



# The California Zephyr

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A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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## AGENT ORANGE COMMITTEE

Ken Holybee, holybee@comcast.net

It is the start of a new term for the CSC. This means that all committee chairs and committee members get a new start. Some with new chairs and some with new members. I have been reappointed as the Agent Orange committee chair. I am hoping that this term I can be more productive than last. At this last convention we voted in favor of a new resolution regarding Agent Orange and Toxic exposures. The new resolution is telling the council that they need to be more involved in assisting in putting on the town hall meetings on the Faces of Agent Orange.

I am in the process of putting together my committee. I am hoping that the members will keep me focused on getting the job done and putting out information regarding the work of the committee. I feel that all committees should be putting reports in the Zephyr after the council meetings. The more information we can put out the better our members can represent our causes.

At this time, I do not see our current legislation, The Toxic Exposure Research Act or even the Veterans First Act, even coming for a discussion on the floor of either house. I don't see any chance of them coming for a vote and that leaves us with another two years lost. How many children will suffer or die waiting for congress to stop fighting over who is the most powerful?

We need to work more on getting the information about the illnesses of all veterans' children into the public thought. The toxic exposures affect more than just our children. We need to include veterans of the Golf War as well as current war veterans. We need to start looking at what we can do at the state level to get legislators involved. This year is done. We need to look at what we can do in the next legislative session. New bills are introduced in February. Is there a way we can get our local legislators to help host our town hall meetings? This is one area that I am going to look into. We want them to attend and we want them to listen. Why can't we get them to host the events? That would also get the media involved.

I was asked to put together a list of speakers in the state that present our view in the Agent Orange Town Hall Meetings. I am working on a list. I know at this time it is small. I am looking for people that can speak as our children as well as veterans that have knowledge of the different toxins. The list for the younger veterans is getting longer as more information comes out about the health effects of different things ranging from burn pits to fuel vapors. We still have a long way to go on this mission and it seems to be getting longer with every turn in the road.

Feel free to ask questions or send comments to me regarding this committee. From the local level to the national level, the members still set our direction. I am always interested in hearing other points of view and having more information when addressing people. Be sure to look for a town hall meeting near you. I have found that at these meetings, if you can get legislators to them, it is a great time for them to hear what you have to say. Be civil and polite, especially if you disagree with them and they will listen to your points.

## VETERANS COURT BILL

### LEGISLATURE'S REJECTION OF VETERANS COURT BILL A TRAGIC DISAPPOINTMENT

By Duncan MacVicar  
Veterans' Advocate

As a Vietnam veteran, I have experienced, first hand, the horrors of battle and the trauma it inflicts on brothers and sisters in uniform. But in the work I do to establish new veterans treatment courts around the state, I am seeing the lives of hundreds of service men and women returning from battle with PTSD and other disorders transformed from despair and depression to hope and redemption.

Veterans' treatment courts have been central to these lives turning a corner for the better. Started in 2008, these courts, which allow veterans that have committed low-level offenses a chance to pursue an 18-month program of treatment and rehabilitation and have their cases expunged, are working! With success rates ranging from 85 to 98 percent, these courts are giving to veterans who had taken a turn for the worst – crime, addiction and down the path to suicide – a second (or third) chance for a better life. All while adding an extra measure of public safety through close supervision and effective rehabilitation.

In California, veterans in 27 counties have access to veterans' treatment courts, and while that may seem great, that means that veterans in over half of our counties – most of them in rural, remote locations – do not have access to these court services and resources.

There appeared to be a glimmer of hope to change that – Assembly Bill 1672, a study bill which would have taken the first steps toward expanding the reach of these courts to allow every troubled veteran the opportunity for access to such services.

Disappointingly, our beloved veterans and their families lost in a big way in the legislature, as the Senate became bogged down in minutia.

This behavior is outrageous. AB 1672 had earned unanimous support in the State Assembly and two policy committees of the State Senate, and with good reason: the legislation commissioned a state study to examine the impact of veterans courts in counties where they exist and on veterans lacking such court services, and to identify technology or other avenues that would facilitate expanded reach.

Moreover, AB 1672 had the generous support of a private citizen – Central California philanthropist and businessman, B. Wayne Hughes, Jr. (who owns SkyRose Ranch in San Miguel that helps veterans with similar disorders), who was committed to pay

\$100,000 of the \$200,000 cost of this state-commissioned study. A California citizen willing to pay out of pocket and offset state budget costs.

But despite this unanimous support in the "lower house" and much of the Senate, combined with the private support from Mr. Hughes, the Senate Appropriations Committee chose to kill a critically important bill.

No one really knows how or what pushes Capitol politicians to do what they do, especially during the final weeks of session and in an election year. Our politicians play shell games, trade favors, and lobby with legislative leaders, sometimes at the expense of worthwhile bills.

What I do know is that thousands of struggling men and women who risked their lives on the battlefield to protect our freedoms, only to return home with battles of their own, are out in the cold and without hope – the hope that AB 1672 would have given them for recovery. And that, Senators, is a shame.

We cannot and must not give up hope on our veterans and the promise of veterans treatment courts. The Legislature might have let them down, but we should never forget their brave service and commitment. We need to do everything we can to get them the care, compassion and services they desperately need today so they can experience a brighter tomorrow.

## LEGISLATOR OF THE YEAR

VVA-CSC members: The State Council will be choosing its Legislators of the Year for 2016. The awardees (1 State Senator and 1 Assemblymember) will be presented their awards at the 2017 VVA Day at the Capitol event. Send your nominations and the reasons to Dean Gotham, Chair of the VVA-CSC Government Affairs Committee. deang1968@gmail.com

Legislators are chosen for their commitment to veterans through their actions in the Legislature. Carrying key veterans legislation, serving with distinction on the veterans committees, etc. Also, how do they serve veterans in their district? Do they have a veterans advisory committee? Do they attend veterans events in the district?

Legislators who have received the award in the past are:

2009 Senator Darrell Steinberg & Assemblyman Paul Cook  
2010 Senator Lou Correa & Assemblyman Jim Nielsen  
2011 Senator Ted Lieu & Assemblywoman Betsy Butler  
2012 Speaker John Pérez & Senator Rod Wright  
2013 Senator Bill Monning & Assemblyman Jim Frazier  
2014 Senator Loni Hancock & Assemblyman Marc Levine  
2015 Senator Joel Anderson & Assemblyman Devon Mathis

For legislative information, go to:

<https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billSearchClient.xhtml>

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

2015-16 Legislative Session Ends - Bills On Governor's Desk

The 2015-16 California Legislative Session ended on August 31st. Legislation that was passed during the last weeks of the legislative session are now on the Governor's desk awaiting a signature or veto. There are 789 of these bills and the Governor has until September 30 to take such action. The bills listed below are bills your organization sponsored, supported, or watched that are currently on the Governor's desk. The access the Legislature's website which has the language, status, votes, and analyses of all legislation from 1999 to the present, go to: <https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billSearchClient.xhtml> If you have any questions, please contact: □ Dean Gotham, Chair, Legislative Committee deang1968@gmail.com □ Pete Conaty, Legislative Advocate pconaty@sbc-global.net (916) 768-8940

AB 2085 AUTHOR: Irwin [D] DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Creates the Office of Military Legal Assistance within the Military Department to assist current service members who require legal assistance by providing access to educational and informational resources and providing referral services to available legal assistance programs, including reduced fee services, pro bono services, and self-help services. Authorizes the areas of legal services assistance the Office may provide. Position: Support

AB 2254 AUTHOR: Achadjian [R] DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Revises the list of armories to be made available for providing temporary shelter to homeless persons to include the Atascadero armory in San Luis Obispo County. Position: Support

AB 2273 AUTHOR: Irwin [D] DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Prohibits a member of the active militia, including the National Guard, from being prosecuted for a military crime based on an attempt to kill himself or herself. Requires the Adjutant General to ensure that any member of the active militia that attempts to kill himself or herself is referred to the Behavioral Health Liaison Program to receive assistance, counseling, or referral to other

appropriate available services. Position: Support

AB 2562 AUTHOR: Veterans Affairs Cmt DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Relates to military service benefits. Deletes references to the date a reservist is called to active duty, both the definition of a reservist and payment deferral provisions, thereby making benefits available to any reservist who otherwise meets the definition. Position: Watch

SB 294 AUTHOR: Pan [D] DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Requires the Board of Administration of the Public Employees' Retirement System to provide a form to be used by a member to receive credit for his or her military service with



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The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of VVA, the State Council or its members.

Who Are The Vietnam Veterans Of America?  
Founded in 1978, Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. is the only national Vietnam veterans organization congressionally chartered and exclusively dedicated to Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA is organized as a not-for-profit corporation and is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Service Code.

VVA'S FOUNDING PRINCIPLE  
"Never again shall one generation of veterans abandon another."

PURPOSE  
The purpose of Vietnam Veterans of America's national organization, the state councils, and chapters is:

To help foster, encourage, and promote the improvement of the condition of the Vietnam veteran.

To promote physical and cultural improvement, growth and development, self-respect, self-confidence, and usefulness of Vietnam-era veterans and others.

To eliminate discrimination suffered by Vietnam veterans and to develop channels of communications which will assist Vietnam veterans to maximize self-realization and enrichment of their lives and enhance life-fulfillment.

To study, on a non-partisan basis, proposed legislation, rules, or regulations introduced in any federal, state, or local legislative or administrative body which may affect the social, economic, educational, or physical welfare of the Vietnam-era veteran or others; and to develop public-policy proposals designed to improve the quality of life of the Vietnam-era veteran and others especially in the areas of employment, education, training, and health.

To conduct and publish research, on a non-partisan basis, pertaining to the relationship between Vietnam-era veterans and the American society, the Vietnam War experience, the role of the United States in securing peaceful co-existence for the world community, and other matters which affect the social, economic, educational, or physical welfare of the Vietnam-era veteran or others.

To assist disabled and needy war veterans including, but not limited to, Vietnam veterans and their dependents, and the widows and orphans of deceased veterans.

FUNDING  
Vietnam Veterans of America relies totally on private contributions for its revenue. VVA does not receive any funding from federal, state, or local governments.



employer-paid employee and employer contributions. Requires employers to inform the member his or her rights to receive credit within certain number of days of the member's return to state service by utilizing that form. Requires employer to provide letters or electronic communications to all employees informing them of those rights. Position: Watch

SB 543 AUTHOR: Wolk [D] DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Amends existing law that establishes Veteran's Home of California in Barstow, Chula Vista, Lancaster, Ventura and Yountville. Provides for an administrator for each home or homesite. Provides funding for designing and constructing veterans' homes. Requires each home to establish a Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Operating Fund to administer quality of life activities for the general welfare of residents. Provides for funding. Position: Support

SB 866 AUTHOR: Roth [D] DISPOSITION: To

Governor SUMMARY: Authorizes a housing developer or service provider that provides housing or services pursuant to the Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention Bond Act of 2014, to provide housing or services to veterans and their children in women-only facilities in limited instances. Position: Support

SB 905 AUTHOR: Bates [R] DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Defines a club for purposes of the qualification for a on-premises liquor license for members of a club and their guests. Includes a nonprofit umbrella organization established to provide a central meeting location, and services for veterans, including those on active duty, and that owns or leases, operates, and maintains a facility for these purposes. Requires the organization to serve a minimum number of veteran organizations. Position: Support

SB 1012 AUTHOR: Nguyen [R] DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Requires any Flag of the United

State or the Flag of the State purchased by the State or any local government agency be made in the United States. Position: Sponsor

SB 1059 AUTHOR: Monning [D] DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Relates to the State Approving Agency for Veterans Education. Includes as a qualifying institution for federal Title 38 awards, an institution that has been accredited by the Committee of Bar Examiners,





**UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR VETERANS CLAIMS DECISION ON  
NON-SERVICE CONNECTED EMERGENCY CARE CLAIMS  
ISSUE BRIEF  
AUGUST 2016**

**Background**

On April 8, 2016, a U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC) ruling invalidated a VA regulation governing reimbursement or payment for unauthorized emergency treatment of a Veteran's non-service-connected condition furnished by a non-VA provider. Prior to the ruling, VA's regulation barred reimbursement or payment when the Veteran has other health insurance (OHI), including Medicare and employee-sponsored and private health insurance, in addition to their VA health care benefits. The CAVC ruling contradicts VA's longstanding interpretation of the statutory authority and our business practices.

**What is the impact of this ruling?**

- The CAVC ruling impacts claims for reimbursement or payment of non-VA emergency treatment of Veterans' **non-service connected conditions if the Veterans also have OHI**. It also impacts related claims for reimbursement or payment of the costs of emergency transportation, which are dependent on VA making payment on the related emergency treatment claim.
- The CAVC ruling significantly expands a benefit without providing additional resources. Unless funds are appropriated for this purpose, implementing the decision will adversely affect resources available for medical services and hospital care for other enrolled Veterans.
- If the CAVC ruling is upheld, it means the way VA was processing claims for reimbursement or payment of Veterans' non-VA emergency treatment of non-service-connected conditions is no longer valid. Regulations need to be developed to determine the way these claims should be paid.
- If upheld, the ruling would require VA to pay claims that are currently denied today, resulting in an unbudgeted cost. As of August 2016, the high-end estimate for the first year of implementation is \$1.6 billion and the low-end estimate is \$529 million. These estimates may change with time and will increase if Veterans' reliance on non-VA emergency treatment grows in response to the ruling.

**What does this mean for Veterans and Community Providers?**

- Many claims for non-VA emergency treatment of non-service-connected conditions **will be held in a pending status and will not be paid**. At this time, VA is unable to state how long these claims will be held. This will affect the claims of Veterans with OHI that otherwise would be eligible for reimbursement. VA estimates it will hold approximately 6,000-7,000 claims per week.
- VA is notifying Community Providers and Veterans that they should submit claims to OHI plans to ensure timely filing deadlines are met while VA challenges the CAVC ruling. This should be done prior to submitting claims to VA.

**How is VA responding?**

- VA is taking steps to challenge the Court's ruling since it does not provide a comprehensive and sustainable solution to emergency care.
- VA is advocating for comprehensive reforms to improve all enrollees' access to care in the community as outlined in the *Plan to Consolidate Community Care Programs* as submitted to Congress in October 2015. The reforms identified in the *Plan* will assist in delivering a program that is easy to understand, simple to administer, and meets the needs of Veterans, community providers, and VA staff.
- VA is moving forward with developing regulations needed to implement the April 8, 2016, decision to ensure VA is able to quickly process affected claims if the ruling is upheld.
- VA is working closely with Veterans, Community Providers, Veterans Service Organizations, Congress, and other key stakeholders to help them understand the implications of the April 8, 2016, ruling and to keep them abreast of VA's actions.

Position: Support

SB 1314 AUTHOR: Block [D] DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Provides that community college students participating in specified baccalaureate degree programs who also satisfy specified eligibility requirements shall receive awards for upper division coursework fee. Extends awards under the Middle Class Scholarship Program to community college students enrolled in upper division coursework of a baccalaureate degree program. Requires the Office of the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges to provide any financial data necessary for award determination. Position: Support

SB 1455 AUTHOR: Block [D] DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Provides that a pupil complies with a school district's residency requirements for school attendance in a school district if he or she is a pupil whose parent is transferred or is pending transfer to a military installation within the boundaries of the district while on active military duty pursuant to an official documentation. Requires a school district to accept applications by electronic means for enrollment and course registration for those pupils. Position: Support

SB 1458 AUTHOR: Bates [R] DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Amends an existing property tax law which provides a disabled veteran's

property tax exemption for the principal place of residence of a veteran or a veteran's spouse. Expands that definition of veteran to include a person who has been discharged in other than dishonorable conditions from service under certain conditions and who has been determined to be eligible for federal veterans' health and medical benefits. Provides time periods regarding the disabled veterans' exemption. Position: Support

**VVA NATIONAL  
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Commission on Care released final report on transforming VA Health Care

In accordance with In Section 202 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, Public Law 113-146 as amended by the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2014 Public Law 113-175. Congress established the Presidential Commission on Care, an independent commission charging it to examine veterans' access to Department of Veterans Affairs health care and to examine strategically how best to organize the Veterans Health Administration, locate health resources, and deliver health care to veterans during the next 20 years.

On June 30, the Commission on Care released the final report on recommendations transforming veterans' health care, in accordance with the law, President Obama, Secretary of Veterans of Affairs and Congress received copies of the final report.

Chairperson Nancy Schlichting, CEO of the Henry Ford Health System, states in the Commission press release on July 5. The Commission recognized that the reforms we're proposing cannot be sustained without fundamentally bolstering governance and strengthening leadership," Schlichting emphasized. "With able leadership and congressional support for these recommendations, VA will be positioned to provide veterans with the quality health care they have earned." <https://commissiononcare.sites.usa.gov/files/2016/07/2016.7.5-Press-Release.pdf> ;

On September 1, The Department of Veterans Affairs issued their statement on the final report of the Commission on Care, Read the Secretary of Veterans Affairs views at <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/includes/view-PDF.cfm?id=2815>

On September 1, The White House Office of the Press issued the Presidents statement on the final report of the Commission on Care. Read the Presidents views at

if the institution complies with specified disclosure and compliance requirements. Position: Watch

SB 1180 AUTHOR: Jackson [D] DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Requires that a certificated or classified employee who is a military veteran with a specified military service-connected disability rating be entitled to a specified number of days leave of absence with pay for the purpose of undergoing disability-related medical treatment. Position: Support

SB 1227 AUTHOR: Lara [D] DISPOSITION: To Governor SUMMARY: Requires the California Conservation Corps to collaborate with the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Employment Development Department to assist any corps member who is a veteran of the United States Armed Forces, in obtaining employment after participating in the corps program. Provides that such collaboration efforts shall include providing access to veterans supportive services and workforce services.



<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/01/statement-press-secretary-presidents-response-commission-care-report>

#### HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

When the House reconvenes on September 6, 2016, the House Veterans Affairs Committee will be holding a held hearing "From Tumult to Transformation: The Commission on Care and the Future of the VA Healthcare System" on Wednesday, September 7, 2016 at 10:30am in room 334 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515 The hearing is open to the public and can be seen live at <https://veterans.house.gov/>. Only the Commissioner of the Commission on Care will testify at the hearing. Vietnam Veterans of America submitted a Statement for the Record regarding our views on the final report.

#### SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

When the Senate reconvenes on September 6, 2016, the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will be holding a held hearing regarding the Commission on Care's report and VA's response on Wednesday, September 14, 2016 at 2:30 in room 418 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510. The hearing is open to the public and can be seen live at <http://www.veterans.senate.gov/>. Vietnam Veterans of America will be testifying at the hearing.

VVA Advocacy Call in Days - Supporting passage of S.2921, the Veterans First Act

Let your voices be heard loud and clear on the hill that you support passage of S.2921, the Veterans First Act in September. This legislation includes S. 901, the Toxic Exposure Research Act of 2015, extend caregiver benefits to catastrophically injured veterans who served prior to 9/11, and it will grant the necessary leasing authority so that development of the West LA Veterans Affairs Campus can proceed apace in providing housing and other services for homeless veterans, men and women who, for decades, have needed these services. This bi-partisan bill with 44 cosponsors was introduced in the Senate by Senator Isakson, Chair of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and Senator Blumenthal, Ranking Member.

So check your emails and be on the lookout for VVA call in alerts on supporting passage of S.2921, the Veterans First Act. And make the CALL

S.2921 -- Cosponsors (<http://filemanager.capwiz.com/filemanager/file-mgr/vva/s2921co-sponsors1.pdf>)

S.2921 - Non-cosponsors ([http://filemanager.capwiz.com/filemanager/file-mgr/vva/S921\\_noncosponsors1.pdf](http://filemanager.capwiz.com/filemanager/file-mgr/vva/S921_noncosponsors1.pdf))

## NATIONAL ANTHEM

### WHY WE SING THE NATIONAL ANTHEM AT

#### SPORTING EVENTS

Matt Soniak

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/22150/why-do-we-sing-national-anthem-sporting-events>

Short answer: History, Tradition and Patriotism.

On the night of September 13, 1814, Francis Scott Key, an American lawyer and amateur poet, accompanied American Prisoner Exchange Agent Colonel John Stuart Skinner to negotiate a prisoner release with several officers of the British Navy. During the negotiations, Key and Skinner learned of the British intention to attack the city of Baltimore, as well as the strength and positions of British forces. They were held captive for the duration of the battle and witnessed the bombardment of Baltimore's Fort McHenry. Inspired by the American victory and the sight of the American flag flying high in the morning, Key wrote a poem titled "The Defence of Fort McHenry."

Upon his return to Baltimore, Key gave the poem to his brother-in-law, who noted that the words fit the melody to the popular drinking song, "The Anacreontic Song." Key's brother-in-law took the poem to a printer, who made broadside copies of it. A few days later, the Baltimore Patriot and The American printed the poem with the note "Tune: Anacreon in Heaven." Later, the Carr Music Store in Baltimore published the words and music together as "The Star-Spangled Banner."

The song gained popularity over the course of the nineteenth century and was often played at public events like parades and Independence Day celebrations (and, on occasion, sporting events). In 1889, the Secretary of the Navy ordered it the official tune to be played during the raising of the flag. In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson ordered that it be played at all military ceremonies and other appropriate occasions, making it something of an unofficial national anthem.

After America's entrance into World War I, Major League Baseball games often featured patriotic rituals, such as players marching in formation during pregame military drills and bands playing patriotic songs.

During the seventh-inning stretch of game one of the 1918 World Series, the band erupted into "The Star-Spangled Banner." The Cubs and Red Sox players faced the centerfield flag pole and stood at attention. The crowd, already on their feet, began to sing along and applauded at the end of the song.

During World War II, baseball games again became venues for large-scale displays of patriotism, and technological advances in public address systems allowed songs to be played without a band. "The Star-Spangled Banner" was played before games throughout the course of the war, and by the time the war was over, the pregame singing of the national anthem had become cemented as a baseball ritual, after which it spread to other sports

## WEST LA VA LAND

### L.A. CITY PARK, BRENTWOOD SCHOOL WILL REMAIN ON VA PROPERTY

Gale Holland



*Federal officials have reached agreement for Barrington Park to stay on veterans land, but the fate of a popular dog park is up in the air. (Katie Falkenberg / Los Angeles Times)*

The Brentwood School and a Los Angeles city park can remain on prime West Los Angeles land deeded for veterans' care under an interim agreement announced Wednesday by federal officials.

The fate of a controversial dog park at the site remains up in the air, however, and the private school's offer of "in-kind" services, including veteran access to its sports facilities, has yet to be fully fleshed out.

"The vast majority of veterans have supported these changes," said Vince Kane, special assistant to Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert A. McDonald.

But advocates said veterans were excluded from the negotiations.

"Because the veterans weren't involved, there is no guarantee any veterans want to use the services they are planning," U.S. Navy veteran Seth Smith said.

"The provisions of in-kind resources are by no means final," said Dan Garcia, chief executive of a veterans advocacy group. "Is it enough? We're looking at it very hard, and we'll see."

The lease negotiations have been a sticking point in the VA's plans to develop its long-neglected 387-acre campus, the largest open parcel on the Westside, to house homeless, disabled and female veterans. The plan, reached as part of a settlement of litigation over substandard care of homeless veterans, is contingent on Congress approving a bill to restore leasing authority to campus officials.

Under the deals announced Wednesday, the Brentwood School will make annual lease payments of \$850,000 — double its previous rate — to keep its 22-acre athletic complex on the VA property. The in-kind services, also valued at \$850,000, will include scholarships and educational and vocational courses for veterans, although the details are still being worked out.

The city has operated the 12-acre Barrington Park on VA property in Brentwood rent-free since 1991; the dog park was added in 2002. The city now has pledged to spend \$200,000 on parks jobs for veterans, to rename the park Veterans Barrington Park and to build a veterans memorial at the site.

The city also promised to work to move the dog park off the land, but the VA did not set a deadline, said Kane, adding that "it may not be going away."

If an alternate site is not found, veterans will share the park with the community, he added. The VA is also considering teaching veterans to train service animals or run a kennel at the site.

The park parking lot will be operated by veterans. The VA has not reached an agreement with the operator of a separate parking lot in Brentwood Village used by customers and employees, Kane said.

Kane and Ann Brown, director of the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, said the deals are part

of overall improvements at the campus, which serves the largest number of veterans in the country. Los Angeles County has long been the homeless veteran capital of the country, with 3,071 counted last January.

Through an aggressive rent voucher program, the VA has housed 4,000 veterans over the last year, Kane said. The campus master plan calls for construction of 1,200 housing units.

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## ITT TECH

### CALVET DISAPPROVES GI BILL APPROVAL FOR ITT TECHNICAL INSTITUTE

Sacramento – To protect the hard-earned GI Bill Education benefits for California Veterans, the California State Approving Agency for Veteran Education (CSAAVE), a division of the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), sent a "Notice of Disapproval" to all 15 California campuses owned and operated by ITT Educational Services, Inc. (ITT). CSAAVE's Disapproval is effective immediately. GI Bill benefits may be used only at approved institutions.

"CalVet takes seriously our duty to ensure California Veterans receive the education and training they are paying for with their earned GI Bill benefits," said Keith Boylan, CalVet Deputy Secretary of Veteran Services. "CalVet stands ready to assist the more than 1,300 affected Veterans and beneficiaries currently enrolled at ITT, and they are encouraged to visit our website for important information about continuing their education," added Boylan.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) regulations authorize CSAAVE to disapprove non-compliant institutions and programs in California. CSAAVE's Notice of Disapproval is based on ITT's failure to comply with federal and state regulations for approval, and precludes ITT from participating in the GI Bill education benefit program or certifying recipients for benefits.

On August 25, 2016, the U.S. Department of Education took action to ban ITT from enrolling new students using federal financial aid funds. On August 26, 2016, the California Department of Consumer Affairs' Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education issued an Emergency Decision requiring ITT to stop accepting new students at all 15 California locations.

For additional information, CalVet encourages Veterans and beneficiaries using the GI Bill at a California ITT campus to visit CalVet's website:

[www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Pages/GI-Bill-Suspension-Information.aspx](http://www.calvet.ca.gov/VetServices/Pages/GI-Bill-Suspension-Information.aspx).

## CHAPTER NOTES

### Chapter 982

We had a great turn out for our second trap shoot and picnic in August. This is a chapter and family event. We had all kinds of fun with some great food.

Our monthly bowling night continues to grow in numbers. Some bowling and lots of fun and laughter. Top bowler for September was Tosh with a 192.

September will be busy with POW/MIA Day celebration. Our Chapter sets up at 4 to 5 locations each year to hand out black poppies and to inform people of the number of missing from all wars.

Arroyo Grande Harvest Festival Parade is September 24. This will be our Chapter's first time as the Color Guard. We have Jerry Kaufman, Max Torres, Deek Sogovia, Michael Knight, Lou Acosta, Jamie Castillo, Jackie Escalante, Ray Espinoza, James May, Angel Del Cruz, Lew Gault, Gerry Estrada, and Henry Ruiz as our members. The next day, September 25th we will be in Los Alamos Pioneer Days Parade.

On October 15th we are participating in the Santa Barbara County Stand Down in Santa Maria, a yearly event for us. On October 22 we are doing a walk for Breast Cancer awareness in San Luis Obispo.

All for now. Support Our Troops - May God Bless

Jerry Kaufman

Support Our Troops - May God Bless

### Chapter 357

5-14-16 - Attended The Shasta County Veteran Affiliate Council meeting

5-30-16- Attended 3 different Memorial Day event in Shasta County

6-25-16 - Attended The Shasta County Veteran Affiliate Council meeting

7-23-16 -Attended The Shasta County Veteran Affiliate Council meeting

Upcoming events



Sept. 9 - To attend the Shasta College Veterans meeting  
 Sept. 16- Promote POW/MIA day  
 Sept.17 - to attend the Shasta County Veteran Affiliate Council meeting  
 Oct. 20- Cook breakfast for 2 days at the Shasta County Stand down  
 Nov. 11 - Present the Vietnam Veterans monument at the Northern California Veterans Cemetery  
 Tip a Vet Fundraiser at Famous Daves

## Chapter 446

September 10th 2016 "Team VVA 446" took part in a charity walk supporting Brain Injury Association held at



Santa Antia Park, the infield of the race track, Team members Chapter Vice President Dirk Young, Chapter Board Member James Maddox, along with soon to be AVVA members Shannon Young Garcia, and Margie Young who just happen to be the chapter VP Dirk Young.

## Chapter 47

On September Chapter 47 held its annual POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony at the Military Museum in San



Bernardino. The local Air Force JROTC presented the colors and raised the American Flag and POW/MIA flag on the museum's pole. A membership meeting followed and then a luncheon was provided.

Members from #756, #446 and #1024 with Richard Segovia District Director at the Bridging of the Gap 9/10/16 in Westminster with our Vietnamese Brothers and Community.



## MST TAKING MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA SERIOUSLY



The Vietnam Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C. Library of Congress

One California court system is working to address the challenges facing women veterans, still coping with abuse they endured during their service.

Eileen Moore (Chapter 785 member) agreed to volunteer as a mentor to veterans in the Orange County Community Court because of her deep commitment to military men and women and her experience as a combat nurse during the Vietnam War. She's also an associate justice for the state's 4th District Court of Appeal, so her knowledge of the law likely came in handy from time to time. "Over the years, I've mentored most of the women, but sometimes men as well," she said. In 2015, vets in the OCCC Veterans Treatment Court were 85 percent men and 15 percent women.

"My observations are mainly about the women. That is, there is only so much money. And almost all of the people who end up sideways of the law as defendants in the veterans court are men, so that the court is necessarily geared towards the men rather than the women," Moore said. She believes the women's needs are not completely different from the men's, but estimates that in her years supporting vets in the program "between 90 and 95 percent of the women that I've mentored have been victims of military sexual trauma."

The federal government defines military sexual trauma as "psychological trauma resulting from a physical assault of a sexual nature, battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment which occurred while the Veteran was serving on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training." The Department of Veterans Affairs stipulates that while "veterans are not granted compensation for the traumatic event itself" they may receive "disability compensation for conditions that result from MST." The VA has a published list of signs, events, or circumstances it calls "markers" that can be used to determine if someone has suffered MST. They include substance abuse, depression, panic attacks, sexual dysfunction, STDs, requests for transfers while active, worsening work performance, among others.

MST is becoming more familiar to the public due to its prevalence among women who return home from conflicts and humanitarian work abroad, but still face difficulties due to sexual trauma they experienced in the line of duty. "I never asked them but somehow things manage to come out. I think that I do understand that. Considering some of the things that happened to me in Vietnam, I think it's probably somewhat soothing to have a woman there with them," Moore said.

She recalled one young woman she mentored who had multiple tattoos and would color her hair in striking ways. "She definitely seemed to want people to stay away from her," Moore said. One early Sunday morning, the woman was in her car going around a corner, still in her pajamas, to go visit relatives. A police officer pulled her over. He arrested her for operating under the influence and she called Moore, who always gave her mentees her phone number. This young woman had even visited her home. "There was a lot of warmth that had built up between the two of us. She said, 'Eileen, I swear I've been off heroin for 56 days. I swear I wasn't on anything,'" Moore said.

Military sexual trauma can create conditions that lead women vets into the criminal justice system because of certain factors associated with it.

It's not uncommon for vets who are in custody to have a pre-existing condition that precipitates their criminal behavior. Nicolaas-John Van Nieuwenhuysen, a staff psychiatrist at the Long Beach Department of Veterans Affairs, has been with the Orange County Community Court's veterans treatment court for two years. "I see a lot of people with alcohol-use disorder, fair amounts using cannabis, stimulants, meth, sometimes cocaine," he said. Substance-use issues are certainly part of the problem, with some people self medicating their PTSD, not sleeping well, having nightmares, unable to relax or being overly anxious, he explained. "You might resort to drinking to get a better night's sleep or to take the edge off during the day. They often end up with an alcohol problem, in addition to already having PTSD," Van Nieuwenhuysen said.

Some veterans in the United States face severe obstacles while adjusting to civilian life after completing their service. These difficulties land thousands in jail for crimes ranging from public intoxication and simple assault, to domestic violence or drug use. About 8 percent of people in prison and jail are veterans (excluding those in military facilities). Veterans are actually slightly underrepresented in jails and prisons, compared to their percentage of the adult population. Women veterans make up 1.1 percent of all inmates in state and federal prisons, and 3.2 percent of those in local and county jails, according to the Bureau of



*The Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 218 | Santa Barbara  
Proudly Present*

# “THE MOVING WALL”



**OCTOBER 12-17, 2016**  
**CHASE PALM PARK | SANTA BARBARA, CA**  
300 BLOCK OF EAST CABRILLO BLVD. (OCEAN SIDE)

**Dedication Ceremony | Saturday, October 15 | 11 AM**  
**Candlelight Service | Sunday, October 16 | Sunset**  
**Vietnam Era Huey helicopter on site**  
*Free Admission | The Wall Will Be Open and Staffed 24 Hours a Day*

*The Moving Wall is a half size replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.*

**Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 218 | Santa Barbara**  
**[vvachapter218.org](http://vvachapter218.org) | [info@vvachapter218.org](mailto:info@vvachapter218.org) | 805.284.6372**

*The Moving Wall is a registered trademark of Vietnam Combat Veterans, LTD*



Justice Statistics. Overall, 48 percent of all those in prison and 55 percent of those in jail “had been told by a mental health professional they had a mental disorder,” according to the BJS.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has estimated that one in five women veterans who use its health-care program screen positive for MST. The American Psychological Association estimates that in 2012, “the Army had the highest rate of sexual assault reports (2.3 per 1,000 service members), while the marine corps had the lowest (1.7 per 1,000).” The organization dedicated an entire issue of its journal to the condition in 2015.

For decades, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder has been recognized as a mental-health condition that afflicts many veterans. MST has made its way into the lexicon largely

due to its impact on women veterans who constitute the bulk of those impacted. A 2015 APA study titled “Sexual Trauma in the Military” summarized the current state of the issue:

Reports of sexual assault in the military have risen by approximately 88 percent between 2007 (2,688 reports) and 2013 (5,061) ... However, the Department of Defense (DOD) has also acknowledged that less than 15 percent of military sexual assault victims report the matter to a military authority ... Therefore, peer-reviewed research may provide more reliable estimates of the incidence of sexual assault. A recent review of research on military sexual trauma (MST) indicated that between 9.5 and 33 percent of women report experiencing an attempted or completed rape during military service. When examining MST, in-

cluding all forms of assault and harassment, between 22 and 84 percent of women report having these experiences during service...

Van Nieuwenhuysen evaluates clients once as part of the OCCC veterans admissions process. “Most of the people that we take in the court suffered from PTSD, substance-use issues, depression,” he said. Symptoms can include re-experiencing traumatic events—either disturbing memories, nightmares, flashbacks—where they’re actually re-living the traumatic situation. They can also experience hyperarousal. “That means they’re kind of keyed up and on edge. They’re hyper vigilant, they’re always aware of their surroundings, they might be easily startled,” he said.

Like Moore suspected of her mentee with the tattoos



and dramatic hair colors, vets with PTSD or MST “often engage in avoidance behavior,” according to Van Nieuwenhuysen. “They tend to avoid reminders of whatever the traumatic event was. Reminders can be people or places, or even just being around crowds,” he said.

Moore showed up for her young mentee’s court date and felt tears welling up in her eyes as the scene unfolded in the courtroom. “I wasn’t trying to make any kind of statement, but sometimes those things happen,” she said. Presiding Judge Wendy Lindley, the founder of OCCC in 2008 and Moore’s friend who had recruited her to be a mentor, pressed the prosecutor for the drug test results. They came back negative.

Both men and women suffer from military sexual trauma, but the majority of victims who report it are women. Some victims also allege that they have faced retaliation for speaking out, like being dishonorably discharged, losing veterans medical benefits as a consequence.

By one estimate, up to 82 percent of veterans involved in the criminal-justice system may be eligible for VA health-care services and benefits, but some may not know it. At OCCC, the treatment includes an assigned psychiatrist or psychiatric nurse practitioner who manages their treatment at the VA, and can prescribe psychiatric medications like antidepressants and sleeping medications to treat their PTSD or depression. Vets also enroll in a comprehensive group therapy program that can include sessions for addiction.

Today, 14 percent of those on active duty are women. The APA report estimates that by 2035 women will make up about 15 percent of living veterans. “Therefore, it is increasingly important for veteran-serving providers and care systems to be able to identify and address gender-specific challenges to successful transitions, including those related to military sexual assault,” its authors wrote. In addition to concluding that MST in women makes them more than four times as likely to have PTSD, the Department of Veterans Affairs taskforce on women found that:

Women who enter the military at younger ages and those of enlisted rank appear to be at increased risk for MST. In addition, women who have had sexual assault prior to military service report higher incidences of MST.

At about midnight the day she came to court to support her mentee Moore received an email from the young vet. “I can’t sleep because I’ve been so upset. I just wanted you to know that it meant the world to me that someone in that courtroom believed me,” Moore recalled the message saying. The therapeutic approach taken at OCCC has provided healing for many participants in the 130 existing veterans courts, who were able to remake their lives after a life-altering experience. It has also resulted in a significant drop in recidivism rates for veterans in the county. Of all program graduates since the start of the veterans court, only 10.5 percent have been re-arrested. That’s a significant improvement over California’s overall recidivism rate of 61 percent.

## FORMER POW DAY

**PRESIDENT PROCLAIMS NATIONAL FORMER PRISONER OF WAR RECOGNITION DAY**



**POW/MIA Ceremony**  
*Air Force Senior Airman Kelly Sowards, left, and Staff Sgt. Joshua McKinnon, right, both assigned to the 902nd Security Forces Squadron, stand guard at the Missing Man Monument to pay respect to America's former prisoners of war and those service members reported missing in action at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Sept. 18, 2014. President Barack Obama designated April 8, 2016, as National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day in a presidential proclamation.*

WASHINGTON, April 8, 2016 — On National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, Americans “salute the selfless service members throughout our history who gave of their own liberty to ensure ours, and we renew our commitment to remaining a nation worthy of their extraordinary sacrifices,” President Barack Obama said in his proclamation designating today National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day.

“Under the flag of the United States, generations of women and men, united in a common cause greater than themselves, have served to defend the ideals that bind us together as a nation and that preserve our country as a beacon of hope and freedom around the world,” the president said. Gratitude for POWs’ Sacrifices

“In wars and engagements since America’s founding, brave patriots have experienced indescribable suffering as prisoners of war,” Obama said. “Often physically and mentally tortured, starved, and put through the worst most of us could imagine, these heroes are owed a debt we can never fully repay, and their families -- who exhibited tremendous fortitude in the face of grueling uncertainty -- are worthy of our profound gratitude.”

He added, “The values of honor, courage, and selflessness that drive our Armed Forces are particularly acute in those who have been taken as prisoners of war, sustaining them through days, weeks, and sometimes years of profound hardship endured for the sake of securing the blessings of liberty for all.”

America’s former prisoners of war -- and all who don our uniform to keep us safe -- have helped to make the United States the strongest and most prosperous nation in the history of the world, Obama said.

“Our eternal obligation is to care for them and uphold our everlasting promise to never leave our men and women on the battlefield behind,” the president said. “Let us reaffirm our adherence to these ideals and honor our former prisoners of war by paying them the gratitude and respect they deserve.”

## HOMELESS VETERANS

**CHRYSLER LIQUIDATING TRUST COMMITS \$750,000 TO SUPPORT HOMELESS VETERANS DONATION IS PART OF VA’S PARTNERSHIP EFFORTS RESULTING IN 220 GRANTS TO VETERANS AND FAMILIES**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is partnering with Chrysler Liquidating Trust to provide funds to support VA efforts to end Veteran homelessness. The partnership is part of the MyVA Strategic Partnership Initiative, which works with external organizations to improve the delivery and access of care for Veterans.

Earlier this year, the Chrysler Liquidating Trust committed \$750,000 to support VA’s efforts to prevent homelessness in Detroit, Philadelphia and Los Angeles. Leveraging VA’s existing partnership with the Pentagon Federal Credit Union Foundation, more than \$233,000 of these funds have been awarded to cover rent and utility deposits for Veterans. As of July 2016, approximately 220 grants were distributed to support Veterans and their families.

The Chrysler Liquidating Trust partnership grew out of discussions between Secretary McDonald and Bob Manzo, Trustee for the Trust on the importance of forging strategic partnerships and the ongoing work to end Veteran homelessness.

“It gives me great pleasure to announce another VA partnership,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “VA’s new strategic partnership with the Chrysler Liquidating Trust is a great example of ways VA is opening its doors to new kinds of partners to better serve Veterans. Just this summer, President Obama announced a nearly 50-percent decline in Veteran homelessness. It’s these kinds of collaborations that are helping us achieve results. Caring for Veterans is a shared responsibility and opportunity.”

“After speaking with Secretary Bob and hearing about VA’s newly invigorated effort to work with external partners, I wanted to find a way to use these funds to support Veterans,” said Trusts’ Manzo. “There’s no reason VA has to take on issues like homelessness by itself. There are ways that all organizations can step up to the plate to support this important national issue.”

The Chrysler Liquidating Trust was es-

tablished as part of the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP). During its creation, it was pre-determined any surplus funds would be allocated to a national cause benefiting Americans. Trust officials chose to allocate those surplus funds to Veterans’ issues.

Since the launch of the MyVA, the largest transformation in the history of VA, the Department has entered into new collaborations with dozens of external organizations to combat issues of homelessness, suicide and Veteran unemployment.

For more information about VA’s Homeless Programs, visit <http://www.va.gov/homeless>. Information about MyVA transformation efforts may be found at [http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/myva\\_transformation\\_update\\_2\\_2016.asp](http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/myva_transformation_update_2_2016.asp).

## "STOLEN VALOR" ACT



Among the legislators taking part in the bill signing ceremony by Gov. Jack Markell in Dover are (l-r) representatives Rich Collins, Dave Wilson, Ruth Briggs King, Harvey Kenton and Danny Short; and senators Bruce Ennis and Dave Lawson.

People seeking benefits by posing as veterans or active duty military personnel could now face a stiff fine under a measure just signed into law by Gov. Jack Markell. Sponsored by Rep. Rich Collins, R-Millsboro, House Bill 80 (as amended) expands the crime of criminal impersonation to include those who falsely claim to be current or past members of the U.S. military for the purpose of "obtaining money, property, or other tangible benefit." The legislation also applies to veterans who try to benefit by deceptively claiming a higher rank than they achieved. Those found guilty of the new Class A misdemeanor will pay a steep price for their transgression. "The penalty is \$1,000 and the judge is not allowed to reduce or suspend that fine," Collins said. "I think veterans deserve all the respect we can possibly give them. This law will serve to help protect the legacy they worked so hard to create." More than a dozen legislators and members of veterans' organizations recently attended a signing ceremony for the law in Markell's Dover office, with many sharing stories of scams perpetrated by individuals who could now be found guilty of violating the new statute. "I think there is more of this than is being reported," said Sen. Bruce Ennis, D-Smyrna, the co-prime sponsor of the bill. Commissioner Ronald Sarg, with the Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs, said it is an easy crime to perpetrate since it is not difficult for someone "to put on fatigues and pretend to be a veteran." Collins said the law will hopefully give authorities a tool to crack down on such acts and potentially curtail them. Rep. Ruth Briggs King, R-Georgetown, a co-sponsor of the bill, said she believes the law will raise public awareness, making it more difficult to commit this type of fraud. The measure passed the General Assembly unanimously. It takes effect immediately.

## CAMP LEJUENE WATER

**MCB CAMP LEJEUNE, NC CONTAMINATED WATER RULE PROPOSAL**

**VA TO PROVIDE PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTION FOR RELATED DISEASES**

As part of VA’s ongoing commitment to provide quality care to Veterans and their families, the VA today proposed to establish presumption of service connection for eight diseases associated with exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune, NC.

Based on evidence from several internationally recognized scientific authorities, including the National Academies of Sciences, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Bob McDonald has determined there is sufficient scientific and medical evidence available to establish a presumption of



# NO/Prop61

Deceptive & Proposition

[www.NoProp61.com](http://www.NoProp61.com)

For Immediate Release: September 2, 2016  
Contact: Kathy Fairbanks, 916-443-0872

## Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Dept of California and Major Veterans Service Organizations Reinforce Strong Opposition to Prop 61 In Response to Yes on 61 Campaign Ad

Newly released analysis by US Department of Veterans Affairs warns Prop. 61 could increase prescription drug costs for veterans by as much as \$3.8 billion annually.

More than 25 California veterans organizations, representing hundreds of thousands of California vets, OPPOSE Prop. 61.

SACRAMENTO – The leaders of California veterans’ organizations today responded to a television ad from the Yes on Prop 61 campaign that featured a few veterans. Veterans are overwhelmingly opposed to Prop. 61 and the leaders of those groups reinforced again that every leading veterans group in the state opposes Proposition 61. The Yes ad is currently appearing on a limited basis on Fox News in San Diego.

“The veterans community in California is overwhelmingly opposed to Proposition 61 and any suggestion to the contrary by the promoters of this flawed initiative is misleading,” said **Dale Smith, Commander, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Dept of CA.** “The VFW, Dept of California, along with every major veterans organization in the state strongly opposes Prop. 61 because it would increase prescription drug costs for the VA and, consequently, veterans.”

More than two-dozen organizations that provide services to hundreds of thousands of California veterans all oppose Prop. 61 because it would take away a special benefit for veterans and increase their prescription drug costs.

In fact, a recently issued analysis by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) warned that if Prop. 61 passes, it could increase drug costs to the VA as much as \$3.8 billion annually.

“Our organizations are on the frontlines helping veterans find health care, mental health services, housing, job training and other programs. This ad certainly does not represent the views of the majority of veteran service organizations or veterans in this state,” said **Enrique Rudino, Commander, AMVETS, Department of California.** “California’s veterans organizations are united in opposition to Prop. 61 because it would be disastrous for vets.”

“California’s veterans organizations do what is right for veterans without a political agenda. The VA has said that Prop. 61 could raise costs to the VA by as much as \$3.8 billion per year. The math is pretty clear here: Prop. 61 adds up to a bad deal for our nation’s veterans. We urge an unequivocal NO vote,” said **Steve Mackey, President, Vietnam Veterans of California, California State Council.**

The veterans organizations opposed to Prop. 61 represent more than two hundred thousand California veterans. They include:

- Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of California
- Vietnam Veterans of America, California State Council
- American Legion, Department of California
- AMVETS, Department of California
- Military Officers Association of America, California Council of Chapters
- American GI Forum of California
- Marine Corps League, Department of California
- Military Order of the Purple Heart, Department of California
- California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (CACVSO)
- California State Commanders Veterans Council
- Disabled Veterans Business Alliance
- Paralyzed Veterans of America, Bay Area & Western Chapter
- Association of the United States Army, Northern California, Sixth Region
- Association of the United States Army, Southern California, Seventh Region
- Reserve Officers Association, Department of the Golden West
- Fleet Reserve Association, West Coast Region
- Minority Veterans Coalition of California
- Jewish War Veterans of America, Department of California
- Scottish American Military Society
- California Veterans Benefit Fund (CAVBF)
- Sons of the American Legion, Detachment of California
- AMVETS Ladies Auxiliary, State of California
- Rear Area Support Foundation
- Veterans Affiliated Council of Sacramento County
- San Diego Military Advisory Council
- Kings County Military and Veterans Coalition

### BACKGROUND ON PROP. 61

Prop. 61 is a deceptive, deeply-flawed measure that would be bad for patients, harmful for veterans and expensive for taxpayers. It will increase prescription drug costs, jeopardize patient access to medicines and result in more bureaucracy, red tape and lawsuits. It also would take away a special prescription drug benefit promised to our veterans. Nearly 150 organizations oppose Prop. 61.

connection between exposure to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune and the following eight diseases: adult leukemia, aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, liver cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma and Parkinson’s disease.

This change would apply to all active duty, reserve and National Guard personnel who served at Camp Lejeune for no less than 30 days from August 1, 1953, through December 31, 1987. The days can be either consecutive or cumulative.

In addition, VA proposes to establish a presumption that individuals who served at Camp Lejeune during this period and later developed one of the presumptive diseases were disabled during the relevant period of service, thus establishing active military service for benefit purposes.

VA acknowledges that current science establishes a link between exposure to certain chemicals found in the water supply at Camp Lejeune and later development of one of the proposed presumptive conditions. However, VA experts agree that there is no scientific underpinning to support a specific minimum exposure level for any of the conditions. Therefore, VA welcomes comments on the 30-day minimum service requirement and will consider other practical alternatives when drafting the final rule. VA also notes that the proposed 30-day requirement serves to establish eligibility for service connection on a presumptive basis; nothing in this proposed regulation prohibits consideration of service connection on a non-presumptive basis. The proposed regulation can be viewed at this link: [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). The 30 day public comment period will be open until Oct. 10, 2016.

<http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/30807/vas-proposes-rule-to-consider-certain-diseases-associated-with-exposure-to-contaminants-in-the-water-supply-at-camp-lejeune/>

### VA PROPOSES RULE TO CONSIDER CERTAIN DISEASES ASSOCIATED WITH EXPOSURE TO CONTAMINANTS IN THE WATER SUPPLY AT CAMP LEJEUNE VA TO PROVIDE PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTION FOR RELATED DISEASES

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has published proposed regulations to establish presumptions for the service connection of eight diseases affecting military members exposed to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

The presumptive illnesses apply to active duty, reserve and National Guard members who served for no less than 30 days at Camp Lejeune between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987, and are diagnosed with the following conditions:

- adult leukemia
- aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes
- bladder cancer
- kidney cancer
- liver cancer
- multiple myeloma
- non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma
- Parkinson’s disease

“We have a responsibility to take care of those who have served our Nation and have been exposed to harm as a result of that service,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. “Establishing a presumption for service at Camp Lejeune will make it easier for those Veterans to receive the care and benefits they deserve.”

Environmental health experts on VA’s Technical Workgroup conducted comprehensive reviews of scientific evidence, which included analysis and research done by the Department of Health and Human Service’s Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), Environmental Protection Agency, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the National Toxicology Program, and the National Academies of Science.

Military members with records of service showing no less than 30 days of service, either concurrent or cumulative, at Camp Lejeune during the contamination period can already be granted Veteran status for medical benefits, following passage of the Honoring America’s Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012.

In the early 1980s, volatile organic compounds, trichloroethylene (TCE), a metal degreaser, and perchloroethylene, a dry cleaning agent (PCE), as well as benzene, and vinyl chloride were discovered in two on-base water supply systems at Camp Lejeune. These systems served the housing, administrative, and recreational facilities, as well as the base hospital. The contaminated wells supplying the water systems were shut down in February 1985.

VA acknowledges that current science establishes



a link between exposure to certain chemicals found in the water supply at Camp Lejeune and later development of one of the proposed presumptive conditions. However, VA experts agree that there is no scientific underpinning to support a specific minimum exposure level for any of the conditions. Therefore, VA welcomes comments on the 30-day minimum exposure requirement and will consider other practical alternatives when drafting the final rule. VA also notes that the proposed 30-day requirement serves to establish eligibility for service connection on a presumptive basis; nothing in this proposed regulation prohibits consideration of service connection on a non-presumptive basis. The 30-day public comment period on the proposed rule is open until Oct. 10, 2016.

## VIETNAM VETERAN HEALTH

VA Begins Nationwide Study on the Health of Vietnam Era Veterans

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched the Vietnam Era Health Retrospective Observational Study (VE-HEROeS), a national study on the health and well-being of Vietnam Veterans, including Blue Water Navy Veterans, as well as Veterans who served elsewhere during the Vietnam Era (1961-1975), and similarly aged U. S. residents who never served in the military.

Beginning this fall, VA will invite approximately 43,000 Vietnam and Vietnam Era Veterans, and approximately 11,000 members of the general U. S. population to participate in VE-HEROeS. Researchers have scientifically selected a random sample of individuals for participation, and are not able to accept volunteers. VA encourages all those who are invited to fully participate in the study.

Because of the small sample size (which was limited because of budget), it is vital that every veteran who receives a survey do their best to fill it out completely and honestly and return it to the Survey Team. Because the Blue Water Navy segment is just a small subset of the overall veteran population, it is even more important that every Survey that goes out to a Blue Water Navy veteran be completed and returned; the higher the return rate, the better the picture of our current health status that can be drawn. This Study can show important 'indications and tendencies' for the health of each cohort, but this Study WILL NOT be a "groundbreaking study of Blue Water Navy health outcomes" as has been previously stated by the Compensation Division of the Veteran Benefits Administration. But even assessing the health trends and tendencies still depends on a high return rate to provide a higher probability for whatever data that can be gathered at this point in time. And every survey received will be one additional data point reporting the overall health for each group of Vietnam Era veterans.

All participants in VE-HEROeS will be asked to fill out a questionnaire on their military service, general health, age-related conditions, health care use, and the health experiences of their children and grandchildren. A smaller group will be invited to agree to a medical records review. Topics of special focus for the study include cognition, hepatitis C infection, and neurologic conditions.

**NO/Prop61**  
Deceptive *Rx* Proposition

**WE OPPOSE PROP 61:**

**THE DECEPTIVE  
RX PROPOSITION**

**LEARN MORE: NoProp61.com**

*Defeating Proposition 61 on California's November ballot is a huge priority for our organization. That's because Prop 61 would take away a special benefit provided to those who have served our country and the measure could increase prescription drug costs for veterans. We hope you will join us in the fight to protect veterans by joining the official campaign opposed to Prop 61.*

*The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) receives special discounts on prescription drugs for veterans in honor of their service to our country. This helps keep medicines affordable to the 75% of veterans who currently pay low out-of-pocket co-pays for prescriptions, and the 25% of vets who pay no prescription co-pays. Prop 61 attempts to extend these special discounts to some state programs. History has shown that when these special discounts are provided to other sizable populations, VA costs goes up.*

*If Prop 61 passes and VA prescription costs go up, there would be added pressure to increase prescription drug co-pays for veterans and to limit the availability of certain drugs.*

*Join the campaign opposed to Prop 61 and help protect veterans.*

**California Veterans Organizations Strongly Oppose Prop 61:**

- Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of California
- Military Officers Association of America, California Council of Chapters
- American GI Forum of California
- AMVETS, Department of California
- Military Order of the Purple Heart,
- Department of California
- Vietnam Veterans of America, California State Council
- American Legion, Department of California
- California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (CACVSO)
- Disabled Veterans Business Alliance
- Paralyzed Veterans of America, Bay Area & Western Chapter
- Association of the United States Army, Northern California
- Reserve Officers Association, Department of the Golden West
- Fleet Reserve Association, West Coast Region
- Minority Veterans Coalition of California
- Jewish War Veterans of America, Department of California
- Scottish American Military Society
- California Veterans Benefit Fund (CAVBF)
- Sons of the American Legion, Detachment of California
- Veterans Affiliated Council of Sacramento County
- San Diego Military Advisory Council

*Veterans sacrifice for our country and deserve all the special benefits afforded to them. Help protect veterans on November 8 and vote No on Prop 61!*



Learn more at [www.publichealth.va.gov/epidemiology/studies/heroes/index.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/epidemiology/studies/heroes/index.asp)

## COMMISSION ON CARE

### STATEMENT FROM VA SECRETARY ROBERT A. McDONALD ON PRESIDENT OBAMA'S FINAL ASSESSMENT OF THE COMMISSION ON CARE

Consistent with the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, the President's formal response to the Commission on Care was transmitted to Congress. As the President has said, "a sacred covenant exists between Veterans and this nation: servicemen and service-women take an oath to protect our country, and in turn, our nation pledges to take care of them when they leave the service. The Commission's work to evaluate the Veterans Affairs health care system is important in ensuring we keep our promise to our Veterans."

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald released the following statement on the report:

VA stands firmly behind the President's final assessment of the Commission on Care report, and we thank the Commission for their hard work.

With input from Congress, Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), and government partners, VA has thoroughly reviewed each and every recommendation to determine whether they were feasible and advisable within the scope of the law. The President and VA find 15 of the 18 recommendations in the Commission's report feasible and advisable, and we have already accomplished or have been working on 12 out of the 18 through our ongoing MyVA transformation. The Department has already started implementing the Commission's recommendations that the President and VA found feasible and advisable.

Transforming VA into a Veteran-Centric Department

Two years ago, the President charged me with transforming VA into the high-performing, Veteran-centric organization our Veterans deserve. I am thrilled to see that through our MyVA transformation initiative. Though there is certainly much more work to be done, VA has already made irrefutable progress in increasing Veterans' access to quality health care and the benefits they have earned.

Progress Made

This past March, VA set a new record for completed appointments: 5.3 million inside VA, 730,000 more than in March 2014. VA increased access to Veterans through an integrated system of care. VHA staff and Choice contractors created over 3 million authorizations for Veterans to receive care in the private sector from October 2015 through July 2016. This is a 42 percent increase in authorizations when compared to the same time period last year. From FY 2014 to FY 2015, Community Care appointments increased about 20 percent from 17.7 million in FY14 to 21.3 Million. Clinical workload is up 11 percent in the past two years. Nearly 97 percent of appointments are now completed within 30 days of the Veteran's preferred date; 22 percent are same-day appointments; average wait times are five days for primary care, six days for specialty care, and two days for mental health care. Nearly 90 percent of Veterans now say they are "satisfied or completely satisfied" with the timeliness of their appointments.

On Commission's Recommendation to Establish VHA Board of Directors

Overall, we found 15 of the 18 recommendations feasible and advisable, and are working to implement them. However, VA strongly disagrees with the Commission on its proposed "board of directors" to oversee the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Such a board is neither feasible nor advisable for both constitutional and practical reasons. Most problematically, this proposal would seem to establish VHA as an independent agency, which would frustrate ongoing efforts to improve the Veteran's experience by integrating Veterans health care and services across VA, making it more difficult for Veterans to receive the quality care where, when, and how they need it.

Increasing Access to Health Care is a Shared Goal

We do, however, strongly agree with the idea of external advice and counsel to ensure the VA operating with the greatest degree of efficiency and effectiveness for Veterans. VA is already advised by our new MyVA Advisory Committee, which has been hard at work since March 2015 applying the members' extensive experience in customer service and organizational change to our transformational challenge. They are leaders in business, medicine, government, and in Veteran advocacy. Among them are eight Veterans like: Major General Joe Robles who after spending 30 years in the Army became President and CEO for USAA; Dr. Richard Carmona, a Special Forces Vietnam Veteran and the 17th Surgeon General of the United States; and Navy Veteran Dr. Connie Mariano,

who was the first military woman to serve as White House Physician to the President, the first woman Director of the White House Medical Unit, and the first Filipino American in US History to become a Navy Rear Admiral. These are innovative, resourceful, respected leaders who are advising us on transformation. They know business. They know customer service. And, they know Veterans.

I strongly support the Commission's intent that creating a high-performing, integrated health care system that encompasses both VA and private care is critical to serving the needs of Veterans. In fact, VA has outlined our approach to achieve this same goal in our Plan to Consolidate Community Care, submitted to Congress in October 2015. This plan would provide Veterans with the full spectrum of healthcare services and more choice without sacrificing VA's foundational health services on which many Veterans depend.

At the same time, it is critical that we preserve and continue to improve the VA health care system and ensure that VA fulfills its mission. Veteran Service Organizations, having decades of experience advocating for generations of our Nation's Veterans, have made it crystal clear that they believe VA is the best place for Veterans to receive care. Many VSOs fear that the Commission's vision would compromise VA's ability to provide specialized care for spinal cord injury, prosthetics, traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental health needs, which the private sector is not as equipped to provide. We share their concern and therefore do not support any policies or legislation that will lead to privatization, which I am pleased the Commission did not recommend outright. Privatization is not transformational. It's more along the lines of dereliction of duty.

VA is well on its way towards realizing the integrated health care network envisioned by the Commission, but we cannot get there alone. Congress is our board of directors. If Veterans are to receive the care and services they deserve, Congress must do its job as our board. Abdicating leadership and constitutional responsibilities by creating more bureaucracy hurts Veterans and slows the progress of our MyVA transformation. Congress must act on key pieces of legislation like our Plan to Consolidate Community Care, our plan to reform the claims appeals process, and the President's budget request for VA.

We, along with VSOs, have worked hard with Republicans and Democrats in Congress to develop these critical pieces of legislation. We know that the vast majority in Congress understand how critical these issues are and are ready to take action. I call on leadership from both parties to put political expediency aside and do what is best for our Veterans and for taxpayers. Only then will we be able to truly transform VA into the 21st century organization Veterans deserve.

A link to the Commission on Care Final Report may be found here.

A link to the Secretary's letter to the President in response to the report may be found here.

Links to the President's statement and letter may be found at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/01/statement-press-secretary-presidents-response-commission-care-report> and <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/01/letter-president-report-va-commission-care>

Information on the Commission on Care and its Charter may be found at <https://commissiononcare.sites.usa.gov/commissioners/>.

## DIRECT APPOINTMENTS

### VETERANS WHO NEED ROUTINE AUDIOLOGY AND OPTOMETRY APPOINTMENTS WILL SOON BE ABLE TO DIRECTLY SCHEDULE

Veterans receiving care at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Centers will now be able to schedule routine ear and eye appointments at local VA Audiology and Optometry clinics without a primary care referral - a move that eliminates multiple steps and gets Veterans into appointments quicker.

## FREE FLU SHOTS AVAILABLE AT WALGREENS

The cold and flu season is upon us and the Department of Veterans Affairs has once again teamed up with Walgreens Pharmacies nationwide to allow all veterans who are currently enrolled in the VA healthcare system to be able walk into any of the over 8000 Walgreens nationally (and the Duane Reade pharmacies in the New York metropolitan area) to receive a vaccination at no cost. Vac-

inations will be available through March 31, 2017. Veterans wishing to receive the no cost vaccination simply need to present a Veterans Identification Card and a photo ID, at any participating Walgreens to receive the vaccination. In addition, after the Walgreens pharmacist administers the vaccine Walgreens will transmit that information securely to VA where it becomes part of the patient's electronic medical record. VA is committed to keeping Veteran patients healthy, and during this flu season, vaccination is the best way to prevent the spread of flu. No matter where you live, visit your local VA clinic or Walgreens to get a free flu shot.

- To find your local VA, visit [va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp](http://va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp).

- To locate a Walgreens store near you, call 800-WAL-GREENs (800-925-4733), or go to [com/findastore](http://com/findastore).

- To learn more about the partnership, call 1-877-771-8537 or visit [ehealth.va.gov/immunization.asp](http://ehealth.va.gov/immunization.asp).

- To get more information on flu and flu vaccine, visit [publichealth.va.gov/flu](http://publichealth.va.gov/flu) or [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).

## WALL OF FACES



My name is Janna Hoehn, I am a volunteer for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC. Faces Never Forgotten program. I am sure you have heard about this project ... We are trying to locate photos of each and every one of our Fallen Heroes from the Vietnam War. All photos will go online on the Wall of Faces (VVMF Site). When the museum is completed (The Education Center at the Wall) the photos will also display there as well.

Below are the states that we are still searching for photos, your help would be greatly appreciated. To check to see if we need a photo or a better quality photo of one of the Fallen, go to: [vwmf.org/thewall](http://vwmf.org/thewall) then type the persons name in the search box, their profile will come up. If there is a generic photo, this means we need his photo. If there is a photo however poor quality, we would welcome a better quality photo.

To search for your local town click on ADVANCED SEARCH behind the searchbox ONLY fill out city/state, hit submit and ALL the profiles will come up for that city. You will be able to scroll though to see who still needs a photo or better photo. You also can search by County/State hit submit and the entire County profiles will come up.

To send photos, please scan and email photos to Janna Hoehn at [neverforgotten2014@gmail.com](mailto:neverforgotten2014@gmail.com). Please put Fallen Heroes name in the subject box.

Here are the states we have NOT completed:

**California**, Arizona, Kansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Illinois, Tennessee, Mississippi, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, Maine and New Hampshire...

We are getting very close to finishing a few of these states, with your help... we could get even closer. Thank you for your support.

Aloha Janna Hoehn  
Team Leader  
Faces Never Forgotten

## SUICIDE PREVENTION

**SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL SUICIDE RISK & PREVENTION MONTH (SHOULD BE EVERY MONTH)**  
VA Crisis Line – 1-800-273 – Talk (8255), Press 1

Some resources for suicide prevention information —

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) - TAPS offers care to those grieving the death of a loved one serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. Established in 1994, TAPS operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week through a national peer support network and provides connection to grief resources, all at no cost to surviving families and loved ones. <http://www.taps.org> 1-800-959-TAPS (8277)



**Make The Connection** – A VA online resource designed to connect Veterans, their family members and friends, and other supporters with information, resources, and solutions to issues affecting their lives. <http://www.maketheconnection.net>

**National Alliance for Suicide Prevention** -- The National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance) ensures a sustained, nationwide public health effort, as it implements the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention to accomplish the ultimate goal of eliminating the tragic experience of suicide.

**The Suicide Prevention Resource Center** – the SPRC offers online training website aims to train service providers, educators, health professionals, public officials, and community-based coalitions to develop effective suicide prevention programs and policies. All courses are available free of charge and can be completed at your own pace. online training website aims to train service providers, educators, health professionals, public officials, and community-based coalitions to develop effective suicide prevention programs and policies. All courses are available free of charge and can be completed at your own pace. <http://training.sprc.org/>

**Zero Suicide** — Zero Suicide is a commitment to suicide prevention in health and behavioral health care systems and also a specific set of tools and strategies. The Zero Suicide approach aims to improve care and outcomes for individuals at risk of suicide in health care systems. It represents a commitment to patient safety--the most fundamental responsibility of health care--and also to the safety and support of clinical staff who do the demanding work of treating and supporting suicidal patients. <http://zerosuicide.sprc.org/>

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

### GOLD STAR MOTHERS AND FAMILIES DAY

On the last Sunday of September each year, we pause to pay tribute to the Gold Star Mothers and Families whose loved ones paid the supreme sacrifice in their service to the Nation. As we sit down at the dinner table on Sunday night, let us remember that in the homes of these patriotic families, there will be an empty chair. On the mantle of their fireplace rests a special flag of the United States of America, folded in the shape of a triangle with white stars ablaze on a field of blue. For many families, the flag represents the final day spent with their loved one.

In 1930, James A. Moss in his definitive book, "The Flag of the United States, its History and Symbolism," he wrote, "The Flag is carefully folded into the shape of a tri-cornered hat, reminiscent of the hats worn by the soldiers who fought the War of the Revolution and won American independence. In the folding, the red and white stripes are finally wrapped into the blue, as the light of day vanishes into the darkness of the night." In that flag, we find the constant thread of our Nation's character -- the truth that America endures because it is home to an unbroken line of patriots willing to lay down their lives for the land they love.

It is hard to imagine the pain of a mother who loses a

son or daughter, the wife or husband who loses their life partner, or the child who loses a father or mother. Just as we honor our brothers and sisters who stood beside us, only to give their last full measure of devotion, we in the Military Order of the Purple Heart hold close and honor

their Gold Star Families left behind. On this day, let us remember our commitment to the Gold Star Mothers and Families who carry on with pride and resolve despite unthinkable loss. As a grateful Nation, we declare that we will never forget their sacrifice, and renew our promise to build a future worthy of their devotion.



## Want to know more about YOUR VA benefits?

Do you have questions about or need assistance with VA benefits? Are you a transitioning Servicemember, Veteran, survivor, or dependent looking to see which VA benefits are available to you? Give us a like and follow on [Facebook](#) to connect with our social media team. Each day, our page features benefits news, updates, tips, how-to's, and discussions.

<https://www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits>



*Group photo of the August California State Council delegates and family members along with friends and guests.*



News Bits

Military Times  
How did your congressional representative vote on the VA reform bill? The House of Representatives on Wednesday passed a bill to make it easier to fire Veterans Affairs Department employees and overhaul the department's benefits appeals process. [http://www.militarytimes.com/articles/how-did-your-congressional-representative-vote-on-the-va-reform-bill?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=EBB%20Mil%209.16.16&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](http://www.militarytimes.com/articles/how-did-your-congressional-representative-vote-on-the-va-reform-bill?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%20Mil%209.16.16&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief)

Army Times  
After review, Army could upgrade dozens of discharges for soldiers with PTSD, TBI. The Army will consider upgrading the other-than-honorable discharges of 73 soldiers diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury after a servicewide review found they may not have undergone a required medical examination. [https://www.armytimes.com/articles/after-review-army-could-upgrade-dozens-of-discharges-for-soldiers-with-ptsd-tbi?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=EBB%20Mil%209.16.16&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](https://www.armytimes.com/articles/after-review-army-could-upgrade-dozens-of-discharges-for-soldiers-with-ptsd-tbi?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%20Mil%209.16.16&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief)

USA Today:  
Account for mental health in the VA's budget: #tellusatady Combine the budgets of the VA and the Defense Department. USA TODAY's editorial 'Every 72 minutes, a veteran commits suicide' is a terrible fact. The piece spotlighted the difficulty of getting a handle on this particular issue. One young veteran lay down on a railroad track and ended his life. Another veteran in the same editorial shot himself to death. These veterans share their service in the armed forces, they have that common ground, but what else? <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2016/09/18/account-mental-health-vas-budget-tellusatoday/90629896/>

WTOP (ABC-103.5, Audio):  
Secretary Robert McDonald on WTOP. In this three-minute interview, Secretary Robert McDonald provides statistics on improved wait times and VA health care access. He says that 24 leases for new spaces have been funded, but Congressional authorization is required before VA can offer these additional points of care. Also, some laws are getting in the way of VA providing great care, and Congress needs to pass over 100 proposals for new laws VA submitted in President Barack Obama's 2017 budget. <https://cisionapi.criticalmention.com/bits/wordplay/#/clipId=24169272&slim=1&partnerToken=7e34ac0d-c71f-4799-97e9-475cb307f8aa>

Portland Press Herald:  
In Maine, VA Secretary affirms pledge to Veterans and their families at ceremonies marking Togus' 150th year. U.S. Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald visited Maine on Saturday to take part in the VA Maine Healthcare System's celebration of the Togus facility's 150th year of operation. Speaking at a media session before the official proceedings, McDonald talked about changes being made to improve veterans care and emphasized the VA's commitment to not only continue to care for veterans but also their families and future generations. <http://www.pressherald.com/2016/09/17/va-secretary-affirms-pledge-to-veterans-and-their-families/>

Journal News (Video):  
VA retreats on ensuring quality care for Veterans: View, Top boss, Robert McDonald. Once again, Robert McDonald, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has made the headlines. As USA Today reported, Secretary McDonald disregarded the laws and rules after the previous secretary of the VA, Eric Shinseki, had to fall on his sword when news broke of the debacle at the Phoenix VA Hospital where 20 veterans were killed. <http://www.lohud.com/story/opinion/contributors/2016/09/18/quality-care-veterans-view/90355582/>

Pasadena Now:  
Vets Stand Watch Around the Clock on Colorado Street Bridge to Prevent Suicides, Spread Awareness. Military veterans set up post on Pasadena's Colorado Bridge for three days in effort to help prevent suicide and spread awareness about the epidemic that takes the lives of around 22 vets each day. Their around-the-clock shifts from Thursday through Saturday aimed to draw the attention from the community and shed a light on the impact of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) on veterans that often results in taking their own lives. [http://www.pasadenanow.com/main/vets-set-up-around-the-clock-watch-on-colorado-bridge-to-prevent-suicides-spread-awareness/#.V9\\_en4-cGMp](http://www.pasadenanow.com/main/vets-set-up-around-the-clock-watch-on-colorado-bridge-to-prevent-suicides-spread-awareness/#.V9_en4-cGMp)

The Fresno Bee:  
Longtime Fresno VA hospital volunteer known for 'red coat' honored by VFW. When Marlene Raffety received the VFW's National Outstanding Hospital Volunteer award in Sacramento this summer, some people probably thought it was about time that she got some recognition. Not Raffety. When she received the plate from VFW auxiliary national chaplain Peggy Haake at the VFW Department of California Auxiliary's State Convention, 'I was humbled to the point I had to make sure I didn't cry,' she said. <http://www.fresnobee.com/news/local/article102503042.html>

Time  
U.S. Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Fighting U.S. Army to Honor Buddies' Sacrifices. Between 1961 and 1975, tens of thousands of U.S. military helicopter pilots, crew chiefs, gunners and medics spearheaded U.S. efforts to secure the 67,000 square miles of South Vietnam. They ultimately lost to the North Vietnamese. Now, a half-century later, they are fighting once again. This time, their ranks thinned by age, they are fighting for a more modest piece of territory: five square feet in Arlington National Cemetery. Once again, they are losing. This time, the enemy is the U.S. Army. [http://time.com/4495714/vietnam-war-helicopter-memorial/?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=EBB%20Mil%209.16.16&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](http://time.com/4495714/vietnam-war-helicopter-memorial/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%20Mil%209.16.16&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief)

Colorado Springs Gazette  
Bush points to his paintings to show Colorado Springs troops about life after the military. On a Colorado Springs trip to encourage troops to embrace civilian life after the military, former President George W. Bush also announced his latest plans for life after the government, releasing a book of artwork. [http://gazette.com/bush-points-to-his-paintings-to-show-colorado-springs-troops-about-life-after-the-military/article/1585458?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=EBB%20Mil%209.16.16&utm\\_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief](http://gazette.com/bush-points-to-his-paintings-to-show-colorado-springs-troops-about-life-after-the-military/article/1585458?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%20Mil%209.16.16&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief)



VVA CA State Council (contact info inside - page 2)

VVA Chapter 223 - Postal Permit  
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To:

In this issue:  
• Activities-Events/Photos  
• Legislative News  
• 2016 State Convention Photos  
• Committee Info  
And more...



VVA & CSC Meeting Dates & Events  
October 14-16, 2016, Fresno, CA  
January 27-29, 2017, Fresno, CA  
April 21-23, 2017, Fresno, CA  
July 21-23, 2017, Fresno, CA  
**Zephyr deadlines 5 weeks prior to each CSC meeting**