

SOUND OFF!



VOL. V, NO 14

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.
“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

20 MAY 2010

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

OVERDUE REAL HELP – SPOTTY BUT HELP NONETHELESS

Over two years ago, January 2008 to be exact, Judge Robert Russell started a Veterans Treatment Court in Buffalo, NY. Veterans Treatment Court is part of Buffalo City Court designed to keep veterans who are non-violent offenders, out of jail.

Veterans are offered the opportunity to be handled by this court but are not forced into it – some refuse because it will be, they believe, too hard to finish. The program includes mentoring by veteran volunteers, mental health treatment, and assistance with gaining VA and other benefits. It also includes random substance testing and periodic appearances before the judge over a period of one or two years.

The program describes itself as “a collaborative effort between the Western NY Veterans Project, Buffalo Police Dept. Buffalo VA Healthcare System, the Buffalo Criminal Courts, the Buffalo Drug and Mental Health Care System, the Erie County Pre-trial Services, and the Court Outreach Unit: Referral and Treatment Service (C.O.U.R.T.S.).

Their mission statement is, “To successfully habilitate veterans by diverting them from the traditional justice system and providing them with the tools they need in order to lead a productive and law-abiding lifestyle.”

They typically offer their services to “those veteran defendants with substance dependency or mental illness charged with felony or misdemeanor non-violent criminal offenses.”

Two years later there are over 20 courts established or getting started around the country generally based on the Buffalo model.

Real cost savings have been realized when compared to traditional justice methods. Although the program has only been in place a short time, they calculate that they realize the same sort of savings as their drug treatment programs which have reported savings of up to \$10 per person for every dollar spent.

The most noteworthy and remarkable aspect of the system is that the recidivism rate is very low. Of those who complete the program almost none have reverted to criminal behavior. Those who do not complete the program are returned to the traditional system. Buffalo had only two out of the first hundred returned.

Some have criticized the program(s) as being a “free pass” for veterans. Others, including the ACLU in Nevada and Oklahoma, have opposed it “because it creates a special class of people charged with crimes who are treated differently based on their status as veterans.” They say that we should then create special class courts for teachers, politicians, etc. Hogwash!

One thing it is not is a “free pass”. Most courts require the veteran to plead guilty to their crimes; they receive a suspended sentence that can include prison time. Fall off the program and the sentence is invoked.

As for creating a “special class” – I have two thoughts on that subject.

First, we already create special classes in our courts. Contrary to general opinion these special classes are not always created in wildly liberal feel-good counties. Orange County, California, a bastion of the right, has eleven special courts for defendants ranging from drugs & alcohol/DUI, to girls in foster care with mental health problems, and they have started one for veterans.

Veterans deserve a “special class” if anyone does. Just the fact that they enlisted doesn’t qualify them for special treatment. It is rather the fact that they are sent to do a job almost no one else is willing to do, they do it repeatedly, and they sacrifice their personal lives, their families, their education, everything when no one else is sacrificing anything. It is not a “free pass – it is payback time to the extent that we can ever repay them for what they have done.

“This isn’t special treatment. This is continuation of treatment of a wound.”

Seamus McCaffery, Supreme Court Justice (PA)

These Veterans Courts should be established everywhere. They should be a part of the system so that our communities actively participate in re-habituating returning veterans to life in the community.

We veterans who do not need the help should be lobbying to establish these courts everywhere. When they are established, we should be lining up to volunteer as mentors. “We take care of our own.” “We leave no one behind.” Those statements have to really mean something and we can do something about it.

Most of the veterans using these courts now are from the Vietnam era and before, as they come to grips with their problems and, in a more open time, begin to let their needs be known.

There are some lower numbers of Gulf War and current veterans, but the flood is coming!

We know that we are harming today’s veterans by the way we are using them up in the current conflicts. Anyone who doesn’t understand that today’s veterans, particularly the combat veterans, have it tougher than any of the rest of us ever did just isn’t paying attention, or is forgetting the reality of their own service.

True – World War II was “for the duration”, and that was tough. Korea was until you got enough “points”, and that was tough too. Vietnam was 12 or 13 months for ground troops and something less usually for air and naval troops (except navy medics attached to the Marines), but the war was circular – they were everywhere; but most went only once and then were done, and if you went back it was usually after several years at home, and yes, that was tough too.

Today’s veterans are in it over and over again, barely getting a year at home if they are lucky, and they are caught up in a 24/7 circular war that beats them down more with each deployment. They are reinjured before they have time to heal.

Even Congress gets the message but they do precious little about it. A bill to provide grants for

establishment of veterans courts throughout the nation has been proposed in two Congresses – the 110th and the 111th. The bill has been titled the SERV Act - *Services, Education, and Rehabilitation for Veterans*. Senator Kerry (MA) proposed S3379 (110th) and then [S902](#) (111th). Representative Kennedy (RI-1) proposed HR4179 (110th) and then [HR2138](#) (111th). Both sets of bills were forwarded to the respective Judiciary Committees where they died in the 110th, and they have languished for 13 months in the 111th.

The idea is good – provide grants to municipalities to establish and support Veterans Treatment Courts. Support for the idea in Congress is almost zilch: each bill got less than 10% support from other legislators..

The total amount proposed for grants would be comical if it weren’t so sad - \$10M per year for six years – much less than the cost of one F35 (they cost \$95M-\$113M no one knows for sure)! *See the following article about earmarks for comparison.*

These courts are at the municipal and county level. There are 3058 counties in the US. If all applied (they won’t) and all were to get their fair share, they would receive only \$545 apiece per year for six years – not enough for postage. Add in the municipalities and they can’t afford to even turn on the lights.

We veterans must stand up and demand that this idea be promulgated throughout the nation. We have to browbeat our legislators into supporting the SERV act and to greatly increase the funding. We should simultaneously be pressing our state legislators to establish comparable programs at the state level to support the county and municipal courts, and to attach significant state funding to that effort (SERV gives 75% and demands a 35% state grant).

This effort is needed **NOW!** We cannot afford to let another generation of veterans rot in neglect. Particularly those of us who are Vietnam War veterans know what it means to be ignored, just as Korean War veterans know what it is to be forgotten – we cannot let that happen to our brothers and sisters in today’s wars.

**For gold the merchant ploughs the main,
The farmer ploughs the manor;
But glory is the sodger's prize,
The sodger's wealth is honor:
The brave poor sodger ne'er despise,
Nor count him as a stranger;
Remember he's his country's stay,
In day and hour of danger.**

Robert Burns

“The Soldier’s Return”, v. 8

[Ed.]

PROOF OF HOW IMPORTANT VETERAN'S TREATMENT COURTS ARE TO CONGRESS COMPARED TO THEIR RAVENOUS HUNGER FOR PORK

Source: 2010 Congressional Pig Book Summary: <http://www.cagw.org/reports/pig-book/2010/>

Congressional requests for pork (earmarks) are down this year, but that doesn't mean that they aren't still pretty far up there. While some of the requests are for worthwhile projects, they all qualify as "pork" because they meet the following criteria:

- Requested by only one chamber of Congress;
- Not specifically authorized;
- Not competitively awarded;
- Not requested by the President;
- Greatly exceeds the President's budget request or the previous year's funding;
- Not the subject of congressional hearings; or,
- Serves only a local or special interest.

The highest year for pork was 2006, with \$29B in requests for 9,963 favorite projects (including \$500,000 by Rep Virginia Foxx and Sen. Richard Burr for the Sparta NC Teapot Museum). This year there are only \$16.5B in requests in 9,121 projects.

No one thought that Veterans Treatment Courts were important enough to demand an earmark, they only would get \$10M per year from the current bills, if those bills ever get out of committee, which does not look likely.

Here are some examples of what types of projects are important enough to warrant earmarks – here are real samples from the pork barrel:

Senate Appropriations Committee Ranking Member Thad Cochran (R-Miss.)

- \$5,000,000 for the National Institute for Undersea Science and Technology at the University of Mississippi;
- \$3,700,000 for marine aquaculture lab operations at the University of Southern Mississippi
- \$1,000,000 for the University of Southern Mississippi for a technology industry partnership designed to transition space technologies into the commercial sector
- \$500,000 for the University of Southern Mississippi for cannabis eradication.

Anonymous earmark

- \$2,500,000,000 for the procurement of ten C-17 aircraft

The Department of Defense's (DoD) own analyses shows that the 205 C-17s that the Air Force has or which are on order, together with the existing fleet of C-5 aircraft, are sufficient to meet the Department's future airlift needs – even under the most stressing situations.

Anonymous earmark

- \$465,000,000 for continued development and initial procurement of the alternate engine for the Joint Strike Fighter.
- Pentagon Press Secretary Geoff Morrell reiterated DOD's position on the alternate engine, stating, "this money can clearly be better spent buying capabilities that our warfighters do need. This is a luxury we cannot afford."*

Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii)

- \$10,000,000 for a Hawaii technology development venture

Senate appropriator Mary Landrieu (D-La.), Sen. David Vitter (R-La.), and Rep. Anh "Joseph" Cao (R-La.)

- \$20,000,000 by for the National World War II Museum.

According to the museum's 2007 IRS Form 990, it already has net assets of \$65,605,851.

House Military Construction Appropriations Subcommittee member Ander Crenshaw (R-Fla.)

- \$26,360,000 by for a fitness facility at Mayport Naval Station.

The Jacksonville Snap Fitness Center is 10.5 miles from Mayport Naval Station, and offers membership for \$44.95 a month.

IF YOU WANT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO ARE BUMPED OUT OF THE SERVICE, FAIL TO GET VA HELP, AND FAIL TO GET HELP IN THE COURTS, VIEW THIS 90-MINUTE PRESENTATION OF PBS'S FRONTLINE – “WOUNDED PLATOON”!

BE PREPARED TO BE PISSED-OFF <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/woundedplatoon/>

CONGRESS MAY OVERRIDE EFFORTS BY SECRETARY GATES TO CUT DEFENSE SPENDING

Craig Whitlock and Dana Hedgpeth - Washington Post Staff Writers - May 17, 2010

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates has vowed to impose fiscal austerity at the Pentagon, but his biggest challenge may be persuading Congress to go along.

Lawmakers from both parties are poised to override Gates and fund the C-17 cargo plane and an alternative engine for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter -- two weapons systems the defense secretary has been trying to cut from next year's budget. They have also made clear they will ignore Gates's pleas to hold the line on military pay raises and health-care costs, arguing that now is no time to skimp on pay and benefits for troops who have been fighting two drawn-out wars. <More at:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/16/AR2010051602937.html>

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two websites: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm. United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims "Public List of Practitioners" are members of the court's bar www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/. Also this site for west coasters <http://www.chapman.edu/law/programs/clinics/amvets.asp>.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

Class Action Suit: On 12 August we appeared before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. An article from the LA Times on 24 August summarizes the results so far <latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/healthcare/la-me-veterans-suit24-2009aug24.0.1423297.story>

.Case Progress to Date:

7/23/2007 Suit filed w/Federal District Court

9/25/2007 Defendant's Motion to Dismiss

2/11/2008 Motion for Preliminary Injunction

2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing

4/21/2008 Trial

6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction

7/25/2008 Appeal notice filed w/9th Circuit Court of Appeals

12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed

12/15/2008 *Swords to Plowshares* and *Vietnam Veterans of America* file amicus briefs

12/22/2008 *Military Spouses for Change* and *United Spinal Association* file amicus briefs

3/4/2009 Appeal will not be subject to Mediation

4/6/2009 Requested an extension to reply to the DVA response to our brief

4/22/09 Extension granted to 1 May 2009

5/1/09 Appellants' Reply Brief filed

6/11/09 Oral Arguments Scheduled for 12 August 2009

8/12/09 Oral arguments

9/14/09 Reply on mediation [changed date]

9/14/09 No agreement on mediation. 9th Circuit accepts the case.

5/20/10 NTR [The courts move veeerrry slowly]

Here is a link to the legal [documents](#) on the lawsuit.

BE A MEMBER If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to [our website](#) and join. Membership is free. The more our numbers grow, the greater voice we have. It shouldn't be that way, but it is, so join us and help us take the fight to Congress and the state legislatures. Please encourage your friends who either are veterans, are related to veterans, or who support veterans' causes to [join VUFT, Inc.](#)

SUPPORTING THE CAUSE If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on [our website "Donate" page](#). Every little bit helps. We are a 501(c)(3): your donations are deductible on your federal taxes. You can also buy our handsome pins using the same method. If you wish to volunteer your services to the organization, please contact the Chair at bhandy@vuft.org or the Vice Chair at scook@vuft.org. Watch for details at www.vuft.org.

D O N A T E!

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS [SOME EDITED FOR LENGTH]

Florida Veterans for Common Sense has an initiative underway to obtain a court diversion program for veterans who come in contact with the criminal justice system. Kudos to Chief Judge Lee Haworth who has instituted a pilot "Courts Assisting Veterans" program in the 12th Judicial Circuit which includes DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota Counties, Florida.

Thanks to funding from the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice, the pilot project is underway and a supervisor, Scott Driscoll, an Afghanistan vet and FLVCS member, has been hired to head up the program. The program is designed to use volunteer mentors to assist the vets who are in trouble with the law. Without mentors the program will fail and vets who could be productive members of our communities will be snared in the revolving door of the criminal justice system. We have seen that result with Vietnam era vets and we must not repeat the same mistakes. Now is the time to "support the troops" and become a veteran mentor. To obtain more information and what is expected contact:

Scott Driscoll, Veterans Court Coordinator, 12th Circuit Court of Florida, 941-861-7800

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

HOUSE EXPANDS BENEFITS FOR VETERANS' CAREGIVERS

The Associated Press - New York Times, April 21, 2010

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Family members of severely wounded Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who forgo jobs and health insurance to provide care for an injured loved one would get relief under a bill unanimously passed by the House on Wednesday.

The estimated \$1.7 billion in caregiver benefits over a five-year period was part of comprehensive veterans legislation that would open the door wider for the Veterans Affairs Department to offer assistance to veterans' family members.

It instructs the VA to create a childcare pilot program; offer post-delivery care to female veterans' newborns; and work with the Pentagon on a study on veterans suicide. It also includes expanded funding for programs assisting homeless veterans and those in rural areas. The total price tag over five years is estimated at \$3.7 billion.

It passed 419-0. <More at: www.vawatchdog.org/10/nf10/nfapr10/nf042210-9.htm>

RETREAT – NEWS

VA SECRETARY ERIC K SHINSEKI VISITS THE BUFFALO VETERANS TREATMENT COURT

Sergio R. Rodriguez - April 6th, 2010

Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki visited the Buffalo Veterans Treatment Court program. The program is the first of its kind in the nation and is used as a model for other treatment court programs being created in other parts of the country. The Secretary's purpose was to receive first-hand knowledge about how the program works in order to integrate and develop similar endeavors in other communities. <More at: www.erie.gov/veterans/veterans_court.asp>

FIRST LADY ANNOUNCES PRESIDENTIAL DIRECTIVE ON MILITARY FAMILIES

J. Elise VanPool - May 12, 2010

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, May 12, 2010) -- First lady Michelle Obama today announced a new 90-day review to develop a coordinated federal government-wide approach to supporting and engaging military families.

The first lady made the announcement during an address to the National Military Family Association's summit in Washington, D.C., May 12.

"With just one percent of our population -- our troops -- doing 100 percent of the fighting, our military families are being tested like never before," said first lady Michelle Obama. "This government-wide review will bring together the resources of the federal government, identify new opportunities across the public and private sectors, and lay the foundation for a coordinated approach to supporting and engaging military families for years to come."

The review will seek to coordinate efforts of federal agencies in supporting service members and their families.

<More at: www.army.mil/-news/2010/05/12/38948-first-lady-announces-presidential-directive-on-military-families/>

GEE – AMAZING! I WONDER WHY THAT HAPPENED?

MILITARY'S HEALTH CARE COSTS BOOMING

Gregg Zoroya - USA TODAYWASHINGTON — Military health care spending is rising twice as fast as the nation's overall health care costs, consuming a larger chunk of the defense budget as the Pentagon struggles to pay for two wars, military budget figures show. The surging costs are prompting the Pentagon and Congress to consider the first hike in out-of-pocket fees for military retirees and some active-duty families in 15 years, said Rear Adm. Christine Hunter, deputy director of TRICARE, the military health care program. Pentagon spending on health care has increased from \$19 billion in 2001 to a projected \$50.7 billion in 2011, a 167% increase. <More at: www.usatoday.com/news/military/2010-04-22-vet_N.htm>

BILL WOULD CREATE WEB PORTAL FOR VETERANS' RECORDS

Alice Lipowicz - May 07, 2010

Goal of the iVets Act is to enable veterans to gain access to DOD personnel records

Veterans would get online access to their military personnel file and health and benefits records under legislation introduced in the House.

Rep. Niki Tsongas (D-Mass.), the sponsor of the Improving Veterans Electronic Transition Services (iVets) Act, wants to help ease the transition from military life to civilian life by enabling veterans to access their service records electronically in a veterans-only Web portal. The proposed Web portal also would offer a "white pages" directory of veterans, e-mail and a direct communications link with the Veterans Affairs Department.

Active duty military service members now use the Defense Department's Defense Knowledge Online system to check their personnel records and benefits, but they lose access to the system once they become veterans.

For medical records, President Obama in April 2009 started efforts to create a joint DOD/VA seamless lifetime medical record for each service member that follows the person as he or she exits the military and becomes a veteran. <More at: <http://fcw.com/articles/2010/05/07/tsongas-bill-veterans-web-portal.aspx>>

MULLEN ASKS COMMUNITIES TO ASSIST VETERANS

Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Carden - American Forces Press Service - 2010-04-25

MORGANTOWN, W.Va., April 20, 2010 – Integrating veterans into society is a challenge not only for the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs, but for the communities they're transitioning into, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said here today.

Navy Adm. Mike Mullen spoke to hundreds of students, veterans and community leaders at West Virginia University and asked for a continued reaching out to military veterans to ensure their needs are met. Mullen also spoke to local residents at a town hall event at a nearby hotel. The talks were part of Mullen's "Conversations with the Country," an initiative he is undertaking to raise awareness in American communities about the value of veterans. <More at: www.emilitary.org/article.php?aid=15299>

VA ASSIGNS RATINGS TO SURGICAL FACILITIES

Lisa M. Novak - Stars and Stripes European edition - May 15, 2010

NAPLES, Italy — Five Veterans Affairs hospitals can no longer perform certain surgeries after the VA determined the facilities were not properly equipped to carry out more complex procedures. VA hospitals in Alexandria, La.; Beckley, W.Va.; Fayetteville, N.C.; Illiana at Danville, Ill.; and Spokane, Wash., are now authorized to perform only standard inpatient surgeries — the lowest rating assigned under the agency's new Surgical Complexity Initiative. <More at: www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=69990>

NUMBER OF SOLDIERS SEEKING OPIATE ABUSE TREATMENT SKYROCKETS

Judson Berger / FOX News May 6th, 2010 7:09 PM

The number of American soldiers seeking treatment for opiate abuse has skyrocketed over the past five years, at a time when the U.S. military has been surging forces into the heart of the world's leading opium producer.

Pentagon statistics obtained by FoxNews.com show that the number of Army soldiers enrolled in Substance Abuse Program counseling for opiates has soared nearly 500 percent -- from 89 in 2004 to 529 last year. The number showed a steady increase almost every year in that time frame -- but it leaped 50 percent last year when the U.S. began surging troops into Afghanistan. <More at: www.foxnews.com/politics/2010/05/06/number-troops-seeking-opiate-addiction-treatment-skyrockets/>

CONGRESSMAN ACCUSES VA OF 'NONCOMPLIANCE'

Kimberly Hefling - Associated Press Writer - April 27, 2010

The chairman of a House panel that oversees the Veterans Affairs Department has asked VA Secretary Eric Shinseki to explain an apparent "emerging pattern" of noncompliance with congressional requests for information about veteran suicide and other issues. Veterans National Suicide Prevention Hotline: <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
<More at: http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/politics/2011714007_apusveteranssuicide.html

NO, NOT EVERY VETERAN IS A HERO

VETERAN SENTENCED TO 6 1/2 YEARS FOR FAKING PARALYSIS

Robert Patrick - St. Louis Post-Dispatch - 04.23.2010

An Army veteran who faked his paralysis to avoid deployment to Iraq was sentenced Friday in federal court in East St. Louis to six and one-half years in federal prison, the U.S. Attorney's office said. Jeffrey W. Rush, 27, and his wife began faking his paralysis more than five years ago, after a "suspicious" one-car crash on Nov. 5, 2004, prosecutors said. Rush had been notified five months before that his company would deploy to Iraq. Rush and his wife both pretended that he was unable to walk and had lost control of his bladder and bowels, although doctors could find no medical problems. Rush was discharged in 2005, and continued to lie about his condition, eventually reaping \$107,857 in disability benefits from the Veterans Administration and \$28,730 in Social Security benefits, prosecutors said.

<More at: <http://interact.stltoday.com/blogzone/st-louis-crime-beat/federal-court/2010/04/veteran-sentenced-to-6-12-years-for-faking-paralysis/>

ARMY CAPT. WHO STOLE \$690K GETS 30 MOS.

Associated Press - May 04, 2010

PORLAND, Ore. -- An Oregon man who stole nearly \$700,000 from the U.S. government while serving as an Army captain in Iraq was sentenced to 30 months in prison Monday. Michael Dung Nguyen, a graduate of West Point, acknowledged stealing more than \$690,000 entrusted to him for distribution to Iraqi humanitarian relief, rebuilding projects and security services.

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/army-capt-who-stole-690k-gets-30-mos.html

TO THE COLORS - GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
5/20		Phoenix, AZ	Resource Fair	David Williams	602-254-5081
5/21		Tucson, AZ	Resource Fair	Joe Niznik	520-243-6693
5/25		Minneapolis	Resource Fair	Nathaniel Saltz	612-726-1327
5/26		Buffalo, NY	Resource Fair	Mark LaHood	716-854-3494
5/26		Lansing, MI	Resource Fair	Kate Reed	517-484-4414 x-103
5/27		San Luis Obispo, CA	Resource Fair	Doris Nickelson	310-545-2937
5/28*31		Sugar Land Memorial Park Sugar Land, TX	The Wall That Heals	City of Sugar Land	
6/4		Kansas City, MO	Resource Fair	Jennifer L. Gould	816-519-8796
6/10-13		VA Hospital Tuscaloosa, AL	The Wall That Heals	Mike Spann Detachments of the Marine Corps League	
6/11		Ft. Lauderdale, FL	Resource Fair	Ronnie Higgins	954-792-4000 x-233
6/13	1300- 1600	Wilshire & San Vicente Blvds Los Angeles, CA	Veterans Rally "Major Distress Call"	"Veterans Today" Bob Rosebrock	
6/17-20		NW Florida Fairgrounds Fort Walton Beach, FL	The Wall That Heals	Heritage Museum of Northwest Florida	
6/18		Chicago, IL	Resource Fair	Jeanne A. Douglas	708-383-3225
6/19		Bozeman, MT	Resource Fair	George Morales	406-580-8253

We are a non-partisan organization. We will advertise all legitimate veterans' events, regardless of purpose or affiliation.

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

A GOOD NPR SERIES (TEXT & VIDEO) ON CURRENT PROBLEMS

AMERICA'S NEW VETERANS: GETTING HELP AMID HURDLES

Bruce Auster - May 10, 2010

Who will take care of the new veterans? The answer is not as simple as it might seem, because veterans today are very different from those of even a few years ago. Today's vets are coming home from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. They are young. Many are women. They often need medical attention — and because advanced battlefield medicine has saved so many lives, these veterans often suffer from many, many injuries.

The government agency that is supposed to help them has been broken for years. But the Department of Veterans Affairs has a new leader — retired Army Gen. Eric Shinseki — who is trying to transform the department. It is no small task, and it is complicated by the sheer number of new vets looking to the VA for services.

... this series, [looks] at some of the specific challenges some veterans face and what the VA [says] it is doing to help them.

Monday, May 10 — [Overview: The New Veteran](#)

Thursday, May 13 — [Women And The VA](#)

Tuesday, May 11 — [The Backlog](#)

Friday, May 14 — [VA Secretary Eric Shinseki](#)

Wednesday, May 12 — [Veterans Courts](#)

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY ~DON'T CLICK THROUGH AND READ THIS IF YOU THINK YOU CAN'T STAND GETTING REALLY ENRAGED!

DISPOSABLE SOLDIERS

Joshua Kors - *The Nation* - April 26, 2010

Research support for this article was provided by the Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute.

The mortar shell that wrecked Chuck Luther's life exploded at the base of the guard tower. Luther heard the brief whistling, followed by a flash of fire, a plume of smoke and a deafening bang that shook the tower and threw him to the floor. The Army sergeant's head slammed against the concrete, and he lay there in the Iraqi heat, his nose leaking clear fluid.

... Doctors at Camp Taji's aid station told Luther he was faking his symptoms. When he insisted he wasn't, they presented a new diagnosis for his blindness: personality disorder.

... Luther insisted to doctors at Camp Taji that he did not have personality disorder, that the idea of developing a childhood mental illness at the age of 36, after passing eight psychological screenings, was ridiculous. The sergeant used a vivid expression to convey how much pain he was in. "I told them that some days, the pain was so bad, I felt like dying." Doctors declared him a suicide risk. They collected his shoelaces, his belt and his rifle and ordered him confined to an isolation chamber.

... Extensive medical records written by Luther's doctors document his confinement in the aid station for more than a month. The sergeant was kept under twenty-four-hour guard. Most nights, he says, guards enforced sleep deprivation, keeping the lights on and blasting heavy metal music. When Luther rebelled, he was pinned down and injected with sleeping medication.

Eventually Luther was brought to his commander, who told him he had a choice: he could sign papers saying his medical problems stemmed from personality disorder or face more time in isolation. <More at: www.thenation.com/doc/20100426/kors/single>

FROM COMBAT TO LOCKDOWN: TROUBLED VETERANS TRADING MILITARY UNIFORMS FOR PRISON ATTIRE

Matthew D. LaPlante - The Salt Lake Tribune - 04/25/2010

John Pace stumbled to his car, slipped Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues" into the compact disc player and turned the key. From half a century away, one Air Force veteran crooned to another:

*When I was just a baby, my mama told me, 'Son,
Always be a good boy, don't ever play with guns.'*

Five years as a military police officer, including a stint in South Korea, a tour of duty in Afghanistan and multiple deployments in Iraq, had all come to this: a drunken 23-year-old combat vet behind the wheel, determined to find another bottle to empty onto his pain. Pace pulled into the dark parking lot of a TGI Friday's restaurant in Riverdale, broke a window and crawled inside. He took one bottle, then another. Then he decided to empty out the entire bar. ... It was Pace's first crime, and records

show he cooperated with investigators who arrived on his doorstep the next morning. "I just wanted to avoid going to jail," he said.

... But charges were up to prosecutors, who filed two felonies against Pace in 2nd District Court. Five weeks later, Judge Ernie Jones - a retired lieutenant colonel in the Army Reserves - sentenced Pace to 36 months of probation for the theft. A month later, Pace was back before Jones for hitting a parked car while driving drunk. Jones sent him to jail for 90 days with the admonition to use the time to sober up. A few months after he got out of jail, police were called to an altercation between Pace and a female roommate. Pace wasn't charged in the incident, but he admitted he had been drinking -- a violation of the terms of his probation. On Feb. 11, Jones ordered Pace to prison for up to five years. <More at: www.sltrib.com/ci_14948127

18 VETERANS COMMIT SUICIDE EACH DAY

Rick Maze - Staff writer - Apr 26, 2010

Troubling new data show there are an average of 950 suicide attempts each month by veterans who are receiving some type of treatment from the Veterans Affairs Department. Seven percent of the attempts are successful, and 11 percent of those who don't succeed on the first attempt try again within nine months.

The numbers, which come at a time when VA is strengthening its suicide prevention programs, show about 18 veteran suicides a day, about five by veterans who are receiving VA care.

Access to care appears to be a key factor, officials said, noting that once a veteran is inside the VA care program, screening programs are in place to identify those with problems, and special efforts are made to track those considered at high risk, such as monitoring whether they are keeping appointments. <More at: www.armytimes.com1/news/2010/04/military_veterans_suicide_042210w/

BRITISH TROOPS LESS LIKELY TO GET PTSD

Stars and Stripes online edition - May 17, 2010

British combat troops are far less likely to suffer post-traumatic stress disorder than their American counterparts, The New York Times reported Monday, citing a recent psychiatric study of the British military.

Just 4 percent of Brits who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan exhibit symptoms of PTSD compared with 10 to 20 percent of Americans, though both have seen comparable levels of combat in recent years, according to the study.

... British troops serve six-month tours, and no more than 12 months in every 36. Depending on the service, American troops might serve more than 12 months at a time with only a year between deployments.

<More at: www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=70043

“SUPPORTING THE TROOPS” BIG TIME IN TEXAS

BACK FROM IRAQ, FRISCO SOLDIER FINDS HOME SOLD BY HOA

David Schechter – WFAA - May 14, 2010:

FRISCO, TX — A soldier returned home from combat to find his Frisco home, which was owned free and clear, sold off by his homeowners' association.

While there is a law to protect service members from financial disaster while they're off fighting a war, it is frequently broken.

On dangerous missions in Iraq, Capt. Michael Clauer of Frisco was responsible for the lives of 130 soldiers. He had a lot on his mind. "You can't worry about what's going on at home," he said. "It's enough stress there the way it is."

His wife, Mae Clauer, was under stress, too. She was alone and taking care of her family in a \$300,000 home her parents had given her as a gift. "When Michael went to Iraq, I went into a very bad depression," she said. The mail piled up unopened and Mrs. Clauer missed \$800 in payments to her HOA. Then she missed the letters saying the association planned to foreclose.

"I ignored a lot of our bills," she said.

Even after the HOA foreclosed and sold the home at auction, Mrs. Clauer didn't open the letters that said she had six months to get the home back, and that time lapsed, too. By the time Capt. Clauer returned from the war, someone else owned their home after paying just \$3,500. <More at: www.wfaa.com/news/local/Frisco-soldier-comes-home-to-find-home-sold-by-HOA-93829194.html#

IT'S NOT JUST THE COURTS – IT STARTS WITH THE SERVICES AND EXTENDS THROUGH THE VA AND INTO THE COMMUNITY!

FEELING WAREHOUSED IN ARMY TRAUMA CARE UNITS

James Dao and Dan Frosch - New York Times - April 24, 2010

COLORADO SPRINGS — A year ago, Specialist Michael Crawford wanted nothing more than to get into Fort Carson's Warrior Transition Battalion, a special unit created to provide closely managed care for soldiers with physical wounds and severe psychological trauma.

A strapping Army sniper who once brimmed with confidence, he had returned emotionally broken from Iraq, where he suffered two concussions from roadside bombs and watched several platoon mates burn to death. The transition unit at Fort Carson, outside Colorado Springs, seemed the surest way to keep suicidal thoughts at bay, his mother thought.

It did not work. He was prescribed a laundry list of medications for anxiety, nightmares, depression and headaches that made him feel listless and disoriented. His once-a-week session with a nurse case manager seemed grossly inadequate to him. And noncommissioned officers — soldiers supervising the unit — harangued or disciplined him when he arrived late to formation or violated rules.

Last August, Specialist Crawford attempted suicide with a bottle of whiskey and an overdose of painkillers. By the end of last year, he was begging to get out of the unit.

"It is just a dark place," said the soldier, who is waiting to be medically discharged from the Army. "Being in the W.T.U. is worse than being in Iraq." <More at: www.nytimes.com/2010/04/25/health/25warrior.html>

HER'S THE COUNTERVAILING OFFICIAL VIEW OF THE PROBLEM

OFFICIAL CALLS WOUNDED WARRIOR'S REPORT 'UNREPRESENTATIVE'

John J. Kruzel - American Forces Press Service - Apr 27, 2010

WASHINGTON (April 26, 2010) -- The focus of a New York Times article depicting neglect and suffering endured by a group of wounded Soldiers recovering in an Army program is unrepresentative of the recovery effort at large, the Army surgeon general said today.

Lt. Gen. (Dr.) Eric B. Schoomaker stopped short of calling the article that appeared yesterday inaccurate, but said the overwhelming majority of Soldiers in warrior transition units are satisfied with the recovery regimen, according to an Army survey. <More at: www.army.mil/-news/2010/04/27/38051-official-calls-wounded-warriors-report-unrepresentative/>

VA [ROANOKE] CLAIMS OFFICE TAKES SNAFU TO A NEW LEVEL

Jana Winter - FOXNews.com - April 19, 2010

Last month, a decorated Gulf War hero received a letter from the Veterans Affairs Administration that said: We are working on your claim for menstrual disorder. There was just one problem: The claim was submitted for fibromyalgia.

Make that two problems: The claim was submitted by Glenn McBride, a 40-year-old man from Roanoke, Va., who most definitely does not get menstrual cramps. It's a bad sign when your health insurance provider can't figure out which gender reaches for the Midol. (Hint: it's the one without the prostate.)

The Department of Veterans Affairs is notorious for bungling health care benefits, and its Roanoke regional office, which handled McBride's claim, has long been considered among the worst.

In September 2009 a surprise inspection found the office was collapsing under the weight of its own bureaucratic incompetence. Literally.

Its filing system — floor-to-ceiling stacks of overfilled file cabinets and loose claims folders — weighed twice as much as the building's structure allowed, threatening the lives of everyone inside. Inspectors also found missing and improperly filed, stored and processed claims, among other problems. The regional office was ordered to overhaul the health care processing center completely.

By last month, six months later, there should have been some improvement. Instead, McBride received a letter that included this perplexing request for additional information:

"On the VA Form 21-4138, Statement in Support of Claim you sent on October 8, 2009, you included menstrual disorder. Please specify what you intended to claim for this condition."

<More at: www.foxnews.com/us/2010/04/19/veterans-health-claims-menstrual-disorder/>

A STRING OF STORIES ABOUT THE VA'S COMPUTER INFORMATION SYSTEMS EXPERTISE, AND HOW WELL THEY FULFILL SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT PROMISES

UNPLUGGED VA COMPUTER AFFECTS TREATMENT OF CANCER PATIENTS

Bob Brewin - 05/04/2010

It took officials at a Veterans Affairs Department hospital in Philadelphia more than a year to learn that a computer used to assess patient's response to treatments for prostate cancer had been unplugged, delaying assessments, according to an inspector general report released on Monday.

The computer ran an application called the VariSeed treatment planning system, which oncologists use to focus radiation treatment on cancer hotspots. But the computer was disconnected from the hospital's network in November 2006 when a vendor and a VA information technology technician unplugged it from a jack that linked it to the main network so they could connect another piece of hardware.

That year, VA clinicians performed 17 procedures to insert radioactive seeds that treat prostate cancer. Without the network connection, X-rays showing the location of radioactive seeds could not be transferred to the VariSeed computer, making it difficult for doctors to determine the patients' response to treatment, the inspector general found. No patient was injured by the error. <More at: www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20100504_4924.php>

FEW VA CLAIMS EXAMINERS WORKING ON NEW PROGRAM TO PROCESS GI BENEFITS

Bob Brewin - 04/21/2010

The Veterans Affairs Department has deployed the first part of a system designed to speed processing of new GI payments to only one of its four claims processing centers nationwide, despite past assurances the system would be fully installed by March, a top agency official told a Senate panel on Wednesday. <More at: www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20100421_1827.php>

VA PLANS TO BUILD AN AGENT ORANGE DISABILITY CLAIMS SYSTEM

Bob Brewin - 05/17/2010

The Veterans Affairs Department plans to build a system to process simplified claims for Vietnam veterans exposed to the toxic chemical Agent Orange, creating its first fully automated disability claims network.

The system will support processing for what VA calls Agent Orange presumptive claims, which until March included [12 diseases](#) associated with exposure to the defoliant that was widely used during the Vietnam War. In March, VA issued a notice in the *Federal Register* informing the public of its intent to add three classes of diseases to that list: certain leukemias, Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease. <More at: www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20100517_6745.php>

POOR SECURITY LEAVES VA SYSTEMS OPEN TO ATTACK, WATCHDOG SAYS

Bob Brewin - 05/19/2010

The Veterans Affairs Department runs unsecure Web application servers, uses weak or default passwords to protect its hardware and software, and does not comprehensively monitor connections between its systems and the Internet, according to an internal agency watchdog.

These conditions leave department systems vulnerable to penetration or attack, said VA Assistant Inspector General Belinda Finn in [testimony](#) before the House Veterans Affairs Committee Wednesday.

The 2002 Federal Information Security Management Act requires federal agencies to develop, document and adhere to detailed information security programs. But Finn said VA continues to have significant information security deficiencies.

She said the IG office found several VA database systems used outdated software that could allow unauthorized users to access mission-critical data and alter databases.

Most of VA's 153 hospitals do not segment access to their medical networks, according to Finn. As a result, IG investigators were able to penetrate the networks -- including those hosting medical diagnostic and imaging systems -- from remote locations. <More at: www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20100519_3450.php>

VA UPDATES ONLINE APPLICATION FOR HEALTH BENEFITS

May 5, 2010

WASHINGTON – Veterans will find it easier and faster to apply for their health care benefits now that the Department of Veterans Affairs has updated its online Form 10-10EZ, "Application for Health Benefits."

"VA is committed to tapping into the best that technology has to offer to ensure Veterans receive the benefits they have earned," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We continue to look for new ways to improve access to care and benefits."

This revised online application provides enhanced navigation features that make it easier and faster for Veterans to apply for their health care benefits. This new version also allows Veterans to save a copy of the completed form for their personal records. <More at: www.vawatchdog.org/10/vap10/vap050510-1.htm>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF MAY 11, 2010

This week the Army announced a decrease in activated reservists, while the Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard announced an increase. The net collective result is 491 more reservists activated than last week. At any given time, services may activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 99,843; Navy Reserve, 6,459; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 18,108; Marine Corps Reserve, 6,767; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 834. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 132,011, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found online at <http://www.defense.gov/news/d20100511ngr.pdf>

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE THURSDAY 20 MAY 2010

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (2,619 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,397
WOUNDED US [5/1/10]	31,809
OTHER US CASUALTIES [5/1/10]	≥48,124
DIED OF SELF-INFILCTED WOUNDS [5/1/10]	208
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [5/20/10]	≥ 105,114 – 1,366,350
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS[1/20/10]	≥ 400K–1.432M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2. 5M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (3,148 DAYS)

KILLED US	1080
WOUNDED US [5/1/10]	5,730
OTHER CASUALTIES US [5/1/10]	11,876
DIED OF SELF-INFILCTED WOUNDS [5/1/10]	38
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED COALITION	697
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY[7/4/09]	≥ 11,152
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (4/9/2010)	≥ 8,453
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	46,322
AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$723,743,508,208
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$272,564,324,578

NOTE: SOME NUMBERS DO NOT CHANGE BETWEEN ISSUES BECAUSE UPDATED FIGURES ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT PRESS TIME

* This entry has been changed to "Non-mortal casualties" which includes wounded, non-hostile casualties, and diseased where medical air transport was required. To see detailed demographic data on the casualties go to

<http://siadapp.dior.whs.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm>

** Includes 280 additional contractor casualties reported in international press but not in US official figures

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

NEW AF DINING PROGRAM OPENS DOORS FOR RETIREES

1st Lt. Gina Vaccaro McKeen - Air Force Personnel Center Public Affairs - April 20, 2010

Randolph Air Force Base, Texas (AFRNS) – Thanks to the Air Force's Food Transformation Initiative, retirees at six bases will soon be able to use military food service establishments previously reserved for active-duty Airmen. Retirees will pay the same market price as everyone else, and there will not be an added surcharge on top of the menu price.

The six Air Force bases participating in the initiative are Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, Patrick AFB, Fla., MacDill AFB, Fla., Fairchild AFB, Wash., Little Rock AFB, Ark., and Travis AFB, Calif. <More at: www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123200600>

TRY OUR READING LIST ~ YOU WILL ENJOY IT

We have added two excellent new books to our reading list. Interestingly, one is an autobiographical novel (*The Second Tour* by Terry Rizzuti), and the other is a novelized biography (*I'm Staying With My Boys*, by Jim Proser with Jerry Cutter).

Rizzuti's book is his way of finally dealing with his only tour in Vietnam and it is a corker. It took him 12 years to write it down, but he succeeded and remarkably. The book is being used in behavioral classes at the Air Force Academy, and will be used this fall at the University of Kentucky. Perhaps because it was my war too, I could hardly put this one down.

The Proser/Cutter book is the story of Sgt. John Basilone, USMC, a MOH recipient who was killed on Iwo Jima. His life was chronicled in the recent HBO series "The Pacific". I couldn't put this one down either.

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

ARMY WIDOW HELPS HEAL THE WOUND

Monica Martinez - April 19, 2010

Dressed in black and seated in a folding chair in front of flag-draped coffin, the young woman is heartbroken. Her parents stand behind her with their hands on her shoulders. A soldier kneels before her, presents her a folded American flag and expresses gratitude for her husband's distinguished service in the military.

The official ceremony is over, but the grieving process has just begun.

That's when the [American Widow Project \(AWP\)](#) begins its work. Since 2007, the nonprofit organization, founded by military widow Taryn Davis of San Marcos, Texas, has helped an estimated 400 new and mostly young military widows piece together their shattered lives. And it's helped Mrs. Davis begin to heal as well.

<More at: www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/apr/19/army-widow-helps-heal-the-wound/

ONCE BRANDED A COWARD, HE FIGHTS FOR PTSD VICTIMS

The Associated Press - April 19, 2010

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) -- They call him the angry guy now. Even his friends. And at this moment, on a snowy evening when he should be home, putting his son to bed, Andrew Pogany is, in fact, ticked off.

He sits with a soldier in a law office. The man has brought with him a pile of medical files, and another desperate story: Sent off to war to fight for his country. Diagnosed, now, with post-traumatic stress disorder. Yet the Army, the soldier tells Pogany, is drawing up papers to discharge him in a way that could mean no medical benefits. The soldier confides he thinks about killing himself. All the time, he says. <More at:

www.cbsnews.com/stories/2010/04/19/national/main6411290.shtml

FINALLY THESE STORIES ARE MAKING THE FRONT PAGES

WHEN DADDY'S GONE FOR A WHOLE YEAR

Faye Fiore - Los Angeles Times - April 28, 2010

Reporting from Crofton, Md.: The effects of military deployment on the youngest children are only just beginning to be understood. For Tatum, 4, and her family, it's been a struggle.

Looking back, the first sign of trouble was the day Tatum Baugh, 4, refused to come to the phone. Four feet high and 45 pounds, she always held her own against her two brothers in the battle over who got to talk first when Marine Staff Sgt. Tyrone Baugh called home from Iraq.

That day, though, she wanted no part of her dad. In the months to follow, she would throw a punch at one of her teachers and scissors at another, distinguish herself as a regular violator on Miss Kerr's red light/green light disciplinary chart, and get kicked out of two preschools.

It's been a rough go for a once well-adjusted child whose wish list for a happy life seemed fairly simple: her new bike, macaroni and cheese, shaking hands with Daisy Duck, and her father at home.

<More at: www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-kids-war-20100428,0,2822707.story

>

NOTICE

If at any time you cannot open a link in this newsletter to an article or web page that interests you, please let me know at scook@vuft; I keep a copy of most of the full articles, or can research an alternative route to the information. [Ed.]

VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC. ADVISORY BOARD

CHARLES "CHARLIE" BROWN, LTC USAF (RET)
GOVERNOR MICHAEL DUKAKIS (FRMR USA)
EVELYN (PAT) FOOTE, BG USA (RET)
HON. JOHN GARAMENDI (CA LT. GOVERNOR)
D. O. HELMICK , (FRMR CMSNR CHP ~ FRMR CANG)
ART HICKS, CMSGT USAF (RET)-[TUSKEGEE AIRMAN]

JOSEPH P. HOAR, GEN USMC (RET)
HON. P. N. "PETE" McCLOSKEY, COL USMCR (RET)
ARTHUR "ART" TORRES, (FRMR CA SENATOR)
JAMES L. WILLIAMS, MAJ GEN USMC (RET)

EXECUTIVE BOARD

CHAIR	BOB HANDY
VICE CHAIR	SANDY COOK
SECRETARY	VITALI MOSTOVOJ
TREASURER	RUSS WEED
AT LARGE	RON DEXTER
AT LARGE	GEORGE GIACOPPE
AT LARGE	ROGER HART
AT LARGE	DON KATZ

<u>COMMITTEES</u>	
COMMISSION	GEORGE GIACOPPE
CHAPTERS	ROGER HART
LEGISLATIVE	BOB HANDY
NEWSLETTER	SANDY COOK

Fair Use Notice

This newsletter may contain copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in our efforts to advance understanding of active-duty military and veterans' issues, etc. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

Are you forwarding this newsletter to others? Please let us know.

Want to join us? Please apply for membership at www.vuft.org It's FREE!

EDITOR'S NOTE: I have been asked what guides my selection of articles. In general, I try to stick with articles that deal exclusively with our target group: serving military, veterans, retirees, and their families. I also favor articles that deal with the effect of Legislative or Executive inaction or bad actions that adversely affect our target group. I try not to pick those articles that have already been beaten to death in the regular press, but rather try to bring the reader articles that he or she might not run across in another medium. While we are non-partisan, I do not believe articles critical of government actions to be partisan as long as they are accurate and fair. Criticism, like dissent, is fair. Finally, I screen hundreds of articles for inclusions and for every article I include, I throw five or six away – good articles, but not as important as the ones selected.

I always appreciate contributions, whether it is opinion in Letter-to-the-Editor form, or articles that the reader believes would be good for our readership. Since I get a chance to vent once in awhile in these newsletters, I will certainly consider Op-Ed copy for inclusion. I always welcome reader comment or complaint. [Sandy Cook](mailto:scook@vuft), Editor

If you need to call us, our number is 1.805.530.6417.

The phone is covered by a voice recorder 24 hours a day. We'll get back to you ASAP.