

# RAO BULLETIN

## 1 July 2010

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**CalVet/DMV Agreement:** The California Department of Veterans Affairs and the California Department of Motor Vehicles today announced 30 JUN an historic agreement that will help connect nearly all of the 2.1 million veterans in California with information about their benefits and services that they have earned through their service in the U.S. Military. Under an agreement signed by CalVet Secretary Roger Brautigam and DMV Director George Valverde, effective 1 JUL 2011, new driver's license and state identification card application forms will ask veterans if they have ever served in the U.S. Military. If they mark on the forms that they have, their mailing addresses will be sent to the CalVet Department for distribution of information relative to services and benefits available to all veterans who served honorably in the military. "This new partnership will help our department reach out to veterans and help them connect with the benefits and services they have earned through their service that are offered by the state of California and the U.S. Government," said Secretary Brautigam.

The information provided by the DMV will include the name of the veteran and his or her mailing address. The CalVet Department will mail to that address information that will explain some of the benefits available to them such as health care, education assistance, job training assistance and home-purchasing assistance and how to obtain those benefits and services. The Veterans will also be asked to log-on to the state department's new Veterans Reintegration System and register their contact information and areas of interest. This new system provides veterans with on-going information about areas such as housing, health care, mental health, state benefits, etc. If the veteran can't utilize a computer or doesn't have access to one, they will be provided with a card that will allow them to sign up for the same information which will be mailed to them whenever there is news to share. The DMV is in the process of redesigning its driver's license and state identification card forms to accommodate mandated changes and new information that is required by state law and this provided the two departments the opportunity to achieve this historic agreement. [Source: News From Around the Country 30 JUN 2010 ++]

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**VAMC St. Louis MO:** A flaw in the sterilization of dental equipment at the St. Louis VA Medical Center John Cochran Division exposed 1,812 veterans to a "low risk" of becoming infected with AIDS or hepatitis. Certified letters were sent 28 JUN to veterans who received dental treatment at the center between 1 FEB 09 and 11 MAR 2010, encouraging them to go to the medical center and be tested for HIV or human immunodeficiency virus and hepatitis B and C virus. VA spokeswoman Marcena Gunter on 29 JUN said, "A routine inspection by a VA internal quality inspection team in March revealed that certain equipment was not being sterilized in accordance with accepted standards." Asked why it took more than a year from when the improper cleaning techniques occurred until the warning letters went out, Gunter said that during that time experts either didn't know it was occurring or were assessing the risk. "Nothing was being swept under the rug," she said. The St. Louis VAMC is a full-service health care facility

providing inpatient and ambulatory care in medicine, surgery, psychiatry, neurology, and rehabilitation, as well as over 65 subspecialty areas. It is a two-division facility that serves veterans and their families in east central Missouri and southwestern Illinois. The John Cochran Division is located in midtown St. Louis in close proximity to its affiliated medical schools - St. Louis University and Washington University. It has all of the medical center's operative surgical capabilities, the ambulatory care unit, and a six-story Clinical Addition that includes surgical facilities, intensive care units, outpatient psychiatry clinics, and expanded laboratory.

Dr. Gina Michael, the association chief of staff at the VA hospital, said the failure happened because some dental technicians thought they were doing the right thing by washing the dental tools themselves. The techs were using...strong soap to clean the tools, when they should have sent them to the hospital sanitizing and sterilizing department. In a written statement, RimaAnn Nelson, acting medical director of the hospital, stated that those desiring a blood test or having questions can call 1(888) 374-3046. However, a reporter who called the number on 29 JUN did not reach a person after being on hold for 20 minutes. The blood tests also will be available at VA clinics in Belleville, 6500 W. Main St., and in St. Charles, Mo. But Gunter said the preferred location for the testing is the dental clinic at the John Cochran Campus of the medical center in south St. Louis. "That's where we will have full staff available to answer detailed questions and provide counseling," said Gunter, who added that she was not aware of any similar occurrence ever happening at the medical center. Nelson, the acting medical director, wrote, "We deeply regret that this situation occurred and we assure you that we are taking all the necessary steps to make certain that testing is offered quickly and the results communicated timely." Rep. Russ Carnahan (D-St. Louis) said that he had requested that the federal agency conduct a formal investigation. In a letter to VA Secretary Eric Shinseki, Carnahan called the potential exposure an "indefensible breach of standard operating procedure." Carnahan added in an interview that he had requested a congressional hearing.

Cochran's procedures have come under scrutiny before. In 2003, an independent agency that evaluates and accredits most of the nation's hospitals took the rare step of placing the St. Louis VA Medical Center on "conditional accreditation" after a surprise inspection uncovered problems at Cochran. The hospital regained full accreditation by the end of the year. In 2007, after reports about poor treatment and rundown conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, officials at the VA's St. Louis area facilities said they were working to solve similar problems. The Veterans Affairs Hospital system has come under fire in recent years for improper care. The New York Times reported in June 2009 that a "rogue cancer unit" operated at a veterans hospital in Philadelphia, where 92 of 116 prostate cancer treatments were botched. Federal investigators were called in to find out how the cancer unit was allowed to operate for six years before officials noticed that the treatment was improper, the newspaper reported. [Source: News-Democrat George Pawlaczky & St. Louis Post Dispatch Bill Lambrecht articles 29 & 30 Jun 2010 ++]

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**VA Headstones & Markers Update 06:** Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki announced 29 JUN that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is offering bronze medallions to attach to existing, privately purchased headstones or markers, signifying a deceased's status as a Veteran. "For Veterans not buried in a national or state Veterans cemetery, or those without a government grave marker, VA is pleased to offer this option that highlights their service and sacrifices for our country," said Secretary Shinseki. The new item can be furnished instead of a traditional government headstone or marker for Veterans whose death occurred on or after 1 NOV 90, and whose grave in a private cemetery is marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker. Under federal law, eligible Veterans buried in a private cemetery are entitled to either a government-furnished grave marker or the new medallion, but not both. Veterans buried in a national or state Veterans cemetery will receive a government headstone or marker of the standard design authorized at that cemetery.

The medallion is available in three sizes: 5 inches, 3 inches and 1 ½ inches in width. Each bronze medallion features the image of a folded burial flag adorned with laurels and is inscribed with the word "Veteran" at the top and the branch of service at the bottom. Next of kin will receive the medallion, along with a kit that will allow the family or the staff of a private cemetery to affix the medallion to a headstone, grave marker, mausoleum or columbarium niche cover. More information about VA-furnished headstones, markers and medallions can be found at <http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/hm/hmtype.asp>. VA is currently developing an application form for ordering the medallion. Until it is available, applicants may use the form for ordering government headstones and markers, VA Form 40-1330. Instructions on how to apply for a medallion are found on the VA Web site at [www.cem.va.gov/hm\\_hm.asp](http://www.cem.va.gov/hm_hm.asp).

Veterans with a discharge issued under conditions other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a VA national cemetery. Other burial benefits available for all eligible Veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a

national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a government headstone or grave marker. The new medallions will be available only to Veterans buried in private cemeteries without a government headstone or marker. Families of eligible decedents may also order a memorial headstone or marker when remains are not available for interment. VA operates 131 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than 3 million Americans, including Veterans of every war and conflict -- from the Revolutionary War to the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan -- are buried in VA's national cemeteries on more than 19,000 acres. Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the VA Web site on the Internet at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov) or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at 1(800) 827-1000. [Source: VA News Release 29 Jun 2010 ++]

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**United States Naval Academy:** The United States Navy was born during the American Revolution when the need for a naval force to match the Royal Navy became clear. But during the period immediately following the Revolution, the Continental Navy was demobilized in 1785 by an economy-minded Congress. The dormancy of American seapower lasted barely a decade when, in 1794, President George Washington persuaded the Congress to authorize a new naval force to combat the growing menace of piracy on the high seas. The first vessels of the new U.S. Navy were launched in 1797; among them were the *United States*, the *Constellation*, and the *Constitution*. In 1825, President John Quincy Adams urged Congress to establish a Naval Academy "for the formation of scientific and accomplished officers." His proposal, however, was not acted upon until 20 years later.

On 13 SEP 1842, the American Brig *Somers* set sail from the Brooklyn Navy Yard on one of the most significant cruises in American naval history. It was a school ship for the training of teenage naval apprentice volunteers who would hopefully be inspired to make the Navy a career. However, discipline deteriorated on the *Somers* and it was determined by a court of inquiry aboard ship that Midshipman Philip Spencer and his two chief confederates, Boatswains Mate Samuel Cromwell and Seaman Elisha Small, were guilty of a "determined attempt to commit a mutiny." The three were hanged at the yardarm and the incident cast doubt over the wisdom of sending midshipmen directly aboard ship to learn by doing. News of the *Somers* mutiny shocked the country. Through the efforts of the Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft, the Naval School was established without Congressional funding, at a 10-acre Army post named Fort Severn in Annapolis, Maryland, on 10 OCT 1845, with a class of 50 midshipmen and seven professors. The curriculum included mathematics and navigation, gunnery and steam, chemistry, English, natural philosophy, and French.

When the founders of the United States Naval Academy were looking for a suitable location, it was reported that Bancroft decided to move the naval school to "the healthy and secluded" location of Annapolis in order to rescue midshipmen from "the temptations and distractions that necessarily connect with a large and populous city." The Philadelphia Naval Asylum School was its predecessor. In 1850 the Naval School became the United States Naval Academy. A new curriculum went into effect requiring midshipmen to study at the Academy for four years and to train aboard ships each summer. That format is the basis of a far more advanced and sophisticated curriculum at the Naval Academy today. As the U.S. Navy grew over the years, the Academy expanded. The campus of 10 acres increased to 338. The original student body of 50 midshipmen grew to a brigade size of 4,000. Modern granite buildings replaced the old wooden structures of Fort Severn.

Congress authorized the Naval Academy to begin awarding Bachelor of Science degrees in 1933. The Academy later replaced a fixed curriculum taken by all midshipmen with the present core curriculum plus 18 major fields of study, a wide variety of elective courses and advanced study and research opportunities. Since then, the development of the United States Naval Academy has reflected the history of the country. As America has changed culturally and technologically so has the Naval Academy. In just a few decades, the Navy moved from a fleet of sail and steam-powered ships to a high-tech fleet with nuclear-powered submarines and surface ships and supersonic aircraft. The academy has changed, too, giving midshipmen state-of-the-art academic and professional training they need to be effective naval officers in their future careers. The Naval Academy first accepted women as midshipmen in 1976, when Congress authorized the admission of women to all of the service academies. Women comprise about 13 to 14 percent of entering plebes--or freshmen--and they pursue the same academic and professional training as do their male classmates. [Source: [www.usna.edu/VirtualTour/150years](http://www.usna.edu/VirtualTour/150years) Jun 2010 ++]

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**United States Naval Academy Update 01:** A sprawling financial scandal at the Naval Academy — involving extravagant parties and a “slush fund” — was an embarrassment that helped lead to an early exit for the school’s superintendent, Navy Times has learned. Vice Adm. Jeffrey Fowler faced “administrative action” in April as a result of a year-long Naval Inspector General’s investigation, said Rear Adm. Denny Moynihan, the Navy’s top spokesman. Navy Times received a copy of the investigation report 28 JUN after a longstanding Freedom of Information Act request. The IG investigation found that Naval Academy officials working under Fowler had created a “sham” bank account that helped fund things like a \$10,000 party for the academy’s golf association and \$1,000 worth of wine for a dinner party at the superintendent’s house. The IG did not substantiate any of the allegations that Fowler was knowingly involved in the financial misconduct. “Vice Adm. Fowler believed any expenditure he authorized was permissible, and he did not financially gain from these irregularities,”

Moynihan told Navy Times. The person assigned as superintendent of the academy is legally required to serve for three years. While Fowler served more than three years, “the outcome of this investigation was a factor in him not serving longer,” Moynihan told Navy Times. Other questionable spending probed by the IG included:

- Annual spending of \$400,000 or more for academy-sponsored tailgate events at football bowl games over the past six years.
- Spending \$157,000 to purchase an 18-wheel tractor trailer truck for the academy’s football team.
- Spending \$325,000 to purchase an antique airplane model that hangs in the front entrance to Dahlgren Hall.
- Spending \$3,715,187 on video production services to create recruiting videos.
- Spending several million dollars to renovate the dining facilities of the Naval Academy Club and the Club at Greenbury Point.

While the inspector general ultimately concluded that these and other expenditures were “within the discretionary authority” of the Naval Academy, the IG criticized the accounting and oversight of the money used. In other instances, such as the catered parties for football coaches and their families, the IG found that the allegations of wrongful spending were “substantiated; however, the violations were unintentional.” Also as a result of the investigation, Robert Parsons, the academy’s deputy for finance, was given a five-day suspension without pay, Moynihan said. A third official, whose name was not released, was also reprimanded, Moynihan said. The IG’s probe found that a fund set up by the academy’s business services division to cover many entertainment expenses was “an unauthorized, off-the-books account that is improper on its face. Its existence is a sham, and it was used much as in the business definition of a ‘slush fund,’ i.e., to pay for things from a pool of money with little accountability required,” IG concluded. The fund was created in APR 07, using about \$95,000 of corporate sponsorship money that the academy received for participation in the 2006 Meineke Car Care Bowl football game, the IG report said.

Fowler explained to the IG that he did not see any fundamental problem with using government money to pay for events that the IG concluded were extravagant and wasteful. “I don’t know the technicalities, but the concept of us doing special things for the people who work here in my mind is not a bad thing,” Fowler told the IG investigators. Although Moynihan would not specify if other “factors” led to Fowler’s early departure, the superintendent’s tenure has been fraught with controversy. Last year he was criticized for allowing a pregnant midshipman to graduate despite the academy’s clear prohibition against being pregnant while enrolled there. Also last year, the administration scrambled to explain why it replaced white members of the school’s color guard with minority students for a nationally televised appearance at the World Series in New York. Fowler has also been criticized for prioritizing the academy’s athletic program over its academics. Earlier this year, he permitted a star football player who tested positive for marijuana to stay at the academy despite the Navy’s purported “zero-tolerance” drug policy. The athlete, Midshipman 3rd Class Marcus Curry, later left the academy after additional allegations of misconduct. [Source: NavyTimes Andrew Tilghman article 29 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Ernie Pyle Museum:** The Ernie Pyle State Historic Site is located one mile north of U.S. Highway 36 on Indiana State Road 71. Contact info was: P.O. Box 338; 120 W. Briarwood Ave. Dana, IN 47847-0338 or (765) 665-3633/9312F or [erniepyleshs@dnr.in.gov](mailto:erniepyleshs@dnr.in.gov). The Indiana Department of Natural Resources, citing low visitation numbers and state budget cuts, no longer wants to operate the Ernie Pyle museum and birthplace, which they closed several months ago. State officials have given the nonprofit group Friends of Ernie Pyle until 1 AUG to come up with a plan for the museum's future. The Friends can accept ownership,

alone or in partnership with other community or governmental groups. If that doesn't happen, the state will move the exhibits to the Indiana State Museum and sell the real estate.

The Site consists of a Visitor Center and a Historic House. The Visitor Center exhibits feature life-size scenes based on Ernie Pyle's writings and experiences as a World War II correspondent. The exhibits include state-of-the-art audio and video stations and contain authentic World War II uniforms, weapons, and gear, including a 1944 Willys jeep donated by local veterans groups . The Historic House from the farm where Pyle was born is furnished as an early 1900s rural Indiana farmhouse. Through the efforts of the Dana residents, the Indiana Department of the American Legion, and a sizeable contribution from the Eli Lilly Foundation, the Historic House was moved from its rural site to its present location. It became a state historic site in July 1976. On 18 APR 95 a new Visitor Center, constructed from two authentic World War II Quonset huts, was dedicated. The center features a video theater, research library, exhibits and a gift shop. This addition was made possible through a grant from the Scripps Howard Foundation and the Paige Cavanaugh estate. The permanent exhibits were completed in 1998. [Source: The Tribune-Star Sue Loughlin article 26 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Vet toxic Exposure ~ Sand:** American forces in Afghanistan may be dealing with toxic sand that can damage their brains, according to a recent Navy study. In a presentation at a neurotoxicology conference in Portland, OR earlier this month, Palur G. Gunasekar, a senior scientist with the Navy Environmental Health Effects Laboratory, said that dust kicked up in sandstorms contains manganese and other metals. "The sand is a risk factor for inducing neurotoxicity," Gunasekar said. Compounds that are neurotoxic are those that damage the nervous system or the brain. The Navy said the findings are preliminary and that so far no definitive link has been found between the inhalation of sand and brain damage. Still, the study followed reports that returning soldiers from Afghanistan and Iraq are experiencing impairments such as memory loss and difficulty concentrating, which may not always be attributable to traumatic brain injuries. Gunasekar told the group, most of them academic and government scientists, that he and his colleagues focused on "subtle environmental issues that our soldiers face." Troops caught in sandstorms may inhale toxic particles, which can be carried to the brain, lungs and other organs. "Once they return...they complain about respiratory problems and also they complain about some of the cognitive functions," he said.

Gunasekar conducted the study with staff scientist Krishnan Prabhakaran and Lt. Cmdr. Micheal Stockelman, both of whom also work at the Naval Health Research Center Detachment, Navy Health Effects Laboratory, located at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, in Ohio. The research team analyzed sand samples from Afghanistan, and found manganese, silicon, iron, magnesium, aluminum, chromium and trace elements. Manganese, on its own, is considered a potent neurotoxicant capable of damaging the brain and causing Parkinsons-like symptoms. They are also studying sand from Iraq. The researchers conducted tests in which nerve cells were exposed to the toxic sand. "As the sand extract dose increases at the higher concentration you see cell death," said Gunasekar, who accompanied his talk with a video of a fierce sandstorm. The researchers also found that exposure to sand could also damage the lungs. Gunasekar noted that soldiers returning from Afghanistan have complained of respiratory problems. Their next step will be to test the effects of exposure to the sand dust in an animal study, if they can secure funding, Gunasekar said. Neither Gunasekar nor the Navy would provide further details about the study.

Dr. Stephen N. Xenakis, a retired brigadier general who now has a private medical practice and also does consulting for the government and health-related companies, said he wasn't surprised by Gunasekar's results. "We know environmental factors are going to make a difference here," Xenakis said. "Now, fortunately, these scientists have gone down to the cellular level and shown what the manifestations are." Xenakis says he sees cognitive problems "all the time in the soldiers I work with," though the causes are not always clear. "They can't focus. They have problems with short-term memory. They'll tell you that stuff that came really quickly to them before, they seem to have more difficulty trying to understand."

In recent years, there has been controversy over reports of how many troops return home with cognitive problems. Xenakis puts the estimate at 20 to 30 percent, most of whom are survivors of brain injuries from blasts or other traumas. "You had over 2 million people who served, some multiple times, in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Xenakis. "We don't know precisely how many have been effected, but you're looking at a big number."

Lisa Jaycox is a senior behavioral scientist with the Rand Corp. who has studied cognitive difficulties after exposure to blasts. She supports a closer look at the possible threat posed by sand.

"A lot of people are reporting headaches and difficulties with memories and such that are hard to explain," she said. "The symptoms overlap with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. There is lots of controversy about what these cognitive symptoms are, whether they are related to a central brain problem or more of a mental health or emotional problem or a combination. This idea of the neurotoxins in the sand would be yet another thing that could contribute to some cognitive problems. I think there needs to be more research is the bottom line."

Cmdr. Cappy Surette, a spokesman for Navy Medicine, said Gunasekar was presenting his own opinion, and not speaking in an official capacity. Surette said that the Navy has no record of troops complaining about cognitive difficulties that are unrelated to traumatic brain injuries. The research team's work was commissioned, he said, "acting on theories that the dust and sand may contain elements of interest." Surette added that "research will continue until the complete picture is understood." The Navy has several related research projects either in the planning stages, or underway; among them, one study to determine whether exposure to sand can exacerbate traumatic brain injuries, and another looking at combined effects of Iraqi sand and cigarette smoke. [Source: Politics Daily Sheila Kaplan article 26 Jun 2010 ++]



**VA Facility Wireless Service:** The Veterans Affairs Department plans to install wireless networks at health care facilities nationwide so patients and their families would have Internet access, top officials said on 24 JUN. The project would be a massive undertaking to deploy the service throughout VA's 153 hospitals, 134 nursing homes and 50 residential rehabilitation facilities across the country. But patients have asked the department provide Internet service in its health care facilities and officials said they view the requests as part of their service to the veteran community. Veterans and their families would be able to use the networks for communications, e-mail and therapeutic activities, said Gail Graham, deputy chief officer for Health Information Management at the Veterans Health Administration during the hearing of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. She emphasized that any network VA installs must run separately from Wi-Fi networks already in place in hospitals that support medical operations.

Roger Baker, chief information officer at VA, said in an interview with Nextgov on 24 JUN that a Wi-Fi network for patients and hospital visitors must operate with an air gap between it and medical networks. If the department installs patient Wi-Fi networks, they cannot compromise the security or data capacity of medical networks used to support bar code medication administration, among other things. A patient Wi-Fi network also cannot interfere with spectrum the medical staff uses, he said. VA plans to consider using broadband cellular wireless as an alternative to Wi-Fi to support the patient network. In addition, VA does not want to maintain the network, because it doesn't want to be put in the position of banning patients from certain websites, a practice it would likely be asked to do if it ran the system, Baker said. VA plans to ask the technology industry to propose business models for the outsourced network, including supporting the network through advertising or asking patients to pay for access. The latter alternative most likely will be hard to sell to veterans, Baker acknowledged. He anticipated VA will put out a request for the network within the next six months.

Health care facilities present a wireless challenge, because they typically have thick, solid walls that make it hard for signals to penetrate and medical devices in the buildings create interference, said David Callisch, vice president of marketing for Ruckus Wireless in Sunnyvale, Calif., which has developed Wi-Fi systems for large organizations such as hospitals. Craig Mathias, wireless analyst at Farpoint Group in Ashland, Mass., said depending on its size, VA might have to install as many as 200 Wi-Fi access points in each facility, which would place the total cost of a national wireless patient network in the multimillion-dollar range. [Source: www.nextgov.com Bob Brewin article 24 Jan 2010 ++]



**VA Blue Water Claims Update 11:** The VA has added the below named ships to the already existing list noted in Update 10 for Navy and Coast Guard ships and vessels that are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange. If you served on any of these mentioned ships and you have had a claim denied, you should reapply citing the VA list as the source for your reapplication. NAUS advises that the VA is already working on a third list that will have more ships listed. If you have a claim and evidence the ship you served on was in Vietnamese waters and/or actually tied up to a dock there, make sure you include that with your claim.

### **Vessels that operated primarily or exclusively on the inland waterways**

- All U.S. Coast Guard Cutters with hull designation WPB [patrol boat] and WHEC [high endurance cutters]
- USS Mark (AKL-12) [light cargo ship]; USS Brule (AKL-28)
- USS Patapsco (AOG-1) [gasoline tanker]; USS Elkhorn (AOG-7)
- USS Genesee (AOG-8); USS Kishwaukee (AOG-9)
- USS Tombigbee (AOG-11); USS Noxubee (AOG-56)
- USS Okanogan (APA-210) [attack transport]; USS Montrose (APA-212)
- USS Bexar (APA-237)
- USS Benewah (APB-35) [self-propelled barracks ship]; USS Colleton (APB-36)
- USS Mercer (APB-39); USS Nueces (APB-40)
- Barracks Barge (APL-26) [sleeping quarters] ); Barracks Barge (APL-30)
- USS Tutuila (ARG-4) [repair ship]; USS Satyr (ARL-23) [repair ship]
- USS Sphinx (ARL-24); USS Askari (ARL-30); USS Indra (ARL-37)
- USS Krishna (ARL-38)
- USS Belle Grove (LSD-2) [landing ship dock]; USS Comstock (LSD-19)
- USS Tortuga (LSD-26)
- USS Asheville (PG-84) [patrol gunboat]; USS Gallop (PG-85)
- USS Antelope (PG-86); USS Ready (PG-87); USS Crockett (PG-88)
- USS Marathon (PG-89); USS Canon (PG-90)
- Floating Base Platform (YRBM-17) [repair, berthing, and messing barge]
- Floating Base Platform (YRBM-18); Floating Base Platform (YRBM-20)
- Winnemucca (YTB-785) [harbor tug]

### **Vessels that operated temporarily on Vietnam's inland waterways or docked to the shore:**

- USS Card (ACV-11) [escort carrier] mined, sunk, and salvaged in Saigon River Harbor during May 1964
- USS Maury (AGS-16) [mapping survey ship] conducted surveys of Mekong Delta and other coastal areas and rivers beginning November 1965 through 1969
- USS Henrico (APA-45) [amphibious attack transport] operated on Hue River during March 1965 and conducted numerous troop landings through March 1967
- USS Montrose (APA-212) operated on Song Hue River during December 1965, operated on Long Tau River during March 1967, and operated on Cua Viet River and at Dong Ha during May 1967
- USS Talladega (APA-208) operated on Saigon River during October 1967
- USS Bolster (ARS-38) [salvage ship] crew operated on land.
- USS Canberra (CAG-2) [guided missile cruiser] operated on Saigon River from March 31 through April 1, 1966, on Cua Viet River during December 15, 1966, and on Mekong Delta Ham Luong River during January 15, 1967
- USS Sproston (DD-577) [destroyer] operated on Mekong Delta and Ganh Rai Bay during January 1966
- USS Picking (DD-685) operated on Saigon River during November 16, 1965
- USS Epperson (DD-719) docked to Da Nang Pier on October 4, 1970
- USS Southerland (DD-743) operated on Song Nga Bay and Saigon River during July 1966
- USS John W. Thomason (DD-760) operated on Nga Be River during 1969
- USS Buck (DD-761) operated on Mekong River Delta and Saigon River during October 1966
- USS Preston (DD-795) operated on Mekong River Delta, Ganh Rai Bay, and Saigon River during September 28 - 29 and December 27 - 29, 1965
- USS Warrington (DD-843) operated on Mekong River Delta Rung Sat Special Zone, North of Vung Gahn Rai Bay during March 1967
- USS Dyess (DD-880) operated on Saigon River and Rung Sat Special Zone from June 19-July 1, 1966
- USS Perkins (DD-877) operated on Saigon River during June 1969
- USS Orleck (DD-886) operated on Mekong River Delta during July 1969

- USS Joseph Strauss (DDG-16) [guided missile destroyer] operated on Mekong River Delta and Ganh Rai Bay during November 7 and December 7, 1968
- USS Waddell (DDG-24) operated on Cua Viet River during March 1967
- USS Newell (DER-322) [radar destroyer escort] docked at port of Nha Trang during December 22-24, 1965
- USS Duluth (LPD-6) [amphibious transport dock] docked to pier at Da Nang during March and October 1971
- USS Cleveland (LPD-7) operated on Cua Viet River and at Dong Ha, as well as Hue River, from November 1967 through 1968 and Saigon River during September 1969
- USS Dubuque (LPD-8) docked at Da Nang on March 15, 1970
- USS Boxer (LPH-4) [amphibious assault ship] docked to pier at Cam Rahn Bay on September 9, 1965
- USS Carter Hall (LSD-3) [landing ship dock] operated on Cua Viet River and at Dong Ha during December 1967

[Source: NAUS Weekly update 25 Jun 2010 ++]

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**DNA Testing in RP Update 01:** In order to qualify for many consular benefits such as visas, passports and Consular Reports of Birth Abroad the establishment of a biological relationship is often a necessity required by law. In some instances the lack of reliable evidence to demonstrate ones identity, maternity and or paternity can make it difficult for an applicant to establish eligibility for a desired benefit. DNA testing is the most accurate and widely available technology to test a biological relationship. Applicants may wish to submit DNA evidence in addition to civil documents in an effort to provide additional evidence as to their eligibility. DNA testing is voluntary. The individual being tested must consent to the testing and the identity of the individual being tested must be verified and confirmed at the time of sample collection.

The specimen collection technique for DNA testing at U.S. Embassy Manila is by buccal (cheek or mouth cavity) swab. Cheek swabs are preferred over blood samples because they are easier to collect, non-invasive, painless and easier to ship. Though advanced, DNA results are only accurate if strict standards are followed for every sample collected. All DNA testing for visa or citizenship purposes must be processed by a lab that is accredited by the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB). The petitioner or applying parent must select an AABB-accredited laboratory, contact the lab directly and make the necessary arrangements including payment for conducting the genetic test.

Under no circumstances should petitioners, including those in the United States, directly receive test kits for themselves or the beneficiaries. The AABB laboratory selected by the petitioner will send the test kit directly to the U.S. Embassy. Upon receipt of the test kit, St. Luke's hospital will contact the beneficiary to set up an appointment for DNA sample collection. All DNA collections must take place at the Embassy and not at the panel physician's office or other lab facility. St. Luke's Hospital lab personnel will be present to take the DNA samples of each beneficiary. Payment for the collection must be made to St. Luke's prior to any collection to be conducted at the Embassy. When test results are received, the U.S. Embassy will contact the beneficiary in order to continue processing case. [Source: U.S. Embassy Manila ACS Newsletter Jun 2010 ++]

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**Visa Fee increase:** On 4 JUN 2010 the U.S. Department of State worldwide increased Machine-Readable Visa (MRV) fees to ensure sufficient resources to meet the increasing cost of processing nonimmigrant visas. The on-line visa application form, known as the DS-160, to replaces paper application forms. The DS-160 is a form that has been in use at many other U.S. embassies and consulates for several months. The U.S. Embassy in Manila's conversion to the on-line form is unrelated to the worldwide visa fee increase. Refer to <http://manila.usembassy.gov/wwwwh3024.html> for information about the DS-160 on-line application form and instructions. The new fees are:

- \$140 – B1/B2, C1/D, F, J, and all other NIV categories not listed below (Visitor/Transit/Student)
- \$150 – H, L, O, P, Q, and R (Temporary Worker)
- \$350 – K (Fiancée)
- \$390 – E (Investor/Trader)

All applicants with an interview date of 4 JUN or later must pay the full MRV fee even if they have already made an appointment and paid at the old rate of \$131. The Embassy requests that visa applicants who have already paid the MRV fee of \$131 for an appointment scheduled after 3 JUN, pay for the difference in fees at the same bank branch where they made the initial \$131 payment. Applicant will need to pay the difference of \$9 before arriving at the Embassy on the appointment date. Applicants for other visa categories will also need to pay the appropriate incremental fee difference. Applicants will need to present both blue MRV fee receipts when arriving at the Embassy (in this example, receipts for \$131 and \$9). Applicants will not be allowed to enter the Embassy for their interview unless the full MRV fee has been paid. [Source: U.S. embassy manila ACS Newsletter Jun 2010 ++]



**Car Insurance Primer:** When you purchase car insurance you should fully understand the protections you are purchasing to enable you to make decisions that can minimize your premiums. There are many companies to choose from and the protections they offer offered should substantially meet the following criteria:

**Bodily Injury Liability:** Pays damages for people injured or killed in an accident for which you are legally responsible. It also covers your legal defense if you are sued as a result of an accident.

- **Why Do You Need This?** If your operation of a covered vehicle results in your being legally responsible for someone's bodily injury or death, you may be required to pay for the person's loss. If the damages are high, all of your assets, including your home, savings and future wages are in jeopardy. Bodily Injury Liability helps protect your assets by covering the injured person's losses and expenses. It also covers legal defense if you are sued as a result of an accident. There are a number of common exclusions to this coverage that will be detailed in your policy.
- **How Much Coverage Do You Need?** When you purchase this coverage you select two limits, for example \$100,000/\$300,000. The first number in the coverage limit is for any one person; the second is the total coverage limit for one incident or accident. Individual states have different minimum requirements for liability insurance and for lease cars. If you lease a car, your lease contract will typically require you to maintain minimum Bodily Injury Liability coverage of \$100,000/\$300,000. You should buy enough Bodily Injury Liability coverage to fully protect your assets.

**Property Damage Liability:** Pays for damage to other people's property resulting from an accident caused by your auto for which you are legally responsible. It also covers your legal defense if you are sued as a result of an accident.

- **Why Do You Need This?** If your operation of a covered vehicle results in your being legally responsible for damage to someone else's property — for example, a car or building — as the result of an accident when you are operating your auto (and certain non-owned vehicles) you may be required to pay for that damage. If the property damages are high, your assets including your home, savings and future wages may be at risk. Property Damage Liability helps protect your assets by paying for the damage to the property.
- **How Much Coverage Do You Need?** Individual states have different minimum requirements for Property Damage Liability insurance. If you lease a car, your lease contract will typically require you to maintain minimum Property Damage Liability Coverage of \$50,000. You should buy enough Property Damage Liability coverage to adequately protect your assets.

**Medical Payments Coverage:** Pays the reasonable and necessary medical, dental, hospital and funeral expenses for the insured, covered passengers and family members, who are injured in a covered auto accident, regardless of who was at fault. Coverage should also be provided to the insured and resident relatives, while they are riding in someone else's car at the time of the accident or if they are struck as a pedestrian.

- **Why Do You Need This?** It will pay medical expenses, such as for surgery, x-rays, ambulance, hospital, and physicians, regardless of who is at fault within the terms of the coverage.
- **How Much Coverage Do You Need?** If you have health insurance that covers most of your medical expenses, you may want to choose a lower level of coverage. This coverage also pays the medical expenses of injured passengers in your car that may not have health insurance.

**Comprehensive Coverage:** Pays for losses to your auto not caused by collision, such as theft, flood, vandalism, earthquakes, explosion, fire, or other covered causes.

- **Why Do You Need This?** Because it will pay for such common non-collision losses to your auto as a broken windshield, a stolen car stereo, or a stolen vehicle. It also pays for damage to your auto caused by natural disasters such as fire and flood.
- **How Much Coverage Do You Need?** With Comprehensive, you can collect for damages up to the actual cash value of your car. If you have an older car, where the cash value is low, you may decide not to purchase this coverage. With Comprehensive, you choose a deductible — the amount that you will pay out of your own pocket-before your insurance pays your claim. For example: your car's stereo is stolen and replacement costs are \$500. If you have a \$100 deductible, Comprehensive will cover \$400 — the replacement cost minus your \$100 deductible. To keep your premiums low, select as high a deductible as you feel comfortable paying out of pocket. If you lease a car, your lease contract will typically require you to have Comprehensive coverage.

**Collision Coverage:** Pays for damages to your auto caused by collision with another object or when it overturns.

- **Why Do You Need This?** If you are legally responsible for an accident, your auto insurance will not cover repairs to your vehicle unless you have Collision coverage. This coverage is normally required if you have a car loan or leased vehicle. There are a number of common exclusions to this coverage that will be detailed in your policy.
- **How Much Coverage Do You Need?** The coverage pays for repair or replacement of your vehicle, up to its actual cash value. If you have an older car, where the cash value is low, you may decide not to purchase Collision coverage. With Collision, you choose a deductible — the amount that you will pay out of your own pocket-before your insurance pays your claim. To keep your premiums low, select as high a deductible as you feel comfortable paying out of pocket. If you lease a car, your lease contract will typically require you to have Collision coverage.

**Uninsured/Underinsured Motorist Coverage:** Typically pays for you and your passengers' bodily injury damages caused by an uninsured driver. This coverage is subject to the terms, limits and conditions of the policy contract.

**Uninsured Motorist Property Damage:** Pays for damage to your vehicle caused by an uninsured driver or in many cases, a hit-and-run driver.

- **Why Do You Need This?** This coverage will pay for damage to your vehicle that you normally would recover from the uninsured driver's insurance company. Given the number of drivers who drive without insurance or without adequate insurance, this is an important coverage.
- **How Much Coverage Do You Need?** You need enough coverage to pay for the repair to or replacement of your vehicle.

**Emergency Road Service (ERS):** An alternative to auto-club towing and road services (such as AAA). It covers problems not typically covered by car insurance, such as towing, lockout service, and mechanical labor if you have a dead battery or get a flat tire.

- **Why Do You Need This?** ERS helps to take the hassle out of unpredictable events such as a flat tire or a dead battery. We'll send help to get you back on the road or tow you to a repair facility. These services are normally available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, anywhere in the United States and Canada.
- **How Much Coverage Do You Need?** ERS is normally available in one standard package.

**Rental Reimbursement Coverage:** Pays up to a preset amount for a rental vehicle if your car isn't drivable for more than a specified period (normally 24 hours) because of a covered accident.

- **Why Do You Need This?** It helps to reduce the hassle of an accident by providing for a replacement car, while your car is in the repair shop, or if your car was a total loss, until you have purchased another car, subject to the coverage limits.
- **How Much Coverage Do You Need?** The costs of rental cars are dependent on their type and model. The amount of coverage you select is determined by your vehicle need and preference. If a compact vehicle is all you need then normally the lowest coverage offered will be sufficient.

**Mechanical Breakdown Insurance (MBI):** Covers many mechanical repairs to your car, protecting you from expensive repair bills. Each company offering this coverage has their own coverage criteria. This coverage is usually available for vehicles whose odometers have not reached a specified limit that have been purchased within a specified time period. A deductible per claim usually applies. Mechanical Breakdown Insurance is similar to a dealer's extended warranty protection. It's in excess of coverage provided by the manufacturer's warranty

- Mechanical Breakdown normally covers repairs to the following systems: Engine, Steering, Air Conditioning, Transmission, Cooling, Brakes Drive Axle, Suspension, and Electrical.
- Most policies have exclusions on coverage such as:
  - 1) Regular maintenance services such as tune-ups, suspension alignment, wheel balancing, filters, lubrication, coolant and fluids, spark plugs, brake pads and lining, brake shoes and tires (includes tire wear and/or tire damage).
  - 2) Breakdown repairs made necessary by intentional damage, rust and oxidation, misuse, or improper maintenance.
  - 3) Coverage provided by the manufacture's warranty.

[Source: Various Jun 2010 ++]

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**Mobilized Reserve 22 JUN 2010:** The Department of Defense announced the current number of reservists on active duty as of 22 JUN 2010. The net collective result is 6,191 fewer reservists mobilized than last reported in the 15 JUN 2010 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 92,373; Navy Reserve, 6,363; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 17,596; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,712; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 826. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 122,870 including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found at <http://www.defense.gov/news/d20100622ngr.pdf>. [Source: DoD News Release No. 528-10 dtd 23 Jun 2010 ++]

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**VA Claims Backlog Update 40:** Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Daniel K. Akaka (D-Hawaii) on 22 JUN introduced The Claims Processing Improvement Act of 2010 (S.3517) to make much-needed improvements to VA's disability claims processing. The bill focuses on enhancements that can be made to adjudicate veterans' disability compensation claims in a more timely and accurate manner. The Committee will hold a hearing to review disability claims processing on 1 JUL, at which time witnesses will testify about Akaka's legislation. Akaka said, "VA's system to provide veterans with disability compensation is well intended, but it is broken. This bill will move the Department closer to fulfilling its obligation to provide every eligible veteran with timely and accurate disability compensation." VA provides disability compensation to approximately 3.1 million veterans across the nation.

In his introductory remarks for the Congressional Record Akaka noted that VA has seen a dramatic rise in the number of claims, driven by a number of factors, including the aging of the general veteran population and our prolonged involvement in two overseas conflicts. Further complicating matters, many claims are increasing in complexity, as veterans seek service-connection for multiple disabilities and for disabilities that are difficult to diagnose, such as traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder. Claims adjudication is an intricate process that has seen many piecemeal changes in recent years. Unfortunately, these changes have yet to produce the results that veterans deserve. Mr. President, my goal, a goal that I am sure is widely shared, is to ensure that veterans are provided accurate and timely resolution to their claims. This legislation I am introducing would make several improvements in the claims adjudication process.

- Provisions in title I of the bill would establish a pilot program that would utilize ICD codes to identify disabilities of the musculoskeletal system. Over 50% of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom veterans that the Department of Veterans Affairs has had some health care contact with have a possible musculoskeletal diagnosis. ICD codes are standard medical condition identification codes used in electronic records that have been adapted by the Secretary of Health and Human Services for electronic transmission of medical data.
- This proposed pilot program would take place in six to ten regional offices and require VA to develop a new method of rating claims, which would consider the frequency, severity, and duration of symptoms of the disability in rating the claim, rather than the current rating schedule published in the Code of Federal Regulations. The current rating schedule adds to the complexity of claims adjudication, because many disabilities claimed are not exactly as described in the regulation and several rating codes may need to be considered. The new rating schedule would focus on the impact of the disability, for example, an inability to walk normally, rather than a particular VA rating code classification. All limitations resulting from all disabilities of the musculoskeletal system would be combined to provide one rating, rather than separate ratings for each

individual disability. This information would be placed into an organized and searchable electronic record. A veteran could elect to not participate in the pilot program. I believe that such an approach will result in fairer, comprehensive ratings for the entire musculoskeletal system.

- Title II of the bill includes a number of provisions that are intended to yield some near-term changes to the claims processing system and should help reduce the overall time a claim is under consideration by VA. During the last several years, the Committee has held oversight hearings on the claims processing system. Many of the provisions in this legislation were first suggested by veterans service organizations and other interested parties in connection with those hearings. Others have been recommended by the Administration. The legislation I am introducing serves as a starting point to move forward in our effort to improve VA's claims adjudication process. Provisions in title II would allow for VA to:
  - a. Issue partial ratings of claims that include multiple issues for those issues that can adjudicated expeditiously.
  - b. Give equal deference to private medical opinions during the rating process.
  - c. Clarify that the Secretary is required to provide notice to claimants of additional information and evidence required only when additional evidence is actually required.
  - d. Modify filing periods for notices of disagreement from one year to 180 days and require a claimant to file a substantive appeal within 60 days of the Department issuing a post-Notice of Disagreement decision – both of these modifications would contain good cause exceptions to the filing deadlines.
  - e. Automatically waive the review of new evidence by the agency of original jurisdiction, usually a Regional Office, so that any evidence submitted after the initial decision would be subject to initial review at the Board of Veterans' Appeals unless the claimant or the claimant's representative requests in writing that the agency of original jurisdiction initially review such evidence.
  - f. Replace the Secretary's obligation to provide a Statement of the Case with an obligation to provide a post-Notice of Disagreement decision. The post-Notice of Disagreement decision would be in plain language and contain a description of the specific facts in the case that support the decision including, if applicable, an assessment as to the credibility of any lay evidence pertinent to the issue or issues with which disagreement has been expressed; a citation to pertinent laws and regulations that support the decision; the decision on each issue and a summary of the reasons why the evidence relied upon supports such decision under the specific laws and regulations applied; and the date by which a substantive appeal must be filed in order to obtain further review of the decision. The Secretary would also be required to send, with a rating decision, a form that if completed and returned, would suffice as a notice of disagreement.

[Source: Sen. Akaka News Release 22 Jun 2010 ++]

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**GI BILL Update 80:** On the 66th anniversary of signing the GI Bill into law, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it has issued more than \$3.6 billion in the bill's newest manifestation, the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Benefit payments under the bill, implemented last year, have gone to more than 285,000 people and their educational institutions. On 22 JUN 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as the GI Bill of Rights. The Veterans Administration - as it was known at that time -- was responsible for carrying out the law's key provisions for education and training, loan guaranty for homes, farms or businesses, and unemployment pay. Before the World War II, college and homeownership were, for the most part, unreachable dreams for the average American. Thanks to the GI Bill, millions who would have flooded the job market opted for education instead.

In the peak year of 1947, Veterans accounted for 49% of college admissions. By the time the original GI Bill ended on 25 JUL 1958, 7.8 million of the 16 million World War II Veterans had participated in an education or training program. In 1984, former Mississippi congressman G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery revamped the GI Bill. The Montgomery GI Bill assured that VA home loan guaranty and education programs continued to work for Veterans of the post-Vietnam era. In 2009, GI Bill benefits were updated again. The new law gave Veterans with active duty service on, or after 11 SEP 01, enhanced educational benefits to cover more expenses, provide a living allowance, money for books and the ability to transfer unused educational benefits to spouses or children. For more information about the Post-9/11 GI Bill for Veterans, refer to [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov). [Source: VA News Release 23 Jun 2010 ++]

**AAFES Refund Policy Update 01:** With the recent major recalls of cars, toys, and a popular fast food franchise's promotional glassware, the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) wants to ensure their patrons know the recall process for goods sold in exchanges. There are two ways to check recalls specific to exchange operations. Authorized shoppers can go to their local exchange and check the customer service area or log on to [www.aafes.com](http://www.aafes.com) for the latest recall information. In the event of a potential recall, AAFES Quality Assurance notifies buyers to determine whether exchange shoppers have been affected. Buyers then provide information such as the scope, Universal Product Code, and disposition information. Once quality assurance specialists send recall information to impacted stores and distribution centers, details are posted in the stores and online. Once the item is recalled it can be systematically blocked at the registers and the distribution flow is stopped. Exchange patrons can utilize the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and AAFES websites as well as in store information to stay up to date on the latest recall information. CPSC is the federal agency charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death. Information concerning more than 4,500 product recalls is available through their website at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov). [Source: AAFES News Release 10-019 ++]

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**National Infantry Museum:** The National Infantry Museum and Soldier Center at Patriot Park celebrated its Grand Opening 19 JUN 09. It is located in Columbus, Georgia, just outside the gates of Fort Benning, the Home of the Infantry and one of the Army's largest installations. This tribute to Infantrymen past, present and future, is the first of its kind in the United States. Throughout the 190,000-square-foot museum, visitors will take an interactive journey through every war fought by the U.S. over the past two centuries. The museum tells the heroic story of everyday Infantrymen through an enviable collection of more than 30,000 artifacts. Era galleries trace Infantry history from before the Revolutionary War to action today in Iraq and Afghanistan. There is a special gallery recognizing Medal of Honor recipients and one that pays tribute to those who love an Infantryman, and the sacrifices they make supporting him. Soldier Center offers visitors more than an education in military history. There is a 3-D IMAX Theatre, full service restaurant and gift store. There also are galleries honoring Soldiers' family members, the Officer Candidate School, Rangers and the training done at Fort Benning. Outside the museum is Heritage Walk, a walkway lined with commemorative granite pavers which leads to a new five-acre parade field for Infantry School graduations and stadium seating for 2,100. World War II Street is an authentically recreated complex of seven buildings from the 1940s. Soon, dozens of Infantry unit monuments will line a memorial walk of honor.

Three parking areas contain space for 900 cars and up to 50 buses. The entire site will accommodate visitors who are disabled. There is no admission fee. There are nominal charges, however, for the IMAX theater and the Infantry Adventure simulators. The museum shop and restaurant offer reasonably priced snacks, meals and gifts. The museum is located at 1775 Legacy Way, Columbus GA 31903 Tel: 706-685-5800. It is open daily except on Xmas & New Year's day from 09-1700 M-Sa and 1100-1700 on Sun. A brochure can be obtained by mail upon request filled out online at [www.nationalinfantrymuseum.com/?page\\_id=25](http://www.nationalinfantrymuseum.com/?page_id=25). [Source: <http://nationalinfantrymuseum.com> Jun 2010 ++]

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**VA Copay Update 11:** Effective 1 JAN 2010

**Outpatient Services** - The following Copay amounts are limited to a single charge per visit regardless of the number of health care providers seen in a single day. The copay amount is based on the highest level of service received. There is no copay requirement for preventive care services such as screenings and immunizations:

- Basic Care Services provided by a primary care clinician \$15 / visit
- Specialty Care Services provided by a clinical specialist such as surgeon, radiologist, audiologist, optometrist, cardiologist, and specialty tests such as magnetic resonance imagery (MRI), computerized axial tomography (CAT) scan, and nuclear medicine studies \$50 / visit.

**Medications**

- Veterans in Priority Group 1 do not pay for medications
- Veterans in Priority Groups 2-6, for each 30-day or less supply of medication for treatment of nonservice-connected condition \$8 (Veterans in Priority Groups 2 through 6 are limited to \$960 annual cap)
- Effective July 1, 2010 Veterans in Priority Groups 7-8, for each 30-day or less supply of \$9 medication for treatment of nonservice-connected condition (Veterans in Priority Groups 7-8 do not qualify for medication copay annual cap)

**Inpatient Services** - Based on geographically-based means testing, lower income veterans who live in high-cost areas may qualify for a reduction of 80% of inpatient copay charges. Charges applicable to all priority groups:

- Inpatient Copay for first 90 days of care during a 365-day period \$1,100
- Inpatient Copay for each additional 90 days of care during a 365-day period \$550
- Per Diem Charge \$10 / day

**Long-Term Care** - Copays for Long-Term Care services start on the 22nd day of care during any 12-month period-there is no copay requirement for the first 21 days. Actual copay charges will vary from veteran to veteran depending upon financial information submitted on VA Form 10-10EC. Charges applicable to all priority groups:

- Nursing Home Care/Inpatient Respite Care/Geriatric Evaluation maximum of \$97/day
- Adult Day Health Care/Outpatient Geriatric Evaluation Outpatient Respite Care maximum of \$15/day
- Domiciliary Care maximum of \$5 / day

[Source: VA Fact Sheet 16-1 dtd Jun 2010 ++]

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**Health Care Reform Update 36:** Contrary to reports circulating on the Internet and a few newspapers, there is not a 3.8% "sales tax" or "transfer tax" on the sale of a home included in the recently signed health care reform bill. The analysis underlying these reports is incorrect and fails to take into account the interplay of the bill's provisions with already existing real estate tax laws that remain unchanged. What was included in the health bill is a provision that imposes a new 3.8% Medicare tax for some high income households that have "net investment income." Any revenue collected by the tax is dedicated to the Medicare hospital insurance program. This new tax will only apply to households with Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) of more than \$200,000 for individuals or more than \$250,000 for married couples. Since capital gains are included in the definition of net investment income, an additional tax obligation might result from the sale of real property. In the case of the sale of a principal residence, the existing \$250,000/\$500,000 exclusion from capital gains on the sale of a principal residence remains unchanged. Consequently, even when the AGI limits are met, the new tax would not be applied to all capital gains that result from the sale of a home. Rather, it would only apply to any home sale gain realized in excess of the \$250K/\$500K existing primary home exclusion that pushes the filer's AGI over the \$200K/\$250K adjusted gross income limit. The new Medicare tax will not take effect until January 1, 2013. [Source: Nebraska Realtors Association article May 2010 ++]

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**Pennsylvania Vet Cemetery Update 04:** Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced 28 MAY a nearly \$19.5 million contract to develop the next phase of Washington Crossing National Cemetery, in Newtown, Pa. The contract was awarded to G&C Fab-Con, LLC, a service-disabled Veteran-owned small business from Flemington, N.J. The project is scheduled for completion in fall 2011. Administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the 205-acre national cemetery in the Philadelphia area will continue to serve Veterans' needs for at least the next 50 years. The cemetery, which serves approximately 580,000 Veterans in the Philadelphia metropolitan area, is located near the borough of Newtown in Bucks County, about three miles northwest of Interstate 95 and less than three miles from Washington Crossing Historic Park. In January, VA completed a 12-acre early burial area with temporary facilities. The first burials at the new cemetery took place Jan. 20.

This phase of the project will include approximately 10,000 full casket gravesites; 3,600 in-ground cremation sites; 4,000 columbarium niches and a memorial wall. The cemetery will also include an administration and public information center complex with public restrooms, a maintenance facility, a cemetery entrance area, a flag assembly area and committal shelters for funeral

services. Other infrastructure elements include roadways, landscaping, utilities and irrigation. The Commonwealth's other VA cemeteries are Philadelphia National Cemetery, Indiantown Gap National Cemetery near Lebanon and the National Cemetery of the Alleghenies in Bridgeville. The Philadelphia National Cemetery, established in 1862, no longer has available burial space.

Veterans with a discharge issued under conditions other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a VA national cemetery. Also eligible are military personnel who die on active duty, their spouses and eligible dependents. Other burial benefits available for all eligible Veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a government headstone or marker. Families of eligible decedents may also order a memorial headstone or marker when remains are not available for interment. Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the Internet at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov), or by calling VA regional offices at (800) 827-1000. For information on Washington Crossing National Cemetery, call the cemetery office at (215) 504-5610. To make burial arrangements at the time of need, call the national cemetery scheduling office at (800) 535-1117. [Source: VA News Release 28 May 2010 ++]

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**VA Parkinson's Disease Program Update 02:** Veterans and others with Parkinson's disease who undergo deep brain stimulation (DBS) may benefit from new research co-sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs and published recently in the prestigious New England Journal of Medicine. The report shows DBS is equally effective at either of two brain sites. Earlier results from the landmark study appeared last year in the Journal of the American Medical Association, which indicated DBS overall is somewhat riskier than carefully managed drug therapy but may hold significant benefits for appropriate patients. The new analysis finds two brain sites roughly equal for patient outcomes relating to movement symptoms. Researchers will follow the study participants several more years to examine the relative benefits and risks of each DBS approach. An abstract of the study is available on the New England Journal of Medicine website <http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/short/362/22/2077>. [Source: NAUS weekly update 18 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Tricare User Fee Update 50:** On 15 JUN, Reps. Barney Frank (D-MA), Ron Paul (R-TX), and Walter Jones (R-NC) as well as Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) released a copy of their letter to the National Commission of Fiscal Responsibility and Reform requesting serious consideration of major cuts in defense spending. They expressed "an ongoing commitment to strong national defense," but said the ever-growing national debt requires a reduction in defense spending over the next 10 years. Specifically, their letter endorses the recommendations of the Sustainable Defense Task Force, a group of analysts and scholars seeking to reduce military spending in procurement, research and development, personnel, operations and maintenance, and infrastructure. The Task Force proposes a series of measures that could possibly save \$960 billion between 2011 and 2020. That task force proposed reducing personnel costs by more than \$100 billion during that period by cutting 200,000 military personnel, yielding a peacetime active duty end strength of approximately 1.3 million, recalculating military compensation to curtail pay raises, and imposing substantial increases in military health care fees (i.e. Tricare). [Source: MOAA Leg Up 18 Jun 2010 ++]

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**VA Presumptive VN Vet Diseases Update 06:** Senator Jim Webb, a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, added language to the 2010 War Supplemental Bill that froze the payment of funds for the new illnesses that the VA had decided last October would be added to the list of presumptive illnesses from exposure to Agent Orange (B cell leukemia, Parkinson's disease and certain heart diseases). Although Senate VA Committee Chairman Daniel Akaka agreed, it was with reluctance because the decision will add \$13.6 billion to VA compensation claims in a single year. The cost of the decision has the two Senators worried about the impact it could have on other VA services. Webb, who is a decorated Vietnam combat veteran, expressed in a letter sent to Shinseki in early June his concern that the 1991 Agent Orange Act, under whose authority Shinseki acted, was designed to cover "relatively rare conditions" and that he is afraid the new ruling has the effect of expanding presumption to common diseases of aging. A spokesman for Akaka said new hearings on the issue could be rescheduled for late summer or fall. However, in order for Congress

to block the VA's new regulation, both the House and Senate would have to pass blocking resolutions, something that most likely will not happen. [Source: TREA Washington Update 18 Jun 2010 ++]

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**VA Presumptive VN Vet Diseases Update 07:** VA Secretary Eric Shinseki will get the Senate hearing he didn't want. Sen. James Webb (D-VA) says he will use a Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing (rescheduled now for 23 SEP) to have Shinseki explain his decision to compensate Vietnam veterans, and many surviving spouses, for three more ailments including heart disease. Shinseki announced last October that ischemic heart disease, Parkinson's disease and B-Cell leukemia will be added to the list of illnesses presumed caused by exposure to defoliants, including Agent Orange, used to clear jungle in combat areas during the war. VA projects that the decision will cost \$13.4 billion in 2010 alone as it will qualify a few hundred thousand more veterans for service-connected disability compensation. Those veterans, it now appears, will have to wait at least a few more months before claims can be paid. And there is at least some doubt now they will be paid. That will depend on whether Webb and enough of his colleagues are dissatisfied with the science behind Shinseki's decision. In an interview in his Capitol Hill office 23 JUN, Webb said he was surprised to find among line items in an emergency wartime supplemental bill (H.R.4899) a few weeks ago \$13.4 billion attributed to "veterans." He asked staff to find out what it would fund. "It came back this was the Agent Orange law," Webb said.

Webb, a highly-decorated Marine from combat service in Vietnam, said this deepened his skepticism over the soundness of that law and how it has been used. "When the law was passed there were two areas that raised questions for me," Webb explained. "One was the presumption of exposure for anyone who had been in Vietnam; 2.7 million people had an automatic presumption of exposure. And then the notion that the VA administrator, now the secretary of veterans' affairs, has discretion based on scientific evidence to decide a service-connection to various illnesses. It's very broad. "Webb amended H.R.4899 so claims can't be paid on the three newly-named Agent Orange illnesses until 60 days after a final rule is published." "This is an area where we have a responsibility to pump for more [information] to tell us specifically how they made the connection. The only appropriate way to do that is say, 'Let's fence the money for 60 days and get some clarification here.' Webb said he was unaware on finding the \$13.4 billion in the bill that Shinseki had asked Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-HI), chairman of the VA committee, not to hold a hearing on this issue.

Akaka had scheduled one for April, then rescheduled for early May when VA declined to send witnesses. One theme he ran on in 2006, Webb said, was restoring a proper balance of power between the legislative and executive branches. Too much authority had been conceded to, or usurped by, recent administrations. Webb said he even fired off a letter to President Obama last December challenging a claim he made as he prepared for a summit on climate change that he would return from Copenhagen with a binding agreement. "I just felt compelled to say, 'You do not have the constitutional authority to bind the United States to an international agreement. The Congress does.'" Webb said. Shinseki's decision on Agent Orange strikes Webb as more proof too much power has been conceded to the executive branch. It was the Carter administration, he said, that adopted a presumption 'that everyone who was in Vietnam was exposed' to Agent Orange. At the time, he said, the decision wasn't onerous on VA budgets because the department only had linked Agent Orange to some rare illnesses. More recently, VA has found links to ailments generally associated with aging, committing VA to pay billions in additional compensation.

Webb felt the scientific evidence linking Type II diabetes to Agent Orange in 2001 was soft. He is reluctant to say the same about the three illnesses Shinseki has endorsed until he hears his testimony. But Webb does intend to question the science behind presuming everyone who served in Vietnam was exposed to defoliants. He knows his own Marine Company was, he said, as were many other units who were engaged in combat in the countryside or handled Agent Orange directly. "On any given day in Vietnam they say about 10% of the people were actually out in direct combat. Percentages are actually higher than that because of rotations...But the majority of the people weren't in combat" where defoliants were used. "That's just the reality of it." The issue was handled with more precision, he suggested, in the late 1970s when Webb served as legal counsel on the House VA committee. "The discussions were you could develop a chronological map overlay of where defoliants had been used, and then develop a nexus in someone's service record on whether they had been in those areas. From that you could say whether these conditions would be presumptively acquired.

"Back then it was very small in numbers. Everyone up here wants to help veterans -- no one more than I do. But a lot of people have asked about this. They want to make sure we're really (a) following the law and (b) taking care of people who are service connected. I don't want to be the one person out here doing this. I know Chairman Akaka has joined me in his concerns. The main thing is let's have Secretary Shinseki come forward and explain the causality." Webb said VA wouldn't publish a final regulation until

after the 23 SEP hearing. It was later learned the hearing might fall within the 60-day period, an indication VA officials plan to publish a final rule before the hearing. That would narrow Webb's window to try to block compensation payments if he and colleagues decide such action is justified. [Source: Military.com Tom Philpott article 17 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Medicare Reimbursement Rates 2010 Update 14:** On 17 JUN the Senate fell four votes short of passing legislation that was needed to stop the 21% cut in Medicare payments to doctors that officially went into effect on 1 JUN. That provision was part of H.R.4213, the American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act of 2010, commonly known as the Extender bill. Because of the complicated Senate rules they needed 60 votes to cut off debate on the bill and proceed with a vote. Senate leaders tried all week to change the bill in order to attract enough votes but no Republicans supported it. Senators Ben Nelson (D-NE) and Joe Lieberman (I-CT) also refused to go along. They wanted more of the costs in the bill to be paid for by cutting government spending elsewhere instead of borrowing more money to pay for it. Doctors groups have been saying for months that if these cuts went into effect doctors will stop taking new Medicare patients and, eventually, new Tricare patients. Senate leaders made another attempt to get the bill passed after making major cuts to appease the republicans but they could only obtain 57 votes on 24 JUN. Not one Republican senator voted for the bill.

On 18 JUN before adjourning for the weekend, the Senate passed a six-month "doc fix" bill H.R.3962 by voice vote after extracting it from a larger tax and benefits package H.R.4213 that has been stalled for months. However, starting 18 JUN payments sent to doctors for their services provided to Medicare patients contained a 21% cut in what they would otherwise have received. it would have been another week or two before Tricare also had to cut the amount of its payments to doctors. The \$6.5 billion bill will stop the 21% cut to doctors who receive reimbursements from Medicare and increase their payouts by 2.2%. The measure is fully paid-for under congressional budget rules. The bill's cost was partially offset by changes to pension funding rules that would reduce required payments by companies, and some of that language may cause concern in the House. Another offset would prevent hospitals from submitting separate Medicare reimbursement claims for inpatient care and outpatient care provided within three days of a hospital admission. The doc fix measure was exempt from the pay-as-you-go law, but many lawmakers, expressing concern over the federal deficit, had called for the bill to comply with that law.

House Democratic leadership leaders said 21 JUN that they would not take up the Senate-passed six-month patch to Medicare provider payments unless the Senate moved to pass certain jobs measures. Within hours of the Senate action, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi released a statement calling it an insufficient temporary fix. "I see no reason to pass this inadequate bill until we see jobs legislation coming out of the Senate," she said. "House Democrats are saying to Republicans in the Senate: Show us the jobs!" The face-off between the two chambers seemed certain to further delay any action to stop the 21% cuts in payment rates that doctors began experiencing 18 JUN. The Medicare agency had delayed processing payments for almost three weeks in anticipation of congressional action, but said it could wait no longer. The agency said it would swiftly process retroactive payments if a patch were enacted into law. A House leadership aide said that Democrats remain committed to "ensuring our seniors and veterans receive the care they deserve," although he declined to say what steps Democrats might take, or when. Frustration over the Senate's inaction was increasing among House Democrats who have taken several politically difficult votes only to find the legislation languish in the other chamber. After another dramatic week, the House finally passed the Senate's stand-alone "Doc Fix" Medicare bill (H.R.3962) 417-1 on 24 JUN. It was sent to the President for signature to make it law which Obama did the same day. [Source: TREA Washington Update & GQ Politics News 18, 21 & 25 JUN 2010 ++]

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**VAMC Charleston SC:** The Joint Commission, the accrediting body for all hospitals in the United States, was so impressed with the quality of clinical programs at the Charleston, SC, VA Medical Center during its recent survey that it sent surveyors' comments praising the facility as "outstanding" to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. The Charleston VA far surpassed the national average for direct impact findings during the Joint Commission survey conducted 9 thru 12 MAR with just four findings for four different accreditation surveys for the hospital, its Long Term Care program, Behavior Health Care, and Home Care. According to the surveyors, medical centers average 10 to 12 direct impact findings for the hospital accreditation alone.

The medical center was praised for its computer-based system for residents' competency, which was noted "as complete and up to date as I've ever seen, particularly with regard to the level of supervision required for the safe performance of surgery or ... invasive procedures" by the physician surveyor. The VA was also recognized for its credentialing and privileging practices, and its Chief of Staff Florence Hutchison, MD, was singled out for special praise by the surveyors. "I have participated in Joint Commission surveys for 34 years," said Charleston VA Quality Manager Shirley Cooper, "and I have never seen such positive comments from a surveyor. It speaks volumes about the quality of care we deliver here. Our Veterans can rest assured they are being cared for in one of the finest medical centers in the country." Charleston was ranked second for quality of medical care amongst VA medical centers in 2007. The facility consistently meets or exceeds quality performance measures set by VA. [Source: VA Secy Vet Group Liaison Officer article 17 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Arlington National Cemetery Update 10:** Several mud-caked headstones line the banks of a small stream at Arlington National Cemetery, the country's most venerated burial ground. Farther upstream in a wooded area, a few others lie submerged with the rocks that line the stream bed. On 16 JUN, after The Washington Post alerted the cemetery to their presence, officials there said they were shocked to find the gravestones lying in the muck near a maintenance yard. Already under fire in recent days for more than 200 unmarked or misidentified graves and a chaotic and dysfunctional management system, cemetery officials vowed to investigate the headstones along the stream and take "immediate corrective action," said Kaitlin Horst, a cemetery spokeswoman. Officials initially said they do not know how the stones got there, whom they belong to, or how old they are. Horst could say only that "they appear to be decades old." Were they used as riprap to prevent stream erosion? Were they engraved incorrectly and then discarded? Or were they intended for a landfill -- where thousands of weathered or damaged burial markers routinely were sent years ago -- and ended up in the mud instead? Subsequently on 22 JUN cemetery officials said they were aware that discarded tombstones were lining the banks of the small for more than a decade but left them in the mud, adding that the tombstones were not removed because of concerns about damaging the stream.

The stream runs under Ord & Weitzel Drive in the northwest corner of the cemetery, across from Section 28. Some of the headstones, stacked in pairs along the stream bed, are visible from the roadway. Others are farther upstream, under a dense canopy of trees. The discovery follows an investigation of the cemetery by the Army's inspector general, which found 117 graves that are marked on maps as occupied on but have no headstones. The inquiry found 94 more marked on maps as unoccupied even though they have gravestones. In addition, the investigation found that at least four burial urns were unearthed and dumped in an area where excess dirt is kept. As a result of the scandal, the Army reprimanded Superintendent John C. Metzler Jr., who is retiring 2 JUL, and his deputy, Thurman Higginbotham, who was placed on administrative leave pending a disciplinary review. Army Secretary John McHugh appointed a new team to oversee cemetery operations and continue the investigation, which officials said could find even more unmarked grave sites. The cemetery's new management team has "vowed to remove the tombstones from around the steam and dispose of them properly.

Joe Davis, a spokesman for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, said he was "stunned" to learned about the discarded headstones. "Arlington National Cemetery is truly hallowed ground to this entire nation," he said. "It is an honor to be buried at Arlington. It is an honor to work at Arlington. And over the past week, we're finding out that people are just not doing their jobs." Horst said that the cemetery's new superintendent, Patrick K. Hallinan, a longtime cemetery official with the Department of Veterans Affairs, checked out the streamside headstones and ordered their removal. "They will reclaim the stones and dispose of them properly in accordance with our current headstone-disposal policy," Horst said. Headstones are replaced if they are damaged or if the writing on them becomes illegible, she said. At one time, gravestones were discarded in landfills. The cemetery ended that practice because Washington area residents were plucking the stones and using them for patios, driveways and other home improvement projects. Under the current disposal policy, headstones are to be ground up so the names cannot be recognized and then recycled.

Officials at Arlington National Cemetery have established a special call center to address concerns worried family members may have about the potential mishandling of their loved ones' remains. Family members with concerns can call (703) 607-8199 M-F from 08-1700 EDT. Six people at the call center take down information, as well as researching records and verifying the physical location of gravesites. The call center opened June 11, a day after Army Secretary John M. McHugh announced the findings of a months-long investigation into the cemetery's records management. Call center workers can release private information only to immediate family

members. The call center began returning calls 21 JUN and will continue do so until all of the concerns brought to the center's attention are addressed. Cemetery officials ask for patience from the families as they work through their concerns. [Source: Washington Post Christian Davenport article 17 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Arlington National Cemetery Update 11:** Arlington National Cemetery officials with limited expertise in federal contracting regulations and scant outside supervision improperly paid millions of dollars to companies that failed to create a digital database of the cemetery's records. As a result, the nation's most hallowed military cemetery uses a flawed and antiquated paper system for tracking the whereabouts of thousands of buried service members and their relatives. Although the cemetery has spent \$5.5 million over seven years to upgrade its records, problems abound, according to an Army inspector general investigation and other Army documents. One contract was so flawed that a handwritten note attached to a legal review of it said, "This is probably not the best way to do business," according to the Army's investigation, which was released this month. But the note said that the "contract is not illegal." The Army's report found that the cemetery had "no acquisition strategy, no integrated IT system and a series of IT regulatory violations." And the cemetery's use of outside contractors had not been reviewed by outside Army officials for more than 10 years.

Many of the problems in the IG's report focus on the cemetery's No. 2 administrator, Thurman Higginbotham. Despite having no training as a contracting officer, he was identified "as the government point of contact for monitoring all IT contract performance." The report identified Higginbotham only by title. "On the surface, [the cemetery] appears to be a very effective organization," Army investigators wrote. But its reputation as a national treasure "obscures many problems." Among them: Dozens of burial plots appear on maps as occupied but have no headstone, and some graves that have a headstone are recorded as vacant. Cemetery workers have begun to dig graves in what they thought was an unoccupied plot but then found that someone was buried there. In some cases, grounds crews have found that graves are marked with headstones for other decedents. Some burial sites have been planted over with trees.

Most national cemeteries are run by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Army runs two: Arlington and the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery in the District. In 2002, eight years after the VA started automating its burial records, officials at Arlington launched their own program. They initially projected that it would cost \$4.8 million through 2016, according to the Army's investigation. Instead, the cemetery spent \$5.5 million on 35 different contracts with "a few vendors," but it has little to show for it. The Army has ordered an audit of contracts during the past five years. In a conference call with reporters 24 JUN, Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) called it an "astonishing" waste of taxpayer money on a project that "should be able to be solved relatively easily." The VA, which manages 131 cemeteries with 3 million gravesites (Arlington has 330,000), started digitizing all new interments in 1994, said Steve Muro, the agency's acting undersecretary for memorial affairs. In 2003, it started digitizing its older records, which date to 1862. That project took five years and cost \$1.5 million. At many cemeteries run by the VA, visitors can look up burial information on a touch-screen computer. At Arlington, that information is primarily on microfiche. "We are one fire, or one flood, or one spilled Starbucks coffee away from some of those records being lost or spoiled," Warner said.

Six of the early IT contracts at Arlington were awarded to a then-newly formed Manassas company called Offise Solutions, the only company mentioned by name in the report. Between March 2004 and June 2005, the business, which had never previously won a government contract, was paid more than \$700,000 by the cemetery, according to federal contracting records. The company delivered approximately 60 CDs of scanned burial files, according to the Army's report. But "these records were not delivered in a standardized format and were not stored as part of a database," the report says. Richard J. Greaux, the founder of Offise Solutions, according to state records, said the company fulfilled all of its obligations. "Everything that we were contracted for, we delivered. We did everything that we were supposed to. You got the wrong company," Greaux said when reached by phone. "You're looking for other companies." The company that obtained the most lucrative contracts for IT work was Alpha Technology Group of Waldorf. The cemetery paid the company roughly \$2.5 million between 2004 and 2007, according to federal records.

The Army report also mentions a company that received a sole-source contract for work estimated at \$250,000. The contractor's proposal came in at more than double that figure, but the contract was awarded "without any evidence . . . that the vendor was capable of performing the effort, given the significant increase in cost." The report does not identify the contractor or describe the work to be performed. Gary Tallman, an Army spokesman, would not elaborate, saying that the "report has to stand on its own." In another case,

contractors drafted a fair-price analysis for work to be performed, a duty that is supposed to be "reserved only for government officials," according to the Army report. The cemetery's contracting officer "merely circled 'concur' " to indicate the cemetery's decision. The Army's Criminal Investigation Division conducted a recent investigation of allegations of conflict of interest between Arlington personnel and a civilian contractor. Investigators referred their findings to the U.S. attorney's office but, said Christopher Grey, a CID spokesman, it "declined to pursue criminal prosecution based on the lack of substantial credible information." [Source: Washington Post Christian Davenport & Aaron C. Davis article 25 Jun 2010 ++]

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**VA Claims Processing Update 02:** VA department officials and representatives of veterans services organizations told House lawmakers 16 JUN that the Veterans Affairs Department faces a wave of more than a million new disability claims this year, a workload compounded by delays in developing automated systems to process them. In addition, a representative of the American Federation of Government Employees told the hearing that employees at the Veterans Benefits Administration have difficulty managing paper claims in a work environment described as "hostile" and that has "deteriorated significantly" since Eric Shinseki took over as VA secretary in JAN 09. "In 2009, for the first time, we received over 1 million claims during the course of a single year," Michael Walcoff, acting undersecretary for benefits at VA, told a hearing of the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs. The number of claims the department received increased from 578,773 in 2000 to 1.014 million in 2009, a 75% rise. Walcoff said the number of claims should increase 13.1% this year to just under 1.2 million. For 2011, he said claims are projected to grow another 11.3% to more than 1.3 million.

Accounting for the sharp increase are the nearly 10-year-old wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and less restrictive requirements for Vietnam veterans to file claims for exposure to Agent Orange, a toxic defoliant, he said. The new Agent Orange rules will add 186,000 claims to VBA's workload through 2011. Last month, VA kicked off a fast-track procurement for an automated system to process Agent Orange claims. Walcoff told lawmakers the agency has begun a series of pilot programs (approximately 30) to help streamline claims processing, including a Business Transformation Lab test in its Providence, R.I., regional office that electronically processes a small number of claims. Business practices developed in Providence will be incorporated into VBA's new automated Veterans Benefits Management System, which is scheduled to go online in 2012. Ian C. de Planque, deputy director of the American Legion's Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Commission, said the Providence pilot provided claims examiners with electronic tools that removed the need to "shuffle through papers and books." In addition, examiners typically process portions of a veteran's claim serially. VBA changed that practice in another pilot at its regional office in Little Rock, Ark., where teams of employees worked together on claims. The test shows the "most promise . . . as the starting point for digital claims processing," said Carol Wild Scott, chairman of the Veterans Law Section of the Federal Bar Association.

One claims processor testified that the VA has daily productivity requirements which reward regional offices for the gross amount of work they report, not whether the work is done accurately or correctly. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki has set a national goal of processing claims within 125 days with a 98% accuracy rate by 2015. Another participant at the hearing testified that, "if we can put a man on the moon, we should be able to meet this goal." That remains to be seen. Joseph Violante, National Legislative Director for Disabled American Veterans, said since VBA is at least a decade behind in automating its claims process, it should not "rush to meet self-imposed, aggressive deadlines for piloting and rolling out the VBMS. He urged, "They get this done right the first time." He told lawmakers he was seriously concerned that VBA did not plan to make rules-based processing a core component of VBMS. That process is commonly used in the insurance industry to automatically compute numerous parameters in claims without the need for manual intervention. Violante said VBA officials told him rules-based processing "will be a component to be added on later, perhaps years later after the full national rollout." He urged the subcommittee to "fully explore this issue with VBA and suggest that it might be helpful to have an independent outside expert review VBMS while it is still early in the development phase."

VBA got more bad news at the hearing when Molly Ames, a rating veterans service representative at the VA regional office in San Diego, said the agency should improve its relations between labor and management if it wants to better process the flood of claims. "Labor-management relations at many [regional offices] have deteriorated significantly, resulting in a work environment that is more hostile now than under the prior administration," she said in her testimony on behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees. "Terminations of both experienced employees and newly trained employees are a routine occurrence." Ames said VBA has targeted union representatives, sometimes at the expense of veterans. A union official Ames did not identify was prevented from

working overtime to process claims because she was a member of the union, she said. Although Shinseki has touted the use of technology to transform VA since taking office, she said the approach does not apply to telework for employees. VA "maintains discriminatory, counterproductive telework policies across all its [regional offices]," Ames said. "Last year, at our request, Congressman Frank Wolf [R-VA] asked Secretary Shinseki to offer telework to more claims processors and to end the arbitrary, unfair practice of requiring higher production from work-at-home employees. Unfortunately, Secretary Shinseki refused to change course. [Source: GovExec.com Bob Brewin article 16 Jun 2010 ++]

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**VAT Tax:** Alarmed by the country's \$1.4 trillion deficit, some economists have suggested that the U.S. adopt a national sales tax. Currently, about 150 countries have this type of value-added tax (VAT): In Great Britain its 17.5%; China 17%; Mexico 16%; Kazakhstan 12%, Philippines 12%, and Egypt 10%. The tax typically applies to all purchases, as well as to services from haircuts to stock trades. VATs "often generate half a country's public revenues," says Robert Goulder of Tax Analysts, a nonprofit publisher of tax policy magazines. In France, for instance, the VAT accounts for 52% of the money the government collects. "Most of the 150 countries that have a VAT would be fiscally crippled without it," Goulder says. In the U.S., each 1% of VAT could raise \$1 trillion over 10 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office. While some federal lawmakers are warning of the idea, others say such a tax disproportionately hurts the poor, who spend most of their income on necessities. Some countries counter that problem by having a dual[rate structure – lowering or eliminating the VAT on purchases like prescription drugs and groceries. However, some policy experts worry that a VAT could actually raise so much money, and so easily, that it would encourage Congressional waste. "A VAT would take the pressure of the government to rein in spending," says Rudolph Penner, a fellow with the Urban Institute, a public-policy think tank. "And the more they spend, the more taxpayers have to shell out." [Source: Parade Economy article 30 May 2010 + +]

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**Vet Jobs Update 19:** Delta Airlines has asked for The National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) assistance to get the word to all state veterans' coordinators, DVOPs, LVERs and one-stop centers to inform them Delta Airlines is hiring for a variety of positions and they want to hire Veterans. Positions include baggage handlers, flight attendants, pilots, etc. For information on number of positions, locations and job descriptions refer to the Delta's Careers section: [www.deltajobs.net/career\\_destinations.htm](http://www.deltajobs.net/career_destinations.htm). For pilots refer to [www.deltajobs.net/pilot\\_qualifications.htm](http://www.deltajobs.net/pilot_qualifications.htm) . [Source: AL Dept of CT msg 18 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Korean War 60th Anniversary:** The 60th Anniversary of the Start of the Korean War was commemorated on 24 JUN at a Congressional Ceremony Commemorating in Statuary Hall in the U.S. Capitol. The event was attended by many dignitaries from the Republic of Korea, as well as Korean War veterans. Nine members of Congress spoke at the event, including all members of the Democratic and Republican leadership, as well as four of the five members of Congress who either fought in the Korean War or were in the armed services at the time of the war. Those members were Congressmen Charlie Rangel (D-NY), John Conyers (D-Mich.), Howard Coble (R-NC) and Senator Arlen Specter (D-Pa.). Not in attendance was Representative Sam Johnson (R-Texas), a Korean and Vietnam War veteran and a Vietnam War POW. Several of the speakers mentioned the fact that when you look at satellite photos taken at night of the Korean peninsula, South Korea is lit up in much the same way as is the eastern coast of the U.S., while North Korean is starkly black. They saw this as a vivid analogy of the difference between a free society -- one that is full of light and life -- and a brutal dictatorship, where the light of freedom has been extinguished. All of the speakers paid tribute to those brave Americans who went to Korea when their nation called and fought against the communist tyranny which threatened to overrun the entire Korean peninsula. Speaker Pelosi said that while some have called the Korean War the "forgotten war," the ceremony in the Capitol was a demonstration that our nation has not forgotten the sacrifices of those who fought in that faraway land. [Source: TREA Washington Update 25 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Korean War Vet Appreciation Letter:** The Invasion of Inchon, the Pusan Perimeter and the Chosin Reservoir are only a few of the fields of battle where Americans placed their lives on the line for democracy. Of nearly 390,000 Americans who served there, 36,000 gave their lives. The war was a military conflict between the Republic of South Korea, supported by the United Nations, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, backed by the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union. The situation escalated into open warfare when North Korean forces invaded South Korea across the border between the countries—the 38th parallel—on 25 JUN 50. An armistice was signed on 23 JUL 53, thus ending the first significant armed conflict of the Cold War; however, a formal peace agreement never has been signed.

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the war, the Republic of Korea 60th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemoration Committee has various plans to thank, honor and remember Korean War Veterans and their achievements. One of the projects is to send letters of appreciation from the President of the Republic of Korea to as many living Korean War Veterans as possible to express tribute and profound gratitude for their service and sacrifice that laid the foundations of peace and freedom enjoyed today by the people of Korea. Korean War veterans who want to receive the letter should fill out and submit an application form for an appreciation letter from the Republic of Korea President. To obtain forms and information on how/where to submit:

- Complete the PDF form at <http://eng.koreanwar60.go.kr/apply.asp>
- By internet click 'SUBMIT' upon completion.
- By mail complete and print the Application Form and send to: US Branch ROK 60<sup>th</sup> AKW Commemoration Committee, 2450 Massachusetts Avenue N.W., Washington D.C., 20008
- Direct all questions to: [sweetewe@korea.kr](mailto:sweetewe@korea.kr)

[Source: Oregon VA News Release 15 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Tricare Nursing Home Coverage Update 02:** A new Tricare requirement is that skilled nursing facilities will have to preauthorize care provided to Medicare-eligible Tricare beneficiaries once Medicare benefits are exhausted and Tricare becomes the primary health coverage. Preauthorization is only required for skilled nursing facility care when medically-necessary skilled nursing services extend beyond Medicare's 100-day limit and Tricare becomes the primary payer for a beneficiary. Since medical documentation must be submitted, the preauthorization is requested by the skilled nursing facility and should not be a burden to beneficiaries or their families. In fact, since a Tricare coverage determination will be provided prior to extended lengths of care being incurred, dual-eligible beneficiaries of Medicare and Tricare will have the benefit of better planning for their extended health care needs.

Medicare and Tricare cover medically-necessary skilled nursing care and rehabilitative therapies, including room and board, prescription medication and laboratory work, which are provided in the skilled nursing facility. However, Medicare covers only the first 100 days of skilled nursing facility care, while Tricare For Life covers treatment as long as it is medically necessary and is a Tricare covered service. For skilled nursing care benefits to be covered, the facility must be Medicare-certified and enter into a participation agreement with Tricare. Beneficiaries must have a qualifying hospital stay of at least three consecutive days, not including the day of discharge. Beneficiaries must also enter the skilled nursing facility within 30 days of being discharged from the hospital and the care must meet Tricare medical necessity guidelines. [Source: Tricare News Release No.10-56 dtd 16 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Outward Bound:** Outward Bound is an international non-profit outdoor education program that offers fully funded (i.e. no cost to the participant) outdoor adventure excursions to all OEF/OIF veterans. It doesn't matter what your current military status is (active, inactive, discharged, retired) - you're eligible to attend as long as you deployed in support of OEF/OIF combat operations while in the military. These five-day excursions offer adventure activities such as backpacking, rock climbing, canyoneering, canoeing, and dog sledding in beautiful wilderness areas in Maine, Texas, Colorado, California, Minnesota and many other states. All expedition costs for lodging, equipment, food, and instruction are completely funded by a multi-million dollar Sierra Club grant,

including the participants' round-trip transportation between home and the wilderness site. There are two types of courses available, each offering wilderness expeditions year-round.

**1. Open Enrollment Courses:** Outward Bound has scheduled expeditions where individual war Veterans sign up for the course of their choosing below, attend on an individual basis, and meet other war veterans from around the nation. Each course listed will have 7 to 12 participants. There are several hundred slots available for OEF/OIF veterans every year. At [www.outwardbound.org/index.cfm/do/cp.course\\_search\\_result/course\\_detailfocusid/18](http://www.outwardbound.org/index.cfm/do/cp.course_search_result/course_detailfocusid/18) click the apply/call link for the course you want to go on:

- Colorado Backpacking & Rock Climbing - Veterans 7/02/10 / 7/06/10
- Maine Coast Sailing - Veterans 7/02/10 / 7/07/10
- Sierra Backpacking and Rock Climbing - Veterans 7/11/10 / 7/15/10
- Apostle Islands Sea Kayaking - Veterans 7/13/10 / 7/18/10
- Maine Mahoosuc Mountains Backpacking - Veterans 7/22/10 / 7/27/10
- Sierra Backpacking and Rock Climbing - Veterans 8/01/10 / 8/05/10
- Maine Mahoosuc Mountains Backpacking - Veterans 8/01/10 / 8/06/10
- Maine Coast Sailing - Veterans 8/05/10 / 8/10/10
- Boundary Waters Canoeing - Veterans 8/09/10 / 8/15/10
- Colorado Backpacking & Rock Climbing - Veterans 8/15/10 / 8/19/10
- Oregon Rafting - Veterans 8/23/10 / 8/27/10
- Boundary Waters Canoeing - Veterans 8/23/10 / 8/29/10
- Apostle Islands Sea Kayaking - Veterans 8/24/10 / 8/29/10
- Maine Coast Sailing - Veterans 8/24/10 / 8/29/10
- Sierra Backpacking and Rock Climbing - Veterans 8/29/10 / 9/02/10
- Apostle Islands Sea Kayaking - Veterans 8/30/10 / 9/05/10
- Boundary Waters Canoeing - Veterans 8/30/10 / 9/05/10
- Maine Coast Sailing - Veterans 9/02/10 / 9/07/10
- Southwest Rafting - Veterans 9/03/10 / 9/08/10
- Sierra Backpacking and Rock Climbing - Veterans 9/06/10 / 9/10/10
- Colorado Backpacking & Rock Climbing - Veterans 9/06/10 / 9/11/10
- Boundary Waters Canoeing - Veterans 9/06/10 / 9/12/10
- Washington Mountaineering - Veterans 9/06/10 / 9/12/10
- Washington Sea Kayaking - Veterans 9/06/10 / 9/12/10
- Oregon Rafting - Veterans 9/07/10 / 9/11/10
- Southwest Rafting - Veterans 9/15/10 / 9/20/10
- Sierra Backpacking and Rock Climbing - Veterans 9/19/10 / 9/23/10
- Colorado Backpacking & Rock Climbing - Veterans 9/20/10 / 9/25/10
- Maine Coast Sailing - Veterans 9/20/10 / 9/25/10
- Maine Mahoosuc Mountains Backpacking - Veterans 9/20/10 / 9/25/10
- Washington Sea Kayaking - Veterans 9/20/10 / 9/26/10
- Oregon Rafting - Veterans 9/21/10 / 9/25/10
- Gulf Coast Canoeing & Fishing - Veterans 9/21/10 / 9/26/10
- Southwest Rafting - Veterans 9/27/10 / 10/02/10
- Maine Coast Sailing - Veterans 9/30/10 / 10/05/10
- Maine Mahoosuc Mountains Backpacking - Veterans 9/30/10 / 10/05/10
- Gulf Coast Canoeing & Fishing - Veterans 10/02/10 / 10/07/10
- Washington Backpacking - Veterans 10/03/10 / 10/09/10
- Oregon Rafting - Veterans 10/05/10 / 10/09/10
- Colorado Backpacking & Rock Climbing - Veterans 10/05/10 / 10/10/10
- Gulf Coast Canoeing & Fishing - Veterans 11/02/10 / 11/07/10

- Gulf Coast Canoeing & Fishing - Veterans 11/13/10 / 11/18/10
- Florida Everglades Canoeing - Veterans 11/23/10 / 11/28/10
- Florida Everglades Canoeing - Veterans 12/05/10 / 12/10/10

**2. Custom Courses:** Outward Bound will schedule customized expeditions upon request for groups of war veterans; these customized expeditions can be tailored to specific needs. These courses are for organizationally established groups of veterans along with their counselor or therapist (mental health worker, outreach specialist); and/or Unit Leader. In order to run a custom course with Outward Bound, in most cases a minimum of 9 participants is needed. These courses can be scheduled at any time of year and at nearly any location where Outward Bound operates. The course activities can be customized to a variety of ability levels. If you are a counselor, therapist, or Unit Leader, who wants to schedule a Custom Course, contact a Veterans Program Course Advisor at [obvets@outwardbound.org](mailto:obvets@outwardbound.org) or call 866-669-2362 ext. 8387.

If you are specifically interested in custom Veteran's courses run from the Outward Bound Baltimore Chesapeake Bay Center on the Appalachian Trail or on the Potomac River, contact John Enny at [jenny@outwardbound.org](mailto:jenny@outwardbound.org) or at 1(410) 448-1721 ext. 1103. If you are interested in custom Veteran's programs from the Outward Bound Philadelphia Center in the Delaware Water Gap, contact Kenja Griffin at [kgriffin@outwardbound.org](mailto:kgriffin@outwardbound.org) or 1(215) 232-9130 ext. 6305. For questions regarding the OEF/OIF Veterans Program course offerings, contact 1(866) 669-2362, ext. 8387; e-mail [obvets@outwardbound.org](mailto:obvets@outwardbound.org) or refer to [www.outwardboundwilderness.org/veterans.html](http://www.outwardboundwilderness.org/veterans.html). [Source: Veterans Village of San Diego Nadirah Sahar msg 16 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Alzheimer's Update 07:** There's no solid scientific proof that lifestyle measures can prevent Alzheimer's disease or cognitive decline, according to a federally convened panel of experts. Staying healthy, exercising, eating a diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids and other healthful foods, and keeping your mind engaged have all been suggested as ways to stave off cognitive decline and the brain disorder known as Alzheimer's, marked by a loss of memory and other cognitive ability. But the independent panel, convened by the National Institutes of Health, concludes that there is insufficient evidence that any of these measures prevent Alzheimer's. The conclusion, although probably disappointing to many, may not be as discouraging as it sounds, says Carl C. Bell, MD, a panel member who is also director of the Institute for Juvenile Research, professor of psychiatry and public health, University of Illinois at Chicago, and president and CEO of the Community Mental Health Council, Chicago. "We had to follow the science," he says, explaining that the panel applied rigorous scientific standards to the numerous studies reviewed to determine if any measures might be proven to prevent Alzheimer's disease or cognitive decline, which precedes it. They found the evidence lacking. "There is no hard science right now." But that doesn't mean there won't be, someday, says Martha Daviglius, MD, PhD, MPH, chair of the panel and professor of preventive medicine and medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. "Right now research is being conducted in promising areas, such as omega-3, physical activity, and cognitive engagement." Currently there are about 5.3 million Americans who have Alzheimer's, the majority of them late-onset disease that becomes apparent after age 65. [Source: WebMD Health News Kathleen Doheny article 14 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Estate Planning Update 02:** Use these common estate planning considerations to trigger thoughtful conversation with your family, ensuring them of your watchful assistance and giving you satisfaction of their future security:

**Planning for Mom and Dad.** Talking with your parents about their estate plan can dramatically reduce family tension and personal stress. Discuss questions like:

- Should your parents purchase long-term care insurance?
- How will the family decide when Mom and Dad need more assistance?
- Whom do your parents want to take on the role of agent for financial and medical powers of attorney?
- Which people and organizations do Mom and Dad want to receive their assets after they're gone?

**Planning for Your Spouse.** If you pass away before your spouse, you want to ensure that you provide for him or her. To do so, consider these elements of your estate plan:

- Would a trust for your spouse's benefit ensure that your spouse will receive proper care in the future?
- Whom should your spouse name as the agent for financial and medical powers of attorney?
- Should your spouse become the beneficiary of all your assets, or should some of the assets go to a trust, caregiver or charity?
- What ownership designations on property titles will ensure tax and legal efficiency?

**Planning for your Brother or Sister.** Sometimes, because of old age or disability, your siblings can require your help. If you're responsible for their well-being, consider these questions:

- Have you talked about assisted living or paid home-caregivers?
- Are they eligible for subsidized services or financial assistance?
- Should your brother or sister be listed as a beneficiary in your will?
- Does your brother or sister need to name a backup agent to you on his or her financial or medical power of attorney?

**Planning for your Children or Other Dependents.** If you still have children, grandchildren or other individuals depending on you, communicate these points in your estate plan:

- Who will act as their guardian (daily caretaker) and conservator (person who handles money)?
- Will your dependents receive your assets immediately or at a later date, should something happen to you?
- Will their inheritance be designated for a specific purpose, such as education?
- If your dependents leave behind no children, will the balance of their assets go to charity?

By taking time to answer these questions for yourself, asking them of others and recording the answers in writing with the assistance of an estate planning attorney, you can alleviate much of your worry about caring for your generations of loved ones. A prudent move would be to designate in advance who would act in your behalf in the event you could no longer make decisions. A durable power of attorney is the document you need to accomplish this. It allows you to name the person you designate to make legal, financial and business decisions when you're no longer able to make them yourself. Be sure to record your durable power of attorney in writing so that it's honored by businesses and other financial institutions. [Source: MOAA News Exchange 16 Jun 2010 ++]



**SBP DIC Offset Update 25:** Survivors of military members have an opportunity for two forms of survivors' benefits. The most common is the purchased benefit called the Survivor Benefit Program (SBP) where the military member pays premiums from retired pay. Currently serving members are also covered by SBP automatically. The other is a program ran by Veteran Affairs (VA) called Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC). DIC is paid to survivors whose spouse died of Service-connected causes. If a survivor qualifies for DIC and is covered by SBP, the DIC amount is subtracted from the SBP amount. This is known as the SBP-DIC Offset. Last August, 3 survivors fought in the courts against the offset for their specific situation and won. They realized the law was worded differently for survivors who remarried after age 57. In this specific case, the law does not stipulate an offset. As a result, all survivors remarried after age 57 now receive full SBP and DIC payments.

The DOD is in the process of fixing the offset issue for survivors in this situation. They have identified 737 survivors remarried after age 57. All of these survivors are now receiving their full monthly SBP and DIC payments. However, the lawsuit also has a retroactive period that requires survivors who qualify to receive back pay. The retroactive period is from the date of remarriage but no earlier than 1 JAN 04. To date, 367 have received their back pay. The remaining survivors will get their back pay over the next few months as DOD calculates the amounts due for each individual. For all other SBP/DIC eligible's, there is now a new tool for MOAA and the Military Coalition to use in fighting for the elimination of the SBP-DIC offset. In 2008, Congress symbolically admitted the offset was wrong by passing legislation that authorized a supplemental pay to help restore some of the pay denied by the offset. This program is known as Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA). SSIA is administered by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) as is SBP. Here is the payment schedule for the additional monthly payment under SSIA:

- October 2008 - \$50
- October 2009 - \$60

- October 2010 - \$70
- October 2011 - \$80
- October 2012 - \$90
- October 2013 - \$100
- October 2014 - \$150
- October 2015 - \$200
- October 2016 - \$275
- October 2017 - \$310

The SSIA was the first foot in the door for the repeal of the offset. Now the Sharp case is another foot in the door. We have support on the Hill for the repeal of the offset but the impediment has been the last minute consensus on how to pay for the offset elimination. The fight will go on. For more on the Sharp case, refer to [www.dfas.mil/rapay/annuitantstoreceivefullsbpanddicbenefits.html](http://www.dfas.mil/rapay/annuitantstoreceivefullsbpanddicbenefits.html) . General information on SBP can be found in the DFAS booklet at [www.dfas.mil/rapay/annuities/sbp/SBPGuideBook.pdf](http://www.dfas.mil/rapay/annuities/sbp/SBPGuideBook.pdf) . [Source: MOAA News Exchange 16 Jun 2010 ++]

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**NDAA 2011 Update 04:** Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said President Obama’s veto threat on the fiscal 2011 defense authorization bill remains strong, even though the bill is likely to contain provisions that the White House has fought hard for. The Pentagon would still recommend vetoing the measure if it contains a continuation of the C-17 cargo plane program or an authorization for a second engine model for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, Gates said 16 JUN in written testimony for a Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee hearing. Inclusion of a repeal of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy that bans gays in the military would not affect the veto threat, Gates said. “I will continue to strongly recommend that the president veto any legislation that sustains the continuation of the C-17 or the F-35 extra engine,” Gates wrote. “And given some recent commentary, it would be a serious mistake to believe the president would accept these unneeded programs simply because the authorization or appropriations legislation includes other provisions important to him and this administration.” Some observers have suggested that Obama might sign a bill with the C-17 and F-35 provisions if it had a repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell.” The House has passed its version of the measure. The Senate Armed Services panel has approved that chamber’s bill, which is awaiting floor action. Both bills include a provision to repeal “don’t ask, don’t tell.” [Source: CQ Politics News 16 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Government Paper Checks:** The Treasury Department said that most government benefits payments will be made by direct deposit by 2013, the latest in a series of cost-cutting moves by the Obama administration. The change will eliminate about 136 million paper checks sent by the Social Security Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, Railroad Retirement Board and Office of Personnel Management, and caps years of efforts to cut back on paper and postage costs. The move should cut about \$48 million in government postage costs and save taxpayers approximately \$303 million in the first five years after the switch, Treasury said. Americans who enroll for benefits payments on or after 1 MAR 2011, will receive them by direct deposit or be enrolled in the government's Direct Express Debit MasterCard program if they do not provide bank account information. Beneficiaries now receiving payments will switch to direct deposit or the debit card by 1 MAR 2013, after agencies inform them of the changes, according to the proposed rule change set for publication in the Federal Register.

About 1 million Americans already receive benefit payments through the Direct Express card, according to the Office of Management and Budget. Officials argue that direct deposits or the debit cards ensure safe, quick delivery of funds and make receiving payments easier for residents hit by natural disasters. The change also coincides with the Obama administration's ongoing efforts to address the soaring deficit and adapt government operations to new technology. "This is precisely the type of smart, streamlined improvement that this administration is committed to making across government to boost efficiency and modernize how we do business," OMB Director Peter Orszag said in a statement. [Source: The Washington Post Ed O’Keefe article 14 Jun 2010 ++]

**California Vet Home Update 08:** Nearly 400 elderly and disabled veterans will soon have a new housing and long-term care facility to call their own, following the official opening on 14 JUN of the West Los Angeles Veterans Home. The \$253 million facility is located on 17 acres in Westwood that the U.S. Veterans Administration gave to the state of California to operate an assisted living and skilled nursing facility for those who were honorably discharged from the armed services. Gov. Schwarzenegger traveled to Los Angeles for Monday's dedication ceremony. "This will be a place where our veterans can be comfortable and honored, the least they deserve for serving our country in uniform," he said. "I am very proud of the work my administration has done on behalf of our military men and women and I promise that we will continue to do everything in our power to make sure all our veterans, young and old, are treated with the respect and dignity they have earned." The home will be the state of California's sixth facility for veterans once it begins admitting applicants by this fall. It will provide services and amenities for veterans who are unable to live independently, including a dementia and Alzheimer's unit.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs contributed approximately \$142 million to the project, according to a press release from the governor's office. An additional \$111 million for the facility came from state general obligation bonds and lease revenue bonds. While it's possible the facility could house homeless veterans living in Los Angeles County, the care offered at the home will be geared toward severely injured and elderly veterans who require regular attention, said J.P. Tremblay, deputy secretary for the California Department of Veterans Affairs. The facility will not be equipped to handle those with substance abuse problems or severe mental illnesses, he said. Veterans will have to be clean and sober to be admitted. Located at 800 Bringham Ave. on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' healthcare campus, patients at the facility will have access to both federal and state medical personnel. The ribbon cutting ceremony came three years after CalVet broke ground on the facility, and two decades since California officials began discussing the idea of a state-run veterans home in Los Angeles, Tremblay said. CalVet recently dedicated veterans homes in Ventura and Lancaster. State-operated facilities for veterans are also located in Yountville, Chula Vista and Barstow, and the state broke ground on two additional veterans homes last month in Fresno and Redding. [Source: Santa Monica Daily Press Nick Taborek article 15 Jun 2010 ++]

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**Tricare Smoking Quitline:** Tricare's Smoking Quitline is a telephone support and referral service. Tricare's Smoking Quitline is now accepting calls! All non-Medicare eligible Tricare beneficiaries within the U.S. can get assistance with going "smoke-free" by calling the quitline 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including weekends and holidays. Beneficiaries residing in the Tricare South Region can reach the quitline at (877) 414-9949. Beneficiaries living in the North Region can call (866) 459-8766 and those living in the West Region can call (866) 244-6870. Beneficiaries who call will be assessed and receive guidance for a smoking cessation plan that fits their unique smoking habits. Cessation materials can also be provided through U.S. mail upon request. Although the new Tricare Smoking Quitline is geared toward smoking cessation only, any Tricare beneficiaries who want to quit using tobacco, including the smokeless kind, can get support through the Department of Defense's comprehensive Quit Tobacco website, [www.ucanquit2.org](http://www.ucanquit2.org). Ucanquit2 offers interactive, Web-based tobacco cessation training along with live, real-time encouragement from trained tobacco cessation coaches via the 24/7 "chat" feature. Users also have the opportunity to exchange information through the website's blog and electronic bulletin board and link to the website's Twitter, Facebook, MySpace and YouTube pages. Many military treatment facilities offer smoking cessation programs and beneficiaries should check locally for more information on those programs. A military treatment facility locator is at [www.tricare.mil/mtf](http://www.tricare.mil/mtf). Medicare eligible beneficiaries are reminded they may be eligible for smoking cessation benefits through Medicare Part B. Check for more information at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). [Source: Tricare news Release No 10-55 dtd 15 Jun 2010 ++]

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**SNAP Update 01:** On 1 OCT 08 the federal food stamp program was replaced by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The SNAP food stamp program makes it easy to find out if you qualify for food stamps. All you need to do is go online at <http://foodstampsnow.org> and answer questions about where you live, who you live with, your income, and your assets (i.e. money in savings or checking accounts, retirement plans, and other assets). If, after completing the SNAP food stamp eligibility questions, you think you qualify for food stamps the next step is completing the SNAP food stamp application. You can pick up a

SNAP food stamp application at your local state SNAP office or they can mail one to you. Some states allow SNAP food stamp applicants to apply for food stamps online. To find the closest SNAP food stamp office in your state refer to [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/map.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/outreach/map.htm) or call the SNAP information line at 1(800) 221-5689. If you qualify, to get the application process going as soon as possible complete the first part of it (your name, address, and signature) and leave it with a SNAP worker while you're at the SNAP office . This will get your application process going while you complete the rest of the application.

After completing the application for food stamp benefits you'll have an interview with a SNAP worker. This must be scheduled in advance. When you arrive for the SNAP interview bring your complete application and the documents or papers you need to have. Ask your SNAP worker which documents you will need to bring. It will depend on your individual circumstances and may be different for each person. However, these documents are often required when applying for food stamps.

- Drivers license or state ID card.
- Birth certificate; pay stubs.
- Eligibility letters for SSI, VA or other assistance you receive.
- A copy of your apartment lease or mortgage statement.
- Utility bills.
- Proof of daycare or child support payments.
- Medical bills that you pay if you have a disability or are age 60 and older

Unlike the old Federal Food Stamp program SNAP uses EBT cards (similar to ATM cards) instead of coupon books. When you go grocery shopping with your SNAP card simply hand the card to the cashier and he or she will deduct your food purchases from your monthly total. Many of the same food stamp rules apply to SNAP: Only food purchases (no pet food), no cigarettes or alcohol, and no household products, medicine or vitamins. For more details about the SNAP food stamp program including how to use the SNAP EBT card, what to do if you lose your card, and answers to frequently-asked questions refer to [www.fns.usda.gov/snap/faqs.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/faqs.htm). [Source: About.Com Senior Living Sharon O'Brien article Jun 2010 ++]

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**Retirement Calculators:** A recent study by the Society of Actuaries says many popular calculators have serious flaws. These potential hazards could lead to serious miscalculations when you're plotting your financial future. The report analyzed 12 retirement calculators created by financial services firms, software companies, nonprofits, and government for consumers and financial planning pros. All but one of the six consumer calculators were no charge: the Fidelity Retirement Income Planner, the AARP retirement planning calculator, MetLife calculator, U.S. Department of Labor and the T. Rowe Price Retirement Income Calculator. ESPlanner, created by Boston University economics professor Larry Kotlikoff, starts at \$149 per year. Unlike the freebies, ESPlanner gathers more detailed data, making its forecasts more reliable. The no cost online tools, as a group, had a host of problems. "These tools take a project that is fairly complex and boil it down to something simple," says John Turner, an economist and co-author of the report. "They don't ask you to consider a lot of important variables." Some can, however, provide a decent starting point for your retirement planning, as a MoneyWatch test found. To get better results when you run your own numbers, look for what blogger Steve Vernon says are highlights of the best calculators, and watch out for the following six areas where retirement calculators may be getting it wrong.

**1. Social Security Projections.** Most retirees get a third or more of retirement income from Social Security. Yet many retirement calculators don't gather the detailed information needed to project these benefits accurately, Turner says. "They often project Social Security income using a bare minimum of information: typically your current earnings, your age, and the year you expect to retire," he says. Although the size of your Social Security payments will vary depending on when you decide to start collecting the checks, Turner found that many calculators don't analyze this choice in enough detail. So to get the best guess for your Social Security benefits, use the Social Security Administration's online retirement estimator, which will give you a personalized projection using your actual earnings history. Another problem: Turner found that many of the calculators low-ball the increases you'll get from Social Security's annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), which is pegged to the Consumer Price Index. "Typically, the inflation assumptions are hidden from the user," he says. "But a few do reveal to you that, for unknown reasons, they use a COLA that is less than the inflation rate."

**2. Rate-of-Return Assumptions.** Three calculators used pre-set future investment rate-of-return assumptions that you can't change, and their percentages varied widely. One, created by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employee Benefits Security Administration, assumed a 5% average annual return from 401(k)s; several others assumed 10%. If a calculator won't let you choose your anticipated rate of return, either be sure you're comfortable with its assumption or walk away. The best calculators let you put in what-if scenarios, and run the numbers using alternative rate-of-return projections. Going this route can let you see how much you might have at retirement using both conservative and aggressive scenarios. While no one can predict the market's future rate of return, the long-term after-inflation rate of return on stocks has averaged 6.8% per year. But odds are you are not invested entirely in stocks, and the fixed-income portion of your portfolio is likely to produce lower returns. So when you're plugging in numbers, base it on your asset allocation, and consider that as you get closer to retirement, you'll want to reduce your stock exposure and boost your bond exposure. A conservative portfolio might yield more like 4% a year.

**3. Life Expectancy.** It's impossible to know how long you'll live, of course. On average, 65-year-old men can expect to live another 17 years, and women another 20 years. Some calculators, the study found, automatically input life expectancy figures. But they fail to account for differences by race, income, and gender. And they also don't take into consideration that you or your spouse might live longer than the averages. "The probability that one [spouse] will live beyond the average is pretty high," says Kirk Kreikemeier, a financial advisor and actuary who served as an advisor for the SOA study. If a calculator forces you to make a longevity prediction, base it on your family history and your health. If you're married, use different life expectancy numbers for you and your spouse, since women tend to live several years longer than men. Several sites help you predict life expectancy; no guarantees, but try the calculators at Real Age, Livingto100 or the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School.

**4. Housing Info.** The calculators make very different assumptions about what you'll do with your house at retirement. "Some assume you won't liquidate your home; others assume you will sell and downsize," Turner says. Very few of the tools analyze the impact on your finances of carrying a mortgage into retirement. Among the no cost calculators reviewed, only the U.S. Department of Labor calculator lets you plug in home equity when calculating your retirement assets. When forecasting your finances in retirement, make your best guess about how much you'll be paying for a mortgage or rent, whether you'll tap your home equity and any income you might receive from selling your home.

**5. Inflation Forecasts.** When it came to inflation, the calculators barely wanted to be bothered. None of the no cost calculators — and few of the professional tools — listed inflation as a retirement-planning risk. Some of the tools let you plug in just one percentage forecast, even though inflation can fluctuate widely over time. Others put in their own default inflation rate, ranging from 2.3 to 4.6%. That spread can make a huge difference in how much the purchasing power of your assets will shrink over a 25-year retirement. Say you have \$1 million and plan to retire in 10 years. With 2.3% annual inflation between now and then, your \$1 million would be worth \$796,606 at retirement. It would erode to \$637,798 if inflation averages 4.6%, according to Inflation.data.com. Stick with retirement calculators allowing you to input alternative inflation scenarios, and run the numbers in a couple of ways. You never know.

**6. Spouses.** Few of the no cost calculators helped couples forecast retirement income for a surviving spouse. They rarely let users enter separate information for both spouses and run numbers with differing life expectancies for them, for example. When the calculators recommended annuities for retirement income (most didn't), none suggested buying one with a survivor's benefit. Some of the calculators allow for separate entry of data for each spouse, but even these typically assume that both people retire at the same time. Spousal issues regarding Social Security benefit claims can be complex — beyond the capability of any online calculator. If you're married, calculate retirement income needs for you and your spouse together and separately, using different life expectancy scenarios. This will help ensure that the one who lives longer won't run out of cash. "Doing the 'what-ifs' can help you see just how differently things can turn out," says Turner.

[Source: CBS [www.Moneywatch.com](http://www.Moneywatch.com) Mark Miller | Apr 21, 2010 ++]

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**Credit Card Agreements:** In compliance with the Credit CARD Act of 2009, the Federal Reserve has posted credit card agreements from more than 300 credit card issuers. Credit card agreements contain the terms, conditions, and pricing for their credit cards. They're the notorious "fine print" that makes credit cards so hard to understand. The availability of these credit card agreements doesn't necessarily make it easier to access your credit card agreement or to compare your credit card to that of another credit card

issuer. Searching the database by credit card issuer, for example, simply returns a list of all that issuers credit card agreements. (For Chase Bank, 28 agreements were returned.) You have to click through all the agreements to find the one for your credit card, if you find it at all. Chase Bank's agreements didn't indicate which credit card they were for. Fortunately, a few banks, like American Express and Compass Bank, did list the name of the credit card at the top of the credit card agreement.

The Federal Reserve's database of credit card agreements will be updated quarterly with the next update on 2 AUG 2010. The database is currently available on the Federal Reserve's website [www.federalreserve.gov/creditcardagreements/default.aspx](http://www.federalreserve.gov/creditcardagreements/default.aspx). The PDF version of each agreement is much easier to read. Credit card issuers are also required to post credit card agreements online and allow cardholders to request their agreement. If you cannot find yours you can find a form to request the agreement. Banks with fewer than 10,000 credit card accounts do not have to submit their credit card agreements to the Federal Reserve, nor do they have to post the credit card agreement online. However, they are required to make credit card agreements available to cardholders upon request. [Source: About.com Credit/Debt Management LaToya Irby article 25 May 2010 ++]

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## Medicare Fraud Update 42:

- **El Paso TX** - Dr. Anthony Francis Valdez, 56, owner of the Institute of Pain Management was charged 15 JUN with carrying out an estimated \$41 million fraudulent health care benefit program billing scheme. During JAN 01 thru DEC 09, Valdez caused fraudulent claims to be submitted to Medicare, Medicaid, Tricare and the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission (TWCC). Valdez caused to be submitted claims for reimbursement of peripheral nerve injections, facet injection procedures and Level Four office visits-typically involving 25 minutes of face-to-face time between patient and physician-which never were performed. Instead of the above-mentioned procedures, he performed prolotherapy on his patients, a procedure the healthcare benefit programs do not reimburse. Conviction on each count of wire fraud (16), mail fraud (21) and unlawful distribution of a controlled substance (4) is punishable by up to 20 years in federal prison; health care fraud (21) up to ten years in federal prison; and, making a false statement (20) up to five years in federal prison. The indictment also included a notice of criminal forfeiture whereby the government is seeking the forfeiture of more than \$1.7 million in cash, his residence in El Paso, his residence in San Antonio and five vehicles. The government is also seeking a monetary judgment in the case for over \$41.8 million.
- **Augusta GA** - The United States has filed a civil False Claims Act complaint against Augusta Medical Systems and its former owner, Julian Osbon, for allegedly submitting fraudulent claims to Medicare and receiving over \$690,000 in improper payments. The complaint alleges that for a period of more than one year, Augusta Medical billed Medicare for vacuum erection devices during a time in which it was not an authorized Medicare supplier. Accordingly, it was not entitled to receive Medicare reimbursement during this period. Osbon had quickly closed his former company, opened Augusta Medical and had hoped to obtain the necessary authorizations from Medicare. However, Osbon allegedly disregarded the law and the advice of his own executive team and proceeded to bill Medicare for thousands of erection devices without having a valid billing number. Vacuum erection devices are covered by Medicare. The complaint was filed under the civil False Claims Act which provides for liability for triple damages and a penalty between \$5,500 and \$11,000 per claim for anyone who submits or causes the submission of a false or fraudulent claim to the United States. The U.S. Attorney's Office initially became aware of these allegations through a whistleblower.

[Source: Fraud News Daily reports 16-30 Jun 2010 ++]

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## Medicaid Fraud Update 16:

- **Sparta NC** - Kristie Brake and Kimberly Miles, co-owners of Heritage Home Care, were sentenced 15 JUN to 46 months imprisonment each and ordered to repay Medicaid more than \$600,000. An investigation by Medicaid Investigations Unit within the N.C. Attorney General's Office, found that Heritage submitted 15,833 fraudulent Medicaid claims totaling \$622,405.89 for in-home assistance to people with a disabilities.
- **Brownsville TX** - Tara R. Rios Ybarra (District 43 Texas State Representative), a dentist with her own private dental practice, was charged on 22 JUN in 3 of a 22-count indictment with allegedly illegally referring Medicaid beneficiaries in

exchange for 15% of the total payment made by Medicaid. This followed the arrest of Gary Morgan Schwarz DDS, MSD, along with two of his office employees and two other area dentists Diana Woo Paparelli, 57, and Colbert J. Glenn, 49. All three defendants face a maximum punishment of up to five years in prison and a fine not to exceed \$25,000 for each offense upon conviction.

- **Chesterfield VA** - Denise C. McCreary, 43, was convicted by a jury and faces a maximum punishment of 90 years in prison and \$2.25 million in fines when sentenced on 17 SEP. She was convicted on nine counts of health-care fraud allegedly involving \$601,580 in bogus Medicaid claims. Evidence showed that McCreary owned and operated Camp Hope Youth Services, a Medicaid-contracted provider of intensive in-home therapy services for children and adolescents. The services, offered by Medicaid in Virginia, are designed to help youths at risk of being removed from their homes, or who are being returned to their homes after removal, because of significant mental-health, behavioral or emotional issues. McCreary billed Medicaid for services that were not reimbursable because the services did not address a child's specific mental-health issues, were not provided by qualified mental-health workers and were not provided to children who were in need of the services. She also billed Medicaid for services that were never provided.

[Source: Fraud News Daily reports 16-30 Jun 2010 ++]

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**State Veteran's Benefits:** The state of Alaska provides several benefits to veterans. To obtain information on these refer to this **Bulletin's Attachment** for an overview of those listed below. Benefits are available to veterans who are residents of the state. For a more detailed explanation of each click on "**Learn more about ...**" wording highlighted in blue on the attachment.

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

[Source: [www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/alaska-state-veterans-benefits](http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/alaska-state-veterans-benefits) Jun 2010 ++]

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**Military History:** The commonwealth of the Philippines was governed on the structure of outmoded strategies of former colonial governments. New goals included the development of an independent military force, was widely scattered and inadequate. The United States government in principal provided token support until the threat of war surfaced. The recruiting and funding of the Philippine Scouts was under the jurisdiction of the United States, resulted in the establishment and foundation of The Philippine Army. President Delano Roosevelt of the United States commissioned General Douglas MacArthur, to become the mentor of the infant military force. The appointment was withdrawn, caused by internal colonial American petty political dissention and jealousies. MacArthur retired from American military service in 1937 to accept the Baton of Field Marshall, of the Philippines, by an Act of the commonwealth government to retain the General's services. General MacArthur had envisioned the growing threat of war in the far-east. He addressed his underlying concept which called for the full support of Commonwealth government and instilled upon President Manuel Quezon to guard against the probable menace. The young nation was practically defenseless in 1947 to cope with threat that, within five years, became a reality. Under MacArthur's expertise and direction were implemented the insurmountable plans for the defense of hundreds of islands in the archipelago. On July 27, 1941, war clouds were brewing, and the retired General was recalled to active American military service this time to energize and muster the infant Philippine Army. By this act, the United States was concerned in the continued sovereignty of the Philippines. To learn more about Philippine participation in WWII refer to the **Philippine Army attachment to this Bulletin**. [Source [www.Mil.com](http://www.Mil.com) Jun 2010 ++]

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### **Military History Anniversaries:**

- Jul 01 1898 - Spanish-American War: The Battle of San Juan Hill is fought in Santiago de Cuba.
- Jul 08 1948 - The United States Air Force accepts its first female recruits into a program called Women in the Air Force (WAF)

- Jul 01 1863 - Civil War: Battle of Gettysburg, Pa; Lee's northward advance halted
- Jul 01 1907 - World's 1st air force established (US Army)
- Jul 01 1970 – Vietnam: 23 day Siege of Fire Base Ripcord began
- Jul 02 1926 - US Army Air Corps created; Distinguish Flying Cross authorized
- Jul 03 1814 - Revolutionary War: Americans capture Fort Erie Canada
- Jul 03 1898 - Spanish American War: U.S. Navy defeats Spanish fleet in Santiago harbor Cuba
- Jul 03 1915 - U.S. Marines landed in Haiti following the assassination of the Haitian president Vilbrun Guillaume. The Marines remained as occupation forces until 1934
- Jul 03 1950 - Korean War: 1st time US & North Korean forces clash in Korean War
- Jul 03 1988 - USS Vincennes in Strait of Hormoez shoots Iran Airbus A300, kills 290
- Jul 04 1776 - Revolutionary War: Declaration of Independence - U.S. gains independence from Britain
- Jul 04 1944 - WWII: 1st Japanese kamikaze attack U.S. fleet near Iwo Jima
- Jul 05 1945 - WWII: Liberation of the Philippines declared.
- Jul 06 1777 - Revolutionary War: British Gen Burgoyne captures Fort Ticonderoga from Americans
- Jul 06 1848 - Mexican-American War: Ended with the Treaty of Guadeloupe Hidalgo
- Jul 07 1863 - Civil War: 1st military draft by US (exemptions cost \$100)
- Jul 07 1941 - WWII: U.S. forces land in Iceland to forestall Nazi invasion
- Jul 08 1950 - Korean War: Gen Douglas MacArthur named commander-in-chief UN forces in Korea
- Jul 09 1944 - WWII: The island of Saipan in the Marianas fell to U.S. troops following their defeat of Japanese defenders
- Jul 09 1944 - WWII: Napalm was used for the first time during the American invasion of Tinian in the Marianas.
- Jul 09 1951 – WWII: Pres Truman asked Congress to formally end state of war with Germany
- Jul 10 1943 - WWII: Operation Husky - U.S. & Britain invade Sicily.
- Jul 11 1789 - U.S. Marine Corps created by an act of Congress
- Jul 11 1864 - Civil War: Confederate forces led by Gen J Early begin invasion of Wash DC
- Jul 12 1812 - War of 1812: U.S. forces led by Gen Hull invade Canada
- Jul 13 1945 - WWII: 1st atom bomb explodes in New Mexico
- Jul 14 1863 - Civil War: Confederate forces under GEN Robert E. Lee, defeated after three days of fighting at the battle of Gettysburg, began their withdrawal to the South.
- Jul 14 1945 - Battleship USS South Dakota is 1st US ship to bombard Japan
- Jul 15 1779 - Revolutionary War: U.S. troops under Gen A Wayne conquer Ft Stony Point, NY
- Jul 15 1918 - WWII: Beginning of the Second Battle of the Marne between German forces on one side and French, American, British, and Italian troops on the other side. The battle ended on 4 AUG.
- Jul 15 1958 - U.S. Marines deployed in Lebanon

[Source: Various Jun 2010 ++]

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## Military Trivia 7:

- The term "Jeep" and how the vehicle derived its name is a widely debated subject. The most common belief is that the name came from the GP designation that the Ford company gave the vehicle, where people blended the two letters together to make a word. Others believe that it came from the term that the Army used to designate untested vehicles – they simply referred to them as jeeps. A third alternative is that the name came from Eugene the Jeep, a character in Popeye.
- In 1940, the Army set up a competition to all automotive companies in an attempt to quickly find a suitable vehicle for the war. With a bid end date of 22 JUL 40, the companies who had decided to enter had 49 days to prepare and present a suitable prototype, and then had another 75 days to finish the required 70 vehicles. Only three companies entered: Ford Motor Company, Willys Motors, and American Bantam Car Company. Although Willys offered the lowest price, American Bantam was the only entry that completed the prototypes in time. Unfortunately, it failed the torque test, and the competition was re-opened to Ford and Willys

- The Army Jeep was first introduced in 1941. The first Jeep rendition, however, was the Bantam BRC. Afterwards, the Army allowed Willys-Overland and Ford to make the Army Jeeps that were to be used for combat.
- There were a total of 647,925 Jeeps made during World War II.
- According to Jeep4Ever.ca, "One Battered Jeep from WWII received a Purple Heart after successfully surviving two beach landings."
- Jeep4Ever.ca also gives the following anecdote about Army Jeeps: "During WWII Jeeps were coming out of the Willys and Ford Plants at rate of one jeep per one and a half minutes and by the end of the war over 700,000 had been built. The Americans had so many Jeeps that some German soldiers believed each America GI got his own Jeep as standard issue. In France, three American soldiers walked up to a guard post and told the sentry that they were lost. The Frenchman immediately told them to surrender and found that they were German soldiers in disguise. When he was asked how he knew, he replied that Americans always travel in jeeps. Another example happened in Belgium when a guard ordered three German soldiers to surrender after he saw that a colonel was riding in the back seat. He explained later that if they were American that the officer would be driving and the infantryman would be in the backseat."
- The first Civilian Jeep was produced in 1944 by Willys-Overland. Designated as a CJ (civilian jeep), they retained the basic form and design of the Army Jeep until 1986, when it was revamped and became the Jeep Wrangler.
- There have been more than 74 different models of jeeps through the years, including Army Jeeps and Civilian Jeeps. There are currently 6 models of jeep in production. They include: the Jeep Wrangler, the Jeep Grand Cherokee, the Jeep Liberty, the Jeep Commander, the Jeep Compass, and the Jeep Patriot. There are 37 different Jeep concept vehicles.
- Ford tried to sue Willys for the Jeep naming rights, and lost. When Willys was sold to other companies, the name Jeep went with it. Therefore, Chrysler is now in possession of the Jeep name.

[Source: [www.armyjeepsale.com/jeep-trivia.html](http://www.armyjeepsale.com/jeep-trivia.html) Jun 2010 ++]



**Tax Burden for New Mexico Retirees:** 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. Following are the taxes you can expect to pay if you retire in New Mexico:

**State Sales Tax:** 5.375% (prescription drugs exempt); county and city taxes may add another 2.68%. Certain food and medical expenses are exempt.

**Gasoline Tax:** 18.8 cents/gallon

**Diesel Fuel Tax:** 22.8 cents/gallon

**Cigarette Tax \$0.91** cents/pack of 20

**Personal Income Taxes**

**Tax Rate Range:** - Low -1.7%; High - 5.3%

**Income Brackets:** \*4: Lowest - \$5,500; Highest - \$16,000

**Personal Exemptions:** \*\* Single - \$3,500; Married - \$7,000;

Dependents - \$3,500

**Additional Exemptions:** Taxpayer or spouse 65 or older - up to \$10,900 deduction each from taxable income. An additional tax exemption of up to \$2,500 is allowed for low- and middle-income taxpayers.

**Standard Deduction:** Single - \$5,450; Married filing jointly - \$9,500

**Medical/Dental Deduction:** Credit of 3% of unreimbursed prescription drug expenses to maximum of \$150 per individual or \$300 per return. Also, if you or your spouse are age 65 and over and have unreimbursed or uncompensated medical care expenses of \$28,000 or more for yourself, your spouse or dependents during the tax year, you are eligible for a \$3,000 exemption and a credit of \$2,800. [Click for details.](#)

**Federal Income Tax Deduction:** None

**Retirement Income:**

**Retirement Income Taxes:** The state offers a low- and middle income exemption. The maximum exemption is \$2,500. To qualify, the amount on line 7 of the state income tax form must be equal to or less than \$36,667 (single), \$27,500 (married filing separately), or \$55,000 (married filing jointly). A deduction also applies for those 65 and older if your adjusted gross income is not over \$51,000 for a joint return, \$28,500 for a single taxpayer, or \$25,500 for a married taxpayer filing separately.

**Retired Military Pay:** See above.

**Military Disability Retired Pay:** Retirees who entered the military before Sept. 24, 1975, and members receiving disability retirements based on combat injuries or who could receive disability payments from the VA are covered by laws giving disability broad exemption from federal income tax. Most military retired pay based on service-related disabilities also is free from federal income tax, but there is no guarantee of total protection.

**VA Disability Dependency and Indemnity Compensation:** VA benefits are not taxable because they generally are for disabilities and are not subject to federal or state taxes.

**Military SBP/SSBP/RCSBP/RSFPP:** Generally subject to state taxes for those states with income tax. Check with state department of revenue office.

### **Property Taxes**

All property, whether real or personal, is subject to state and local property taxes. Rates vary substantially and depend on property type and location. The statewide weighted average rates, i.e., total obligations/total net taxable value, are about \$26.47 for residential property. Assessors usually determine market value by the sales-comparison approach which matches a property's value to that of similar properties. The valuation of a residence that did not change hands in the prior year may not increase by more than 3% annually. One-third of the property's market value (assessment) is its taxable value. The taxable value may be further reduced by exemptions of \$2,000 each of heads of households and \$4,000 for veterans.

There is a property tax rebate for residents age 65 and older. Their modified gross income cannot exceed \$18,000 for the tax year and they cannot have been claimed as a dependent on another taxpayer's return. Homeowners 65 and older who earn \$18,000 (\$25,000 in Sandoval County) or less are eligible for a credit of up to \$250 (married filing jointly) or \$125 for single taxpayers. Call 505-827-0870 for details.

For details on property taxes refer to [www.tax.state.nm.us/oos/PropertyTaxFAQ.pdf](http://www.tax.state.nm.us/oos/PropertyTaxFAQ.pdf) If you are a senior refer to [www.tax.state.nm.us/pubs/brochure\\_1.pdf](http://www.tax.state.nm.us/pubs/brochure_1.pdf) for some useful information.

**Inheritance and Estate Taxes** - There is no inheritance tax but an inheritance may be reflected in a taxpayer's modified gross income and taxed that way. The estate tax is related to federal estate tax collection.

For further information, visit the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department site [www.tax.state.nm.us](http://www.tax.state.nm.us).

Information for new residents is available at [www.tax.state.nm.us/pubs/fy1101.pdf](http://www.tax.state.nm.us/pubs/fy1101.pdf) . [Source: [www.retirementliving.com](http://www.retirementliving.com) Jun 2010 +]

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**Congressional Alphabet:** To better understand what is happening to veteran legislation as it proceeds through Congress it is useful to know the language used by our representatives as they conduct business. Following are some of the words or expressions you will see while reading about or listening to House and Senate sessions:

- **CALENDAR WEDNESDAY.** An older procedure letting committees call up bills of their choice on Wednesdays. It is routinely set aside each week. It was created in 1910 to challenge the speaker's control of the agenda.
- **CALL UP A BILL.** To raise it on the floor for immediate consideration.
- **CALL of THE HOUSE.** A type of quorum call, used to bring absent members to the floor when no vote is pending. It is also used automatically after any vote which had less than a quorum participating.
- **CAPITOL HILL.** Refers to the area encompassing the U.S. Capitol, and the House & Senate office buildings. The term refers to an incline once known as "Jenkins Hill," and includes the surrounding residential area.
- **CASEWORK.** Refers to intermediary work performed by members of Congress for constituents who may have problems, or "cases", with the federal government.

- **CATS AND DOG.** These are leftover "stray" bills on minor subjects saved for days with light floor schedules.
- **CAUCUS.** This is an informal group of members sharing an interest in the same policy issues. Examples include the Arts Caucus, the Democratic Caucus, the Black Caucus, the Rural Caucus, etc.
- **CBO.** Congressional Budget Office, conducts non-partisan economic analysis and research. CBO also evaluates proposed bills and amendments, assessing their potential cost.
- **C.F.R.** Stands for the code of federal regulations. These are rules written by federal agencies.
- **CHAIRPERSON.** The leader of a congressional committee. Chairmen are always members of the majority party, often those with seniority; their powers include the ability to schedule hearings and allocate committee budget.
- **CHAPLAIN of THE HOUSE OR SENATE.** The individual who opens the day in his respective Chamber with prayer & gives pastoral counsel to its members.
- **CLERK of THE HOUSE.** The person who creates and maintains legislative documents, voting tallies, and other records. The business management of the House is handled by the new Chief Administrative Officer.
- **CLOAKROOMS.** Two long, narrow rooms at the rear of the House and Senate chamber, one for each party. Members meet in the cloakrooms for private conversations, phone calls, and snacks.
- **CLOSED RULE.** A rule that bans amendments to a bill on the House floor, with the exception of Committee amendments. Committee amendments are approved in advance by a committee and offered by its chairman or his/her designee.
- **CLOTURE.** The formal procedure used to end a filibuster. It can take up to three days and requires 60 votes. Cloture can also be used even if there is no filibuster underway, to ban non-germane amendments. If cloture wins, 30 additional hours of debate are allowed prior to voting, but they are rarely used. If cloture fails, debate would continue without limits. Instead, the bill is usually set aside.
- **CODE.** Stands for Congressional Delegation. It refers to a trip abroad by a group of members.
- **COLA.** A cost-of-living-adjustment, increasing federal benefit payments to keep current with inflation.
- **COLLEAGUE.** A term of address used by members to refer to one another, as in "my distinguished colleague."
- **COLLOQUY.** A pre-scripted floor dialogue between the chairman of a committee and another congressman. The dialogue seeks to clarify the intent behind certain provisions for purposes of legislative history.
- **COMMIT A BILL.** To send it to a committee for initial consideration rather than debating it immediately.
- **COMMITTEE of the WHOLE.** The entire House meeting in the form of a committee. This allows members to follow the more expeditious rules of a committee. House rules require that all money bills be considered in the Committee of the Whole.
- **COMMITTEE REPORT.** A report prepared by a House or Senate Committee to explain the content of a bill being reported. Committee reports are optional in the Senate, but mandatory in the House. They contain views of Committee members, a cost impact analysis, and compare the bill to current law.
- **COMPANION BILL.** A bill that is similar or may be identical to one introduced in the other house of Congress.
- **CONCURRENT RESOLUTION.** A resolution used to take action or express opinion on behalf of both the House and Senate. It does not make law. Uses include fixing adjournment dates & setting the annual congressional budget.
- **CONFeree.** A Member of Congress named to represent his/her chamber in negotiations with the other house. Formally known as "managers," the conferees meet in a conference committee to negotiate a compromise between the House and Senate versions of a bill.
- **CONFERENCE.** Refers to a formal meeting, or series of meetings, between House and Senate Members. The purpose of a conference is to reconcile the differences between the House and Senate versions of a bill.
- **CONFERENCE COMMITTEE.** A temporary panel of House and Senate negotiators. A conference committee is created to resolve differences between versions of similar House and Senate bills.
- **CONFERENCE REPORT.** Refers to the final version of a bill proposed by House and Senate conferees. It also contains the "statement of managers," a section-by-section explanation of the agreement
- **CONFIRMATION.** Refers to the Senate's constitutional duty to approve or reject presidential nominations.
- **THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.** A daily account of House and Senate floor debate, votes and members' remarks. It is printed by the Government Printing Office and for sale to the public. It's also on the internet.
- **CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE (CRS).** Refers to the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress. CRS responds to requests for general information and issue analysis only from Members, Committees, or staff.

- **CONSTITUENCY SERVICE.** Refers to the assistance given constituents by Members of Congress in non-legislative areas. Most requests are for help in obtaining action from federal agencies on individual problems and cases. Other services include obtaining government information and publications, flags flown over the capitol, and military academy appointments.
- **CONSTITUENTS.** Members refer to the people who live in their Congressional district or state as their "constituents."
- **CONTINUING RESOLUTION.** Also known as a "CR," continues funding for a program if the fiscal year ends without a new appropriation in place. A "CR" provides temporary funding at current levels or less.
- **CONTRACT AUTHORITY.** Permits a federal agency to obligate money prior to actually having the funds in hand.
- **CORDON RULE.** The Rule requires Senate committee reports to show in detail how a bill would change current law. The rule is named after the Oregon Senator who suggested it, Guy Cordon. He served from 1944 - 1955.
- **CORRECTIONS CALENDAR.** This Calendar is used to repeal or revise laws considered outdated, harmful, or unnecessary. A 3/5 vote is required to pass a corrections bill. It may be amended only by committee-approved language.
- **CO-SPONSOR.** A member who formally adds his/her name as a supporter to another member's bill. An initial cosponsor is one who was listed at the time of the bill's introduction, not added on later.

[Source: C-SPAN Congressional Glossary Jun 2010 ++]

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**Veteran Legislation Status 28 JUN 2010:** For or a listing of Congressional bills of interest to the veteran community that have been introduced in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress refer to the Bulletin's **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 on 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 perhaps the most effective way to let your Representative and Senators know your opinion. Whether you are calling into a local or Washington, D.C. office; sending a letter or e-mail; signing a petition; or making a personal visit, Members of Congress are the most receptive and open to suggestions from their constituents. The key to increasing cosponsorship 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 on <http://thomas.loc.gov> your legislator's phone number, mailing address, or email/website to communicate with a message or letter of your own making. Refer to [http://www.thecapitol.net/FAQ/cong\\_schedule.html](http://www.thecapitol.net/FAQ/cong_schedule.html) for dates that you can access your legislators on their home turf. [Source: RAO Bulletin Attachment 28 Jun 2010 ++]

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## Have You Heard?

A crusty old Marine Sergeant Major found himself at a gala event hosted by a local liberal arts college. There was no shortage of young, idealistic ladies in attendance, one of whom approached the Sergeant Major and asked, 'Excuse me, Sergeant Major, but you seem to be a very serious man. Is something bothering you?'

'Negative, ma'am. Just serious by nature.'

The young lady looked at his awards and decorations and said, 'It looks like you have seen a lot of action?'

'Yes, ma'am, a lot of action.'

The young lady, tiring of trying to start up a conversation, said, 'You know, you should lighten up a little. Relax and enjoy yourself.' The Sergeant Major just stared at her in his serious manner. Finally the young lady said, 'You know, I hope you don't take this the wrong way, but when is the last time you had sex?'

'1958,' he replied.

'Well, there you are. No wonder you're so serious. You really need To chill out! I mean, no sex since 1958!

She took his hand and led him to a private room where she proceeded to help him 'relax' several times.

Afterwards, panting for breath, she leaned against his bare chest and said, 'Wow, you sure didn't forget much since 1958.'

The Sergeant Major said in his serious voice, after glancing at his watch, 'I hope not; it's only 2143 now.'

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A sense of humor is part of the art of leadership, of getting along with people, of getting things done.

**Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890 - 1969)**

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

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