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A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Happy New Year!



INTERVIEW BY VIETNAM MAGAZINE

John Rowan John Rowan,
VVA National President



Born and bred in Queens, John Rowan is the quintessential New Yorker, blunt and driven, especially when it comes to the needs of his fellow Vietnam veterans. Recently elected to his fourth two-year term as the national president of the 66,000-member Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), Rowan takes pride in the accomplishments of the Congressionally chartered veterans service organization, but isn't content to rest on his laurels. As Vietnam veterans get older, Rowan is determined to ensure they know the benefits to which they are entitled and how to get them. In a wide-ranging interview (available in its entirety here on the web), Rowan talks about his Vietnam experience, the birth of VVA and the organization's ongoing efforts on behalf of all veterans.



"I am especially proud when young veterans tell me that if not for the VVA, they would still be getting screwed." (Photo: DNA Info/Olivia Schreck)

Did you always intend to go into the service? I attended Brooklyn Technical High School and was a good student until my senior year when I was a screw-up. After graduating, I went to a business college but dropped out after half a semester and went to work for ATT as a technician. Then in July 1965, with the draft breathing down my neck, I decided to join the Air Force.

How did you get to Vietnam? When I went in, I aced all the tests and intended to go in as an electrician. Then, in typical military fashion, they asked me to take another test on language skills. The next thing I know is they offered me to become a linguist. They gave me a spiel, it sounded like an interesting thing to do. It was hysterical, because the only thing I actually failed in high school was French. So I got orders to Monterey, Calif., to study Indonesian. I didn't even know where the hell that was and had to look it up in the library. Surprise, Indonesia's the fifth largest country in the world!

Were you actually headed for Indonesia? I studied the language for six months, then went to Texas for intel training. In the meantime, the Indonesian government crushed the Communist insurgency, killing about 3 million people in the process. Now I had nothing to do, so when they asked who wants to learn Vietnamese, I said sure.

So, you became a Vietnamese linguist? After three months of Vietnamese training, they gave up on me and I was sent back to Texas. But, they were going to send me to Vietnam anyway. I was trained to work on a crypto machine flying in RC-130s. We started out do-

ing 30-day rotations flying out of Da Nang. Then we were sent to Okinawa to establish the 6690th Security Squadron to fly RC-135s around China to the Tonkin Gulf and down the coast. Becoming a brand new squadron required us to create everything, our policies and procedures, from whole cloth, so I became something like a squadron clerk. We shared a building with the Strategic Air Command unit. We could go over to their side for briefings so we knew of every plane and mission that was going north—so we would know who the NVA were going after. They couldn't come over to our side, because everything we did was top secret. Hell, on the planes, the pilots couldn't even come out of the cockpit because of the sensitive nature of what we were doing.

What was the squadron's mission? We were listening to anything coming off the ground. Any time a pilot in Hanoi took off, we knew who he was and what he was doing. To do that, we had to have linguists in Vietnamese, Chinese, Russian and Korean on board. Most of the enemy pilots were actually Korean because they had the most experience. The Russians mostly ran the surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites. There were three components we monitored: radar sites, missile sites and the command sites. We'd sit out at 42,000 feet and you could hear anything; on clear days, we could even see up the Red River to Hanoi.

That is how we knew what the enemy pilots were up to and could figure out who they were going after, so we could give our pilots a heads up. We mostly flew in the Tonkin Gulf, but on occasion we flew along the border with Laos. Our main mission was to find SAM sites, but we also had guys in the back of the plane who had gear for radar signals to pinpoint just where they were. It was one of the real unsung tales of the war. I actually talked to some Russians who worked at the missile sites and they said we almost wiped them out, until LBJ ordered the bombing halt and that was the end of that. The North Vietnamese knew what was happening, but there was not much they could do about it short of sending someone out to get us. Sometimes we did have a fighter escort. Our missions were, compared to the grunts, relatively safe. Of course, when we were on the ground in Da Nang, we were vulnerable. I was there during an intense rocket attack one night. When I came out the next morning, I found a jet engine had come down right next to my bunker.

Your tour was cut short by a personal tragedy. In December 1967 my father was diagnosed with lung cancer, and because I was the only child I was given a hardship discharge, otherwise I would have served until August 1969. Fortunately he lived for almost a year. I felt bad leaving early, and found the work to be very interesting.

You had a unique perspective as the war became most intense. I actually suffered from information deprivation. It was strange. I'd read the papers and say, "Nah, that's wrong." For example, I remember

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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.



reading one story about the U.S. bombing the Red River Valley dike system. I realized most Americans are thinking Hoover Dam, not just some mud pack dikes. Yes, we screwed things up for the Vietnamese, but they were out rebuilding the mud dike the next day. People didn't understand what was really going on there. That was the big fallacy of the war, we were fighting the war as we did against the Germans, instead of as against the Vietnamese.

Back home, your life went into a different direction. Back in New York, I was working and taking care of my family situation. I had the GI Bill and realized I needed to get my butt back in school. I went to night classes for a year before I quit my job to go back full time at Queens College, where I got a B.A. in political science and then went straight through for a masters degree at Hunter College. I had really contemplated going back into the Air Force or possibly the National Security Agency, but in school I found other things. When I got out of college, I went to work for the Bronx borough president, then got a job with Congressman Ben Rosenthal doing his community relations work in the district. I did that for three years and got to Mayor Ed Koch. About that time, the city was creating its community boards to work with city government, and I became the first district manager of the Queens Community Board. I was there for nine years, interfacing with city officials and working on local planning and improvements. It was a nonelected position, but it really had a lot of clout. When the City Council created the Office of Oversight and Investigation in 1986, I became an investigator and later went to work in the Controllers office, overseeing contractors and procurement. After 26 years, the city offered an early retirement, so I was able to retire at 56 in 2002.

In the meantime, as you built a career, Vietnam was never far away. It started when I went back to school in the fall of 1968, in the middle of antiwar movement. I took a poly science course from a professor who had been a colonel in the Reserves, had taught at the War College and thought the war really sucked, not necessarily from the political standpoint, but that it was being run badly and was a complete waste. I was also studying Asian history, geopolitics, and I began to meet other veterans at Queens College, which was a very liberal place. I became acquainted with Bobby Mueller and got involved with the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. By then, I thought the war was really stupid, especially the bombing halt, and I thought we should get the hell out. I believed Richard Nixon when he said he would end the thing, then I got really pissed when he didn't.

What was it like in the VVAW? Vietnam Veterans Against the War was very active in New York, but I found the politics got tedious. I later realized that many guys were left-wing maniacs—and FBI informants. I stayed with it until 1972, then went to work for George McGovern, because I thought, here's this WWII bomber pilot going against Nixon. For many in the VVAW, that was too mainstream. Ultimately, the McGovern campaign turned out to be a waste of time. There were a lot of guys who I had got to know in VVAW who were in the local colleges and I stayed in touch with them. In 1978, I was asked to serve on the board of directors of the Veterans Upgrade Center in Brooklyn, working on getting discharge upgrades. It was run by all Vietnam vets, including a couple of lawyers. The intake guy was the best, he had a Silver Star and was black, which was important because most of the vets coming in were black.

Were there a lot of unfair discharges? It was horrible what went

on, the number of bad discharges. Guys were getting administrative discharges for offensives that, if they had been tried they would have received simply some disciplinary actions. We are talking bullshit discharges. Draftees with time left were often toast when they came home from Vietnam. The Army was happy to get rid of them, they didn't want them hanging around. The regular Army guys who maybe had a year or more to go, were pissed on. They were used to being dressed down and now were being told to be spit shined, salute everybody, be good soldiers, when all they really wanted was to go home. So, often the military would say, "OK, kid, sign this and you can go home." They were administrative discharges. Now, not only were they Vietnam vets, but they also had this bad paper hanging around their necks, often for only minor offenses. There were probably a half-million bad discharges during this time. So we had this program of vets helping vets get discharge upgrades, and we won 75 percent of our cases challenging their discharge status.

Was this a national program? There were about 20 of these centers around the country, but they were independent of each other and locally staffed. One still survives in Rochester, N.Y., the Vet Outreach Center, which helps vets find jobs and housing and get counseling.

So the Veterans Upgrade Center kept you involved with veterans issues after the war? I thought about Vietnam a lot, but after the war there was not much to do about it. It was hard to forget about, however, because of so many problems that followed for veterans, like drug addiction. I always tell people that I know more guys who died because of Vietnam after the war than in the war. Around 1980 the funding for the Upgrade Center changed and it morphed into more of a jobs program. That was really fun. We'd get these guys who'd been out hustling on the streets. If they didn't come in on time they'd throw them the hell out; if they looked like hell they'd send them back home. Basically either they would clean up their act to get some help or they wouldn't—we couldn't waste time with the wouldn't's. By 1980, VVA was starting to pop. It was originally the Council of Vietnam Veterans, primarily a lobbying organization, before Mueller decided to turn it into a veterans service organization and started talking about creating local entities and growing the organization. In 1981 we created the Queens Chapter 32, and I became its first president. I did that for two years. We had our first national convention in 1983 to create the VVA as we know it today.

What characterized the original VVA members? Most of us thought Vietnam veterans got screwed. For some, like me, we felt a bit of survivor guilt—we did OK but others didn't. Guys needed help.

What was it like at the beginning? It was not always a good thing, as many guys were now talking about their experience for the first time, opening old wounds, sometimes freaking out their families who never really knew what they went through. It caused a lot of stress, a number of divorces. One guy in Poughkeepsie went off the deep end, killed himself.

Did the VVAW background of many VVA founders taint the organization? There is no question a lot of early guys were involved in VVAW. Some people didn't like it, some didn't know, some didn't care. But by then VVAW was moribund. The politics was getting off the rails, the war was over and most of us were gone from the organization long before that. But the driving force

was to get help for the vets, bringing guys together.

So, why didn't you just join up with the American Legion or VFW? When I was working for Congressman Rosenthal, I joined the American Legion, and at my second meeting they wanted to make me vice commander. I did join the Catholic War Veterans. They had a very active post in a nearby neighborhood, a very Catholic community. In 1976 I was the first Vietnam vet to become post commander. It is really hysterical. You can go there today and see all the commanders' pictures hanging on the walls. They have all these black-and-white photos of nice clean-cut guys, in their little hats. Mine is the first color photo, me with long hair, a big bushy red beard, no tie, a hat barely sitting on my head. It was an obvious demarcation point. They were very conservative, but I got them information and got them involved in things, like opening the post for vets to get help once a week. They thought I was crazy, but they liked me.

The VVA Founding Principles takes a pretty sharp jab at the other veteran organizations. Yeah. It pokes them in the eye a bit. I know we've gotten some harsh responses over the years as a result, but my feeling is tough shit, it was true. I'm a life member of Disabled American Veterans. They never wanted to hear about PTSD, mental health issues. Agent Orange? Didn't want to hear about that chemical stuff. I've come to the conclusion there was a real generational divide. They were our fathers, we were their sons. We were the hippie freaks, smoking pot instead of getting drunk. Old Joe getting drunk all day at the bar on 10-cent beers, that was OK, but little Johnny running with his friends smoking pot, that was not OK. They had the crewcuts, we had the long hair. And then talking about mental health? Forget about it. The big difference, of course, was drugs. I had a bunch of friends who ended up in the war and after we all came back, we were into music and stuff, hanging out, talking about and sharing our experiences. We didn't know we were having "rap sessions," but that got a lot of them through it. World War II guys didn't understand any of that.

What's been the VVA's greatest breakthrough accomplishment to date? Undoubtedly prevailing in the Agent Orange battles, going back to the original law in 1991 to last year's addition of ischemic heart disease to the VA list of presumptive diseases. Agent Orange has killed and is continuing to kill a lot of us. It was very important that we could get the disability payments for these diseases. Still, there are so many widows who should be getting compensation but don't even know about it.

Then there is the whole issue of PTSD. We helped get people to understand what it is. It used to be called Post Vietnam Syndrome but we know now it affects not just combat veterans, but anybody who goes through traumatic experience. We were the only ones willing to challenge the VA on this and keep the research going. And, I'm very proud of the fact that we played a big part in rehabilitating the prestige of Vietnam veterans.

What were your greatest disappointments? No question, we would have liked to have gotten people to listen to us on Agent Orange and PTSD 10 years earlier than we did. We could have saved lives. The other great disappointment is the lack of help from past veterans. They should have known better. But I'm very proud of what we've done and feel especially proud when I meet young veterans who tell me that, if not for us, they would still be getting screwed. We can be particularly proud that we have changed the

dynamic.

Things are better, of course, but do you see similar challenges facing the new veterans to those that Vietnam vets faced? There are still crazy things going on, a lot of bullshit discharges. We are working with Yale Law School on new personality disorder discharges.

Were you surprised at the early resistance to recognition of PTSD in the Iraq and Afghan War veterans? Yeah, it was tough it out and go back. The military needs the bodies, especially in this war, so they can't have them flaking out on them, it's sad. PTSD is a funny thing, some get it, some don't. It is especially hard on the Guard and Reserve.

We are understanding that PTSD can still arise in guys for the first time 40 years after their combat. Delayed PTSD is a big issue now emerging as Vietnam veterans retire and all this crap they had bottled up comes back to haunt them. A lot of guys are now having these issues, and we need to get them into treatment. I do give the VA credit for its suicide outreach, at least they are trying. And the veterans court stuff can go a long way to save a lot of people and a lot of heartache by identifying the problems and nipping the criminal behavior in the bud when they are doing small stuff.

Given there were some 8 million who served during the era and 2 to 3 million in Vietnam, are you disappointed with the organization's size? No, as we've probably had some 400,000 veterans come through as members. We are an activist organization, not so much a social club. We don't allow drinking at meetings. While we would love to have more members—and we are growing—we are very happy with the people we have as members. We believe they are the best-informed members of all the veterans' organizations.

What we do is more important than size of membership. We have 66,000 members and are actually growing steadily, about six percent per year. As vets retire, they have some time, want to reflect and get in touch with people. Florida chapters are growing fast, especially in the big retirement communities. On the other hand, we see some chapters dying on the vine.

What is the Veterans Health Council, the newest VVA initiative? It is the biggest thing we are doing now, bringing together experts from academia, advocacy organizations, health institutions and pharmaceutical companies to discuss health issues related to veterans. At our web site, vets can find all the presumptive diseases for each war. It kills me that so many do not know that they qualify for compensation, for example, for diabetes or prostate cancer. They can be a big disability rating resulting in giving veterans health care and payments they deserve. Probably 75 percent of Vietnam vets do not go to the VA for health care and more than that do not belong to a veterans service organization. So most Vietnam vets don't have a clue and that's why we are trying so hard to do outreach. That includes training the health care community, so they understand how vets fit in. For example, we're working with the Lung Cancer Alliance, which did not even know that lung cancer is an automatic presumptive for Vietnam Veterans. We are doing that with other groups, like the Men's Health Network and getting articles into medical journals. The problem is the VA doesn't really get this information out as well as it should. And we are trying to create more relationships with nonveteran organizations, such as the NRA. We recently met with the NRA Veterans/Military Committee, chaired by Oliver North, to talk about the

Veterans Health Council. In the meeting, North said: "I belong to the VVA and read about getting a PSA test. I went, proved positive, got diagnosed and got treated. They saved my life."

Do you see improvements at the VA? Eric Shinseki is one of the best secretaries of Veteran Affairs we've ever had. When the ischemic heart disease got listed, Office of Management and Budget was having fits, and crap started coming up in Congress about how expensive this stuff is. But Shinseki pushed it. Unfortunately he has to deal with an entrenched bureaucracy. But all this anti-government stuff is frustrating. I'm not saying the government doesn't do stupid things—I've seen it firsthand—but it can give incentives. The WWII GI bill is one of the best examples, and the money spent was multiplied a hundred fold. I remember doing a background check on a guy who came out of a poor neighborhood, was just average in school, got out of the service in 1944, went back to college on the GI bill and went on to become an engineering pioneer in construction. He got his chance with the GI bill.

And the Vietnam vets' GI Bill didn't stack up? Our GI Bill sucked. Vietnam was the first truly integrated U.S. military and we brought in huge numbers of poor and minorities. Think of it, had we had a GI Bill like in WWII, we could have totally changed the lives of millions and perhaps whole communities.

Are you concerned about the talk of massive budget cuts? We are concerned about any attempts to cut veteran benefits. Now Tri-care has become a subject again. That was part of the deal, and now it's, "Oh we didn't really mean it." Come on, this society owes it to the one percent who serve—and they aren't the same people as the one percent at the top.

What should Vietnam veterans do to protect their rights, in addition to joining VVA? I just wish they would all start to speak out more. The leaders of most veteran organizations are pretty united on these issues and do a good job in holding Congress' feet to the fire. Regarding the budget stuff, we are trying our best, but will only see when the dust settles. But our individual members and nonmember veterans need to make their voices heard.

http://www.historynet.com/interview-john-rowan-natl-president-vva.htm?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=interview-john-rowan-natl-president-vva

AIR FORCE DISRESPECT FOR THE DEAD DRAWS VVA'S IRE

(Washington, D.C.) "It's a matter of respect, of honoring service and sacrifice," said John Rowan, National President of Vietnam Veterans of America. "And the members of VVA are quite frankly saddened, if not outraged, at reports that the Air Force, our Air Force, has disrespectfully and uncerecermoniously dumped the incinerated remains of at least 274 American troops in a landfill in Virginia, far more according to news reports than the military had acknowledged previously." "What is unconscionable," Rowan noted, "is that, according to a report in today's Washington Post, the landfill dumping was concealed from families who had authorized the military to dispose of the remains in a dignified and respectful manner. To us, this does not mean dumped in a landfill. Whoever came up with that idea ought to think about a second career. With the tens of billions of dollars spent on the global war on terror, Rowan said, "Is it too much to ask that protocols be

followed for the proper disposal of body parts? How much could that cost?"

CSC LEGISLATIVE NEWS

January 2012

By: Pete Conaty and Dana Nichol

BUDGET SHORTFALL CONTROLS THE LEGISLATURE

On December 13, Governor Brown made \$981 million in "trigger cuts" to funding for higher education, K-12 schools and services for the elderly and mentally disabled. These trigger cuts were a result of last year's budget compromise whereby if projected revenue did not materialize, then automatic cuts would be made to balance the 2011-2012 budget (the 2011-2012 budget is debated in early 2011 and approved in June 2011). Actual revenue came in \$2.2 billion short of the \$4 billion projected last year.

Furthermore, the governor has announced that the 2012-2013 budget is already looking to be \$13 billion short. The governor must submit this budget to the Legislature on January 10. The governor noted "in three weeks, we'll have a number of more cuts, for more than \$1 billion." "They will be the same kind of state services, very important to help the poor, elderly, students. But we don't have the money and we're going to cut back." There is a rumor around the Capitol that the Governor will be asking all state departments to cut their budgets by 10%. 2012 will be a year to "fight for what you've got" rather than fight for an increase.

The California Department of Veterans Affairs has already made cuts to its operating budget for this year. The opening of the new veterans homes in Redding and Fresno has been delayed and will be in caretaker status for three to six months after they are completed.

Into this mix will be the influx of newly separated veterans from the military's drawdown. These new veterans will be entering the workforce in the middle of the ongoing recession and many will be trying to pursue a higher education in the midst of huge cuts to the state's community college, state university, and university systems.

We will closely study the governor's budget once it is released and report to you its impacts on veterans.

AB 1209

The State Legislature operates in two year sessions which start in the odd year. Therefore 2012 will be the second year of the 2011-12 Legislative Session. Some bills from last year which held by their authors for further work can be taken up in January ("2 year bills"). One of these 2 year bills was AB 1209-Cook; funding for County Veterans Service Officers (CVSO's). However, because of the bleak state budget forecasted for 2012, it was decided after consultation with the bill's sponsor (CACVSO) and the bill's author, that now is not the time to ask for a \$7.3 million increase in the state's local assistance to the CVSO's.

AB 1093

Another 2 year bill which was dropped due to the budget constraints was AB 1093-Davis; Veterans offices in colleges. AB 1093 would have asked the state's colleges to accommodate CVSO's and VSO's on campus to assist student veterans. This would have imposed a cost on the college systems and as such it was



CALIFORNIA STATE COUNCIL

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

DAY AT THE CAPITOL

MARCH 28, 2012

The California State Council holds its Annual Day at the Capitol event to coincide with Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day which is during the last week of March each year.

VVA and AVVA members from across California are invited and encouraged to attend. The State Legislature, the CA Department of Veterans Affairs, the Employment Development Department, the Department of Health and Human Services, the CA National Guard, and the state colleges and universities all oversee programs to assist veterans and their families.

Therefore, it is important that VVA-CSC members attend the Day at the Capitol to show our support for these programs and to educate legislators and staff on issues of importance to veterans.

The Council provides free breakfast and lunch buffets to VVA attendees. The day is spent at the State Capitol meeting your local legislators, educating legislators and staff on veterans issues, and hearing from key legislative speakers.

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day is also observed. There will be a ceremony and wreath laying at the California Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Please spread the word to all chapters. Registration form is attached.



REGISTRATION FORM

* Note: Breakfast and lunch are free to all VVA and AVVA members **who are registered.**

NAME OF ATEENDEE(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE #: () _____ - _____

E-MAIL:

CHAPTER #:

CHAPTER LOCATION:

E-MAIL OR FAX THIS FORM TO KEN HOLLYBEE:

decided to not pursue the bill, especially since the budget triggers more painful cuts this year even before the other shoe drops on the January 10th governor's budget.

AB 201, Veterans Courts

As you know, the governor vetoed the CA State Council sponsored AB 201-Butler in 2011 citing budgetary constraints. In his veto message, the governor stated "given current budgetary constraints, the decision to adopt this kind of program--something already within the courts' authority--is better left to the sound discretion of the judiciary." Assemblywoman Butler, the VVA-CSC's 2011 Legislator of the Year is working with us to explore how this issue can be further pursued in 2012.

SB 404

SB 404-Anderson; Firearms: handgun safety certificates: exemptions for veterans was also dropped because of opposition from the Attorney General's office. The AG's office stated that the provisions of SB 404 would inadvertently cause the loss of vital staff positions. Senator Anderson, working with us, will still pursue the concept in a different bill in 2012. We will work with the AG to craft a bill agreeable to them.

SB 661

Still, there are opportunities to work on veterans issues, especially those issues that are important, but do not cost money. Senator Ted Lieu will reintroduce his bill, SB 888, that was vetoed in 2011, which sought to protect the sanctity of veterans funerals from protestors who seek to disrupt them. Senator Lieu has put the language into a new bill, SB 661 to satisfy the concerns raised by the governor in his veto message.

We will be keeping you posted on all the new veterans bills as they are introduced and move through the Legislature.

CALVET GETS \$141 MILLION FOR CONSTRUCTION OF VETERANS HOMES

The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) has received \$142 million from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) for construction of the Fresno and Redding Veterans Homes. CalVet will receive \$92 million for construction of the 300-bed Veterans Home of California in Fresno and \$50 million for construction of the 150-bed Veterans Home of California in Redding. California will provide approximately \$49 million for construction of the Fresno Veterans Home and \$27 million for the Redding Veterans Home.

"We are all grateful that the USDVA has agreed to release the funding for our continued construction and procurement for completion of our Redding and Fresno State Veteran Homes," said Robin Umberg, CalVet Undersecretary for Veterans Homes.

When completed, the Redding Veterans Home's design will create a more residential, rather than institutional feel, by offering private rooms and communal living and dining areas. This veterans home will bring more than 200 jobs to the Redding area. This project will forever mark the City of Redding's history pages, as one of the single-largest construction projects in the City's history.

The Fresno Veterans Home's design veers from a traditional shared-room floor plan to private rooms for veterans, which include special features designed to promote an intimate, residential

ambiance. This veterans home will bring more than 400 jobs to the Fresno area.

"I know the opening of both of these homes is something the Governor's office, CalVet, both sides of the political aisle, the US-DVA, veterans service organizations, and these local communities all want to see happen," stated Umberg. "We are all working together to do all that we can to open these two homes as soon as possible."

CalVet reminds veterans in need and their families that they have the option of using one of the other California Veterans Homes located in Barstow, Chula Vista, Lancaster, Ventura, West Los Angeles, and Yountville until our Redding and Fresno Homes are up and running. Please go to www.calvet.ca.gov/VetHomes/Default.aspx for more information.

The Veterans Home of California – Redding will be located at 3400 Knighton Road, Redding, CA 96002; Fresno will be located at 2811 West California Avenue, Fresno, CA 93706.

ADDITIONAL \$10.3 MILLION TO HELP ELIMINATE VETERANS HOMELESSNESS

WASHINGTON – Eleven states will share more than \$10.3 million in grants to community groups to provide enhanced services for homeless Veterans this year. This is in addition to the \$59.5 million in preventive grants awarded earlier this year. "Homelessness is a national issue that will be solved at the local level," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "VA is proud to partner with the community organizations that share our dedication to serving those who served this Nation. They are pulling Veterans out of homelessness and setting them on the path to independence." As a key component of VA's plan to eliminate homelessness among Veterans, VA's Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program provides grants and per diem payments to help public and nonprofit organizations establish and operate supportive housing and service centers for homeless Veterans. As a result of this funding, provided through a program known as VA Special Need Grants for Homeless Veterans Service Providers, 26 projects will receive approximately \$10.3 million to continue providing enhanced services for homeless Veterans who are seriously mentally ill. The grants will also greatly benefit homeless women Veterans, including women with children, elderly women, or those who may be terminally ill. For more information, visit VA's website for the National Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Office at www.va.gov/homeless/GPD.ASP. Additionally, VA has a National Call Center for Homeless Veterans, 1-877-4AID VET (1-877-424-3838), <http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/NationalCallCenter.asp>.

WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY IN DC - MARCH, 2012

Recognizing the fact that Vietnam Veterans were treated poorly when they came home, in 2004 the US House of Representatives and US Senate unanimously passed resolutions proclaiming March 30 as WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

{WHVVD} in past years.

Since then 12 states have passed legislation California, Minnesota, North Dakota, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Wisconsin, Connecticut, Delaware, Montana, Maine and Oregon proclaiming either March 29 or March 30 as WHVVD. Still there are 38 states whose Vietnam Veterans have not been recognized for their sacrifice and service.

As a way to show appreciation to the 12 states that HAVE passed legislation, and in support of the Vietnam Veterans currently living in the 38 states that HAVE NOT yet moved to create a day to officially welcome them home, WHVVD, Inc. and its members will gather in Washington, DC. from 6 AM Thursday March 29 thru 6 PM Friday March 30, 2012 to commemorate the first National WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY celebration.

We encourage ALL Americans, especially our Iraq, Afghanistan, Korea, WW 2 and Vietnam Veterans to show their support and unity for ALL WHO SERVED by gathering together in DC for this historical event in our nation's capital. For those who are unable to attend in DC, we suggest you organize/gather at your state capital or your local community City/Meeting Hall. Now that our men and women are returning home from Iraq, we can be grateful for the lessons we learned in the way we treated our Veterans when they came home at the end of the Vietnam War. We will never again blame the Veteran for delivering the message we sent them to deliver! ALL Veterans, especially the VN Veterans were the first to stand up and insure that ALL our returning Desert Storm/Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans are greeted and treated with respect and dignity when they come home. We ask all Veterans' Organizations, large and small, new and old, to accompany us in Washington, DC. on March 29-30, 2012. All our veterans deserve the thanks and gratitude they have earned. Please join us in this show of strength and support, and help us ensure that never again will our men and women in uniform face such a hurtful return home from overseas.

To all who served, thank you and welcome home!

José G. Ramos Chairman/Founder www.whvvd.org
562.696.3965 FOR ALL WHO SERVED

*footnote, the capitalization of "Veteran" is not a typo. We believe all honorably discharged Veterans have earned the right to have their title capitalized.

3.6% COLA FOR RETIREES IN 2012

The final inflation figures for the 2011 fiscal year have been released, and the news is good for retirees who are hoping for a Cost of Living Adjustment in January 2012. The 2012 COLA for military retirees will be 3.6% – a significant increase and most welcome after two years without a COLA. The 3.6% adjustment will become effective 1 December 2011, and will be reflected in January 2012 retired pay, Survivor Benefit Plan, Veterans Administration, and Social Security payments.

There are two groups of military retirees who will not see the full 3.6% COLA applied to their current payments. First are retired servicemembers who entered service on or after Aug. 1, 1986 and chose the REDUX retirement plan. The REDUX plan gave a \$30,000 Career Status Bonus at 15 years of service. In return for

the bonus, those servicemembers agreed to accept reduced retired pay and also a reduced COLA. REDUX retirees' COLAs are calculated at 1% below the normal COLA rate, so they'll see a 2.6% COLA.

The second group who will not see the full 3.6% COLA are those servicemembers who retired in 2011. They will receive a smaller COLA for just this one year, as they already benefited from the active duty pay in January 2011. All future COLAs will be the same as everyone else.

Many people who are going to be very, very happy about this.

VETERAN BENEFITS INFLATE RISING COST OF WAR

Analysis of disability rolls finds today's veterans are more likely to seek benefits.

By Lee Hill Kavanaugh And Chris Adams - Kansas City Star

Military history professor David Holden limps through the hallways of the Fort Leavenworth Command and Staff Center, looking for a quiet place to talk.

Finding an unused classroom, the 33-year-old Army veteran sits down, crosses his right foot over his thigh.

Then takes it off.

He's more comfortable without his prosthetic, he says, glancing at the empty boot with a taped-on tiny American flag. The end of his leg is covered in a white fuzzy sock.

He's not shy about his injury. It's been seven years since the bomb blast in Fallujah, Iraq, blew off his foot, damaged his hearing, ended his Army career.

Adjudged 60 percent disabled, the former captain said his life's trajectory was forever changed.

Holden is one of more than 3,170 former military personnel in the six-county area — including Leavenworth County — who spent time in Iraq and Afghanistan and now receive monthly VA disability checks.

And that is a number guaranteed to grow as the number of veterans return home, settle into civilian lives and age.

Holden, who served in both Afghanistan and Iraq, notes how "people are surprised that an amputee doesn't get 100 percent disability. But it's enough."

While Vietnam extracted a far higher death toll — 58,000 compared with 6,300 so far in the war on terror — the number of documented disabilities from recent veterans is approaching the size of that earlier conflict, according to a McClatchy Newspapers analysis of the 3.2 million on the disability rolls of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The data, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, show those leaving the military in recent years are filing for and receiving compensation for more injuries than did their fathers and grandfathers.

Only one part of this is because more troops than ever survive wounds considered lethal in past conflicts.

Holden knows he could have died that day in Fallujah. Instead, he was rushed to Baghdad for a seven-hour state-of-the-art surgery, then to Germany, then home for a year at Walter Reed in

Washington, D.C.

He lives daily with back pain from his gait, knee pain from a recent surgery.

"I tell my wife that I make a terrible old man."

But his injuries led him to her, and they now have three children; he moved to Kansas two years ago to earn a history degree through the Wounded Warriors program at the University of Kansas and a new career teaching military history at elite Army institutions.

"So, really, as far as losing my foot, I'm a better man for it. It gave me a different perspective on life, reminding me how temporary life can be... But it's tough remembering that some of my friends gave the ultimate sacrifice. You hope it wasn't in vain."

...

According to statistics from the advocacy group Veterans for Common Sense, 2.2 million service members have deployed once to either Afghanistan or Iraq since Sept. 11, 2001, and 942,000 have deployed twice or more.

Of those, 6,300 service members died; 46,000 suffered nonfatal wounds in action.

But more than 600,000 have filed for VA disability benefits, and about 700,000 received treatment in the VA's medical system.

That veterans today apply with greater frequency and greater urgency than in years past is the nature of these conflicts, said Linda Bilmes, a Harvard professor who co-wrote "The Three Trillion Dollar War" with Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz.

In previous wars, a general seeing a brigade under stress might have pulled it back — putting the soldiers on kitchen duty for a while, she said. Now, those functions are being handled by contractors, eliminating that relief valve.

"The guys who are out in the field are relentlessly out in the field," Bilmes said.

Beyond that, far more soldiers in this all-volunteer military have been back for two, three, four or five tours, and the long-term impact on hearing and on traumatic brain injuries caused by improvised explosive devices will be felt for years.

The VA also is more accommodating than it once was in ruling on disabilities.

Some worry that some vets are gaming the system. Holden said he's disgusted with some who claim problems, but he agrees, too, that some wounds are not as visible as his. The post traumatic stress and skull rattling by IEDs are signature wounds of the recent wars.

According to VA data, the average Vietnam veteran in the system has 3.5 documented disabilities — more than those from the Korean War or World War II, but less than those in the Gulf War era.

The VA doesn't actually specify whether somebody was in Iraq or Afghanistan, lumping all veterans from the first Iraq war in 1990 into a "Gulf War" category that also includes veterans from the recent wars. McClatchy's analysis, however, zeroed in on veterans who left active duty in 2003 or later, an approximate cohort of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

That category of the most recently discharged Iraq or Afghanistan fighter has an average of six disabilities on file.

As they come home from Iraq this month, they bring with them a range of mental and physical ailments that generally worsen as a veteran ages.

Bilmes said the peak for paying out claims from World War II didn't come until the 1980s. The peak for the Vietnam War, over

nearly four decades ago, hasn't yet been reached.

"We expect to see the same kind of lag this time around," Bilmes said.

Veterans file disability claims if they've been injured during military service — whether in a combat zone or stateside. Based on the severity of the disability, the VA pays veterans compensation checks that range from \$127 to \$2,769 a month.

...

In Jackson County, 861 from America's two most recent wars receive the disability checks. In Clay and Platte counties, the numbers are 364 and 331 respectively.

On the Kansas side of the area, Johnson County has 699, according to McClatchy's database, while Wyandotte County has 166.

Leavenworth County, with its much smaller population, however, has 749.

Mark Wisner, physician assistant at Leavenworth's VA Hospital, wasn't too surprised at the concentration of those with recent service-connected disabilities. At least 650, from all over the region, are his patients.

"This is a military-friendly town. We're close to a big city. It's hard to leave the camaraderies that you build up in the military. You can still feel that here," he says. "And I see a lot of military spouses of officers who are studying here. There's a lot of husbands and wives who met each other while serving."

Wisner, an Army veteran who has served in three different wars, including Iraq, has an 80 percent disability rating.

His injuries are not so obvious, he says. He has heard the negative comments from civilians who have never experienced war.

"Yes, I've had people ask me why I was getting disability benefits," he says. Wisner is 60, and suffers with diabetes, tinnitus, joint and bone pain, some PTSD. A long laundry list of ailments.

Because of his own deployment experience, he better understands his patients.

"Most civilians don't know that troops in war carry with them at least 75 pounds of gear, and most carry around more than that to do their jobs. That's hard on young people's bodies, wearing them out faster than normal living," he says. "I don't get offended when someone asks. They just don't realize because they haven't been over there. I chalk it up to ignorance."

He laughs when asked if he thinks his patient load will increase, adding it's not an "if" but a "when."

"I'll probably reach my limit in a month or so," he says.

Paul Sullivan, at the National Organization of Veterans' Advocates, which helps veterans file their disability claims, isn't so sure.

"Right now, VA is getting about 10,000 new Iraq and Afghanistan claims and patients per month," he said. "The numbers are devastating."

The VA received a record 1.3 million disability claims last fiscal year. The time to decide those rose to an average of 188 days — far above the goal that no claim take longer than 125 days and going in the wrong direction.

"We think we've got the problem identified, and we think we have the right disciplines in place," said Thomas Murphy, who directs the VA's compensation program. More than 2,500 new workers hired in the past three years are now experienced enough

to handle the complex claims coming in.

• • •

Given the nature of today's disabilities, it's difficult to calculate how much it all might ultimately cost.

"We're in somewhat uncharted waters," said Bilmes, the Harvard professor.

Her most recent estimates, from 2010, indicate that providing disability payments to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans could range up to \$500 billion over the next 40 years. All this, as the country enters a period of reduced government spending.

This worried some veterans like Holden. Wisner, however, doesn't think the government can renege.

"With such a small percentage of Americans volunteering for military service, the government can't afford to do that.

"The United States needs its military.... The benefits are its promise to us."

To reach Lee Hill Kavanaugh, call 816-234-420 or send email to lkavanaugh@kcstar.com

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FROM JACK THOMAS, VIETNAM WARRIOR (BRONZE STAR AND PURPLE HEART MEDALS) - FIRST CAVALRY DIVISION - 1970; AND, CHAPEL OF FOUR CHAPLAINS BRONZE MEDALLION RECIPIENT

Author unknown.

Thank you to the 0.45%

I remember the day I found out I got into West Point.

My mom actually showed up in the hallway of my high school and waited for me to get out of class. She was bawling her eyes out and apologizing that she had opened up my admission letter. She wasn't crying because it had been her dream for me to go there. She was crying because she knew how hard I'd worked to get in, how much I wanted to attend, and how much I wanted to be an infantry officer. I was going to get that opportunity.

That same day two of my teachers took me aside and essentially told me the following: Nick, you're a smart guy. You don't have to join the military. You should go to college, instead.

I could easily write a tome defending West Point and the military as I did that day, explaining that USMA is an elite institution, that separate from that it is actually statistically much harder to enlist in the military than it is to get admitted to college, that serving the nation is a challenge that all able-bodied men should at least consider for a host of reasons, but I won't.

What I will say is that when a 16 year-old kid is being told that attending West Point is going to be bad for his future then there is a dangerous disconnect in America, and entirely too many Americans have no idea what kind of burdens our military is bearing.

In World War II, 11.2% of the nation served in four years.

In Vietnam, 4.3% served in 12 years.

Since 2001, only 0.45% of our population has served in the Global War on Terror.

These are unbelievable statistics.

Over time, fewer and fewer people have shouldered more and more of the burden and it is only getting worse. Our troops were sent to war in Iraq by a Congress consisting of 10% veterans with

only one person having a child in the military.

Taxes did not increase to pay for the war. War bonds were not sold. Gas was not regulated. In fact, the average citizen was asked to sacrifice nothing, and has sacrificed nothing unless they have chosen to out of the goodness of their hearts.

The only people who have sacrificed are the veterans and their families. The volunteers. The people who swore an oath to defend this nation. You.

You stand there, deployment after deployment and fight on. You've lost relationships, spent years of your lives in extreme conditions, years apart from kids you'll never get back, and beaten your body in a way that even professional athletes don't understand.

Then you come home to a nation that doesn't understand.

They don't understand suffering.

They don't understand sacrifice.

They don't understand that bad people exist.

They look at you like you're a machine – like something is wrong with you.

You are the misguided one – not them.

When you get out, you sit in the college classrooms with political science teachers that discount your opinions on Iraq and Afghanistan because YOU WERE THERE and can't understand the macro issues they gathered from books, with your bias.

You watch TV shows where every vet has PTSD and the violent strain at that. Your Congress is debating your benefits, your retirement, and your pay, while they ask you to do more.

But the amazing thing about you is that you all know this. You know your country will never pay back what you've given up.

You know that the populace at large will never truly understand or appreciate what you have done for them.

Hell, you know that in some circles, you will be thought as less than normal for having worn the uniform. But you do it anyway. You do what the greatest men and women of this country have done since 1775 – YOU SERVED. Just that decision alone makes you part of an elite group.

Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few.

OSTEOARTHRITIS FINDING COULD PAVE WAY FOR PREVENTION

Challenging long-held notions that osteoarthritis is a result mainly of wear and tear on the joints, researchers led by Dr. William H. Robinson of the Department of Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System and Stanford University have provided new insights into the immune-system changes that may trigger cartilage breakdown. Their report appears in the Nov. 6 online edition of Nature Medicine.

"This research can lead to a better quality of life for Veterans and others with osteoarthritis," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "This is an example of how VA's research program can lead to many significant breakthroughs in health care."

Working with samples from humans with osteoarthritis and

continued on page 14



As the above sign says, "Homeless Veterans Deserve a Home," and on Christmas Day Steve, Elayne, and Shelly Mackey virtually brought their home from Riverside (at least their kitchen and dining room) to the locked gates of the Los Angeles National Veterans Home and shared it with homeless Veterans.

Steve Mackey is President of Vietnam Veterans of California, (VVA) California State Council. Elayne is President of Associates Vietnam Veterans of America liaison, State of California, (family and friends of Veterans), and Shelly is a Veteran activist extraordinaire.

The leadership of this family constantly working for the greater good of America's Veterans, particularly our disabled, disadvantaged and homeless Veterans is inspiring beyond comparison.

Elayne and Shelly spent a great amount of personal time baking cookies and cakes, and making potato and macaroni salads, and preparing a variety of cold-cut meats and cheeses, vegetables, etc., for sandwiches. On Sunday, Steve packed all the food, desserts, coffee, juices, tables, chairs, Christmas decor, etc., including their lovable dog Mr. Pibb, into their Chevy Suburban and drove more than 75 miles for our 197th Sunday Rally of the Veterans Revolution to "Save Our Veterans Land" and to "Bring Our Homeless Veterans Home."

Dr. Sharon Sekhon, Founder and Director of the Studio for Southern California History and a loyal ally and supporter of our cause, also stopped by with coffee and tacos. Dr. Sekhon is a tireless advocate in helping keep alive the history of Southern California, including our National Veterans Home. <http://www.socialstudio.org/>

While homeless Veterans were being fed on Sunday, Steve Mackey stood at the corner of one of the busiest intersections in West Los Angeles with a sign informing the public what truly needs to be done: "Bring Our Homeless Veterans HOME."

As another gesture of good leadership to help our homeless Veterans, Steve, Elayne and Shelly have joined forces with the Old Veterans Guard to request that the VA open the front gates to the Veterans Home and provide 24/7 emergency shelter with a Veterans "Stand Down," offering immediate shelter and care homeless Veterans.

This will provide temporary shelter while demands are met for the replacement of numerous existing buildings that are obsolete, dysfunctional and even vacant, and a new and modern Veterans Home is constructed to provide quality humanitarian services for disabled and disadvantaged Veterans who are in need of shelter and care.

Thanks to the leadership of the Mackeys for dedicating so much of their own time and money to help make the less fortunate enjoy a nice Christmas setting and meal.

The Mackeys also led organizing and executing the Veterans Grand Picnic Summer Celebration in August and are busy planning the next one for 2012. And there's more good news coming soon with their good leadership.

In sum, good leadership is, as good leadership does always not just when it is expedient.

But how do we define "good?"

Consider how Aristotle answered the question . "What is a good man?"

He responded: "A man who does good."

He was then asked: "What is good?"

And he answered: "What the good man does."

Good leadership is the Mackey family in action and we thank them for their selfless service.

Please do your part and join in this good and noble cause to "Save Our Veterans Land," and to "Bring Our Homeless Veterans HOME."

It's important to know that Vietnam Veterans of America is a Plaintiff in the ACLU's lawsuit against the VA for misusing Veterans property and abusing disabled and homeless Veterans.



Larry Kegel, 73-year old Vietnam-era Veteran made his loyal Sunday drive from Santa Clarita to man our 15-foot "Save Our

Veterans Land." Larry is Jewish and wore his "Happy Chunakah" shirt. This was clearly a friendly day of giving and celebration -- regardless of religious beliefs or customs.



As homeless Veteran sat peacefully and enjoyed the generous helping of food and drink with the friendship of Mr. Pibb, others took their meals, including survival kits with clothing and caps, and left.



Elayne and Shelly's festive, colorful and cheery display offered homeless Veterans a generous spread of salads, sandwiches, fresh fruit, chips, coffee, Martinelli's apple juices, etc. Recordings of Elvis Presley's Christmas and Holiday music made the setting and the day a truly splendid occasion.



Homeless Veterans sleep outside the locked gates of the Los Angeles National Veterans Home, while behind this walled fence is the rent-free public community park to "preserve the open space" of Veterans land.

Homeless Veterans are already confined to a world of open space, mostly living alone and hungry in back-alley squalor while their deeded property and building facilities are misappropriated for non-Veteran use.

The recently dedicated million-dollar rose garden which is part of the public park, is being dubbed as "outside therapy" for Veterans.

How insensitive, when the best-known therapy for disabled and disadvantaged homeless Veterans is "inside shelter." That's why this land was deeded in perpetuity as a "Home" for disabled Soldiers, to ensure that there would never be a homeless Veteran.

When considering your year-end charitable donations, please consider Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. <http://www.vvacalsc.com/>

God Bless America, our U.S. Military Troops, and America's Military Veterans.

Remember, Today's Troops are Tomorrow's Veterans.

continued from page 11

mice, the research team found that the complement system, a group of proteins that move freely through the bloodstream, plays an important role in the development and spread of osteoarthritis. When functioning normally, the complement system is an important part of the body's immune system, killing harmful bacteria and cells infected by viruses when it is called upon to do so.

The researchers discovered that one component of the complement system, called the membrane attack complex, or MAC, is formed and activated in the joints of both humans and mice affected by osteoarthritis. They believe that when the MAC is aberrantly activated in the joints (a phenomenon called "dysregulation"), it induces low-grade inflammation and the production of enzymes that break down cartilage and result in the development of osteoarthritis.

"It's a paradigm change," says Robinson, a physician-researcher with the Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center at the Palo Alto VA and an associate professor of immunology and rheumatology at Stanford. "People in the field predominantly view osteoarthritis as a matter of simple wear and tear, like tires gradually wearing out on a car."

Osteoarthritis, also known as degenerative arthritis, affects millions of people around the world, usually those who are middle aged or older. The disease is most commonly found in hands, neck, lower back, knees and hips. Currently, there are no therapies available to slow the progress of the disease, and treatment is focused on pain control. Ultimately, some patients with osteoarthritis require joint replacement surgery.

Robinson says one-third of people aged 60 or over suffer from osteoarthritis. VA estimates that more than 6 million World War II and Korean War Veterans are still living and could be affected. Finding a way to stop the disease from progressing in an aging population could potentially help millions of Veterans.

Robinson said he is optimistic about the potential of the new findings to eventually translate into better therapies to treat osteoarthritis or prevent it altogether. "Right now," he says, "we don't have anything to offer osteoarthritis patients to treat their underlying disease. It would be incredible to find a way to slow it down."

EL DORADO AND RIVERSIDE COUNTIES TO BEGIN OPERATING VET COURTS

SACRAMENTO – On January 5, 2012, the El Dorado and Riverside County Superior Courts will begin their first day of hearings in specialized veterans treatment courts. These new "Vet Courts" are the result of planning and collaboration between local veterans services advocates, the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), and Superior Court judges. Over the past year, CalVet has worked with individual counties to help set up these Vet Courts, which take a veteran's psychological and physical issues into account when that individual has broken the law.

"Riverside and El Dorado counties are the most recent counties that have committed to helping our veterans in this manner," said CalVet Secretary, Peter Gravett. "There are now 15 counties that have Vet Courts or something similar. Our goal is to have Vet Courts in at least 20 counties by this summer, while still pushing

to open more."

Vet Courts are designed to focus on the specialized needs of veterans who may be suffering from service-related disabilities or illnesses. Due to the complexities of Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury, and military sexual trauma, men and women who have served their country in a war zone often go for months, or even years, before any trauma manifests itself. Many veterans are finding themselves in trouble with local law enforcement after making poor decisions that may have been the result of issues like PTSD. Vet Courts work to offer veterans the help they need while providing them a path to avoid the pitfalls that keep them in the criminal justice system or on the streets.

Most veterans will be eligible for these treatment courts, unless their crimes involve capitol offenses or sexual assault. While this program has stricter requirements than the typical courts, many of these Vet Courts offer probation in place of imprisonment and the potential to have charges reduced or dropped if veterans complete the programs designated for them.

For more information about Vet Courts, contact PAO@CAL-VET.CA.GOV.

W/LA VA LAND - UPDATES

FELLOW VETERANS AND FRIENDS OF VETERANS

Christmas was also our 197th consecutive Sunday Rally of the peaceful Veterans Revolution to "Save Our Veterans Land" and to "Bring Our Homeless Veterans HOME."

Steve Mackey, President of Vietnam Veterans of America, California State Council, along with his wife Elayne and daughter Shelly, (and faithful "watch dog" Mr. Pibb) drove from Riverside like they do nearly every Sunday. They will be bringing some special treats and refreshments for attendees and homeless Veterans.

Christmas is a day of giving... so give the greatest gift of all --- your selfless service to help the less fortunate -- our disabled, disadvantaged and homeless Veterans. They gave their selfless service for our freedom and independence, so give back without hesitation.

Please join us as we continue our Mission to fully reclaim our Veterans property and enforce the Deed of 1888 with the construction of a new and modern National Veterans Home to end Veteran homelessness in Los Angeles County.

See you / 1:00 - 4:00 PM / Northeast corner of Wilshire and San Vicente Boulevards -- West of the 405 Freeway, adjacent to Brentwood.

Wishing you and your family a very Merry Christmas along with every other Holiday Celebration, and further wishing you many Blessings of good health, safety and well-being, prosperity, and the very best for 2012.

See the article (on next page) that appeared in the 'Los Angeles Times' last year regarding General Patton's Prayer for our Troops during World War II.

Let us not forget our men and women who will be protecting our safety and freedom during these festive Holidays, just as they protect us every day, and let us pray for their own safety.

God Bless America, our United States Military, and our Mili-

tary Veterans.

The Old Veterans Guard

UCLA BASEBALL DIAMOND ON VETERANS PROPERTY

Here we go again

Following is link to current article in the UCLA "Daily Bruin" about adding more baseball seats to the stadium on Veterans property. The article states this will be the 32nd year that UCLA has used the stadium, which also means that Veterans have been deprived of this property for the past 32 years.

UCLA Baseball stadium to seat more fans

http://www.dailybruin.com/index.php/article/2011/10/baseball_stadium_to_seat_more_fans

Attached is a list of agreements the VA has with unlawful tenants on Veterans property. This was taken from the CARES draft Master Plan submitted by the VA in January of this year. Note: << Under an Enhanced Sharing Agreement UCLA utilizes the stadium for a period of five (5) years option with one (1) five (5) year option. 5/01/2001 -4/30/2011.>>

It was to expire on April 30, 2011 but apparently the VA extended the "sharing agreement" that is not shared with Veterans.

UCLA will add 580 more seats for a total of 1,820, which is more than the VA has hospital patient and homeless beds.

So, more people will be watching collegiate baseball than there are Veteran patients and homeless Veterans on this sacred property.

There are also nearly 5,000 VA employees, and the VA's annual budget exceeds \$750 million and they lease out Veterans land rent free and \$1 a year to "offset budget shortages."

Meanwhile, 20,000 Veterans are homeless.

The money to expand the seating was donated by the Gifford Foundation. They also donated money for a batting cage and a state-of-the-art 10,500 training facility. UCLA also has a large parking lot in the adjacent area, which is where the recent (still unsolved) homicide of a Veteran occurred.

With the US Attorneys filing for a Motion to Dismiss the ACLU lawsuit, it's rather apparent that our federal government supports this kind of use of Veterans property over providing shelter for homeless Veterans.

Jackie Robinson Stadium (UCLA baseball)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jackie_Robinson_Stadium_%28UCLA_baseball%29

'BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY' AUTHOR HELPS EFFORTS TO RECLAIM VA GROUNDS

By Jared Morgan

Ron Kovic joins about a dozen people gathered in front of Veterans Administration gates Sunday to symbolically take ownership of federal land the protesters say belongs to veterans.

Cars swooshed around the busy West L.A. corner, some honking in response to the protest signs.

A group of about a dozen or so veterans gathered at the corner gate of the Los Angeles National Veterans Park at San Vicente and Wilshire boulevards Sunday to protest what they say is a gross misappropriation of veteran-owned land.

"There's 16 acres of land here that's been given to the—actually a homeowner group here in Brentwood, which is not a veterans

organization—for a public park," said Robert Rosebrock, director of the Old Veterans Guard organization.

Rosebrock and many of his cohorts had been protesting on this piece of ground for the past 183 Sundays.

Vietnam veteran and Born on the Fourth of July author Ron Kovic was there as well Sunday, wearing his Marine Corps Alpha shirt. He threatened to peacefully occupy the VA property and set up a tent under the tree closest to the gate, which was locked with a heavy chain.

"We'll call it Freedom Tree," Kovic said.

Kovic, whose book was turned into a movie directed by Oliver Stone and starring Tom Cruise, said that he wants to see the property be used to house homeless veterans.

He echoed the Old Veterans Guard's decree that all businesses on the VA grounds should vacate or be evicted.

"We're here today to reclaim this land," said Kovic. "We're going to read a declaration of ownership."

VA LAUNCHES VETERAN HOMELESSNESS OUTREACH CAMPAIGN

WASHINGTON, Oct. 12, 2011 - As part of its drive to end homelessness among veterans by 2015, the Veterans Affairs Department has launched an outreach initiative in 28 communities across the nation.

"Those who have served this nation as veterans should never find themselves on the streets, living without care and without hope," VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki said in announcing the "Make the Call" initiative.

Shinseki noted that 28 communities $\frac{1}{2}$ from Atlanta to Hawaii $\frac{1}{2}$ will host special programs this fall highlighting local services for homeless veterans, their families and those at risk of becoming homeless.

"Working with our partners in state and local government, the nonprofit and the private sectors, we can restore our homeless veterans and their families to the lives of dignity they've earned," Shinseki added.

This fiscal year, VA officials said, the department expects to spend \$3.4 billion to provide health care to homeless veterans and \$800 million in specialized homeless programs, citing studies that say more than 75,000 veterans are homeless on a typical night, and about 135,000 spend at least one night a year in a homeless shelter.

Since March 2010, VA has offered a toll-free telephone number, staffed around the clock by trained professionals, to help homeless veterans, their families and at-risk people. The number is 877-4AID-VET, or 877-424-3838.

Recently, VA has transformed the focus of its efforts from temporary, shelter-based services to prevention, employment, permanent housing and help to families and veterans at risk of becoming homeless, officials said.

A 1944 CHRISTMAS MIRACLE FOR GENERAL PATTON

By Alison Bell

The World War II general's holiday greeting to troops in Europe that winter included a prayer entreating God to end the rains that

were bogging down the United States' 3rd Army.

In early December 1944, General George S. Patton Jr., commander of the United States' 3rd Army, stood with his troops at Germany's doorstep. He'd pushed his men across France toward Germany with furious speed during summer and early fall, but in the last months, as he drove through France's Lorraine region toward the Saar River, progress stalled. Fuel and supplies were running short, and perhaps even more deviling, the weather wouldn't cooperate. Driving rains had mired his troops and grounded the fighter planes and bombers needed for air support.

On Dec. 8, Patton turned to a higher power to clear the skies. He asked Chaplain James H. O'Neill if he knew of a "good prayer for the weather," according to military historian and Patton expert Kevin M. Hymel. "We must do something about these rains," Patton said, "if we are to win the war."

After some thought and research, O'Neill came up with the following:

"Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that, armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies, and establish Thy justice among men and nations. Amen."

O'Neill typed the prayer onto an index card, and on the flip side typed a Christmas greeting from Patton. Patton ordered 250,000 copies of the card printed and distributed to every man in the 3rd Army.

Throughout history, soldiers have called upon their gods for protection and victory over their enemies. But Patton's now legendary prayer was extraordinary in its presumption and audacity, said Hymel. "There were four other American commanders in the European Theater during that time, and none of them were asking God to fix the weather."

Patton's religious beliefs were also set in childhood. His parents were devout Episcopalians who helped found the first Protestant church in the San Gabriel Valley, the Church of Our Saviour, according to Kenneth Veronda, headmaster of Southwestern Academy in San Marino. Patton used to pray nightly to a painting of two men he thought were God and Jesus but were really Civil War heroes Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, Hymel said. "Patton was raised to believe that he had a firsthand relationship with God."

And perhaps he did. In December 1944, his prayer was answered. The weather miraculously cleared (it did eventually snow, but the prayer hadn't mentioned snow), and Patton was able to get his army moving again. When the Germans launched their final attack against Allied Forces, the Battle of the Bulge, Patton swung his men north toward the town of Bastogne, where German forces surrounded American troops from the 1st Army. On Dec. 26, he broke through the German defenses and relieved Bastogne.

Of all of Patton's World War II military successes, it was this effort at Bastogne, said Hymel, that Patton considered his "most brilliant operation and outstanding achievement of the war."

Gen. George S. Patton Jr. in 1944. His now legendary prayer beseeching God to end the heavy rains bogging down the U.S. 3rd Army was extraordinary in its presumption and audacity, a

military historian said.

USAF MEMORIAL DESIGN GETS INITIAL APPROVAL

A preliminary design was recently approved for the U.S. Air Force Memorial that will someday grace the Northern California Veterans Cemetery in Igo.

Sculptor Gideon Carl Turner III of Redding received a green light from the California Department of Veterans Affairs, signed by Secretary Peter J. Gravett, to finalize his working concept even as the memorial committee begins fundraising for a 14-foot tall bronze and stainless steel monument, a symbol of the Air Force's history and mission.

The committee is hoping to have its memorial in place and dedicated sometime in 2013.

Titled "Into the Wild Blue Yonder" the memorial will include a bronze globe 6 feet in diameter resting atop a 3-foot high pyramid with an 8-foot square base, Turner said. Encircling the globe and thrusting 6 feet to 8-feet upward will be a stainless steel contrail or aircraft path ending in a deltoid shape representing a futuristic aerospace vehicle.

The base represents the four winds and compass points. Each side of the pyramid will feature a different inscription including a memorial dedication, an explanation of the memorial's symbolism, lyrics to the Air Force song and a brief history of the Air Force, explained retired Air Force Col. Peter Stiglich of Cottonwood, who is chairing a five-person committee to oversee the memorial project.

"The sphere depicts the earth and its continents. Attached to the United States are four talons of the Air Force's mascot, a falcon. The talons represent the security of our country due to the Air Force's strength. They morph into a single contrail encircling the sphere representing the global reach and mission of the Air Force to keep our nation free. After its elliptical course, the contrail soars skyward and departs the bounds of earth as a deltoid shape enters the heavens," Stiglich writes in the project proposal.

An estimated \$400,000 to \$500,000 will be needed to erect the memorial and provide an endowment fund that will provide for its maintenance and care in perpetuity, Stiglich said.

"As a 26-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force, I am thrilled to be associated with this memorial project. it's a real honor and privilege to be working alongside other veterans and civilians within the community who are dedicated to turning this vision into reality," Stiglich said.

Sculptor Turner also designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial sculpture for the cemetery, will oversee the work of a Berkeley-based foundry to cast in bronze four sides of the pyramid's base and a hollow bronze sphere as well as create the stainless steel contrail.

Although it will be the first service-oriented monument at the state-operated facility, it will likely not be the last, said Stephen Jorgensen, cemetery administrator.

"We included the concept of memorials for all five branches of service the Air Force, Navy, Marines, Army and Coast Guard along with this proposal and that concept has been approved by Secretary Gravett. Now we have a place for each service memorial and we have set parameters for height and size for all of them,"

Jorgensen explained.

Arranged like the five points of a star around the cemetery's main flagpole circle, memorials for each of the five service branches will be centered in a circular paved area incised with a white granite star, he said.

"What we are doing is creating a shrine to our Veterans, both living and dead," Jorgensen explained. "It has never been my vision for this place to simply be a cemetery. A shrine must contain a variety of memorials where people can come to appreciate the history, sacrifice and military contributions of the countless veterans who have served our country to unselfishly."

Jorgensen has a history of seeing the big picture. When he served for 13 years as the administrator of the Riverside National Cemetery, he helped facilitate creation of two national memorials, one honoring Congressional medal of Honor recipients and the other honoring prisoners of war and those who went missing in action.

"I've carried that same concept the entire time I have been here," said Jorgensen, who helped open in 2005 the Northern California Veterans Cemetery, the state's first such facility that is open to the public. Other state-funded cemeteries exist, but only serve residents of a particular nursing home or hospital facility, he said. Kellie Jokela, who chairs the Northern California Veterans Cemetery Support Board, said of the Air Force monument, "It is my extreme hope that we are able to continue these kinds of activities. The grounds are beautiful and reflect the respectful ambiance that we want for our fallen heroes."

"I cannot think of a better way to show our appreciation for the dedication of those who served in the U.S. Air Force than to have a memorial erected in their honor," Jokela said.

Carl Turner

"We All Need HOPE"

AGENT ORANGE - PROSTATE CANCER

VVA URGES ALL VETERANS EXPOSED TO AGENT ORANGE BE SCREENED FOR PROSTATE CANCER

(Washington, D.C.) "Veterans exposed to Agent Orange are at least twice as likely to develop prostate cancer; their recurrence rates are higher; and recurring cancers are more aggressive," noted Dr. Thomas Berger, Executive Director of VVA's Veterans Health Council, before today's Congressional Men's Health Caucus Prostate Cancer Task Force. Berger urged his fellow Vietnam veterans to get screened, noting "it's worth the fight."

Said Berger, "Some three million veterans served in Southeast Asia, and no one knows for sure how many of these veterans were exposed to Agent Orange." In 1996 the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences concluded there is "limited evidence of a positive association between prostate cancer and exposure to herbicides used in Vietnam, including Agent Orange." As a result of IOM's findings, Jesse Brown, then-Secretary of the Veterans Administration (VA), issued the final rule, recognizing prostate cancer as a service-connected, presumptive disease associated with exposure to Agent Orange and other phenoxy herbicides during military service, allowing such exposed veterans to become eligible for VA disability compensation and health care.

In 2008, University of California-Davis Cancer Center physicians released results of research showing Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange have greatly increased risks of prostate

cancer and even greater risks of getting the most aggressive form of the disease as compared to those who were not exposed. The research was also the first to use a large population of men in their 60s and the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test. More than 13,000 Vietnam veterans enrolled in the VA Northern California Health Care System were stratified into two groups, exposed or not exposed to Agent Orange between 1962 and 1971. Based on medical evaluations conducted between 1998 and 2006, the study revealed that:

- * Twice as many Agent Orange-exposed men were identified with prostate cancer than non-exposed;

- * Agent Orange-exposed men were diagnosed two-and-a-half years younger than non-exposed; and

- * Agent Orange-exposed men were nearly four times more likely to present with metastatic disease than non-exposed.

Further buttressing this link, in 2009, a study of 1,495 veterans in five cities who underwent radical prostatectomy to remove their cancerous prostates showed 206 exposed to Agent Orange had a near 50 percent increased risk of their cancer recurring, despite the cancer seeming nonaggressive at the time of surgery. And the cancer came back with a vengeance. The time it took the prostate-specific antigen, or PSA, level to double – an indicator of aggressiveness – was eight months versus more than 18 months in non-exposed veterans.

VA MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Senate panel calls for probe of VA mental health services

By Steve Vogel, Published: November 30

After hearing testimony about the continued long waits faced by veterans seeking mental health care, a Senate committee Wednesday called for an investigation of the problem and an audit of the Department of Veterans Affairs' \$5.7 billion mental health care budget.

"Especially at a time when we are seeing record suicides among our veterans — we need to meet the veteran's desire for care with the immediate assurance that it will be provided — and provided quickly," said Sen. Patty Murray, (D-Wash.), chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, who asked the VA's Office of Inspector General to examine the issue.

The action came after Michelle Washington, director of post-traumatic stress disorder services at the Wilmington VA Medical Center in Delaware, testified that facility managers are spending time "gaming" the system to meet goal numbers rather than providing needed mental health care for veterans.

Washington testified that all psychologists at the center have been directed to see four new patients a week to meet the VA's goal that all veterans seeking mental health care be fully evaluated within 14 days.

The scheduling is done "by clerks pressured by management to make the system look good," Washington said.

But Washington said that no provision has been made for follow-up care, meaning that patients have to wait four to six weeks for follow-up appointments. Returning patients often have their appointments moved back to make room for new ones, she said.

The long waits often end up frustrating and scaring off veterans who have made the decision to seek help, she said.

Moreover, Washington said, the initial visit is often little more than an administrative meeting to gather information rather than a

medical evaluation.

Murray asked Mary Schohn, director of mental health operations for the VA's Veterans Health Administration, whether VA facilities are "gaming the system."

Schohn responded that the VA "does not condone gaming of any kind" and regularly audits its facilities, and that she was unaware of any such problems.

Since 2006, the VA has seen a 34 percent increase in the number of veterans seeking mental health services, reaching more than 1.2 million in 2010. In that time, Schohn noted, mental health staff levels have increased by 47.8 percent, and the VA has made "marked improvements" in its services.

"We take very seriously this committee's concerns regarding needed improvements," Schohn said.

Washington, who was testifying on behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees, said she received little response when she brought her concerns to managers. "They tell me they're working on it," she said. "Sometimes there's flat-out denial there's a problem."

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ONLINE DD-214's

IT'S OFFICIAL; DD-214'S ARE NOW ON-LINE.

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has provided the following web site for veterans to gain access to their DD-214's on-line: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/>

This may be particularly helpful when a veteran needs a copy of his DD-214 for employment purposes. NPRC is working to make it easier for veterans with computers and Internet access to obtain copies of documents from their military files.

Military veterans and the next of kin of deceased former military members may now use a new online military personnel records system to request documents.

Other individuals with a need for documents must still complete the Standard Form 180, which can be downloaded from the on-line web site. Because the requester will be asked to supply all information essential for NPRC to process the request, delays that normally occur when NPRC has to ask veterans for additional information will be minimized. The new web-based application was designed to provide better service on these requests by eliminating the records center mail room and processing time.

Please pass this information on to former military personnel you may know and their dependents.

SCULPTOR OFFERS 'HOPE' AS MONUMENT

By George L. Winship, Editor

Hope.

It's what all Vietnam Veterans carried with them during each day of every tour of duty, said combat veteran and sculptor Carl Turner, 64, of Jones Valley, who recently designed an imposing monument titled "Hope" for the Northern California Veterans Cemetery in Igo.

Turner is also under commission to design and create an equally striking memorial for the U.S. Air Force that is also destined for

the same cemetery.

Designed in bronze to resemble a shell casing fragment, Turner's Vietnam Veterans Monument will tower 20 feet high, spread 12 feet at its base and feature larger-than-life cutouts of two infantrymen holding a wounded soldier on a makeshift gurney as they wave down a hovering Huey medical evacuation helicopter flying high above the flying bullets.

The stark maquette or scale model of the finished sculpture also contains three very real bullet holes and is encircled at its base by a bas relief of a rice paddy.

"It's one of the strongest memories that I hold," said Turner, who served as a U.S. Army infantryman in Vietnam from 1964-1965 and lived that scene for himself.

"You will notice there are no guns depicted on the monument. I



didn't want any guns, but there is the memory of guns in the bullet holes," Turner noted. "To get those, I had to shoot my own art work," he added.

The message of hope is evident in the upraised hand of one soldier as the Huey tilts toward the ground from overhead.

"Everyone had hope. This is the essence of hope," said Turner, who completed the bronze maquette in January.

Turner intends to have the completed full-size sculpture – estimated to have a finished weight of nearly 4,000 pounds – cast in a San Francisco Bay Area foundry early in 2013 with installation at the cemetery in time for Memorial Day that same year.

A site for the monument was approved and Peter James Gravett, California's Secretary of Veterans Affairs, authorized placement of it at the far northwest corner of the cemetery's existing boundary.

"It is going to be the largest piece (of sculpture) so far, and it certainly is the most challenging in terms of fundraising," noted cemetery director Steve Jorgensen.

The complete monument will include a meditation site, a small replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington,

D.C., and an information kiosk

Between now and the installation, Turner and a growing committee of willing volunteers will be contacting potential corporate sponsors, Vietnam Veteran groups throughout California, individual donors and families of veterans who may wish to memorialize their loved ones, living or deceased, with a granite star engraved with the person's name, branch of service, years of active duty and other pertinent information, said Mike Wiley, a fellow Vietnam Veteran who did two tours of duty there with the U.S. Navy.

"This is a powerful and emotionally charged piece that will serve as a destination draw for veterans from throughout the state and nation," Wiley said.

Included in the nearly \$500,000 budgeted for the project, Wiley noted that a substantial sum will be set aside as an endowment so the monument's maintenance does not become a burden for California's taxpayers.

Donations may be sent to Northern California Veterans Support Group, Vietnam Veterans Monument Account, Northern California Veterans Cemetery, P.O. Box 76, 11800 Gas Point Road, Igo, CA 96047.

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CHAPTER 933

On 12-19-11, Fresno Chapter 933 Director Chuck Berberian represented the Chapter at the Dedication/Ribbon-cut-



ting ceremony for the renovation of the 3rd floor Surgery Waiting Room. Chapter 933 donated \$300 to help pay for upgrades in furniture, flooring, wall coverings and art to make the Waiting Room more pleasant for family members as they wait for their veterans coming out of surgery.

Stephen W. Doak
President, Fresno Chapter 933
(559) 260-2704

CHAPTER 756 MOVING WALL



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Individual membership is open to Veterans who served on active duty in the US Military (for other than training purposes) from February 28, 1961 to May 7, 1975 or from August 5, 1964 and May 7 1975 for Vietnam-era Veterans.

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ + _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

Individual membership or Associate membership Dues:

\$20 for Annual___ / \$20 for Renewal___ / \$50 for 3 Year Membership___

Life Memberships:

\$250___(age 49 and under) \$225___(50-55) \$200___(56-60) \$175 (61-65) \$150 (66+)

For individual membership a DD214 is required if not already on file.

Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America is an adjunct organization with VVA, Both Veterans and non-Veterans may join. If joining AVVA you are eligible to be a member of VVA Yes___ No___

Print this page and fill out and mail with DD214 (if needed) to our address above.

If you are a current member, to renew provide your Membership # _____ Chapter _____

MEET THE NEW TEAM AT THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Bios can be accessed at: <http://www.calvet.ca.gov/AboutUs/StaffBios.aspx>



[Peter James Gravett, Secretary](#)



[Lawrence Gonzales, Undersecretary, Operations](#)



[Robin Umberg, Undersecretary, Veterans Homes](#)



[Trevor Albertson, Deputy Secretary, Veterans Services](#)



[Mark Lennon, Deputy Secretary, Administration](#)



[Jim Lowrey, Deputy Secretary, Farm and Home Purchases](#)



[John Peter "J. P." Tremblay, Deputy Secretary, Communications and Legislation](#)



[Lee Gutierrez, Deputy Secretary, Minority Veterans Affairs](#)



[Lindsey Wathen, Deputy Secretary, Women Veterans Affairs](#)

Image
Coming
Soon.

[Robert Wilson, Deputy Secretary and Chief Counsel, Legal Affairs](#)



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VVA CA State Council contact info inside - page 2

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IN THIS ISSUE:

- W/LA Land Update & Holiday Photos
- Legislative Information
- Veteran Information
- Chapter Activities
- And more...

VVA & CSC MEETING DATES & EVENTS

CSC Meeting - October 21-22, 2011 - Fresno, CA
CSC Meeting - February 3-4, 2012 - Fresno, CA
CSC Meeting - April 27-28, 2012 - Fresno, CA
CSC State Convention - June 29-30, 2012 - Fresno, CA