



Veterans Serving Veterans



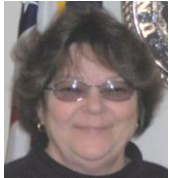
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From the Director: The Greene County Veterans' Service Commission and the staff of the Veterans' Service Office are honored and humbled to serve those who have served our great country in the United States Military.

Our main focus is to ensure that the veterans of Greene County have access to all of the benefits they may be entitled to receive as well as their dependents and that they are treated with respect and dignity.

We hope this newsletter is a helpful tool in providing information concerning veterans' benefits, legislation concerning veterans' issues at the local, state and national level and upcoming events in Greene County. We welcome your comments and feedback and if you have suggestions, please feel free to contact our office.

Once again, thank you for allowing us to serve you.

This newsletter contains the following articles:

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VA Handbook: The latest edition of the Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents Pamphlet can be obtained from the Department of Veterans Affairs online or by mail. It updates the rates for certain federal payments and outlines a variety of programs and benefits for American veterans. Most of the nation's 25 million veterans qualify for some VA benefits, which range from health care to burial in a national cemetery. In addition to health-care and burial benefits, veterans may be eligible for programs providing home loan guaranties, educational assistance, training and vocational rehabilitation, income assistance pensions, life insurance and compensation for service-connected illnesses or disabilities. In some cases, survivors of veterans may also be entitled to benefits. The handbook describes programs for veterans with specific service experiences, such as prisoners of war or those concerned about environmental exposures in Vietnam or in the Gulf War, as well as special benefits for veterans with severe disabilities. In addition to describing benefits provided by VA, it provides an overview of programs and services for veterans provided by other federal agencies. It also includes resources to help veterans access their benefits, with a listing of phone numbers, websites, and a directory of VA facilities throughout the country.

The 2010 publication in English can be downloaded at no cost from VA's Web site at http://www1.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.asp. Order by:

- Mail: U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO), P.O. Box 979050, St. Louis, MO 63197-9000 or Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20401
- Phone: (866) 512-1800 or (202) 512-1800 or Fax: (202) 512-2104 with a credit card.
- Easy Secure Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov

Mojave Desert Veteran Memorial Update 05: A \$125,000 reward is now being offered for information leading to the apprehension and conviction of the individuals who seized the Mojave Desert War Memorial in early MAY. \$100,000 is being offered by a donor to the group Family Security Matters (FamilySecurityMatters.org). The donor is an anonymous U.S. Military wounded veteran who was the recipient of the Silver Star Medal. An additional \$25,000 is being offered by Liberty Institute. Anyone with information about the theft is asked to call (760) 252-6120 or (202) 528-4665 or email tips@familysecuritymatters.org. To contribute, click the Mojave Desert War Memorial Fund at <https://www.familysecuritymatters.org/donate/donate.asp>. Family Security Matters is an organization created to give Americans the tools to become involved citizens and defenders of their homes, families, and communities.

The memorial was stolen from its longtime perch in California's Mojave Desert. It was first erected 75 years ago as a memorial in honor of America's World War I veterans and became known as a symbol to honor all veterans who have served their country. The stolen cross had been the subject of a legal dispute for about a decade after a former park service employee sued on grounds that the Christian religious symbol was unconstitutionally located on government land. Congress reacted by transferring land under the cross to private ownership. In April, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to order the removal of the cross while a lower court decides whether the land transfer was legal. However, the cross was hidden by a wooden cover. A replica of the cross mysteriously appeared on the stolen cross site 20 MAY. The cross apparently was put up during the night and nobody has claimed responsibility. The white, painted replica was made of metal pipes and resembled the 7-foot original, but workers soon determined it was a copy. The paint job was new, it was 6 inches taller, and there were none of the marks of the original cross. Four new holes were drilled to replace bolts cut off by thieves who took the original. Mojave National Preserve spokeswoman Linda Slater said the government remained under court order not to display a cross on the site. And since the replica wasn't the original disputed cross, it had to come down. An exact replica is ready to be installed by Henry Sandoz, who has been the memorial's caretaker since 1984, but only if the original memorial is not recovered and the district court authorizes the land swap with the VFW.

VA Data Breaches Update 44: In the wake of two more data losses at the Department of Veterans Affairs, the House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations brought in officials from the Government Accountability Office, the Inspector General's Office at the VA, and the VA itself. Subcommittee Chairman Harry Mitchell said in his opening statement that "just recently, we have learned of two data breaches: In Texas, 3, 265 veteran's records were compromised when information went missing from a facility conducting lab tests. In a second instance in Texas, a VA contracted company had a laptop stolen compromising the records of 644 veterans. These recent data breaches are proof that the VA still has a long ways to go in ensuring our nation's veterans that their most sensitive information is being safely stored and handled."

VA Assistant Inspector General Belinda Finn in testimony before the House Veterans Affairs Committee 20 MAR said that 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. 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. VA had not identified, managed or monitored a significant number of system connections with external sources, meaning "an attacker could penetrate VA's internal network and systems over an extended period of time without being detected," she said. The department has made progress improving its IT security during the past several years, Finn told committee members, but still needs to complete the majority of 11,000 action plans to mitigate and eliminate security risks.

Roger Baker, VA's chief information officer, testified that the department monitors its core enterprise network 24 hours a day, has deployed 160 intrusion detection systems nationally, and blocks delivery of 16.4 million e-mails a day viewed as spam or containing malware. VA has moved to isolate networks that host X-ray machines and other medical devices from other networks, Baker said. The department's most important ongoing security project is its Visibility to the Desktop program, which Baker said he expects to complete by September. It will allow VA to check the status of all machines in a network from a central location at the enterprise level. "This is a huge security tool for us," he said, "and it means that VA can review and run reports on any of the 333,000 machines on our network. This also gives VA the ability to apply patches which will greatly improve the security of the network.

Burn Pit Toxic Emissions Update 14: The Veterans Affairs Department has issued guidance on how to determine benefits for vets exposed to environmental hazards, including burn pits, in the war zones. The move is significant: The 30-page training letter marks the first time VA has ever addressed potential battlefield exposures and the first time it has issued guidance on benefits for a war-related health issue without specific direction from Congress or the recommendation of large, independent health organizations. That's a huge step for an agency that, for too long, has failed to be a proper advocate for the veterans it is supposed to serve. And it's proof positive that VA Secretary Eric Shinseki is living up to his promise to better look out for the rights and interests of those who serve. According to the

veterans group Disabled American Veterans, more than 500 vets of the present wars suffer from respiratory illnesses, cancers and other serious medical conditions believed to be connected to war-zone burn pits, the giant open-air fires used in the war zones to incinerate trash, medical waste and more. Many more veterans, however, have been exposed to those same fires. For some, symptoms may not emerge for years; others may already be suffering undiagnosed symptoms, unaware that their health problems might be related to environmental exposure during their war tours. It is essential, therefore, that VA follow up its guidance letter with training for claims specialists and outreach to veterans. The agency has made an impressive first step. It must now follow through.

PTSD Update 47: In a 2 MAY article carried in the 15 MAY Bulletin, the Associated Press reported that the Department of Veterans Affairs granted a Gulf War veteran disability benefits for post-traumatic stress in 1996, though the agency was unaware that he had fabricated or exaggerated events cited in his application. The story was based on VA records which were disclosed as part of a criminal case in which the veteran was eventually convicted of manslaughter. Since the story appeared, the veteran, Felton Lamar Gray, has provided additional VA records which indicate that the agency later re-examined Gray's case after learning as a result of the manslaughter proceeding that his application contained unreliable information. The newly available records show that Gray's case was reviewed in 1999 by a VA rating board, which recommended that his benefits be stopped because his testimony about events during his military service had "been discredited." The rating board's findings were submitted to the VA's Compensation and Pension Service, which conducted an administrative review. In 2000, the Compensation and Pension Service overruled the rating board, deciding that even though Gray's original application may not have been accurate, "The evidence in file does not establish clear error in the grant of service connection for PTSD."

Telephone Menu Bypass: Tired of Talking to a Voice Robot? Want to Talk with a Human? Go to www.dialahuman.com for the phone number and menu code/procedure to speak directly to someone. You can select phone number listings in alphabetical or category (Automotive, Banks, Cell, Credit, Finance, Government, ,Hardware, , Insurance, Internet, Mobile, Pharmacy, Products, Shipping, Software, Stores, Telephone, Travel, TV/Satellite/Cable, Utilities) order. There is even a means to add numbers to the list or report a bad number for the benefit of other users.

Reserve Retirement Age Update 21: Rep. Tom Latham (R-IA) has introduced the Reserve Retirement Deployment Credit Correction Act (H.R.4947) to fix current statutory language that bars thousands of Guard and Reserve members from receiving proper credit for their active duty service toward early Reserve retirement. Since 28 JAN 08 activated members of the National Guard and Reserve receive three months' early reserve retirement credit -- normally, age 60 -- for each aggregate active duty service period of 90 days. Congress adopted the 2008 law to acknowledge the unprecedented reliance on the reserve forces for operational duty at home and overseas. Since 911 more than 770,000 reservists have been called up and more than 250,000 have served multiple tours. The glitch is that each 90-day increment of creditable active duty service must be performed within a single fiscal year. Which means a 90-day tour starting in October through June receives full credit, but one that starts in July, August or September gets none - because it crosses the Oct.1 start of the next fiscal year. Similarly, a 12-month tour earns 12 months of Reserve retirement credit only if it starts in the first one or two days of January, April, July, or October. Otherwise, it yields only 9 months of early retirement credit, since one of its quarters will span the start of a new fiscal year. MOAA and many other members of the Military Coalition believe that Congress never intended to impose such arbitrary and unfair credit restrictions on Guard and Reserve personnel. The solution in Rep. Latham's bill is simple and sensible -- provide "rollover" crediting of operational service between fiscal years for all accrued service of at least 90 days. MOAA and our Military Coalition partners strongly support H.R.4947. Members of the military community urged to contact their representative to cosponsor and pass this important legislation. This can be easily accomplished by going to the following website: <http://capwiz.com/moaa/issues/bills/?bill=14876641> and forwarding either a preformatted message or one of your own design to your legislator.

Armed Forces Bonus Program: Each service has their own bonus program tailored to obtain qualified personnel in critical shortage areas. For example, New Army recruits with skills critical to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are eligible for bonuses, educational help and other incentives if they enlist to serve in the Army's most under-manned jobs. Incentives include average bonuses of up to \$20,000 for a six-year active-duty enlistment for the most in-demand occupations. Perks such as student loan repayment and the Army college fund can also be offered for the 14 most critical military occupational specialties (MOSs). Eligible Soldiers may also be offered incentives to pursue a new MOS in some of these career fields. Soldiers can contact their career counselor or retention representative to learn more about in-service jobs. To find complete information on current cash enlistment incentives (signing bonuses) and reenlistment bonuses offered by each of the Armed Forces, refer to

www.military.com/recruiting/bonus-center . There you can access the following elements of the Bonus program:

- Military Bonus Resources
- Military Bonuses Explained
- How to Qualify for Military Bonuses
- How Military Bonuses Are Paid
- The National Call to Service Explained
- Air Force Bonus and Incentive Overview
- Army \$2K Referral Bonus
- Army Bonus and Incentive Overview
- Army Reserve Bonus and Incentive Overview
- Marine Corps Enlistment Bonus Program
- Marine Corps Reserve Re-Enlistment Bonus
- Navy Bonus and Incentives Overview
- Navy Enlistment Bonus Tiers Explained
- Navy Reserve Enlistment Bonus Program
- Army National Guard Bonus and Incentive Overview
- Air National Guard Bonus and Incentive Overview

VA Presumptive VN Vet Diseases Update 04: VA has recognized certain cancers and other health problems as associated with exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides or as associated with military service. Veterans suffering from the following conditions may be eligible for disability compensation and health care benefits:

- **Acute and Subacute Peripheral Neuropathy** - A nervous system condition that causes numbness, tingling, and motor weakness. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of exposure to Agent Orange and resolve within 2 years after the date it began.
- **AL Amyloidosis** - A rare disease caused when an abnormal protein, amyloid, enters tissues or organs.

- **Chloracne** (or Similar Acneform Disease) - A skin condition that occurs soon after exposure to chemicals and looks like common forms of acne seen in teenagers. Under VA's rating regulations, chloracne (or other acneform disease similar to chloracne) must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of exposure to Agent Orange.
- **All chronic B-cell leukemias** including, but not limited to, hairy-cell leukemia and chronic lymphocytic leukemia. - A type of cancer which affects white blood cells.
- **Diabetes Mellitus** (Type 2) - A disease characterized by high blood sugar levels resulting from the body's inability to respond properly to the hormone insulin.
- **Hodgkin's disease** - A malignant lymphoma (cancer) characterized by progressive enlargement of the lymph nodes, liver, and spleen, and by progressive anemia.
- **Ischemic Heart Disease** including, but not limited to, acute, subacute, and old myocardial infarction; atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease including coronary artery disease (including coronary spasm) and coronary bypass surgery; and stable, unstable and Prinzmetal's angina - A disease characterized by a reduced supply of blood to the heart that leads to chest pain.
- **Multiple Myeloma** - A disorder which causes an overproduction of certain proteins from white blood cells.
- **Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma** - A group of cancers that affect the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue.
- **Parkinson's disease** - A motor system condition with symptoms that include a trembling of the hands, imbalance, and loss of facial expression.
- **Porphyria Cutanea Tarda** - A disorder characterized by liver dysfunction and by thinning and blistering of the skin in sun-exposed areas. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of exposure to Agent Orange.
- **Prostate Cancer** - Cancer of the prostate; one of the most common cancers among men.

- **Respiratory Cancers** - Cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea, and bronchus.
- **Soft Tissue Sarcoma** (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or Mesothelioma) - A group of different types of cancers in body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues.

VA has recognized the following birth defects associated with exposure to Agent Orange or service in Vietnam:

- **Spina Bifida** (except Spina Bifida Occulta) - A neural tube birth defect that results from the failure of the bony portion of the spine to close properly in the developing fetus during early pregnancy.
- **Birth Defects** in Children of Women Vietnam Veterans - Covered birth defects include a wide range of conditions associated with women veterans' service in Vietnam.

Additionally, VA has recognized **Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)** diagnosed in Veterans with 90 days or more of continuously active service in the military was caused by their military service.

Unclaimed Money Update 04: News reports that Americans are owed \$33 billion or more in "unclaimed money" conjure up images of lottery-style windfalls. The reality is that if you are able to find something like a long-forgotten bank account, the amount you reap will probably be small. The good news: It's a lot easier than it used to be to seek and find forgotten cash. Windfall or not, it doesn't hurt to poke around on Internet databases. In the past decade, the rise of the Internet has made the process this simple: Enter your name and hit "go" on your state's unclaimed-property website. A list will pop up showing possible matches to be pursued, often with some hint of the amount of money involved. Although states keep up the records, what we're talking about isn't tax-refund money. It's things like bank accounts, stocks, uncashed dividend or payroll checks, traveler's checks, insurance policies, customer overpayments, and contents of safe-deposit boxes. The state databases are the result of consumer-protection laws. A search for "missing money" makes even more sense than usual at a time when many Americans are struggling financially.

CBS's "Early Show" reported 14 MAY that about \$33 billion in unclaimed money resides with state treasuries and other agencies, waiting to be returned. This amounts to \$280 per unclaimed payment, correspondent Rebecca Jarvis said. That may be the average amount, but searches commonly turn up "less than \$100." "Unclaimed property laws have been around since at least the 1940s, but have become much broader and more enforced in the last 15 years," the National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators (NAUPA) says on its website, which represents the state-level programs. If you want to hunt for this kind of buried treasure, here are some tips:

- Two key resources for easy Web-based searching are www.unclaimed.org and www.MissingMoney.com. Both charge no fee, are supported by NAUPA, and draw on state-based lists of unclaimed money. The MissingMoney site, created by NAUPA in 1999, allows one-stop searching of more than half the states plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. Although not all states participate in MissingMoney, the unclaimed.org site will link you to state-level search tools.
- Remember to widen your searches in appropriate ways. You can try variations of your name (before a marriage, for example). You may have rights to some money that was owed to deceased relatives, so you can search with their names as well. Also, it may pay to look in all the states where you or the relatives have lived.
- The NAUPA site offers a page of links to other resources that may be helpful, including Canadian and Swiss sites for unclaimed bank accounts and US federal agencies such as Veterans Affairs and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp.

Some of the government-backed websites also offer tips on avoiding scams. Some private services offer legitimate help in recovering lost assets, while others are trying to get your money unscrupulously. On tax refunds, the Internal Revenue Service often finds you with an amount you're owed. Schedule M for income tax is a case in point: Thousands of Americans are receiving tax refunds based on the "making work pay" tax credit. For those who failed to claim it, the IRS made the correction for them. Finally, all these reminders about lost money point back to a more basic reality: The best way to claim your money is not to lose track of it in the first place.

Have You Heard?

Justice for all.

Let's put the seniors in jail, and the criminals in nursing homes. This way the seniors would:

- Have access to showers, hobbies, and walks.
- Receive unlimited free prescriptions, dental and medical treatment, wheelchairs, etc.
- Receive money instead of paying it out.
- Have constant video monitoring, so they could be helped instantly if they fell or needed assistance.
- Bedding would be washed twice a week, and all clothing would be ironed and returned to them.
- Be checked every 20 minutes by a guard who would and bring their meals and snacks to their cell.
- Have family visits in a suite built for that purpose.
- Have access to a library, weight room, spiritual counseling, pool, and education.
- Be provided, on request, at no charge simple clothing, shoes, slippers, P.J.'s and legal aid.
- Have private, secure rooms for all, with an exercise outdoor yard -- with gardens.
- Be allowed a personal computer, TV, radio, and daily phone calls.
- Have a board of directors to hear complaints, and the guards would have a code of conduct, that would be strictly adhered to.

The criminals would:

- Get cold food, be left all alone, and unsupervised.
- Lights off at 8 p.m., and showers once a week.
- Live in a tiny room and pay \$4,500.00 per month with no hope of ever getting out.



BRONZE STAR MEDAL – WWII VETERANS



After General Omar Bradley became Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, he let it be known that he felt combat infantrymen and combat medics of WWII deserved something more than a simple “job well done.” As a result, U.S. Army regulations were changed so that combat infantrymen and combat medics from WWII who had been awarded the Combat Infantryman’s Badge – (CIB) or the Combat Medic Badge (CMB) and served between December 7, 1941 and September 3, 1945 were also eligible for the Bronze Star Medal.

We are looking for WWII veterans that were awarded the Combat Infantryman’s Badge or the Combat Medic Badge as a result of service in World War II during the dates listed above or their next-of-kin and did not receive the Bronze Star Medal. If you qualify, **please contact the Greene County Veterans’ Service Commission at (937) 562-6020.**

Remember, this award only applies to U.S. Army infantrymen and medics from the World War II era, December 7, 1941 through September 3, 1945.

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