" as an outpatient. Because she wasn't an inpatient for at least three consecutive days, she didn't qualify for Medicare's nursing home coverage. Inpatient stays are covered under Medicare Part A. Inpatients who are hospitalized for three days or more qualify for Medicare's limited nursing home stay coverage. Observation stays are considered outpatient services covered under Part B. Observation patients can have much higher copayments costs and sometimes get hit with huge bills for non-covered drugs. Hospitals are not required to tell patients they are under observation. Patients only learn they were receiving observation services when the bill arrives. By then it's too late because hospitals and doctors are prohibited from reclassifying observation patients as inpatients once they've been discharged. The number of Medicare patients in observation stays has jumped 69% in the past five years, according to federal records. They are also staying in the hospital longer. Even though Medicare recommends that hospitals decide within 24 to 48 hours whether to admit or discharge patients, the number of observation stays exceeding 24 hours have nearly doubled.

3. **How Much Are You Going To Lose with Chained COLA?** The proposed changes to the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for your Social Security, military, or other federal benefits will have a long-lasting impact on the amount you receive as you age. To calculate your loss go to <http://seniorsleague.org/chained-cola-calculator>.

4. **Are You Eligible For Medicare's Home Health Services?** Medicare covers home health services for eligible homebound seniors and disabled people. But to qualify, beneficiaries need to carefully follow the requirements. Here are the three things needed to qualify.

- Is the beneficiary homebound? Currently, homebound means that the beneficiary must be confined to a home and leaving the residence requires a considerable and taxing effort. Absences from the home must be infrequent, or for periods of relatively short duration, or to receive medical treatment. Beneficiaries can still get home healthcare if they attend adult day care.
- The beneficiary must need part-time or intermittent skilled nursing care and/or skilled rehabilitation. Medicare covers home health services up to seven days a week for no more than 8 hours per day and 38 hours per week. Medicare pays for skilled nursing care that requires a registered nurse (RN) or licensed nurse under the supervision of an RN. Injections, tube feedings, catheter changes, observation and assessment of a patient's condition, are examples. Beneficiaries requiring skilled rehabilitation services like physical therapy, speech services, and occupational therapy, may be eligible if the services are reasonable and necessary to treat or maintain function affected by their illness or injury. If a patient requires skilled services then Medicare also pays for a home health aide to provide personal care services, including help with bathing, toileting and dressing. If the beneficiary **ONLY** requires personal care, then he or she does **NOT** qualify for the home care benefit.
- Beneficiaries must be under the care of a physician and need reasonable and necessary home health services. Very important! The services need to be certified by a physician and established in a 60-day plan of care.

[Source: TSCL Social Security and Medicare Advisor 12 Aug 2013 ++]

Aviation Art 45 ► After the Battle



After the Battle **by Robert Tylor**

A flight of Spitfire MK IX's, generally considered to have been the greatest of all the Spitfire marks, return to their base at R.A.F. Kenley in July 1942. High on adrenalin after a dog-fight with German Fw190's over France, the 611 Squadron pilots make the high speed run for home above the distinctive patchwork fields of southern England.

[Source: <http://www.aviationarthangar.com/afbabyrotas.html#description> Aug 2013 ++]



Reserve Retirement Age Update 26 ► H.R. 2907 Early Retirement Pay

More than 600,000 members of the National Guard and the Reserves would benefit from a bill introduced by Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC). The National Guardsmen and Reservists Parity for Patriots Act, or H.R. 2907, would provide early retirement pay to qualifying members who served between Sept. 11, 2001, and Jan. 28, 2008. This would repair a flaw in a law passed in 2008 that offers retirement pay to a reserve-component member three months prior to age 60 for each aggregate of 90 days of service spent on Title 10 status to support a contingency operation or while responding to a national emergency on Title 32 status. The law applies only to service after Jan. 28, 2008, the date the National Defense Authorization Act which included the law was passed. "Whether these brave men and women were putting their lives on the line during heavy combat in Iraq and Afghanistan or tending to devastating natural disasters at home like Hurricane Katrina," Wilson said, "each of our Guard and Reserve members deserves to receive appropriate recognition for their active-duty service." [Source: NGAUS Washington Report 13 Aug 2013 ++]

Vet Airport Screening ► Obama Signs H.R.1344

The White House says President Barack Obama has signed into law a bill making it easier for wounded or disabled members of the military and veterans to get through airport security screening. Obama signed the **Helping Heroes Fly Act (H.R.1344)** into 9 AUG, a week after it received final approval in the House. The measure requires the Defense Department and Veterans Affairs to work with the Transportation Security Administration on a new protocol. Democratic congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii, an Iraq war veteran, sponsored the bill, with Democratic Sen. Mark Pryor of Arkansas and Republican Sen. Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire leading the Senate effort. Gabbard says the law ensures troops can return to life at home as quickly and seamlessly as possible. She says veterans deserve dignified screening processes that respect their service and sacrifices. [Source: Associated Press article 9 Aug 2013 ++]

Vet Benefit Legislation Update 02 ► Omnibus Bill Clears SVAC

With no heed of a debt crisis, the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee voted 24 JUL to help more veterans find work, help more injured vets to gain reproductive health services, and to pay caregivers of seriously disabled veterans who left service before 9/11 a monthly stipend plus expenses. How to cover the \$12 billion cost of these

initiatives, over just the next five years, is still to be determined, conceded Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), committee chairman. But he promised colleagues to try to find the money. More proposals than these were approved in the catchall “omnibus” bill, S.944, forwarded to the full Senate for further debate and amendments before passage, and later, reconciliation with more modest House plans.

One initiative having no cost would grant “veteran” status to more than 200,000 Reserve and Guard retirees -- those who have served 20 years or more to earn retirement at age 60, but didn’t serve at least 180 days on active duty to be viewed as a veteran under current law. Proponents of this measure say these retirees don’t seek more VA benefits. They simply want to be able to answer “yes” when asked if they are veterans, or to rise at public gatherings when veterans are asked to stand and be recognized. Other initiatives in S.944 would:

- Require public or state-run colleges and universities to charge veterans who use the GI Bill their lower in-state tuition rates.
- Require VA to report publicly once a quarter on disability claims processing goals and how those stack up against actual claim decisions.
- Make it easier for veterans traumatized by sexually assault in service to gain VA disability compensation.
- Increase veterans’ access to alternative medicine, chiropractic care and other new approaches to care delivery.

Rep. Richard Burr (NC), ranking Republican on the committee, was the lone voice opposing all provisions “not paid for,” he said, “so we won’t continue to saddle future generations of Americans with continued debt.” He opposed Sanders’ provision to expand the VA caregiver program, now limited to caregivers of seriously ill or injured post-9/11 veterans. The program pays a monthly stipend and also caregiver needs for counseling, training, respite periods and travel expenses. The committee agreed by voice vote to extend the program to caregivers of any severely injured veteran. Before the vote, Burr noted the \$8.5 billion cost over the first five years, and urged Sanders to find offsets elsewhere in the budget before the full Senate votes on the measure. “You’re right,” Sanders told Burr. “This is an expensive piece of legislation. So is giving tax breaks to millionaires. So is having one out of four corporations in this county not paying a nickel in taxes.” After delivering his slap to Republicans who oppose any sort of tax hikes, Sanders went on to promise to do his “best to find the funding” to be able to help more caregivers.

Burr also opposed Sanders’s proposal to offer new incentives to employers to hire vets and to renew for two more years the popular Veterans Retraining Assistance Program enacted under the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011. Burr offered a less costly jobs package, saying Sanders package would cost \$2.5 billion over five years and shouldn’t be passed unless spending cuts are identified to pay for it. He also noted that the Government Accountability Office in 2011 urged consolidation of 47 existing federal employment and job training programs to save billions of dollars. Forty-four of these plans overlap with others in some way, Burr said, again citing GAO. “To be consistent,” Burr said, he also opposed Sen. Patty Murray’s (D-WA) provision to improve VA reproductive assistance to severely wounded, ill or injured vets and spouses. It too is unfunded. Defense officials estimate that injuries from improvised explosive devices in Iraq and Afghanistan left almost 2000 veterans, male and female, unable to have children without special medical intervention, for example in vitro fertilization. That type of treatment is available on active duty but not usually from the VA after vets leave service, Murray said.

All of these provisions cleared the committee by voice vote despite Burr’s opposition. Burr quietly changed from black hat to white on the issue of veteran status for Reserve and National Guard retirees. For a third straight year, the House has passed The Honor America’s Guard-Reserve Retirees Act , this time including the bill language in the fiscal 2014 defense authorization bill. It would grant vet status to those who served long enough to be eligible for reserve component retired pay. Most of the impacted retirees served during the Cold War when it was commonplace to serve full careers with no active duty except for training. These retirees often are surprised to learn they aren’t veterans for lack of a DD Form 214, “Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty.” They can’t claim

veteran preference in applying for federal jobs. Yet at age 60 they draw military retired pay, can use TRICARE and shop on base.

Burr had blocked Senate committee action on this issue for the past two years, fearing it would lead to expansion of benefits and higher VA costs. His resistance held even after language was added specifically barring a change in vet status from qualifying these retirees for more benefits. This week, however, Burr accepted a fresh compromise, which now virtually assures passage by year's end. The revised language would confer veteran status on Guard and Reserve retirees under a general law provision rather than under Title 38, which governs VA and access to VA benefits. It's an extra layer of protection against the possibility that these retirees, sometime in the future, will press for benefits that Congress intended as rewards for serving at least 180 days on active duty. [Source: Standard-Examiner | Tom Philpott | 31 Jul 2013 ++]

Veteran Legislation 113th Congress ► As of 13 AUG 2013

For a listing of Congressional bills of interest to the veteran community introduced in the 113th Congress refer to this Bulletin's "**House & Senate Veteran Legislation**" attachment. Support of these bills through cosponsorship by other legislators is critical if they are ever going to move through the legislative process for a floor vote to become law. A good indication of that likelihood is the number of cosponsors who have signed onto the bill. Any number of members may cosponsor a bill in the House or Senate. At <http://thomas.loc.gov> you can review a copy of each bill's content, determine its current status, the committee it has been assigned to, and if your legislator is a sponsor or cosponsor of it. To determine what bills, amendments your representative has sponsored, cosponsored, or dropped sponsorship on refer to <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d111/sponlst.html>.

Grassroots lobbying is the most effective way to let your Congressional representatives know your wants and dislikes. Members of Congress are the most receptive and open to suggestions from their constituents. The key to increasing cosponsorship support on veteran related bills and subsequent passage into law is letting legislators know of veteran's feelings on issues. You can reach their Washington office via the Capital Operator direct at (866) 272-6622, (800) 828-0498, or (866) 340-9281 to express your views. Otherwise, you can locate your legislator's phone number, mailing address, or email/website to communicate with a message or letter of your own making at <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d111/sponlst.html>. Refer to http://www.thecapitol.net/FAQ/cong_schedule.html for dates that you can access them on their home turf.

FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF VETERAN RELATED LEGISLATION INTRODUCED IN THE HOUSE AND SENATE SINCE THE LAST BULLETIN WAS PUBLISHED:

- H.R.2785 : Military Reserve Jobs Act. A bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to improve the hiring of veterans by the Federal Government and State governments, and for other purposes.

- H.R.2797 : Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund Income. A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow taxpayers to designate overpayments of tax as contributions and to make additional contributions to the Homeless Veterans Assistance Fund, and for other purposes.

- H.R.2841 : Guard and Reserve Equal Access to Health Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to ensure that the Secretary of Defense affords each member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces with the opportunity for a physical examination before the member separates from the Armed Forces.

-
- H.R.2847 : Wounded Warrior Service Dog Act of 2013. A bill to establish a grant program to encourage the use of assistance dogs by certain members of the Armed Forces and veterans.

-
- H.R.2882 : Improving Opportunities for Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses Act of 2013. A bill to amend the Small Business Act and title 38, United States Code to provide for a consolidated definition of a small business concern owned and controlled by veterans, and for other purposes

-
- H.R.2906 : Fairness to Veterans for Infrastructure Investment Act of 2013. A bill to amend MAP-21 to improve contracting opportunities for veteran-owned small business concerns, and for other purposes.

-
- H.R.2907 : National Guardsmen and Reservists Parity for Patriots Act. A bill to amend title 10, United States Code, to ensure that members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces who have served on active duty or performed active service since September 11, 2001, in support of a contingency operation or in other emergency situations receive credit for such service in determining eligibility for early receipt of non-regular service retired pay, and for other purposes

-
- H.R.2913 : Veterans' Local Access Act. A bill to authorize certain Department of Veterans Affairs major medical facility leases, and for other purposes.

-
- H.R.2941 : Tribal Lands Nursing Home Grants. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make certain grants to assist nursing homes for veterans located on tribal lands.

-
- H.R.2953 : Medicare VA Reimbursement Act of 2013. A bill to provide Medicare payments to Department of Veterans Affairs medical facilities for items and services provided to Medicare-eligible veterans for non-service-connected conditions.

-
- H.R.2974 : VA Sexual Trauma Care Beneficiary Travel Pay. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for the eligibility for beneficiary travel for veterans seeking treatment or care for military sexual trauma in specialized outpatient or residential programs at facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

-
- H.R.3053 : Healthcare for our Heroes Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Professional Scholarship Program.

-
- H.R.3056 : Warriors' Peer-Outreach Pilot Program Act. A bill to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on the provision of outreach and support services to veterans pursuing higher education under the Post 9/11 Educational Assistance Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

-
- S.1411 : Rural Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 2013. A bill to specify requirements for the next update of the current strategic plan for the Office of Rural Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs for improving access to, and the quality of, health care services for veterans in rural areas.
-

[Source: <http://www.loc.gov> & <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills> 13 Aug 2013 ++]

Veteran Hearing/Mark-up Schedule ► As of 14 Aug 2013

Following is the current schedule of recent and future Congressional hearings and markups pertaining to the veteran community. Congressional hearings are the principal formal method by which committees collect and analyze information in the early stages of legislative policymaking. Hearings usually include oral testimony from witnesses, and questioning of the witnesses by members of Congress. When a U.S. congressional committee meets to put a legislative bill into final form it is referred to as a mark-up. Veterans are encouraged to contact members of these committees prior to the event listed and provide input on what they want their legislator to do at the event. Membership of each committee and their contact info can be found at <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/committees.tt?commid=svete>. Missed House Veteran Affairs committee (HVAC) hearings can viewed at <http://veterans.house.gov/in-case-you-missed-it>. Text of completed Senate Veteran Affairs Committee (SVAC) hearings are available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/committee.action?chamber=senate&committee=va&collection=CHRG&plus=CHRG>:

- **August 14, 2013.** The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, will hold an Informational Field Hearing and Outreach Event on Veterans' issues at the Fontana, California City Hall.
- **September 9, 2013.** HVAC will hold a full committee field hearing entitled "A Matter of Life and Death: Is VA Doing All It Can to Stop Veterans from Dying?" 9:00 A.M.; Allegheny County Courthouse, 436 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, PA.
- **September 11, 2013 (T).** HVAC-DAMA subcommittee will hold a hearing on September 11, 2013 to discuss Fully Developed Claims (FDC's). 3:00 P.M.; Cannon House Office Building

[Source: Veterans Corner w/Michael Isam 14 Aug 2013 ++]

House Vet Bill Progress ► 1-15 Aug 2013

The House VA Committee cleared an array of veterans' bills including Advance Appropriations which will provide funding one year in advance for all VA discretionary programs. The committee also moved the following bills to the full House for debate. They include:

H.R.1443 Tinnitus Research and Treatment Act, requiring VA to recognize tinnitus as a condition for research and treatment by Auditory Centers of Excellence. It also requires allocation of resources for more research within VA and in cooperation with DOD Hearing Centers.

HR 2011 extends the Veterans Advisory Committee on Education through December 31, 2015 and adds chapter 31 (Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment) to subjects for review by the committee.

H.R.2072, Demanding Accountability for Veterans Act would authorize VA to provide contracted medical foster care for certain veterans eligible for VA-paid nursing home care. It also requires those veterans to receive VA home health services and requires recipients of VA homeless grant and per diem programs to certify that they are compliant with state building and safety codes.

H.R.2189 establishes a commission to evaluate the disability claims backlog and to recommend ways to reduce the number of pending claims -- there is concern over the bill that 6 months is too short a time period for commission members to adequately learn and understand the disability benefit programs administered by VA, let alone propose substantive recommendations that would improve claims processing without harming veterans.

The bill also includes provisions directing VA to make interim payments of claims involving multiple conditions, expediting records from SSA, DOD and National Guard duty station for claims purposes, establishing a two-year training program for claims processors, expanding the pilot project allowing private physicians to provide C&P exams to 15 regional offices (currently 10 are underway), creating a Blue Water Analogous list and requiring numerous reports to Congress on the disability claims processing system.

H.R.2481 the Veterans Economic Opportunity Act of 2013 establishes a Veterans Economic Opportunity Administration within the VA which would oversee all education, home loan and vocational rehabilitation programs. This bill would elevate the responsibility for veteran economic success in VA. However, there are concerns about interoperability between a new administration and the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) for certain benefits that rely on VBA eligibility decisions; how a new administration would affect the adoption of eBenefits among all new VA enrollees; and how the confirmation process would affect the ability of the administration to carry out its programs. Other provisions amended into the bill include a 5-year extension of homeless veterans reintegration programs, centralized reporting for GI Bill enrollment purposes, allowing children of deceased veterans to use Post 9/11 education benefits and expansion of eligibility for Fry scholarships for those children of veterans who received the Purple Heart and died within 31 days of discharge. It also amends SCRA with regards to mortgage protections for service members and surviving spouses and provides child custody protections for deployed service members.

[Source: VFW Washington Weekly 9 Aug 2013 ++]



Have You Heard? ► Joys of Aging!

Here are some of the perks of reaching 50 Or being over 60 And heading towards 70 or beyond!

1. Kidnappers are not very Interested in you.
2. In a hostage situation, You are likely to be released first.
3. No one expects you to run -- Anywhere.
4. People call at 9 PM (or 9 AM) and ask, 'Did I wake you?'
5. People no longer view you as a Hypochondriac.
6. There is nothing left To learn the hard way.
7. Things you buy now Won't wear out.
8. You can eat Supper at 4 PM.
9. You can live without sex But not your glasses.
10. You get into heated arguments About pension plans.
11. You no longer think of speed limits As a challenge.
12. You quit trying to hold Your stomach in no matter who walks Into the room.
13. You sing along With elevator music.

14. Your eyes won't get Much worse.
15. Your investment in health insurance Is finally beginning to pay off.
16. Your joints are more accurate meteorologists Than the national weather service.
17. Your secrets are safe with your friends Because they can't remember them either.
18. Your supply of brain cells is finally down to A manageable size.
19. You can't remember Who sent you this list.

AND THE MOST IMPORTANT THING: Never, NEVER, NEVER, under any circumstances, take a sleeping pill, and a laxative on The same night!

The Good Old Days ► Over the Counter Meds

Have you ever wondered why our great grandparents all had such fond memories of their youth? Well... I'm surprised they remembered anything at all!!! Forget Tums & Tylenol. Forget Aleve & Benadryl. Look at the cool stuff they had back then! Check out the attachment to this Bulletin titled, “**The Good Old Days**”

Military Lingo/Jargon/Slang ► 015

USA Academy: *Crab / Squid / Middie* - One who attends the Naval Academy.

USA Acronyms: *BOG* - Boots On the Ground. Number of soldiers available.

USA Equipment: *Fast-Mover* - A jet aircraft, especially one equipped to make bombing and/or strafing runs.

USA Field Slang: *Fort Beginning* - Fort Benning. Trainees call it this because of the long wait to begin infantry school. Also called "Fort Bend Me Over."

USA Misc: *Dirty Bird* - used to describe soldiers with personal hygiene issues; i.e., soldiers that don't shower after PT, soldiers that don't wash their clothes, soldiers with messy or dirty barracks rooms.

USA Rank: *Light Colonel* - Lieutenant Colonel; contrast with Bird Colonel.

USA Soldiers: *Brown Hat* - Drill Sergeant.

USA Unit Nicknames: *BDO* - 1st Infantry Division, from the abbreviation of its nickname, "The Big Dead One".

USAF: *Boards out:* Speed brakes extended.

USMC: *Boondoggle* – Project or trip on government time and/or expense which serves no purpose other than to entertain the person making it.

USN: *Cut of His Jib* - In the days of sailing ships, nationality and rigs could often be distinguished by their jibs. A Spanish ship, for example, had a small jib or none at all. Large French ships often had two jibs and English ships normally had only one. From ships, the phrase was extended to apply to men. The nose, like the jib of a ship arriving

in harbor, is the first part of the person to arrive at a designated place. Figuratively, it implies the first impression one makes on another person.

Vets: Cirrhosis What happens to your liver 40 years after Vietnam or a jetgun (inoculation machine) injection. Caused by alcoholism, homelessness, incarceration for more than 2.5 days, snorting toot, shooting up, piercing your ears. Can be caused *before* or *after* service by wild sex and tattoos. Very rarely related to service.

Interesting Ideas ► Grape Ice cubes



Use frozen grapes and you won't water down your drinks.

"What this country needs are more unemployed politicians."

— **Edward Langley**, Artist (1928-1995)

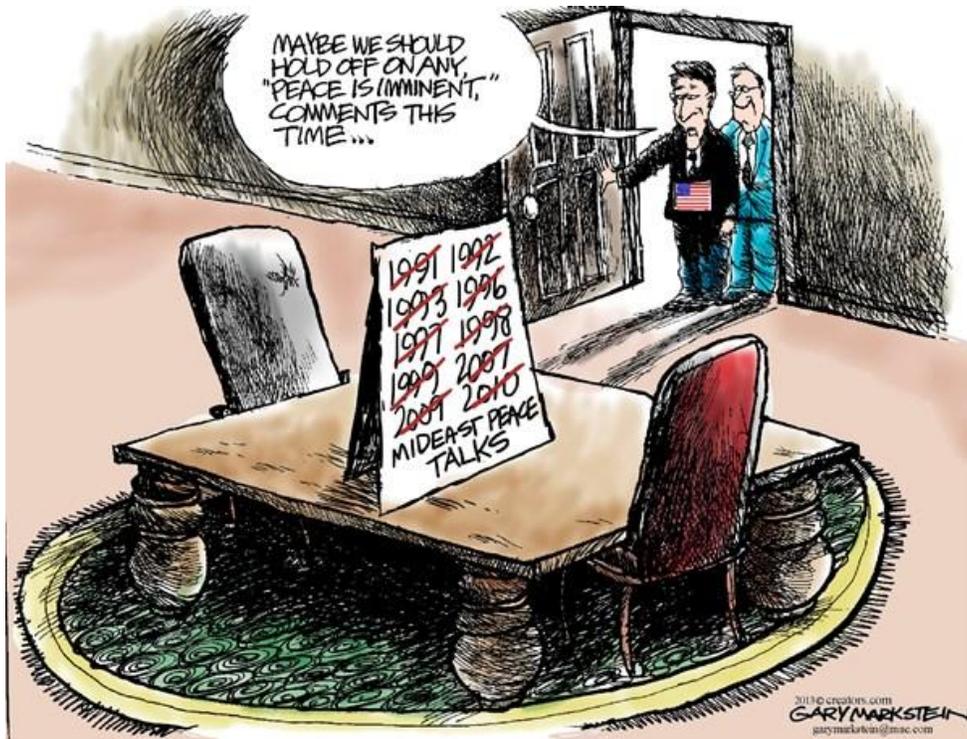


Finally a well dressed Wal-Mart shopper



Just a housewife out shopping in Alaska .

No permit required in Alaska for either open (must be 18) or concealed (must be 21) carry.





FAIR USE NOTICE: This newsletter contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in an effort to advance understanding of veterans' issues. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material in this newsletter is distributed without profit to those who have expressed an interest in receiving the included information for educating themselves on veteran issues so they can better communicate with their legislators on issues affecting them. For more information go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this newsletter for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

Notes:

1. The Bulletin will be provided as a website accessed document until further notice. This was necessitated by SPAMHAUS who alleged the Bulletin's former size and large subscriber base (94,000+) were choking the airways interfering with other email user's capability to use it. They directed us to stop sending the Bulletin in its entirety to individual subscribers and to validate the subscriber base with the threat of removing all email capability if we did not.
2. Subscribers who have not yet validated their email addressee who desire to continue to receive the Bulletin can send a message to raoemo@sbcglobal.net with the word "KEEP" in the subject line to restore their subscription. Anyone who no longer wants to receive the Bulletin should send a message to raoemo@sbcglobal.net with the word "DELETE" in the subject line. This Bulletin notice was sent to the 14,160 subscribers who have responded to date.

3. Bulletin recipients with interest in the Philippines can request to be added to the RAO's Philippine directory for receipt of notices on Clark Field Space 'A', U.S. Embassy Manila, and TRICARE in the RP.

4. New subscribers and those who submit a change of address should receive a message that verifies their addition or address change being entered in the mailing list. If you do not receive a message within 7 days it indicates that either I never received your request, I made an error in processing your request, or your server will not allow me to send to the email addressee you provided. Anyone who cannot reach me by email can call (951) 238-1246 to ask questions or confirm info needed to add them to the directory.

5. If you have another email addressee at work or home and would like to also receive Bulletin notices there, just provide the appropriate email addressee to raoemo@sbcglobal.net.

6. Past Bulletin articles are available by title on request to raoemo@sbcglobal.net. Refer to the RAO Bulletin Index alphabetically listing of article and attachment titles previously published in the Bulletin. The Index is available under pinned topics at <http://s11.zetaboards.com/CFLNewsChat/forum/27519/>. Bear in mind that the articles listed on this index were valid at the time they were written and may have since been updated or become outdated.

7. The Bulletin is normally published on the 1st and 15th of each month. To aid in continued receipt of Bulletin availability notices, recommend enter the email addressee raoemo@sbcglobal.net into your address book. If you do not receive a Bulletin check either <http://www.veteransresources.org> (PDF & HTTP Editions), <http://frabr245.org> (PDF & HTTP Editions), or <http://vets4vets.zymichost.com/rao.html> (PDF Edition) before sending me an email asking if one was published. If you can access the Bulletin at any of the aforementioned sites it indicates that something is preventing you from receiving my email. Either your server considers it to be spam or I have somehow incorrectly entered or removed your addressee from the mailing list. Send me an email so I can verify your entry on the validated mailing list. If you are unable to access the Bulletin at any of these sites let me know.

== To subscribe first add the RAO email addressee raoemo@sbcglobal.net to your address book and/or white list. Then send to this addressee your full name plus either the post/branch/chapter number of the fraternal military/government organization you are currently affiliated with (if any) "AND/OR" the city and state/country you reside in so your addressee can be properly positioned in the directory for future recovery. Subscription is open to all veterans, dependents, military/veteran support organizations, and media.

== To automatically change your email addressee or Unsubscribe from Bulletin distribution click the "Change address / Leave mailing list" tab at the bottom of the Bulletin availability notice that advised you when the current Bulletin was available.

== To manually submit a change of email addressee provide your old and new email addressee plus full name

Lt. James "EMO" Tichacek, USN (Ret)

Editor/Publisher RAO Bulletin, U.S. Embassy Warden & IRS VITA

RAO Baguio, PSC 517 Box RCB, FPO AP 96517

Tel: (951) 238-1246 in U.S. or Cell: 0915-361-3503 in the Philippines.

Email: raoemo@sbcglobal.net

Web Access: <http://www.veteransresources.org>, <http://frabr245.org> or <http://vets4vets.zymichost.com/rao.html>

Office: Red Lion, 92 Glen Luna, cnr Leonard Rd & Brent Rd. Baguio City 2400 RP TUE & THUR 09-1100

AL/AMVETS/DAV/NAUS/NCOA/MOAA/USDR/VFW/VVA/CG33/DD890/AD37/TSCL member