

SOUND OFF!



VOL. VII, NO 3

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

20 NOVEMBER 2011

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

THOUGHTS UPON RE-EMERGING AFTER VETERANS' DAY

Greetings, world!

I have just surfaced from my lair—hiding out from the Veterans' Day nonsense. If you hide deep enough (I was hanging out with Punxsutawney Phil) you don't have to listen to all of the commercial and political hypocritical crap that circulates around what should be a solemn day.

Here is what I did not do:

- I didn't buy a mattress at the “Veterans Day Sale” at the six mattress stores within twenty miles of me.
- I didn't buy either a Japanese or a German car at the “Veterans Day Auto Extravaganza”.
- I didn't stop in and take advantage of the “Veterans Day Garden Sale” at my local big box store and pick up those special Veterans Day items like fertilizer and roach killer.
- I didn't attend a Veterans' Day ceremony with politicians and functionaries.
- I didn't listen to a single political Veterans Day speech on radio or TV—my stomach is too weak for that stuff.
- I didn't take a cruise to the Caribbean or the Greek Isles on a foreign-flagged cruise ship with all of the non-veterans who were taking advantage of the special Veterans Day prices.
- I didn't respond to those who said, “Thank you for your service” and who then assumed that relieved look as if they had done their duty and accomplished something patriotic.
- In fact, I didn't go out at all so I would not have to respond to the people who would look the

other way when they realized that I was a veteran and they were not.

Here is what I did do:

- I remembered those of my acquaintances and friends who did not return, in particular those of my command who didn't make it home.
- I tried to figure out what I could do to help alleviate the pain of all those who have come home, from my war and others, and who are today wounded in body, and especially those who are wounded in spirit.
- I donated to several organizations that provide real help, such as the National Veterans Foundation who scans the streets of Los Angeles nightly for homeless veterans, and Disabled Rights Advocates who have taken on veterans along with all of the other disabled in our nation.
- I spent much of the day contemplating the plight of today's veterans and acknowledging that they probably have it worse than I did in many ways.
- I spent part of the day with an acquaintance who was a different kind of veteran in that he protested the Vietnam war, not to avoid the draft, but because he believed the war—not the draft—to be wrong; and he was willing to be arrested for his beliefs—which he was.
- I spent another part of the day lamenting my country's predilection to use the military as its essential instrument in foreign affairs.
- I did respond to those who I knew were sincere in their wishes.

- Finally, I took a little comfort from the fact that in May we had won a significant victory in the courts over the DVA's shameful treatment of so many of my brothers and sisters, while also being thankful that some made it into the system, despite the obstacles, and were being helped at least a little.

Then on Wednesday, after congratulating myself for surviving another National Hypocrisy Day (we have two—the other is 30 May), I received word late in the day that the Chief Judge of the US Court of Appeals of the Ninth Circuit had taken a vote and had negated our May victory (See VUFT Bulletin #52).

I was not surprised. Judge Alex Kozinsky had clearly stated in his dissent in our May victory that he considered the majority ruling wrong by dissenting “in large part”.

Please don't get me wrong. Memorials are important, but they are not enough.

Thanks is important, but it is not enough.

Even parades and dinners in honor of veterans are important, but they are not enough.

It is not that we veterans want more than our just due. It is not that we somehow want our fellow citizens to give us more than they and their representatives have already enacted into law.

It is simply that we want what has already been granted to us—without hesitation—without delay—without adverse process—without reluctance on the part of the bureaucrats or our fellow citizens.

Now I don't believe that either of the current open wars—as they have played out—are justified.

The original hot pursuit to apprehend and kill extract Osama bin Laden and his cohorts who were being protected by the Taliban government of Afghanistan was undoubtedly legitimate.

The invasion of Iraq was trumped up out of the minds of those in charge of our nation at the time in an act that defied their pledge to protect us. Their “March to Folly” has hardly been ameliorated by the subsequent administration.

If you don't believe that, then ask yourself how are we better off in this world today than we were then? What has happened that has justified the deaths of 6,300+ Americans, 1200+ of our allies, and who knows how many thousands of Iraqis and Afghanis.

It is a self-answering question—we are not!

My point is not to berate the acts of either administration in the past as a political statement, rather it is to ask the veterans' essential question—why did my friends die?

More importantly, why did they have to die when other options were clearly available but not pursued?

The story that is always framed around veterans' holidays is about bravery, honor, sacrifice—but lately it is a story tinged with fear for the nation's safety, and it is this latter story that has taken precedent.

If the fear is essential, beyond the normal caution we all should feel in a complicated world, then what has happened to lessen that fear. Does having Osama bin Laden replaced by a multinational movement committed to his cause lessen our fears? Does bankrupting the nation lessen our fears?

And why are we afraid anyway? Are the Chinese building troop ships to invade the West Coast? Is Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula purchasing long-range bombers?

What current threat is there that cannot be handled by good police work (with the occasional interference of the dark side of the CIA)? I thought that Americans were supposed to be tough; that we didn't succumb to irrational fears.

Why do we need to make so many more veterans when there is no threat of war? Why can't we see the very real threats that are out there, realistically?

Why must more—Americans or others—die to preserve the mistakes that we seem to be mired in?

And why do my fellow citizens want my brothers and sisters to keep fighting somewhere? Does the mere fact that we have forces fighting somewhere somehow make the rest of my fellow citizens feel safer?

Can they keep on demanding that we serve and die, and then slough off their responsibility by saying “Thank you for your service?”

Can our politicians keep on demanding that we serve and die and then feel that they have done their duty by given a speech once or twice a year calling everyone in uniform “heroes”. (We know the difference even if they don't, don't we?).

Well in my book they are heroes, but not for the reasons you might think.

They are heroes most often because they serve knowing that when they come home they will face an uncaring nation that does not see the delay in helping them in the aftermath as being an important issue at all.

Certainly far less important than their latest favorite TV show, or Saturday's football game.

This wonderful nation of ours can send them off on multiple deployments; foster a professional atmosphere that is destroying marriages, families, communities, and individuals; turn their backs on them when they return, or at best observe them with indifference; and then finally continue the nonsense of preparing to use military force as a conventional means of addressing (never solving) complex international relations.

Jingoism won't fix this! Holiday speeches won't repair the damage! Cheap mattresses, cheap cars, and cheap sentiments won't return our veterans to society whole and well.

The politicians, pundits, and professional fear mongers tell us that we have to continue to spend more than the entire world on defense—from what? Why do we need to spend a trillion dollars on defense? (See the table at end of this editorial).

Are the threats so great? Fine. If they are, please explain them to me.

Weren't we all, as veterans, taught to assess the threat first and then apply only those methods that would lead to success—victory if you will—and to apply them only in the strength and to the extent necessary to achieve a real goal.

Has the threat been determined to be a trillion dollar a year threat? Prove it to me!

If politicians believe it to be true, and if they have done the fundamental analysis of that threat that an ordinary squad leader has to perform every day in combat, then they should have no trouble convincing us of the need.

Meanwhile, as they perform their analysis, maybe they could include an estimate of the number of jobs that could be made available to veterans and others by reducing that defense budget by 10% or 20% or more.

If we just got veterans jobs repairing our decaying transportation infrastructure, my estimate, based on the 2009 Federal Highway Administration figures, is that the 27,822 jobs would be created would be per billion spent. Thus a 10% reduction in defense spending which was in turn spent on something we really need could generate almost 3 million jobs. Not bad, huh?

We veterans are practical politicians also, so we realize that your defense industry contributors wouldn't like it. So why not convince them to calve off a transportation infrastructure repair subsidiary? They could still make obscene profits and they could still give you all big donations, but the nation might get something useful for a change instead of just another few thousand weapons.

Stop fearing! There is nothing out there against which we must defend to the extent that you have been led to believe.

Stop fearing the monsters under the bed and the possibility of not getting reelected and start imagining the real possibilities of America. Let veterans share in that imagination!

In the words of a revered modern philosopher (ask your kids):

"I think the willfully unimaginative see more monsters, they are often more afraid. What is more, those who choose not to empathize enable real monsters. For without ever committing an act of outright evil ourselves, we collude through our own apathy."

J. K. Rowling

Harvard Commencement Address, 2008

BUDGET BREAKDOWN FOR 2012

Defense-related expenditure	2012 Budget request & Mandatory spending	Calculation
DOD spending	\$707.5 billion	Base budget + "Overseas Contingency Operations"
FBI counter-terrorism	\$2.7 billion	At least one-third FBI budget.
International Affairs	\$5.6–\$63.0 billion	At minimum, foreign arms sales. At most, entire State budget
Energy Department, defense-related	\$21.8 billion	
Veterans Affairs	\$70.0 billion	
Homeland Security	\$46.9 billion	
NASA, satellites	\$3.5–\$8.7 billion	Between 20% and 50% of NASA's total budget
Veterans pensions	\$54.6 billion	
Other defense-related mandatory spending	\$8.2 billion	
Interest on debt incurred in past wars	\$109.1–\$431.5 billion	Between 23% and 91% of total interest
Total Spending	\$1.030–\$1.415 trillion	

REVEILLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two organizations: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program www.vetsprobono.net/; National Organization of Veterans' Advocates (NOVA) www.vetadvocates.com .

Also, United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims "Public List of Practitioners" are members of the court's bar <http://www.uscourts.cavc.gov/practitioners/>

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

STATUS OF OUR CLASS ACTION LAWSUIT

DID SOMEONE FROM THE VA COACH THE COURT ON THE "DELAY UNTIL THEY DIE" PROCEDURE? We believe that the Ninth Circuit panel correctly resolved all of the issues, even those on which they sided with the defendant, and that a rehearing is not necessary.

We reported the VA's claim that we have no constitutional right to our benefits. I am no lawyer nor am I a Constitutional scholar, but it just makes sense to me as a citizen that all citizens have a constitutional right to the protections and the benefits of all US laws. How can veterans be singled out as being different? Tell me, am I being naïve? Does one have to have a law degree to understand his or her status as a citizen? Should we have to have such training? Is that what we have come to, government by hidden meanings and complex understandings of occult doctrines?

The VA also claims "sovereign immunity", a concept that most executive branches enlist from time to time to avoid responding to the legal challenges from us as citizens. I thought that we got rid of the "sovereign" and his right never to be challenged by "ordinary persons" in that war we had from 1775 to 1781. In fact, we got rid of the concept of "ordinary persons" and "extraordinary persons". How does "sovereign immunity" jibe with the "right of the people to peaceably assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances"? Again, am I being naïve when I question this? Would someone please tell me where I am wrong? [Ed.]

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.

05/20/11 The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled in part in our favor, specifically on the Constitutional issues in our claim.

27 May Case Management Conference before the original trial judge, Judge Conti, in Federal District Court in San Francisco.

6/20/11 Waiting for Judge Conti to call out the next step

7/20/11 Still waiting. The VA has requested a hearing by the full court.

8/0/11 VA appeals to undo everything that has transpired over the last three years.

9/30/11 Still waiting

10/20/11 Still still waiting

11/16/11 Back to square 2—the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. We have to argue that veterans DO have a right to their benefits, and that they have a right to receive them in a timely manner..

WE WILL KEEP YOU POSTED

Here is a link to the legal documents on the lawsuit. www.veteransptsdclassaction.org/

BE A MEMBER If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to www.vuft.org/membership.html 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. at www.vuft.org/membership.html

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 at www.vuft.org/donate.html. 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.

The case is moving on and we must support our legal team. Please dig down and help us if you can. Any amount helps.

P L E A S E D O N A T E!

www.vuft.org/donate.html

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

AN OUTSTANDING EXCEPTION TO MY COMPLAINT

How does Sears treat its employees who are called up for military duty? By law, they are required to hold their jobs open and available, but nothing more. Usually, people take a big pay cut and lose benefits as a result of being called up for active duty. Sears is voluntarily paying the difference in salaries and maintaining all benefits, including medical insurance and bonus programs, for all called up reservist employees for up to two years.

I submit that Sears is an exemplary corporate citizen and should be recognized for its contribution. I suggest we all shop at Sears at least once, and be sure to find a manager to tell them why we are there so the company gets the positive reinforcement & feedback it well deserves.

Pass it on. Mary Rose [verified at www.snopes.com/politics/military/sears.asp]

[Mary Rose does not work for Sears—she contacted Sears to verify that the policy is still in place—here is part of their answer:

"Sears regards service to our country as one of greatest sacrifices our young men and women can make. We are happy to do our part to lessen the burden they bear at this time. Bill Thorn - Sears Customer Care"]

A LETTER FROM A MEMBER

I'm a veteran. I was in the Army, infantry, Viet Nam. I think Veterans Day has been subverted from it's original intent and is now just one more tool that is used to build the myth that the solution to conflict is military action.

I feel that the glorification of the military is so pervasive it has become part of our culture. "The few the proud . . .", "An army of one", highways dedicated to military units and organizations, fighter jet fly overs, POW-MIA flags, basketball games on war ships - the list goes on and on. What is seldom said is that military action is death and destruction. Therefore, all of these subtly add to the myth and glorify the act of killing.

The eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918 was when the killing stopped in WWI. In November of 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of Armistice Day. He said this day should be used by America "to show her sympathy with peace and justice in the councils of the nations". On June 4, 1926 Congress passed a resolution that said we should observe the day "with appropriate ceremonies of friendly relations with all other peoples." ...

Arnold Stieber ~ VN 1970-71

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

PROVISIONS OF OBAMA'S JOBS PLAN PASS SENATE

Lisa Mascaro - Los Angeles Times - November 11, 2011

WASHINGTON -- The Senate on Thursday overwhelmingly approved provisions of President Barack Obama's jobs plan that found rare bipartisan appeal, including a proposal to give companies tax credits for hiring unemployed veterans.

... The 94-1 vote on the eve of Veterans Day comes at a time when the jobless rate among Iraq and Afghanistan vets is in the double digits, higher than the 9 percent national unemployment rate.

Mr. Obama's proposal was bolstered by attaching a popular House-passed bill that would provide job training for vets.

<More at: www.post-gazette.com/pg/11315/1189089-84.stm#ixzz1dbv8NQMU>

THE EXPRESSION "PISSING INTO THE WIND" COMES TO MIND

PASSAGE OF VETS JOBS BILL DOESN'T MEAN IMMEDIATE CHANGES

Leo Shane III - Stars and Stripes - November 18, 2011

WASHINGTON -- The House overwhelmingly passed legislation Wednesday offering a host of new job training programs for veterans and offering employers up to \$9,600 for hiring them. But it could take months before veterans see any benefits.

Businesses can collect up to \$5,600 in tax credits for hiring an unemployed veteran, and up to \$9,600 for hiring a wounded veteran. In August, White House officials estimated that move alone could help create more than 25,000 jobs for veterans in the next few years.

Most of the bill's provisions will take months to implement. But House and Senate staffers said that's because the items are addressing the root of the unemployment issues, looking for long-term solutions to keep veterans working.

The jobs measure includes an extra year's worth of GI Bill benefits for 100,000 unemployed veterans, to retrain them for jobs in "high-demand sectors." That amounts to more than \$1,300 a month for classes, certification and living expenses.

But that retraining program will only be open to 45,000 veterans next year, and won't start until July at the earliest. The program is open to veterans of all ages, and Department of Veterans Affairs officials are expected to start taking applications soon.

Disabled veterans who have exhausted their unemployment benefits will also be eligible to receive another year of vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits, but that also won't start until next summer.

According to Bureau of Labor Statistics data, last month more than 850,000 veterans nationwide were looking for work, and nearly 30 percent of them were veterans from the post-9/11 era

<More at: www.stripes.com/news/passage-of-vet-jobs-bill-doesn-t-mean-immediate-changes-1.161032>

KEY SENATORS SUPPORT BOOST IN TRICARE FEES

By Thomas Philpott, Syndicated Columnist October 22, 2011

Sens. Carl Levin, D-Mich., chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and John McCain of Arizona, its ranking Republican, endorse President Barack Obama's call to establish next year a \$200 enrollment fee on Tricare for Life, the prized supplement to Medicare for 2.1 million elderly military retirees, their spouses and survivors.

These influential senators made their views known on Tricare changes and other defense budget issues in separate letters to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction. The so-called "super committee" of 12 lawmakers faces a Nov. 23 deadline to recommend to the full Congress a plan to trim the nation's massive debt by \$1.5 trillion over a decade.

<More at: www.heraldnet.com/article/20111022/BIZ/710229901>

TWO VERY USEFUL LEGISLATIVE WEBSITES FOR VETERANS

<http://capwiz.com/dav/issues/> and http://www.votesmart.org/official_congress.php

U.S. WELCOMES AFGHAN APPROVAL OF LONG-TERM MILITARY PRESENCE

Yaroslav Trofimov - NOVEMBER 20, 2011

KABUL—The U.S. said it was "heartened" by Saturday's decision of the Loya Jirga, a four-day gathering of some 2,000 Afghan representatives, to endorse President Hamid Karzai's plan for an agreement on a long-term American military presence, even though the meeting set several conditions that could end up torpedoing the deal.

... The list of conditions adopted by the Loya Jirga, while reiterating Mr. Karzai's demands (that the U.S.-led coalition forces immediately cease night raids, home searches and detentions of insurgent suspects) also included a requirement that American citizens have no immunity for committing crimes and "should be tried inside Afghanistan in accordance with the country's laws." <More at: <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203710704577050000162177144.html>>

MILITARY DROPPING ANTI-MALARIA DRUG

Thomas Watkins - Associated Press - November 19, 2011

LOS ANGELES—Almost four decades after inventing a potent anti-malarial drug, the U.S. Army has pushed it to the back of its medicine cabinet. The dramatic about-face follows years of complaints and concerns that mefloquine caused psychiatric and physical side effects even as it was used around the globe as a front-line defense against the mosquito-borne disease that kills about 800,000 people a year.

"Mefloquine is a zombie drug. It's dangerous, and it should have been killed off years ago," said Dr. Remington Nevin, an epidemiologist and Army major who has published research that he said showed the drug can be potentially toxic to the brain. He believes the drop in prescriptions is a tacit acknowledgement of the drug's serious problems.

Over the past three years, the Army slashed by almost 75 percent the amount of mefloquine it prescribes, even as it sent thousands more soldiers to malaria-prone Afghanistan. <More at: www.sfexaminer.com/news/health/2011/11/military-dropping-anti-malaria-drug>

LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE "ALL-VOLUNTEER" SERVICES

FBI SAYS GANGS INFILTRATING THE US MILITARY

Bryant Jordan - Military.com - October 24, 2011

The U.S. military is facing a "significant criminal threat" from gangs, including prison and biker gangs, whose members have found their way into the ranks, according to an FBI-led investigation. Some gang members get into the military to escape the streets, but then end up reconnecting once in, while others target the services specifically for the combat and weapons training, the National Gang Intelligence Center says in a just-released 2011 National Gang Threat Assessment/Emerging Trends. <More at: www.military.com/news/article/2011/fbi-says-gangs-infiltrating-the-us-military.htm>

VIOLENCE MORE COMMON IN KIDS OF COMBAT VETERANS

Mike Stobbe - AP Medical Writer - 10/31/2011

ATLANTA — A new study suggests that when parents are deployed in the military, their children are more than twice as likely to carry a weapon, join a gang or be involved in fights. And that includes the daughters.

"This study raises serious concerns about an under-recognized consequence of war," said Sarah Reed, who led the research of military families in Washington state.

<More at: www.msnbc.msn.com/id/45105652/ns/health-childrens_health/t/violence-more-common-kids-combat-veterans/#>

SOLDIER GETS LIFE IN AFGHAN KILLINGS

Gene Johnson - Associated Press - November 11, 2011

JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD, Wash. -- A military jury sentenced an Afghan war veteran to life in prison after the Army staff sergeant was convicted of murder, conspiracy and other charges in the deaths of civilians, in one of the most gruesome cases to emerge from the conflict. Staff Sgt. Calvin Gibbs, of Billings, Mont., was accused of exhorting his bored underlings to slaughter three Afghan civilians for sport. The jury for the court-martial at Joint Base Lewis-McChord south of Seattle sentenced Gibbs Thursday to life in prison, but he will be eligible for parole in less than nine years. <More at: www.military.com/news/article/soldier-gets-life-in-afghan-killings.html>

COULD THIS BE PART OF THE REASON THEY HAVE TO UP TRICARE FEES?

FRAUDULENT DEFENSE CONTRACTORS PAID \$1 TRILLION

October 20, 2011

Hundreds of defense contractors that defrauded the U.S. military received more than \$1.1 trillion in Pentagon contracts during the past decade, according to a Department of Defense report prepared for Sen. Bernie Sanders.

... The report detailed how the Pentagon paid \$573.7 billion during the past 10 years to more than 300 contractors involved in civil fraud cases that resulted in judgments of more than \$1 million, \$398 billion of which was awarded after settlement or judgment for fraud. When awards to "parent" companies are counted, the Pentagon paid more than \$1.1 trillion during the past 10 years just to the 37 top companies engaged in fraud. Another \$255 million went to 54 contractors convicted of hard-core criminal fraud in the same period. Of that total, \$33 million was paid to companies after they were convicted of crimes. Some of the nation's biggest defense contractors were involved.

[Read the Pentagon report »](#) -- [Read the tables »](#) -- [Read a summary of the report on contracting fraud »](#)

<More at: <http://sanders.senate.gov/newsroom/news/?id=57672667-8958-44D9-936E-074DE29F9BE3>>

MAYBE HE CAN GET ON THAT PREFERRED LIST IN THE ARTICLE ABOVE??

VETERAN SAYS VA REFUSES TO GIVE WOUNDED WARRIORS PREFERENCE WHEN GRANTING CONTRACTS

October 23, 2011

A government investigation is seeking a response from the Department of Veterans Affairs after the agency allegedly failed to follow a law that would have it set aside work for qualifying firms owned by disabled veterans. The U.S. Government Accountability Office began its probe after a complaint filed by former Marine Rodney Marshall, who runs a commercial supply business in Portage, Mich., after returning from the Persian Gulf War with injuries to his knees, hips and back, according to a report by McClatchy Newspapers.

Rodney, 40, filed his protest with GAO after becoming frustrated by not being able to seek a pair of VA supply contracts because the bidding was restricted. Marshall says the VA failed to follow a 2006 law – known as “Veterans First” – that requires the agency to set aside work for qualifying, service-disabled, veteran-owned firms.

<More at: www.foxnews.com/us/2011/10/23/veteran-says-va-refuses-to-give-wounded-warriors-preference-when-granting/#ixzz1ddOKMFlg>

WHO CARES WHAT VETERANS THINK?

SEPULVEDA VA HOUSING ADVANCES DESPITE OPPOSITION

Dana Bartholomew - Daily News Staff Writer - 10/31/2011

Despite seven years of community opposition, developers plan to soon break ground at the Sepulveda VA on apartments for homeless and disabled veterans. In January, builders plan to convert two vacant medical buildings at the Sepulveda Veterans Affairs in North Hills into 149 studio units for veterans and support staff.

The \$48-million complex -- developed and run by two nonprofit groups through a no-bid, 75-year lease -- has been mired in controversy from the start. Opponents include local and state veterans groups, San Fernando Valley elected officials and 15 neighborhood councils who fear housing would further erode VA health care services. "I still oppose the project because there was no competitive bidding, and they appear to have breached their lease," said Rep. Brad Sherman, D-Sherman Oaks, whose district includes the VA.

... The \$48-million conversion of two asbestos-filled buildings into 149 apartments will end up costing \$322,000 a studio. At that rate, it would cost Uncle Sam \$6.5 billion to house all of L.A.'s homeless veterans. Critics say VA Sepulveda could better serve thousands of returning veterans by returning its walk-in clinic to a full-fledged hospital. They say that federal fair housing laws prohibit the VA and its contractors from renting to veterans only, according to the lease. They say a lawsuit could easily force the VA to open the Sepulveda VA up to nonveterans. And that the VA maintains the right to give away its land to vendors, which could lead to a break-up of the North Hills campus. <More at: www.dailynews.com/ci_19229705>

16% OF THE ARMY'S MANPOWER CAN'T BE DEPLOYED

90,000 SOLDIERS MEDICALLY UNFIT FOR COMBAT

Gregg Zoroya - USA Today - Nov 3, 2011

Nearly 90,000 soldiers are either unfit for combat with health restrictions or are otherwise unavailable for combat, according to data released to USA Today.

Although the Army said it can fill combat brigades heading to Afghanistan with healthy soldiers — some rushed in at the last minute as units head overseas — the growing list of ill, injured or wounded is making the job tougher, military officials said.

<More at: <http://militarytimes.com/news/2011/11/usat-army-90000-soldiers-unfit-combat-110311w/>>

ATHEISTS IN U.S. MILITARY SEEK OFFICIAL RECOGNITION

Matthew Hay Brown - Baltimore Sun - November 14, 2011

Capt. Ryan Jean wanted to perform well on the Army's psychological evaluation. But he also wanted to answer the questions honestly. So when he was asked whether he believed his life had a lasting purpose, Jean, an atheist, saw no choice but to say no. Those and other responses, Jean says, won him a trip to see the post chaplain, who berated him for his lack of faith.

"He basically told me that if I don't get right with God, then I'm worthless," said Jean, now an intelligence officer at Ft. Meade. "That if I don't believe in Jesus, why am I in uniform, because this is God's army, and that I should resign my commission in order to stop disgracing the military."

Jean says experiences such as that confrontation three years ago, when he was serving at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait, have spurred him to seek Army recognition as a humanist lay leader — on par with Christian, Jewish and Muslim lay leaders who help military chaplains minister to the troops. <More at: <http://latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-military-atheists-20111114.0.7258479.story>>

TRICARE DATA THEFT

Bob Brewin 11/04/11

TRICARE contractor SAIC got slammed on Oct. 26 with a class action lawsuit seeking as much as \$4.9 billion in damages after health-care beneficiaries' records were stolen from the car of an employee in San Antonio.

<More at: http://whatsbrewin.nextgov.com/2011/11/saic_hit_with_49b_lawsuit_over_tricare_data_theft.php>

TO THE COLORS – GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
Every Sunday	1300-1600	Wilson & San Vicente Blvds. NE Corner, Los Angeles, CA	Save Our Veterans Land	Veterans Revolution	
12/6-12/11		Marco Island Veterans Community Park Marco Island, FL	The Wall That Heals	Marco Island Veterans Memorial Fund	

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

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

UNCERTAINTY ABOUT SKILLS, INJURIES DAMPENS HIRING OF VETERANS

By Olga Khazan 11/11/2011

It's rare for the Senate to agree on something these days, but Thursday's tax credit amendment for companies that hire veterans garnered unanimous support. If it works, it could be a godsend for Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, who have a significantly higher unemployment rate than the rest of the population.

Nationwide, 12.1 percent of veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars are out of work, compared with 9 percent of the general population. So what's keeping these recent veterans out of civilian jobs?

First, there are the countless environmental factors: After serving, many vets return to their hometowns, and those areas may or may not have robust job markets. Many also return with debilitating injuries that might delay their job searches for months, and few enlisted service members have bachelor's degrees upon re-entering the workforce.

But there is also substantial amount of uncertainty among prospective employers. In a 2010 Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) survey, 60 percent of employers responded that "translating military skills to civilian job experience is a major challenge" when it comes to hiring veterans.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/on-small-business/post/uncertainty-about-skills-injuries-dampens-hiring-of-veterans/2011/11/11/>

MILITARY HEALTH-CARE REFORM LEAVES WOUNDED WARRIORS ENTANGLED IN MORE RED TAPE

Steve Vogel - November 18, 2011

Reforms meant to streamline military health care for severely wounded service members have in many cases worsened the bureaucracy, causing duplication, confusion and turf battles, according to families, congressional overseers and advocates for veterans.

After reports that troops recovering from catastrophic wounds at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and other facilities were getting lost in the military's system, a high-profile commission recommended in 2007 that every severely wounded service member be assigned a federal recovery coordinator. This "single point of contact" was to cut red tape and shepherd the wounded through recovery and the transition back to military duty or civilian life.

But at least a dozen Defense Department and Department of Veterans Affairs programs have sprung up to coordinate the care. The proliferation of programs and case managers, intended to better manage health care, "may actually have the opposite effect," Debra Draper, health-care director for the Government Accountability Office, told a congressional committee last month. A Rand Corp. study released last week found more than 200 programs sponsored or funded by the Defense Department to help troops with psychological health and traumatic brain injury, leading to significant duplication within and across branches of service.

The bureaucratic problems for the severely wounded can range from additional paperwork to conflicting guidance. In one situation, five case managers were working on the same life insurance problem for one person, according to a GAO report.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2011/11/09/giQAUMEIZN_story.html>

VA MENTAL HEALTH CASELOAD CLIMBING: NEW REPORT

Lisa Chedekel - Oct 26, 2011

The number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans receiving mental health care from the VA has quadrupled since 2006, with PTSD and depression the most common diagnoses, a new report by the federal Government Accountability Office shows.

The report shows that over a five-year period from 2006 through 2010, more than 2 million veterans received mental health care from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Iraq and Afghanistan veterans accounted for an increasing proportion of those veterans—from 4 percent in the 2006 fiscal year, to 12 percent in 2010. That percentage continues to grow, veterans' advocates say. In 2010, more than 139,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans received mental health care from the VA—up from just 34,500 in 2006. <More at: www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/health/entry/va_mental_health_caseload_climbing_new_report/id_41504>

VETS SAY THEY DIDN'T RECEIVE GOVERNMENT HELP THEY NEEDED

Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY - 11/8/2011

More than half of all veterans who describe themselves as "seriously" hurt or wounded from combat or peacetime service say the government did not give them "all the help ... it should," according to a Pew Research Center survey released today.

In comparison with ex-servicemembers who were either unharmed or suffered lesser injuries, badly hurt veterans report more difficulty readjusting to civilian life, wrestling with mental illness or holding jobs. Twenty-eight percent of seriously injured veterans work full-time; half are jobless.

Within that group of seriously injured veterans, those who served after 9/11 are more likely than veterans from earlier eras to be dissatisfied with their lives and assistance. <More at: www.usatoday.com/news/military/story/2011-11-08/injured-veterans-survey/51124584/1>

YOU ARE A SCREW-UP, BUT THEY ONLY “MISCOMMUNICATE”

TAMPA VA HOSPITAL APOLOGIZES TO VETERANS FOR 'MISCOMMUNICATION'

William R. Levesque - Times Staff Writer - October 24, 2011

TAMPA — The James A. Haley VA Medical Center has apologized to four men quoted in a recent *St. Petersburg Times* article about difficulties they faced in a program that pays for medical care outside the facility, a hospital spokeswoman said.

This program, called fee basis, allows veterans to get medical care outside the Department of Veterans Affairs if the agency is too busy, doesn't offer a service or in case of some emergencies.

Veterans interviewed by the *Times* for the Oct. 16 story complained appointments with non-VA doctors have been canceled because of Haley's budget problems. Some noted instances in which Haley refused to pay for outside medical care.

"We have contacted those veterans who contacted you and apologized for any miscommunication that our veterans received," Haley spokeswoman Carolyn Clark said. But interviews with most of the veterans or their families indicate the VA has not offered to remedy any of the problems they discussed in the story.

<More at: www.tampabay.com/news/military/veterans/tampa-va-hospital-apologizes-to-veterans-for-miscommunication/1198245>

LAG IN MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOUND AT A THIRD OF VA HOSPITALS

Gregg Zoroya and Paul Monies, USA TODAY - 11/10/11

Veterans seeking mental health therapy at nearly a third of the Department of Veterans Affairs' hospitals must wait longer than the VA's goal of seeing patients in 14 days or less, according to a USA TODAY analysis of internal VA data. More Iraq War veterans are seeking mental health care. Department of Veterans Affairs clinicians have raised concerns about limited resources to help them.

The findings are in contrast to the VA's assertion that fewer than 5% of patients must wait too long to begin therapy with psychiatrists or psychologists.

The USA TODAY analysis follows concerns raised by scores of VA clinicians in an August survey

[<http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/opinion/editorial/VAMentalHealth.pdf>] that the VA does not have the resources to handle growing numbers of veterans with mental health issues. The survey showed that it takes about three to six weeks for veterans to begin mental health treatment. "These numbers show that ... in many communities, the VA is unable to give our veterans the timely access to health care they deserve," says Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., chair of the Senate VA Committee, who plans a Nov. 30 hearing on the issue.

The number of veterans seeking mental health care has increased since 2006 from nearly 900,000 to 1.2 million last year, according to a Government Accountability Office study. The number of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in therapy increased from 35,000 in 2006 to 139,000 in 2010. During that time, the VA nearly doubled mental health staffing to 21,000.

<More at: www.usatoday.com/news/military/story/2011-11-09/veterans-mental-health-care/51143216/1>

MORE IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN WAR VETERANS WIND UP HOMELESS

By Gregg Zoroya, USA TODAY

Updated 10/28/2011 12:58 PM

As wars in Iraq and Afghanistan wind down, federal officials are seeing a growing number of young veterans on the street, according to a joint homeless study by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and Department of Veterans Affairs released Friday. About 13,000 of the nation's homeless in 2010 were ex-servicemembers between ages 18 and 30, a disproportionately large number of the nation's overall homeless veteran population, the study says.

"These findings are particularly concerning given the anticipated number of new veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq," the study concludes.

The Army expects to cut its forces by about 50,000 over the next year or two after pulling troops out of Iraq by December and continuing a drawdown of forces in Afghanistan. The HUD-VA study noted that while young veterans make up only about 5% of the nation's veteran population, they constitute nearly 9% of all former servicemembers who are homeless.

<More at: www.usatoday.com/news/nation/story/2011-10-28/iraq-afghanistan-veterans-homeless/50976338/1>

HOMELESS VETERANS MORE LIKELY TO STAY HOMELESS, NEW SURVEY FINDS

November 9, 2011

Veterans who become homeless tend to stay homeless for longer periods than nonveterans, according to a new national survey by a nonprofit advocacy group. They're also more likely to suffer from serious health conditions leading to death.

The survey of 23,000 homeless people was released Tuesday by the 100,000 Homes Campaign, a nonprofit coalition of local community groups combating homelessness. The survey found that, although veterans make up 9% of the country's population, they accounted for more than 15% of the homeless people surveyed.

"We've known that veterans were particularly at risk to become homeless, but now we know that they're more likely to stay homeless and face life-threatening conditions on the street," the campaign's director, Becky Kanis, said in a statement. "The data paint a picture of an extremely at-risk population that is unlikely to get off the streets without targeted help."

<More at: <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/nationnow/2011/11/homeless-veterans-more-likely-to-stay-homeless-new-survey-finds.html>>

A JOB FOR EVERY VETERAN: LET'S GIVE THEM THE HOMECOMING THEY REALLY DESERVE

10/21/11

People around the world breathed a sigh of relief today as President Obama announced that he would keep his campaign commitment to wind down the war in Iraq. And families across our country are overjoyed that they will have their loved ones home for the holidays.

Unfortunately for many of our brave veterans, they won't be getting the sort of homecoming they've earned. More than 11% of veterans of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are unemployed. That number is tragic and shameful for us as a nation. And I'm afraid that number will only grow, with tens of thousands returning home to a terrible economy.

That is, unless we do something about it.

We should employ 100% of our veterans -- let me repeat that, 100% of our veterans. Every single person who has served overseas in the last decade deserves a chance at meaningful employment for the next decade. What better homecoming for our brave men and women than to make sure each and every one of them can provide for their family?

<More at: www.huffingtonpost.com/van-jones/iraq-veteran-unemployment-b_1025912.html>

FOR SOME FAMILIES, MARINES FALL SHORT ON FRIENDLY-FIRE PROTOCOL

Greg Jaffe – November 2

The memorial service for Lance Cpl. Benjamin W. Schmidt was a major event in San Antonio. More than 500 mourners packed the Oak Hills Church to honor the Marine who was killed in combat in Afghanistan on Oct. 6. Schmidt's father, David Schmidt, is the team doctor for the San Antonio Spurs, and several of the team's stars mourned with the family.

"I literally watched Benjamin grow up," basketball Hall of Famer David Robinson said at the service.

What the family and the mourners did not know was that Schmidt, 24, had been accidentally killed by another Marine.

... An October 2007 investigation of 91 Marine friendly-fire incidents by the Corps' inspector general found only four instances in which the Marines notified family members in a "timely manner" of investigations. Six of the 91 incidents resulted in fatalities, and in the other cases, Marines were wounded.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/national/national-security/for-some-families-marines-fall-short-on-friendly-fire-protocol/2011/11/01/gIQAgJ1uqM_story.html>

WE NEED MANY MORE OF THESE

VETERANS COURT TO OFFER JAIL ALTERNATIVE FOR SOME

Marga K. Cooley - Lompoc Record - November 20, 2011

Some veterans in northern Santa Barbara County who find themselves on the wrong side of the law as a result of a non-violent, non-serious crime or substance abuse will soon have the option of getting help instead of spending time in jail.

Veterans Treatment Court, a collaborative effort by the District Attorney's Office, Public Defender, Superior Court, county Probation and Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Services, will debut Wednesday in Department 3 at Santa Maria Superior Court. <More at: [**EVEN AFTER 'DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL,' GAY SOLDIERS REMAIN UNEQUAL IN THE MILITARY**](http://www.lompocrecord.com/news/local/7e671f64-134b-11e1-8e7b-001cc4c002e0.html#ixzz1eHaZ31W>S</p>
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Brian Beutler - November 3, 2011

Two weeks ago, Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) neatly demonstrated the power of retail politics — and at the same time brought to light a legal conflict that has made the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell a bumpy affair. Shaheen had intervened on behalf of a constituent named Charlie Morgan — an openly gay Chief Warrant Officer in the New Hampshire National Guard — who had just returned from a deployment in Kuwait, only to be forbidden by the military from bringing her spouse Karen to an event aimed at helping families deal with the transition back to life at home.

It's unthinkable that a straight, married service member would have faced this kind of obstacle. But though Don't Ask, Don't Tell had been stricken from the books, and Morgan was allowed to serve openly, the Defense of Marriage Act still allowed the New Hampshire National Guard to deny her spouse authorization to attend the so-called Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. Shaheen took Morgan's case straight to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and the policy was quickly reversed — the Morgans were allowed to attend Yellow Ribbon event earlier this month.

<More at: <http://tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2011/11/integrated-but-unequal-after-dont-ask-dont-tell-gay-soldiers-remain-unequal-in-the-military.php>>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SUNDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2011

OP'N IRAQI FREEDOM/NEW DAWN (2,721/447 DAYS)		OP'N ENDURING FREEDOM (3,698 DAYS)	
KILLED US	4,408/76	KILLED US	1,842
WOUNDED US [10/31/11]	31,921/2,328	WOUNDED US [10/31/11]	14,733
OTHER US CASUALTIES [10/31/11]	40,374/2,433	OTHER CASUALTIES US [10/31/11]	14,883
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [10/31/11]	223/8	DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [10/31/11]	70
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1	MISSING OR CAPTURED US	0
KILLED UK	179	KILLED COALITION	971
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139/1	WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819	KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY[7/4/09]	≥ 11,152
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182	KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (9/10/2010)	≥ 8,813
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874	WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	46,322
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [10/19/11]	≥ 113,230–1,455,590	AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS[9/20/10]	≥ 400K–1.556M	COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$804,008,228,915
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M	COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$477,019,095,868

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

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF OCTOBER 11, 2011

This week the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps announced a decrease in activated reservists, while the Coast Guard announced an increase. The net collective result is 613 fewer 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 69,463; Navy Reserve, 4,629; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 10,807; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,644, and the Coast Guard Reserve, 768. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 91,311, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found on line at www.defense.gov/news/d20111011ngr.pdf

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

CLICK THROUGH AND READ THE WHOLE ARTICLE ~ HAVE A STIFF ONE FIRST **FALLEN SOLDIER'S FAMILY BRINGS DOG THEY NAMED HERO HOME FROM IRAQ**

Steve Hendrix - November 10

This was as close as Hero the dog had been to her old buddy Justin since they were photographed together in 2007. In that picture, they were snout-to-chest, a 23-year-old soldier cuddling a weeks-old stray puppy in Samarra, Iraq. But Wednesday, Hero could get no nearer than six feet, a grown dog snuffling above a grave at Arlington National Cemetery.

"Whaddaya think, girl, you guys glad to be back together?" asked Mitchel Rollins, patting Hero's back, raising a little cloud of fur in the sun slanting across his son's final resting place. "Are you still shedding? You gonna leave some hairs on Justin? I think he would like that."

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/local/fallen-soldiers-family-brings-dog-they-named-hero-home-from-iraq/2011/11/09/gIQAQ1yu9M_story.html>

DOORS THAT JUST WON'T OPEN ANYMORE FOR SOME VETERANS

Randy Henk - For The Courier-News - August 25, 2011

They must be around here somewhere, I said to myself as I scurried around the local supermarket in a search for Hawaiian rolls. After scanning for another moment, success. Then thinking to myself again, what a stupid place to put them.

With the hunt over and everything in hand, I made my way toward the cashier. An older couple was pushing their cart toward me, and the woman suddenly turned to her husband and remarked, "It's people like that is why our country sucks."

My jaw dropped as I stopped dead in my tracks. A neon sign on my forehead would have read shock and disbelief. I turned to the couple and asked, "Excuse me, ma'am, was that meant for me?" Her reply, "Yes, as a matter of fact, it was."

Milliseconds turned to eternity. Hundreds of thoughts race through my mind, processing what would be my chosen reaction and the possible outcome.

I stood erect and firmly responded, "After serving this country almost 22 years, it gives me great pride that you have the ability to say that." I turned and continued on my way. She muttered something, but by this time I was already deaf, too deep in thought.

... I am now just another statistic — an unemployed combat veteran, a subcategory of the "undead" of society. Some are maimed, some are homeless, and the majority are having a hard time coping with the adjustment.

I guess one of the hardest things to accept is those with whom we share the category: felons, addicts, runaways, unemployed and all of the rest that society deems to be "undead."

I, along with the others, served and defended this very society, answering every call to arms our nation asked of us. We left home to serve and upon our return to re-enter society, the very door that was opened for us to leave and serve is now shut in our faces.

... With the political unrest and our struggling economy, it has been pretty nerve-wracking — already both my Army and VA pension has been threatened twice since May. I at least have that to make ends meet, but what of the previously mentioned soldier who served less than 20 years and is not receiving a retirement or disability pension?

<More at: <http://couriernews.suntimes.com/news/6990223-418/doors-that-just-wont-open-anymore-for-some-veterans.html>

A LOOK INSIDE THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERAN'S AFFAIRS ON VETERANS DAY

Nicole Byerly - Nov 11, 2011

Families across the United States are quick to forget just how many Veterans from wars that took place so long ago are still around to celebrate this special day with their friends and families.

Veteran's day is a day to remember all of those soldiers who have served for the freedom of our country. While thousands of soldiers are being sent home and urged to file claims through the Department of Veterans Affairs through their new expedited claims process, the Department of Veterans Affairs is quick to forget just how many old claims they have yet to process.

Out of the US DVA regional offices located all over the United States, over 500,000 new claims and claims for increases are waiting to be filed, on top of over 90,000 pending appeals. Each office claims to have a backlog between 10,000 and 20,000 claims; which have been "sitting" around for over a year in some cases. A release in September of 2011 stated that new claims are averaging between 12 and 18 months to process, while some appeals can take several years to show any significant process. For anyone who depends on benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs, this is an unnecessarily long wait to have to deal with. Not only are the backlogs continuing to build up, but an expedited claims process which was set into effect in the recent year has put all of the backlogged files on a back burner.

... So, although Veteran's are truly thankful for all of their great discounts, free food, and community services on this great Veteran's day, one of the biggest impacts any American can have on a Veteran to show their appreciation is by fixing the system for the very company who is on this great soil in the land of these United States to represent and fight for services and benefits for Veterans. <More at: <http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/314273#ixzz1doiM1AFS>>

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

GOOGLE FOR VETERANS HELPS SOLDIERS FIND JOBS, CONNECT

By Leslie Horn

November 14, 2011 10:31am EST

Google has launched some new tools for veterans and their families.

Opened on Veteran's Day, [Google for Veterans and Families](#) is a site that pulls together various free Google services to help military personnel and their families do things like get jobs, connect with fellow vets, transition into civilian life, and record the story of their service.

For example, it offers resources through Google Docs to help these individuals build their resumes, calling through Google Voice to keep in touch with other veterans and loved ones, assistance through Google Finance to track expenses and investments, and several other resources. <More at: www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,2396338,00.asp>

VA POSTS ONLINE LIST OF SHIPS ASSOCIATED WITH PRESUMPTIVE AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE

September 2, 2011

WASHINGTON – Veterans who served aboard U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships operating on the waters of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, may be eligible to receive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability compensation for 14 medical conditions associated with presumptive exposure to Agent Orange.

An updated list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships confirmed to have operated on Vietnam's inland waterways, docked on shore, or had crewmembers sent ashore, has been posted at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/> to assist Vietnam Veterans in determining potential eligibility for compensation benefits. <More at: <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2156>>

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.org; I keep a copy of most of the full articles, or can research an alternative route to the information. [Ed.]

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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, Editor mailto:scook@vuft.org

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

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