

All veterans are reminded that the fastest way to learn about and secure the benefits they have earned is by visiting their local County Veterans Service Office. A listing of these offices is available at www.cacvso.org.

JANUARY 2014

CALVET WISHES YOU A HAPPY

New Year

2014

Secretary's Message

First, I want to wish everyone a very happy and prosperous new year. I hope that everyone had as productive a year as we have had here at CalVet in 2013.

With the opening of the final two veterans homes in this department's five-year building project, our Homes Division is now in a position to serve more than twice the number of veterans we could serve just five years ago.

We were also fortunate to have a Governor that saw the benefit of investing in the future of California veterans by committing 3 million a year for three years to fund a Joint Claims Initiative with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA). With that investment and completion of the hiring process for the 36 claims representatives, we will have for this initiative, California is making great strides to help the USDVA cut the wait time veterans are facing on their benefit claims filed with the USDVA.

This past year, we also had success with the Legislature passing new laws that will directly benefit veterans and their families. (A list of the key measures is included in this newsletter). One of the most significant is AB 639 by Assembly Speaker John Perez. This measure will allow our department

(with voter approval in June) to redirect \$600 million in bond authority to fund the construction, rehabilitation and development of multi-family transitional housing for homeless veterans. CalVet is working diligently with the California Department of Housing and Community Development and the California Housing Finance Agency to develop and design a program that will help some of the neediest veterans in this state.

Looking forward, we must continue the successes of the past and work to help veterans achieve their highest potential.

More needs to be done to help veterans find meaningful careers, not just entry level jobs. These men and women, who put their lives and private sector careers on hold to serve and protect this nation, deserve the opportunity to succeed; they have earned that chance.

Many are using their GI Bill benefits, and our California schools are stepping up to help, but more can be done. There should be an easier way for veterans to translate their military experiences to civilian jobs. The Interagency Council on Veterans is continuing to work on this issue, bringing together policy makers from schools, labor and employment to ensure all avenues of easing that transition are explored.

Careers in state service is another area in which we can continue to be proactive. This past year, the Legislature approved and the Governor signed a bill by Assemblywoman Susan Talamantes Eggman (AB372) that provides veterans with easier access to civil service careers. Many state departments, such as the Department of Parks, CHP and CalFire, are making concerted efforts to recruit veterans to open jobs. We must keep that momentum going.

Looking back, I can honestly say we have had a good year in 2013, but I am looking forward to a more productive and successful 2014.

Sincerely,



Peter J. Gravett, Major General (Ret)
Secretary, California Department of
Veterans Affairs

CALVET CLAIMS BACKLOG TEAMS MAKING STRIDES

The efforts of the CalVet/USDVA Joint Claims Initiative to alleviate the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) veterans claims backlog are beginning to make a real difference. As of December 26, 2013, with 21 members of the 36 approved staff hired and trained, the Strike Teams at

the CalVet District Offices in Oakland, Los Angeles and San Diego have collectively reviewed 3,171 claims since September of 2013.

The compensation awarded through these efforts is \$1,310,639 in lump sum payments (meaning retroactive payments based on the time the claim has been sitting at the USDVA). Monthly award payments totaling \$139,472 have been awarded. Annualized, that is \$1,673,664 in payments going to California veterans every year for the rest of their lives.

The award amounts are based on only those claims which have been reviewed by the Strike Teams and Adjudicated/Rated by the USDVA by December 26, 2013.

“Those are truly amazing numbers and a source of pride for CalVet considering only a small percentage of the 3,171 claims reviewed have been rated,” said CalVet Secretary Peter Gravett.

CalVet expects the numbers to rise exponentially as the CalVet/USDVA Joint Claims Initiative effort continues.

USDVA ADDS FIVE ILLNESSES TO TBI PRESUMPTIVE LIST

Veterans suffering with traumatic brain injury (TBI) – the “signature” wound of the post-9/11 wars – have new hope for the compensation they need and deserve.

Veterans diagnosed with service-connected TBI who now suffer from Parkinson’s disease, certain types of dementia, depression, unprovoked seizures or some diseases of the hypothalamus and pituitary glands will soon be able to file easily for expanded disability compensation benefits.

Beginning January 15, 2014, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) will automatically presume those illnesses are service connected when diagnosed as a secondary condition to TBI. The new regulation stems from a report of the National Academy of Sciences, Institute

of Medicine (IOM) regarding the association between TBI and the give diagnosable illnesses. The IOM report found “sufficient evidence” to link moderate or severe levels of TBI with the five ailments.

According to the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center, 287,861 servicemembers and veterans have been diagnosed with TBI since 2000. The numbers represent medical diagnoses of TBI that occurred anywhere U.S. forces are located, including the continental U.S. Importantly, these numbers are not all deployment-related; over 80% of TBIs occur in a non-deployed setting. Common causes of TBI include crashes in privately owned and military vehicles, falls, sports and recreation activities, and military training.

Eligibility for expanded benefits will depend upon the severity of the TBI and the time between the injury causing the TBI and the onset of the second illness. However, veterans can still file a claim to establish direct service-connection for these ailments even if they do not meet the time and severity standards in the new regulation. Servicemembers who are within 180 days of discharge may also file a pre-discharge claim for TBI.

If you are a veteran who has been diagnosed with service-connected TBI or any of the five presumptive diseases and disorders related to TBI, contact your County Veterans Service Office to file a claim for disability benefits. To find the CVSO office nearest you, go to www.cacvso.org. Click on Contact Us and then click on your county of residence.

DIPLOMAS FOR THOSE WHOSE EDUCATION WAS INTERRUPTED BY WAR

Sacramento County residents whose high school education was interrupted during World War II, the Korean War or the Vietnam War due to military service and/or internment

have an opportunity to receive belated high school diplomas.

Through the Sacramento County Office of Education's Operation Recognition, an individual who left high school to serve in the U.S. Military during the period of December 7, 1941-December 31, 1946 (WWII), the period of June 25, 1950-June 30, 1955 (Korean War), or the period of February 28, 1961-May 7, 1975 (Vietnam War) may apply to receive a high school diploma. To be eligible for a diploma, veterans must show proof of military service and honorable discharge. They also must have been attending high school at

the time of enlistment into military service or internment in a WWII relocation center

Diploma recipients or surviving family members should be current or former residents of Sacramento County. Diplomas may be awarded posthumously to honorees' next-of-kin. Similar programs have been implemented or are being planned in other regions of California, as well as in 25 other states.

To learn more about Operation Recognition and to download an application, go to www.scoe.net/or/index.html.

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS HELPED CALVET DISTRIBUTE KOREAN WAR REMEMBRANCE BOOKS

The response to CalVet's call for assistance in distributing approximately 20,000 "Korea Reborn: A Grateful Nation Honors War Veterans for 60 Years of Growth" books free to Korean War veterans and their families was immediate and very generous. Special thanks go not only to staff at the Fresno, Redding and West Los Angeles Veterans Homes but also to:

- Nora Dominguez, University of LaVerne, Bakersfield
- Cindy Holley, Glenn County

- Alice Watkins, Mendocino County
- Rod Melendez, Veterans Museum and Memorial Center, San Diego
- Jo Licata, Hilton San Francisco Union Square, and
- Eduardo Ramirez, San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission

"I personally want to thank Nora, Cindy, Alice, Rod, Jo and Eduardo for stepping up and helping us distribute these beautiful books to our very deserving Korean War veterans and their families," said Peter J. Gravett,

CalVet Secretary. "Thanks to your efforts and those of our CalVet staff, we have distributed all the hundreds of boxes we received from the South Korean government."

The "Korea Reborn: A Grateful Nation Honors War Veterans for 60 Years of Growth" books were published and donated to CalVet by the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs to commemorate the Korean War 60-year anniversary. The photos and text tell the story of the Korean War from the perspective of both U.S. Veterans who served in the conflict and the Koreans who prospered from the freedom left in their wake.

CALIFORNIA NURSES SUPPORT VETERAN HEALTHCARE

If the American Academy of Nursing campaign is successful, “Have you ever served in the military?” is a question that soon all California nurses and other healthcare providers will routinely ask their patients. Military service members may have been exposed to environmental hazards that could adversely affect their health—hazards healthcare providers need to know about to serve veteran patients better.

The Academy’s campaign, announced at the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs conference late last year, encourages healthcare providers to ask about their patients’ military background. That single question can be the key to timely and adequate assessments, diagnosis and treatment.

Less than 30% of all veterans receive care within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) healthcare system. According to the USDVA, fewer than half of community providers routinely ask their patients about being a current or former member of the armed forces or a family member. While USDVA healthcare providers may be familiar with military-related occupational and environmental health hazards, many civilian healthcare providers may not be fully aware. This campaign seeks to address these gaps in veterans’ healthcare.

The Academy has created a pocket card for nurses and other healthcare providers that lists the most common health concerns linked to military service, as well as questions the provider should ask veteran patients. This information will help providers obtain a more complete military service history and identify possible health factors or illnesses related to such service.

The Academy’s Military & Veterans Health Expert Panel, formed in 2011 to study service members’ health care and develop policy recommendations, recommended the campaign. Besides California, the Academy has launched the campaign in Alabama, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, Ohio, Texas, Virginia and Washington, with the assistance and cooperation of departments of veterans affairs in those states. Ultimately, the campaign will be launched in all 50 states over a three-year period.

To download “Have you ever served in the military” posters, pocket cards and other campaign materials for your office or healthcare waiting room, go to www.haveyoueverserved.com.

VA PALO ALTO HEALTH CARE SYSTEM HONORED

For the third consecutive year, VA Palo Alto Health Care System has been recognized with the Silver Level California Award for Performance Excellence (CAPE) Eureka Award from the California Council for Excellence (CCE). VA Palo Alto Health Care System is one of six recipients, and the only Veterans Health Administration health care system in California to earn this distinction in 2013.

The CAPE Program, administered by the CCE, employs the same rigorous criteria used on the national level, is the highest recognition in the state for performance excellence.

VA Palo Alto Health Care System will be honored along with other CAPE Eureka Award recipients at the CCE’s 20th Annual Best Practices and Awards Conference March 18 in Long Beach.



RESERVE YOUR CALIFORNIA VETERAN LICENSE PLATES NOW!

California drivers will soon be able to proudly display their veteran status by reserving VETERAN license plates. A new law brought the California specialty license plates back by the popular demand of disappointed veterans who learned a couple of years ago that the VETERAN license plate which had been available was replaced by a version that read "Honoring Veterans." Honoring Veterans license plates are still available.

According to the new law which approved the VETERAN plate, CalVet must collect and hold pre-paid license plate applications until 7,500 are received before the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) will actually produce the VETERAN plates. Once that threshold is crossed, DMV will produce the plates and take responsibility for processing future applications. That same "hold and wait" process applies to all new specialty license plates approved in California.

VETERAN license plates can be customized with the distinctive military branch or veterans service organization logo of choice. Proceeds from the sale of these plates help support efforts of CalVet and 56 county veteran service offices to connect veterans and their families with the benefits and services they have earned through military service.

For more information or to reserve your VETERAN license plates, go to www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/VeteransPlate.aspx. Download the application or call CalVet at (877) 741-8532 toll free to request a VETERAN license plate application be mailed to you. "Honoring Veterans" license plates are available now and can be ordered by following the link provided above.

The veteran license plate program is a partnership between the California Department of Veterans Affairs the California Department of Motor Vehicles, and the California Association of County Veterans Services Officers, Inc.

ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION BENEFITS FOR DEPENDENTS

By Joe Wright

If you are a veteran who has a disability or disabilities rated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) at 30% or greater, disability compensation can be increased based on your dependents. A claim for this increased benefit needs to be filed with the USDVA when there is any change in the status of the veteran's spouse and/or children.

Every year veterans with dependents continue to lose compensation benefits because of their failure to file or re-file a claim for dependency status. Normally, increased compensation is paid for a child until age 18. The USDVA will recognize and pay veterans for their dependent children until age 23 as long as they are attending an accredited high school or college program.

On a child's 18th birthday, the USDVA will automatically drop the child if the appropriate school attendance form is not completed and returned to the local USDVA Regional Office. If a child is attending school and drops out for any reason, the veteran

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NEW ORANGE COUNTY VETERANS MUSEUM SPACE APPROVED

The Orange County Fair and Event Center Board of Directors has approved a permanent space on the fairgrounds property for a veterans museum, prompting applause from local leaders from the veterans community. Board member Nick Berardino, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran and Orange County Employees Association General Manager, made the motion in honor of four friends who fought alongside him during the Vietnam War and who didn't make it home.

"Today was a monumental step forward in creating a permanent home to preserve and share Orange County's great legacy of our veterans for future generation," said Bobby McDonald, OC Veterans Advisory Committee Chair and U.S. Navy Vietnam Veteran. "We now have a historic facility, on historic grounds, recognizing our historic men and women veterans."

"Everything we've been trying to teach our children about the sacrifices we made to protect freedom will now be able to be actively heard, touched and seen up close in the most personal way. This will become our new home," said Terry McCarty, AMVETS past National District VI Commander and U.S. Marine Corps Vietnam veteran.

The approved site for the Veterans museum was lauded by veterans for its prominent location right off the Main Gate with heavy foot traffic including nearly 100,000 school children who visit for educational programming. With its proximity to the Centennial Farms and a Workers Memorial, the site is likely to become one of California's greatest hands-on learning "campuses" and heritage centers.

For more information about new veterans museum coming to Orange County, call (714) 719-9789.

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must also notify USDVA or an overpayment status will result.

It is also important to advise the USDVA or your local County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) of a new spouse or child as it is to advise them if the child is no longer attending school. If you need assistance with keeping your dependency status current or any other veteran benefit related issue, contact your CVSO. To find the office nearest you, go to www.cacvso.org. Click on Contact Us and then click on your county of residence.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County.

ASSEMBLY VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE GETS NEW CHAIR

Assembly Speaker John Perez has named Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva chair of the Veterans Affairs Committee in the state Assembly.

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<< CHAIR

Quirk-Silva is a school teacher who was elected to the California State Assembly in 2012 to represent California's 65th Assembly District. That district includes her lifelong home of Fullerton, as well as the communities of Anaheim, Buena Park, Hawaiian Gardens, Cypress, La Palma and Stanton.

Prior to her election to the Legislature, Assemblywoman Quirk-Silva was elected to the Fullerton City Council in November 2004, where she was selected by her peers in 2007 to serve as mayor for two terms.

Assemblywoman Quirk-Silva is a strong advocate for transparency, innovative thinking and collaboration. Her willingness to work across the aisle to do what is best for her community is something she

has done successfully throughout her career. In her tenure as mayor, Sharon Quirk-Silva was able to ensure Fullerton had a balanced budget and a 10% reserve. She attributes her ability to achieve this accomplishment during the state's difficult economic time to her parents who taught her to never squander opportunities or resources.

As chair of the Veterans Affairs Committee, Quirk-Silva said in a prepared statement that she will make helping connect veterans with benefits and services a priority for the committee.

"Under my direction as the Chair of the Committee on Veterans Affairs, the Committee will dedicate itself to increasing the rate at which our veterans connect to the benefits they have earned and meeting the needs of California's veterans, those

currently serving and those with past service," she said in a prepared statement on her website.

"We will do this by advocating for programs that connect veterans with their federal benefits, for increased access to higher education, for consideration of the special needs of female veterans, by supporting increases in the supply of veterans transitional and supportive housing, and for promoting increased veterans health care services—including critically important mental health services," she continues.

Quirk-Silva also serves on four other committees in the Assembly; Transportation, Higher Education, Accountability and Administrative Review, and Housing and Community Development.

CALVET LEGISLATION

Last year, the CalVet Legislative Office tracked and monitored approximately 105 proposed bills and analyzed approximately 55 proposed bills relating to a wide range of veterans and military issues such as education, healthcare, employment and housing. Below is a highlight and summary of key legislation affecting California's Veterans that was passed in the 2013 session and took effect on 1 January 2014.

AB 244 (BONILLA) VEHICLES: LICENSE PLATES

This bill requires the Department of Veterans Affairs to apply to the DMV to sponsor a veterans specialized license plate, and requires the DMV to issue the veterans specialized license plates if the Department of Veterans Affairs collects 7,500 pre-paid applications for the new plates. The bill requires that these license plates be subject to specified additional fees like other specialized plates, and that the department deposit the revenue from those additional fees, after deducting its administrative costs, in the Veterans Service Office Fund.

The new "Veterans" license plates are now offered in addition to the current "Honoring Veterans" license plates that available to any California motorist. Chapter 690, Statutes of 2013

AB 372 (EGGMAN) CIVIL SERVICE: VETERANS PREFERENCE IN HIRING

The State Civil Service Act contains various provisions providing for veterans' credits in relation to any open competitive entrance examination. Existing law requires that veterans, widows or widowers of veterans, and spouses of 100%

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disabled veterans, who become eligible for certification from eligible lists by attaining a passing mark, be allowed specified additional credits. This bill deleted the credit provisions and would revise and recast the provisions governing veterans' preference providing that whenever any veteran, widow or widower of a veteran, or spouse of a 100% disabled veteran achieves a passing score on an entrance examination, he or she will be ranked in the top rank of the resulting eligibility list. This preference does not apply if the veteran was dishonorably discharged or released from service. Chapter 75, Statutes of 2013

AB 639 (PEREZ) VETERANS HOUSING AND HOMELESS PREVENTION BOND ACT

This bill amends the Veterans' Bond Act of 2008 to reduce the amount of bonds that are authorized to be issued under the act for the purpose of funding home loans to veterans from \$900 million to \$300 million and enacts the Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention Bond Act of 2014 to authorize the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$600 million. The funds would be used to provide multifamily housing to veterans pursuant to the Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention Act of 2014 (VHHPA), also enacted by the bill. The bill also authorizes the Legislature to amend the provisions of the bond act, by majority vote, for specified purposes and imposes a specified reporting requirement on the Department of Housing

and Community Development to evaluate, in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs, any program established pursuant to the VHHPA. Chapter 727, Statutes of 2013 (This bill contained an urgency clause and took effect immediately).

AB 717 (CHAVEZ) CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD

This bill requires that the California Veterans Board, composed of 7 members with specified qualifications who are appointed by the Governor and subject to the confirmation of the Senate advise the department and the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs on policies for operations of the department, and requires the department to respond to all proposed policy changes offered by the board prior to the next scheduled meeting of the board. This bill also eliminates certain qualifications to be a member of the board, and require every board member to be a member in good standing with a congressionally-chartered veteran service organization. Existing law sets forth the duties of the secretary and the board with regard to the administration of the department to benefit California veterans. This bill requires the secretary and the board to each seek to confer with the California State Commanders Veterans Council at least twice per calendar year on issues affecting California veterans. Existing law requires the board to annually report to the Legislature regarding the activities, accomplishments, and expenditures of the board. This bill

repeals this requirement. Chapter 692, Statutes of 2013

More information on these bills can be found at www.legislature.ca.gov

Additionally, the following bills were passed and signed by the Governor:

- AB 150 (Olsen) State Parks: Armed Services: Fee Waiver Chapter 688, Statutes of 2012
- AB 151 (Olsen) Local Government: Disabled Veterans: Assistance Chapter 689, Statutes of 2012
- AB 258 (Chavez) State Agency Forms: Veterans Chapter 227, Statutes of 2013
- AB 287 (Frazier) Vietnam Veterans Memorial Chapter 229, Statutes of 2013
- AB 508 (Calderon I.) Debt Collection: Homeless Veterans Chapter 234, Statutes of 2013
- AB 555 (Salas) Social Security Numbers: Veterans Chapter 103, Statutes of 2013
- AB 556 (Salas) Fair Employment and Housing Act: Veterans Chapter 691, Statutes of 2013
- AB 557 (Yamada) Veterans Homes: Accounting of Charges Chapter 134, Statutes of 2013
- AB 984 (Chau) State housing Finance Agency Chapter 82, Statutes of 2013

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- AB 1057 (Medina) Professions and Vocations: Licenses: Military Chapter 693, Statutes of 2013
- AB 1289 (Cooley) Vietnam Veterans Memorial Chapter 191, Statutes of 2013
- SB 232 (Monning) Central Coast State Veterans Cemetery Fort Ord Fund Chapter 694, Statutes of 2013
- SB 272 (Corbett) Advertising: Military Endorsements Chapter 695, Statutes of 2013
- SB 290 (Knight) Nonresident Tuition Exemption Veterans: Student Fee Waiver Chapter 696, Chapter 2013
- SB 725 (Anderson) Veterans Buildings and Memorial Chapter 697, Statutes of 2013
- SB 759 Nielsen Firearms: State Military Museum and Resource Center Chapter 698, Statutes of 2013
- SB 769 (Block) Veteran: Criminal Defendants Chapter 46, Statutes of 2013
- SB 815 (Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs) Clean-Up Bill Chapter 186, Statutes of 2013

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY 16

Amador County Veterans Collaborative
Jackson Elks Lodge
Contact: Nichole Mulford
(209) 223-2286

JANUARY 22

Veterans Town Hall/Collaborative
San Francisco Federal Building
Contact: Eddie Ramirez
(415) 740-4399

JANUARY 28

Santa Clara County Collaborative for Military & Their Families
Probation Dept. Office, San Jose
Contact: (408) 313-5391

JANUARY 31

Inland Empire Women Veterans Unity Group Meeting
Fontana Veterans Resource Center
Contact: Ann Duson (323) 517-1145
vetwomenunity@hotmail.com

FEBRUARY 12

Capitol Legislative Day
CA Assn County Veterans Service Officers
State Capitol Basement, Eureka Room

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FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS:

RATES AS LOW AS

3.90%*

NO MONEY DOWN**

A CalVet Home Loan is the better choice when compared to other market loans. Veterans buying their first home in California are able to obtain a competitive interest rate with attractive insurance programs protecting their home and family.



INTERESTED IN FINDING OUT HOW MUCH HOME YOU CAN AFFORD?

CalVet can help you get pre-approved for your home purchase. A pre-approval confirms that you are eligible and financially qualified for a specified loan amount. Knowing the size of your loan will help you in selecting a home and negotiating your purchase.

You can start the pre-approval process by submitting an inquiry online at www.calvet.ca.gov/homeloans or you can download the application and submit it by mail, fax or email. Once you have obtained a pre-approval, you will know how much you can borrow and be ready to purchase your new home.

YOUR CALVET ADVANTAGE GIVES YOU ACCESS TO A MORE AFFORDABLE LOAN. SOME FEATURES ARE:

- » Low to no down payment
- » 1% Origination Fee with no additional lender fees
- » No monthly mortgage insurance premium, which lowers your monthly payment
- » Fire and Hazard insurance with low group rates and guaranteed replacement cost
- » Disaster protection for earthquake and flood damage – great coverage with low deductibles and low premiums
- » Low cost group Life Insurance

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
(866) 653-2510 OR LOANAPPS@CALVET.CA.GOV**



*4.25% - Estimated total monthly payment/APR based on a \$200K sales price, no down payment & financing of the VA funding fee under the CalVet/VA program, \$200K assessed value, mandatory hazard, and disaster indemnity insurance. Your actual payment can vary due to replacement costs for your home, location, local taxes, fees, and assessments and subsequent use of VA benefit, etc.

** Not all buyers will qualify.