

SOUND OFF!



VOL. VII, NO 4

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

20 DECEMBER 2011

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

CIRCUIT COURT ~ A REAL EXPERIENCE!

On Tuesday, 13 December, we got the chance to see the wheels of justice in motion in the United States Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit. The cliché that “The wheels of justice grind slowly but exceedingly fine”, is true, at least in the “slowly” part. In any event, I want to share our experience with all of you who have hung in with us for so long on this case.

Having never observed a federal court of appeals in action before, I was looking forward to seeing wisdom applied and justice dispensed. My expectations were naïve and far exceeded the actual outcome.

The building was impressive. It was built in 1905 as a court and post office, and when it opened it was called [“a post office that’s a palace.”](#) : it is all marble and bronze. It survived the 1906 earthquake. The bronze elevators were beautiful and could easily sit in a museum. The halls were marble-floored with marble pillars on either side of each justice’s office door, courtesy of the Italian workmen who were imported to do the stonework. By the time we got to the courtroom, my scheming mind had figured that we could house at least 300 to 500 homeless veterans in the space allotted to 29 judges and their minions.

We knew that the presiding judge would be Judge Kozinski, the judge who disagreed on the original appeal, and who withdrew the finding of his own panel and set up this 11-judge hearing. Interestingly, because he is Chief Judge of this court, he gets two or three or maybe even more swings at the ball. He voted against us in the panel, he struck down our largely favorable finding, and now he was sitting as a voting judge on the new panel, one which he had empowered.

Bob Handy and I had a front row seat—literally, since we were on the bench inside the rail with the

lawyers and the court functionaries. The feeling was much like being inside the altar rail at the Vatican—you were afraid to move too quickly or the great judge in the sky would strike you dead. I think my breathing slowed down out of fear that there might be some rule I would be breaking if I breathed too quickly.

The judges entered like a religious procession with Judge Kozinski substituting for the archbishop at the end of the procession. A clerk (there are a number of them) gave us the “All rise!” and I felt compelled to bow my head as they entered. When everyone was in place, and when a brief moment of silence had been observed in recognition of the awe we should offer this array of blackbirds, the clerk banged the gavel and declared the court in session. (I guess banging the gavel is beneath the presiding judge’s sense of grandeur, so he farms it out to the nice lady at the clerk’s desk. I thought I smelled incense.)

I’ll give you my overall impressions here, and you can get the detail on the court’s website if you wish.

The full hearing is available in audio at www.ca9.uscourts.gov/media/view_subpage.php?pk_id=0000008542

and in video at http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/media/view_video_subpage.php?pk_vid=0000006173. They each are one hour long.

First though, you will be pleased to know that Judge Conti, the federal judge who originally heard our case, was in the front row of the audience along with his law clerks. He privately expressed his desire that they overturn his decision that he could not force the VA to do anything. Ever since the original trial he has been one of our heroes, not for his decision that he could not do anything, which we regretted but

understood, but for his written agreement with most of what we asked for in his written decision.

There were a number of veterans' organizations and individual veterans present, and we thank them all for attending. Standing room only.

To the appeal hearing.

Each side gets precisely one half hour, and if they wish to reserve time for a rebuttal, they have to take that out of their half hour. The time is apparently set in the judicial liturgy, and there are no exceptions. When the hour is up, the judges get up and leave, regardless of where your counsel might be in his or her argument.

All of the rules are for the convenience of the judges, apparently, as they certainly are not in support of the plaintiff or the defendant or their counsel. The judges interrupt with questions at any point, and if they don't like the answer they just keep repeating the questions, and all of this comes out of your half hour.

The remarkable thing to me was the unwillingness of several judges to accept answers they didn't like. One judge in particular kept insisting that we were trying change the VA's rules and policies. Since we have spent over four years saying that all we want the VA to do is follow their own rules and the Congressionally imposed law, it was a bit frustrating to have this particular judge believe otherwise and take about 4-6 minutes of our precious time to insist repeatedly that he was right.

Several judges, however, were obviously looking to clarify the issues and asked very pointed questions of both sides. The most important question, I believe, was asked by one judge of the VA's counsel, and followed up by two others. She asked (paraphrased) if the VA was holding that the courts had no place in the VA's business, thus veterans had no place to turn except to the VA itself or to Congress for relief. He replied, "Yes." The question was then extended to ask if that idea was true for veterans and if it were applied to other classes, such as women, or African-Americans, would the same be true. Would the members of those classes be denied assistance from the courts if their claim was against the Executive Branch? The VA's counsel spent much of his time attempting to dodge the question despite the insistence of several judges that he answer clearly; he never did.

In the end it was obvious that the hearing was just a step on the checklist, and that the real judgment would come behind those marble and oak walls, far from the public eye. When we do not know. How it will come out we do not know.

One thing we do know, and that is that if we win at this level, the VA will try to take us to the Supremes. If we lose at this level, we will attempt to go to the Supremes ourselves. Also, since the docket for 2012 is already set, we cannot get to them before the 2013 session, and then only if they permit it.

My impression after this session is that if the Executive wants to go to the highest court they will probably get there. My further impression is that if we want to go to the highest court it is a crap shoot whether we will get there or not. After all, we didn't appoint the Supremes, the Executive did with the approval of the Congress.

Much of the discussion between the judges and the VA's counsel seemed to be an argument between the often competing doctrines of *separation of powers* (the VA's position) and *checks and balances* (the position of some but not all of the judges). The VA held for the sovereign right of the Executive to operate unhindered by the courts, while the courts (i.e. some of the judges) were asserting, or at least hinting at their right to interfere when necessary.

Overall, my greatest impression was that, except when our marvelous lead counsel Gordon Erspamer spoke, none of the discussion was about veterans. Gordon spoke about veterans and their plight. The judges and the VA spoke about rules, law, processes, authorities, and powers; never about performance and never about veterans themselves.

It was as if you were in an emergency room and the doctors and nurses were arguing about some chapter in a medical textbook and fighting over parking places and the electricity bill while you were quietly expiring on the table.

Oh well! I guess that is our justice system, and our executive system as they have evolved over the years. We get not what we ask for, but what we allow to happen—which I guess is all we deserve.

I have always believed that the American idea—that marvelous spark that formed our country—is not in the Constitution but in the Declaration of Independence, paragraph 2 where it says: **"...all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed."** Wow! What an idea! Not just for the 18th century but for all time.

If I am to base my opinion on what I observed last week in San Francisco, it is apparent that the citizens who formed the system—those who instituted the government—are forgotten while the system, its workings, its powers and its perks are fought over by those whom we elect or appoint and pay to protect us and our rights.

Now we wait, and prepare of the next battle—another battle at which we are forced to be the spectators while the government mercenaries fight it out before us, not really caring about how we would want the battle to resolve, nor apparently really caring much about us at all. Almost like watching the WWE.

I the end we will be able to at least be able to say with Bob Dylan, ‘I’m glad I fought, I only wish we’d won.’

A final word. We cannot say enough in praise of Gordon Erspamer and Morrison and Foerster, and of Sid Wolinsky and Disabled Rights Advocates, and all of their supporting lawyers and staff. They are fighting for all of us against a formidable foe, and they do it with skill and vigor. Thanks to all of them! They are the heroes in this fight.

Always remember!

In the hour and 20 minutes we spent in the courtroom, another veteran in the care of the VA committed suicide, and at least one more did who was unreported. [Ed.]

THE PAST IS PROLOGUE

While writing the above I remembered this editorial that I had stashed away long ago. Another war, another time, but not much different for veterans, or for most of the rest of the citizenry for that matter.

Columbus Sun, “THE CLASS THAT SUFFER” (February 17, 1865)

Upon poor women and children, upon soldiers who are toiling and bleeding for liberty, upon salaried men who have not the time, or who desire to speculate, the whole weight of this fearful struggle falls. Men of wealth, who are hoarding thousands, put up the piteous cry of exorbitant rates – more bitterly than ever just after increasing the prices 1000 fold, while upon ragged blood drenched soldiers, upon weary despairing, heartsick women, and those whose only dependence is a pitiful yearly sum must be made to bitterly suffer.

Non-producers alone feel the war. Others can meet high rates with the same – those who speculate not, must shift as best they can what matters life or death so avarice can be gratified? What is honor unattended by wealth? What is liberty, unless money can be hoarded by millions? What, if the country be ruined, its women ravished, its homes desolated, its altars violated and freedom forever perish – what matters all so the almighty dollar may be amassed in piles? What care men of the present day whether their country sinks so property may be secured, and the price at which liberty is bought rests as light as possible upon their patriotic shoulders?

That is right. Pile up wealth – no matter whether bread be drawn from the mouth of the soldier’s orphan or the one-armed, one-limbed hero who hungry walks your streets – take every dollar you can, payout as little as possible, deprive your noble warriors of every comfort and luxury, increase in every way the necessaries of life, make everybody but yourself and non-producers bear the taxes of the war; but be very careful to parade everything you give before the public – talk boldly on the street corners of your love of country, be a grand home general – and, when the war is over, point to your princely palace and its magnificent surroundings and exclaim with pompous swell “These are the results of my patriotism.”

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

Please see this month's editorial and the table below.

Case Progress to Date:

Date	Action	Days since previous action	Days since start of case
7/23/2007	Suit filed w/Federal District Court	-	0
9/25/2007	Defendant's motion to dismiss	64	64
2/11/2008	VUFT motion for preliminary injunction	139	203
2/25/2008	Preliminary injunction hearing – denied	14	217
4/21/2008	Trial before Judge Conti	56	273
6/25/2008	Judgment unfavorable (based on jurisdiction)	65	338
7/25/2008	Appeal notice filed w/9th Circuit Court of Appeals	30	368
12/10/2008	Appeal brief filed	138	506
12/15/2008	<i>Swords to Plowshares & Vietnam Veterans of America</i> file amicus brief (not accepted by court)	5	511
12/22/2008	<i>Military Spouses for Change & United Spinal Association</i> file amicus brief (not accepted by court)	7	518
3/4/2009	Appeal will not be subject to Mediation	72	590
5/1/2009	VUFT's brief filed	58	648
8/12/2009	Oral arguments before 3-judge panel	103	751
9/14/2009	No agreement on mediation. 9 th Circuit agrees to adjudicate	33	784
2010 No Action			
5/20/2011	The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals rules in part in our favor, specifically on the Constitutional issues in our claim.	613	1397
5/27/2011	Case Management Conference before the original trial judge, Judge Conti, in Federal District Court in San Francisco	7	1404
7/20/2011	VA has requests a hearing by the full court.	54	1458
8/10/2011	VA appeals to undo everything that has transpired over the last three years; claims veterans have no constitutional right to benefits.	21	1479
11/16/2011	Back to square 2—9 th Circuit panel ruling withdrawn	98	1577
12/13/2011	<i>En banc</i> hearing before 11 judges	27	1604
12/20/2011	<i>Today - waiting</i>	7	1611
1611 days = 4 years, 4 months, 27 days			

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

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 naive? 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?

If every veteran went out and committed a felony he or she would apparently have more rights and more avenues of appeal than we do as veterans. I guess that makes us the new "underclass" in the federal system.

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 naive when I question this? Would someone please tell me where I am wrong? [Ed.]

SUPPORTING THE CAUSE If you wish to donate to our work you may 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, or donate \$10 or more and we'll send you one anyway.

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]

WE CAN'T PROCESS NEW CLAIMS BUT WE WANT TO "RE-EVALUATE" OLD, LONG-STANDING CLAIMS JUST IN CASE YOU ARE CHEATING US

A member sent me a letter reporting on what he had discovered in speaking with three friends of his who were on long-term, service-related disability. They each had received the following letter from the Denver office of the DVA dated 29 November". Each has been "100% permanent & total for PTSD for between 14 and 17 years."

VA is required to periodically re-evaluate certain disabilities. We have requested a physical examination of your service-connected disability(ies) so that we may review the severity of the condition(s) to ensure that you are properly evaluated.

In a short period of time, the V A medical facility that will conduct the examination will notify you as to its time and place and any special preparations for the exam. You may have already received the scheduling letter.

If you do not report for this required examination, it could result in the reduction or discontinuance of any V A compensation benefits that you may be receiving.

If your mailing address is different than that shown above, please advise us of your new mailing address. You should notify us immediately of any changes in your mailing address.

If you reside in the Continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, the Northern Marianas, or Puerto Rico, you may contact V A with questions and receive free help by calling our toll- free number 1-800-827~1000 (for hearing impaired TDD 1-800-829-4833). From American Samoa you may dial toll free 684-699-3730.

K. MALIN - VETERANS SERVICE CENTER MANAGER

The VA later claimed that the letters were sent out automatically by their computer and were or might be a mistake. The computer works to call you in for a “re-evaluation” (read “bend over and grab your ankles”), but the individual claim records can’t be computerized and must remain in multiple paper files in multiple locations.

I guess the computer is used only to tell the evaluators when to get out their red pencils, and maybe when to take a coffee break and when to go on vacation. Oh yes, the computer is probably used to tell them when to lose that piece of paper you have submitted four times already.

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

GLAD YOU ARE FINALLY ASKING THE QUESTIONS, SENATORS. OF COURSE, THE VA HAS THE ANSWERS. “WE ARE DOING GREAT! THE PROBLEM IS THAT THOSE PESKY VETERANS JUST WON’T SHOW UP FOR THEIR APPOINTMENTS.”

SENATE PANEL HEARS OF BATTLES FOR CARE BY VETERANS WITH PTSD

Gregg Zoroya - USA TODAY – November 30, 2011

Accounts of chronic staff shortages among Department of Veterans Affairs mental health staff and veterans discouraged over delays in therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder were brought before a Senate Veterans' Affairs committee hearing today.

"Too often, I am told that the patient will have to wait as long as six weeks for the first appointment. But after waiting that long, many patients lose the motivation for treatment, or their PTSD worsens while they are waiting," testified Michelle Washington, a coordinator of PTSD care at a VA hospital in Wilmington, Del.

... The committee has been pressing the VA hard in recent months on delays in treating mental health cases after a survey done within the department earlier this year showed that 70% of clinicians believe the VA lacks staffing or space to handle the mounting numbers of veterans seeking care.

... The VA insists that it is meeting scheduling deadlines and that any delays are the result of problems it cannot control, such as patient rescheduling or failing to show up for appointments.

<More at: www.usatoday.com/news/military/story/2011-11-30/veterans-PTSD-health-care/51515992/1>

IN THE SAME HEARINGS, THE VA TAKES UMBRAGE AT BEING ACCUSED OF GAMING THE SCHEDULING SYSTEM.

GOD, WE ARE ALL SO UNFAIR TO THESE DEDICATED FOLKS, AREN'T WE?

HOSPITAL OFFICIAL: VA GAMES PATIENT SCHEDULES

December 01, 2011 - Military.com - by Bryant Jordan

[DVA] officials came under fire in a Senate hearing Wednesday over the long wait times for vets who need mental health services, though a senior official denied VA hospitals are “gaming the system” to make it appear the situation is improving.

... “Veterans in need of new and established patient appointments usually have to wait far longer than 14 days -- and often as long as two months -- before they can begin evidence-based trauma-focused treatments,” said Michelle Washington, coordinator of PTSD services at a VA hospital in Wilmington, Del.

... Washington, who appeared as a representative for the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents more than 200,000 VA workers, told the lawmakers she feared retaliation by VA management for appearing at the hearing. “Nonetheless, I took the risk of testifying today because of the importance of speaking out about the growing barriers to providing mental health care to my patients,” she said. “Like my colleagues, I work at the VA because of an intense dedication to serving this unique patient population, and their service-connected mental health conditions.”

... North Carolina Sen. Richard Burr, a Republican, called it “unacceptable” that veterans were not getting timely access to the care they needed, and criticized the VA for what he said was a string of reviews and surveys and policy papers. The providers want to be able to do their jobs, he said. “They’re focused on outcome and you’re focused on process,” Burr said.

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/hospital-official-va-games-patient-schedules.html>

THE SENATE AGREES YET WE SPEND YEARS FIGHTING IT OUT IN THE COURTS TO MAKE THE SAME POINT! GO FIGURE!

GREAT! LET'S RUN ANOTHER STUDY TO PROVE WHAT WE ALL ALREADY KNOW!

LAWMAKERS WANT AUDIT OF WAIT TIMES FOR VETERANS

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS - December 6, 2011

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal lawmakers are calling for an inspector general's investigation into how long it takes for veterans to get treatment for mental health disorders after they return from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

<More at : www.nytimes.com/aponline/2011/12/06/us/politics/AP-US-Veterans-Wait-Time-Investigation.html>

RETREAT – NEWS

REPORT: GI TRIED TO ESCAPE FROM TALIBAN CAPTORS

McClatchy-Tribune Information Services December 09, 2011

TWIN FALLS, Idaho -- Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl made a bold escape from his Taliban captors while imprisoned in Pakistan, avoiding them for three days before they recaptured him, according to a report published by The Daily Beast.

The news website's account -- compiled by two correspondents for Newsweek, which the site is affiliated with -- offers a window into the Hailey Soldier's life of captivity in the hands of the Taliban.

The story is hard to corroborate -- even that Bergdahl was confirmed still alive was news to U.S. Central Command, accord to The Daily Beast. But the website appeared confident in its report, based on interviews with "three reliable militant sources" who heard the details from fighters present when Bergdahl made the escape attempt.

Bergdahl, 25, has been a prisoner of the Taliban since his capture on June 30, 2009, in Afghanistan. Since then, he has appeared in at least five Taliban propaganda videos, one of which was released in May. He is the only known U.S. Soldier to be a captive of the Taliban. <More at: www.military.com/news/article/report-gi-tried-to-escape-from-taliban-captors.html>

ARMY TAPS FIRST NURSE FOR SURGEON GENERAL

Bob Brewin – NextGov.com - 11/30/11

On Dec. 7 in a ceremony at Fort Myer, Va., the Army will promote Maj. Gen. Patricia Horoho to the rank of lieutenant general and swear her in as the first nurse to serve as Army Surgeon General. Horoho is a 1982 graduate of the University of North Carolina School of Nursing <More at: http://whatsbrewin.nextgov.com/2011/11/army_taps_first_nurse_for_surgeon_general.php>

MAYBE THE FIRST LESSON WE SHOULD GIVE YOUNG PERSONS TODAY IS “NEVER FK WITH A DEFENSE CONTRACTOR!” IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE SURE THAT YOUNG PEOPLE KNOW WHO RULES THE UNIVERSE.**

A BRITISH DEFENSE COMPANY MADE SURE THIS MEDAL OF HONOR WINNER COULDN'T WORK IN THE DEFENSE INDUSTRY EVER AGAIN

Robert Johnson - Business Insider - November 30, 2011

Nobody questioned former Marine Sgt. Dakota Meyer's judgment when he defied orders and pounded into an enemy stronghold rescuing 13 fellow Marines and 23 Afghan allies during the Battle of Ganjgal in 2009.

Nobody, except maybe Meyer himself, questioned his nomination for the Medal of Honor (MoH) in November 2010 by the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

But when Meyer protested the sale of advanced weapons to Pakistan, BAE not only questioned his judgment, they made sure he was unemployable in the defense industry. <More at: http://articles.businessinsider.com/2011-11-30/news/30457746_1_bae-thermal-imaging-marines#ixzz1fli0OQZ9>

DECORATED MARINE SUES CONTRACTOR

JULIAN E. BARNES – Marine Corps Times/Associated Press - 29 November 2011

Two months ago, Dakota Meyer was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Barack Obama for his service in Afghanistan, the military's most prestigious award. On Monday, Sgt. Meyer alleged that a defense contractor has called him mentally unstable and a problem drinker, ruining his chances for a job in the defense industry.

Sgt. Dakota Meyer alleges BAE Systems blocked him from a defense-industry job by claiming he is mentally unstable and has a drinking problem.

In legal papers filed Monday, the Marine claims that BAE Systems, where he worked earlier this year, retaliated against him after he raised objections about BAE's alleged decision to sell high-tech sniper scopes to the Pakistani military. He says his supervisor at BAE effectively blocked his hiring by another defense contractor by making the claims about drinking and his mental condition. <More at: http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204753404577066703457602304.html?mod=googlenews_wsj>

WE MET THIS YOUNG MAN WHEN WE WERE IN SAN FRANCISCO—WHAT A STRONG YOUNG PATRIOT HE IS!

IRAQ WAR VETERAN HURT IN OCCUPY OAKLAND PROTEST EXPECTS RECOVERY, CHIDES INVESTIGATION'S PACE

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS - November 28, 2011

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Marine Corps veteran struck in the head during a clash between police and Occupy Oakland protesters still has trouble speaking but said in his first interview since being injured that he expects to recover completely.

Scott Olsen said in the video interview posted Monday on Indybay.org that he couldn't speak at all in the days after his skull was fractured Oct. 25. "I am doing much better than when I look at myself a month ago, which was two days after the attack," Olsen said. "I was not doing good. But now I'm doing a lot better."

... Olsen said he didn't know at the time how he was wounded. But he said he's now frustrated by the pace of the police investigation into who fired the tear gas canister he believes struck him. "You would think something like this wouldn't take too long to find out who's responsible," he said. "But it's been over a month. How long does it take to see who fired this at me?"

<More at: www.therepublic.com/view/story/b43f5a40526f495cb9c0da721ee78496/CA--Occupy-Oakland-Veteran-Hurt/>

PROPRANOLOL DIDN'T WORK SO LET'S FIND ANOTHER PILL! WILL THEY FIND A PILL TO GIVE TO CONGRESS SO WE CAN STOP SENDING KIDS TO WAR IN THE FIRST PLACE?

NO FEAR: MEMORY ADJUSTMENT PILLS GET PENTAGON PUSH

Katie Drummond - December 16, 2011

The Pentagon hasn't come close to solving the PTSD crisis plaguing the current generation of troops. And the top brass looks like it's ready to try anything — like a major push into a cutting-edge, controversial realm of treatment. One that'd see military personnel popping a pill to wipe away the fear they associate with traumatic memories.

<More at: www.wired.com/dangerroom/2011/12/fear-erasing-drugs/>

PRESIDENT OBAMA SIGNS VETERANS TAX CREDIT BILL

By JAMES DAO November 21, 2011, 2:20 pm

If anyone doubted that veterans remain potent political symbols, they need look no further than Congress's ability to set aside partisan gridlock last week and overwhelmingly enact legislation providing tax credits to businesses that hire veterans. Flanked by veterans advocates, President Obama signed the bill into law this morning.

The "VOW to Hire Heroes Act" will provide tax credits of up to \$2,400 for employers who hire veterans who have been unemployed at least 4 weeks; up to \$5,600 for hiring veterans who have been unemployed longer than 6 months; and up to \$9,600 for businesses that hire veterans who have service-connected disabilities and have been unemployed longer than 6 months. <More at: <http://atwar.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/11/21/president-obama-signs-veterans-tax-credit-bill/>>

VETERAN HIRES IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HIT 20-YEAR HIGH

Steve Vogel - 12/13/2011

The federal government hired the highest percentage of veterans in more than 20 years during the past fiscal year, the Office of Personnel Management announced Tuesday.

Veterans represented 28.5 percent of total federal hires in fiscal 2011, an increase of 2.9 percent over fiscal 2010 and 4.5 percent over fiscal 2009, according to preliminary figures released by OPM.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/federal-eye/post/veteran-hires-in-federal-government-hit-20-year-high/2011/12/13/gIQAAtqwHsO_blog.html>

NAVY ENCOURAGING SEPARATED SAILORS TO APPLY FOR CIVILIAN JOBS

Stars and Stripes - December 9, 2011

SASEBO NAVAL BASE, Japan – Citing record retention and recent steps to thin the ranks, the Navy announced a new Civilian Careers Campaign to attract some of the sailors let go back into the Navy as civilian employees.

... Sailors slated for separation or those already separated can find out more information on job opportunities in the Navy's civilian sector at <http://www.public.navy.mil/donhr/employment/Vets/Pages/Default.aspx>.

<More at: <http://www.stripes.com/news/navy-encouraging-separated-sailors-to-apply-for-civilian-jobs-1.162918>>

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	
1 Jan		Cotton Bowl Stadium Dallas TX	The Wall that Heals	Dallas Football Classic	

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

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

VETERAN TO VA: 'WE WILL STOP WHAT YOU ARE TRYING TO DO'

Curt Nettinga - Hot Springs Star staff - December 13, 2011

HOT SPRINGS - After a day of employee meetings and news conferences to talk about the new proposal for veteran's healthcare in western South Dakota, a very loud, very large crowd was on hand at the Mueller Civic Center to receive the first public presentation of the plan that could lead to a sharp reduction of services in Hot Springs. The overall impression of the audience was that the new proposal was not well received.

... "Since 1995," said veteran Don Ackerman to DiStasio, "you have torn down and systematically destroyed this facility. You have lied to us when you said 'Nothing is planned for Hot Springs.' You were hired to serve veterans, and what you have done is destroy this facility!" "But let me tell you," Ackerman said, pointing at DiStasio, "we will stop what you are trying to do!"<More at: http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/communities/hot-springs/veteran-to-va-we-will-stop-what-you-are-trying/article_41dfda1a-2546-11e1-b380-001871e3ce6c.htm#ixzz1qps58H8O>

THE # OF MILITARY FAMILIES RECEIVING LIHEAP INCREASES BY 156% SINCE 2008

PRESS RELEASE - Contact: Mark Wolfe, 202-320-9046 - Embargoed till December 8, 2011

... Key Findings: The number of veterans has increased from 12 percent of total recipients to 20% since 2008, increasing from 695,760 in FY 2008 to 1.78 million in FY 2011. During this period the overall program grew by 54% while the number of veterans households increased by more than 150%. Veteran households in fact accounted for almost 35% of total growth in the program between FY 2008 and 2011. Of specific interest, 12% of all veterans receiving LIHEAP have served in Iraq or Afghanistan. Seven percent of military families are currently serving in the military.

<More at: <http://www.neada.org/communications/press/Press%20Release%20-%20NEADA%2012-8-11.pdf>>

VETERANS' WAIT FOR MENTAL HEALTH CARE AT MILWAUKEE VA CLINIC AMONG WORST IN THE NATION

Gregg Zoroya and Paul Monies - USA Today - Nov. 20, 2011

The veterans hospital in Milwaukee ranks among the nation's worst in prolonging patient wait times for mental health care, according to an analysis by USA Today.

The newspaper found that the Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee had the 20th slowest response time out of 133 veterans facilities examined nationally. The average patient's wait for mental health care in Milwaukee was calculated as 18.3 days, which also was 17.7 days later than the average patient had requested for an appointment.

<More at: www.postcrossant.com/article/20111121/APC0101/111210422/Veterans-wait-mental-health-care-Milwaukee-VA-clinic-among-worst-nation>

VETERANS MEET NEW CHALLENGES UPON RETURN TO CITY

Michael Herzenberg - 12/16/2011

Heroes' welcomes play out over and over again in ceremonies for returning service members across the country.

After the initial hugs and tears, however, the country's embrace can come to an end while the pain continues.

Army Private George Coleson returned from South Korea two years ago, but no home awaited him. "There was a lot of times when I couldn't eat," says Coleson.

After his honorable discharge, he says he lived on the streets and in a shelter for almost a year and a half. "Panhandling, yes," says Coleson, "and people would look at you and say, 'you're a vet?'"

He's not alone. In fact, according to the federal government, 67,000 vets nationwide spent a night in a shelter in 2010. That was an actual improvement from the year before, when more than 1 in 10 people in a shelter served in the military.

Locally, a study by the Food Bank for New York City last month found one in four households with a veteran has difficulty affording food. <More at: www.ny1.com/content/top_stories/152715/veterans-meet-new-challenges-upon-return-to-city>

VA WRITES ITS OWN REPORT – AND IF YOU BELIEVE THIS I HAVE A (??) TO SELL YOU NUMBER OF HOMELESS VETS DOWN 12 PERCENT, REPORT SAYS

Steve Vogel,

The number of homeless veterans in the United States declined by nearly 12 percent between January 2010 and January 2011, according to figures being released Tuesday by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan called the decline "nothing short of extraordinary," given the economic conditions in the country.

The annual survey found that 67,495 veterans were homeless in the United States on a single night in January 2011, nearly 9,000 fewer than the 76,329 counted in January 2010.

The figures show nearly an 11 percent drop in homelessness among veterans since January 2009, when 75,609 were recorded as homeless.

<More at: www.washingtonpost.com/politics/number-of-homeless-vets-down-12-percent-report-says/2011/12/12/glQAZnJzqO_story.html?wpisrc=nl_headlines>

THE REAL COST OF VETERAN HOMELESSNESS AND NINE THINGS EVERY COMMUNITY CAN DO TO END IT

Rosanne Haggerty 11/15/11 09:17 AM ET

1. Combat ought to be the most difficult experience our nation's veterans ever endure, and yet many go on to become homeless for eight or nine times the length of their deployments. That is the key finding of a [new report](#) by the 100,000 Homes Campaign detailing the widespread health crisis facing America's 76,000 homeless veterans. Public housing authorities can share their housing inspection standards with non-profit organizations helping veterans find apartments. This allows non-profits to complete informal pre-inspections to help veterans find apartments that will pass required housing quality inspections on the first try. (Days eliminated: 50)
2. Public housing authorities can eliminate any locally imposed minimum income requirements for housing homeless veterans. (Days eliminated: 44)
3. Local VA branches can eliminate any requirement that a veteran enter treatment as a condition for receiving a Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) voucher. Such treatment is not required by federal statute. (Days eliminated: 30 to 180)
4. Public housing authorities can allow use of a veteran's VA's DD-214 form to satisfy their identification requirements, rather than requiring birth certificates and social security cards, which homeless veterans may have lost. (Days eliminated: 30)

5. Local VA branches can train VASH case managers to access the HINQ (Hospital Inquiry) database. (Days eliminated: 5)
6. Housing Agency: Negotiate rent-reasonableness with the prospective landlord at the time of the housing inspection. (Days eliminated: 21)
7. Public housing authorities can issue provisional rent vouchers to enable homeless veterans to begin a housing search while other paperwork is being finalized. (Days eliminated: 7)
8. Human Services Agencies and local VA branches can co-locate and centralize move-in assistance resources or HPRP (Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program) paperwork with a veterans' service center. (Days eliminated: 55)
9. Communities can send representatives to the next 100,000 Homes Campaign Housing Placement Boot Camp to discover ways to streamline and shorten their housing placement processes.
<More at: www.huffingtonpost.com/rosanne-haggerty/the-real-cost-of-veteran-b_1093259.html>

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION FALLS SHORT ON SUICIDE PREVENTION, EXPERTS SAY

Sophie Quinton -December 2, 2011

The Veterans Administration's suicide-prevention campaign will be meaningless unless veterans actually use it, experts told a House subcommittee hearing on Friday.

Panelists and lawmakers praised the VA's moves to improve suicide prevention services, which include setting up a crisis helpline, placing suicide coordinators at medical centers, and integrating mental health services with primary care. But the VA needs to do a better job at engaging local communities and providing the services veterans truly need, panelists testified.

"No matter how great our programs and our services are, if they do not help those in need, they do no good at all," said Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle, R-N.Y., in opening remarks before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health.

Eighteen veterans commit suicide each day, according to VA estimates; an active service member or reservist took his or her own life every 36 hours between 2005 and 2010, according to the Department of Defense. Panelists noted that the data remains hazy—not least because suicides often go unrecorded.

Rep. Cliff Stearns, R-Fla., asked a panelist how he would rate the VA's success at preventing suicides on a scale of 1 to 10.

"Four," said Thomas Berger, head of the Veterans Health Council of Vietnam Veterans of America.

<More at: www.nationaljournal.com/healthcare/veterans-administration-falls-short-on-suicide-prevention-experts-say-20111202>

VETERANS CRISIS HOTLINE

The hotline for anyone needing immediate help with mental health issues is **800-273-8255**.

SPECIAL COURTS GIVE VETERANS A SECOND CHANCE

frhee@sacbee.com - Dec. 18, 2011

Amos Lee Gregory Jr. didn't get help for post-traumatic stress from his time aboard Navy attack submarines. He got by – until the day he snapped. He was headed to prison – until he found a court just for military veterans. There, he finally received treatment and counseling, and also awakened an interest in art that is now his career.

Wednesday marked a big milestone – after 18 months in Santa Clara County's veterans court, he "graduated." He tried to act nonchalant about it, but when the judge declared that Gregory had completed all his requirements and wiped his record clean, his fist pump gave away how much it means.

"Everything," he told me. "The court saved my life."

Veterans courts have been steadily expanding across California. Now, they're coming to the Sacramento region; judges and advocates in El Dorado County plan to start one on Jan. 1. The state Department of Veterans Affairs hopes 20 are established by July – just as thousands of soldiers come home to California from Iraq and Afghanistan.

<More at: www.sacbee.com/2011/12/18/4128611/special-courts-give-veterans.html>

STUDY: TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN LIFE HARDER FOR MARRIED TROOPS

Megan McCloskey - Stars and Stripes - December 09, 2011

WASHINGTON -- Nearly half of the veterans who served since 9/11 have struggled with the transition back to civilian life -- and being married is likely to make it harder, according to a survey released Thursday.

The Pew Research Center, an opinion research group in Washington, looked at factors that predict whether a servicemember would have an easier or harder time stepping out of uniform, and the survey revealed that marriage negatively affects how well a veteran will do.

Those who were married during their service had a significantly tougher time after returning than did their single counterparts. Chances of an easy exit from the military dropped from 63 percent for single troops to 48 percent for married troops, according to the report. <More at: www.stripes.com/news/study-transition-to-civilian-life-harder-for-married-troops-1.162892>

COST OF CARING FOR WARS' WOUNDED ON PACE TO ECLIPSE VIETNAM

Chris Adams - McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON - The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan may be winding down, but the long-term costs of caring for those wounded in battle is on path to rival the costs of the Vietnam War.

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

The data, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act and detailing all disability payments to veterans of all wars, show that veterans leaving the military in recent years are filing for and receiving compensation for more injuries than did their fathers and grandfathers.

At the same time, McClatchy found, the VA is losing ground in efforts to provide fast, efficient and accurate disability decisions. And the agency has yet to get control of a problem that has vexed it for years: The wide variation in disability payments by state and region, even for veterans with the same ailments. For soldiers now coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan, this ongoing variation in an already clogged disability system means the size of monthly compensation checks might be a quirk of geography. <More at: <http://fayobserver.com/articles/2011/12/05/1141259>>

BUT THEY WILL SCRAMBLE TO FIND ANOTHER PILL. MAYBE BIG PHARMA WON'T GET A CUT OF THIS GUY'S METHOD—THAT MIGHT EXPLAIN IT. NO PROFIT, NO POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS, NO GRANTS.

RESEARCH FUNDING FROM FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DENIED FOR FDA-APPROVED PTSD TREATMENT FOR VETS

CHICAGO, IL--(Marketwire - Nov 30, 2011) - A safe medical treatment that's been in use since 1925 has been successfully applied by Dr. Eugene Lipov (www.ChicagoMedicalInnovations.org) to treat symptoms of PTSD. Called stellate ganglion block (SGB), it involves injecting anesthesia into a cluster of nerves in the patient's neck. Lipov has received FDA approval for its use in treating PTSD.

The pain management specialist treated a number of war veterans at no charge and found the procedure works in 30 minutes and can last months to years. However, his attempts to obtain research funding from the federal government were denied, despite congressional support.

So Lipov created a non-profit, Chicago Medical Innovations, and wrote "Exit Strategy for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," a book that summarizes current treatment options and the latest developments in PTSD, to raise money for treatments and awareness about this extraordinarily simple solution for a devastating condition.

From the sale of each book, \$5 will go to CMI to fund treatments. Injections cost \$1,000 each and two are usually required.

So far, about 65 patients have received the block with about 80 percent reporting relief, Lipov said.

<More at: www.marketwire.com/press-release/research-funding-from-federal-government-denied-fda-approved-ptsd-treatment-vets-1593144.htm>

VA TELLS VET “COME MIERDA Y MUERTA!” SOUNDS LIKE EMBUSTES TO ME.

TAMPA VETERAN SAYS TRANSLATION OF A SPANISH-LANGUAGE DOCUMENT IS DELAYING HIS CLAIM

William R. Levesque - Times Staff Writer - November 27, 2011

TAMPA — Edgar Freyre has fought a running battle for a Department of Veterans Affairs disability pension since 1967.

In that time, the Tampa resident said he has seen innumerable delays caused by doctors, by VA claims examiners, by missing records and by old-fashioned bureaucratic inertia.

But now, Freyre said, he's facing a new delay. His claim is lost in translation.

The 81-year-old's VA claim has ground to a halt with no action taken in six months because Freyre submitted a document to the agency that was written in Spanish, VA records show.

The document is a history of Freyre's old U.S. Army unit that he found on the Web. It was an all-Puerto Rican outfit that was decimated in the Korean War.

<More at: www.tampabay.com/news/military/veterans/tampa-veteran-says-translation-of-a-spanish-language-document-is-delaying/1203690>

AND IF ALL OF THAT WEREN'T ENOUGH ~~

BANKS MAY HAVE ILLEGALLY FORECLOSED ON 5,000 MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY

Pat Garofalo - Nov 29, 2011

For months, major banks have been dealing with the fallout of the “robo-signing” scandal, following reports that the banks were improperly foreclosing on homeowners and, in many instances, falsifying paperwork that they were submitting to courts. Banks have been forced to go back and re-examine foreclosures to ensure that homeowners did not lose their homes unlawfully.

In the latest episode of this mess, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency has found that banks — including Bank of America, Wells Fargo, and Citigroup — may have improperly foreclosed on up to 5,000 active members of the military:

<More at: <http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2011/11/29/377392/banks-illegally-foreclose-military>>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE TUESDAY 20 DECEMBER 2011

OP'N IRAQI FREEDOM/NEW DAWN (2,721/476 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,408/76
WOUNDED US [12/5/11]	31,921/2,328
OTHER US CASUALTIES [12/5/11]	40,374/2,433
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [12/5/11]	223/12
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139/1
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [12/20/11]	≥ 113,876–1,455,590
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS [9/20/10]	≥ 400K–1.556M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

OP'N ENDURING FREEDOM (3,727 DAYS)

KILLED US	1,857
WOUNDED US [12/5/11]	15,040
OTHER CASUALTIES US [12/5/11]	14,883
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [12/5/11]	73
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	0
KILLED COALITION	973
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY [7/4/09]	≥ 11,152
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (9/10/2010)	≥ 8,813
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	\$807,804,928,716
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$486,787,920,536

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 DECEMBER 13, 2011

This week the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard announced a decrease in activated reservists. The net collective result is 1,258 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 67,970; Navy Reserve, 4,503; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 9,590; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,341, and the Coast Guard Reserve, 769. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 88,173, 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 <http://www.defense.gov/news/d20111213ngr.pdf>

REMEMBERING DAVID HICKMAN, 23, THE LAST SOLDIER KILLED IN IRAQ

Hickman, 23, was killed in Baghdad by a roadside bomb that ripped through his armored truck Nov. 14 — eight years, seven months and 25 days after the U.S. invasion of Iraq began. He was buried in Greensboro, N.C. two weeks and a day before he was due home.

He was the 4,474th member of the U.S. military to die in the war, and probably the last.



“HOW DO YOU ASK A MAN TO BE THE LAST MAN TO DIE FOR A MISTAKE?”

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

AMERICAN INDIAN VETERANS GET \$825K IN REIMBURSEMENTS

Alysa Landry - 11/30/2011

FARMINGTON NM — About 660 American Indian veterans in New Mexico have received reimbursements of state income taxes wrongly withheld from their pay while they served on active military duty. The payments total more than \$825,000 but fall short of the \$1.2 million allocated for refunds, the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department reported. A 2008 law established a settlement fund to compensate American Indian veterans who paid state taxes when they were on active duty. The Legislature the following year allocated dollars for that fund.

<More at: http://www.daily-times.com/ci_19437565>

WHODA THINK IT?

REPORT: HIGH LEVELS OF 'BURNOUT' IN U.S. DRONE PILOTS

Rachel Martin - December 19, 2011

Around 1,100 Air Force pilots fly remotely piloted aircraft, or drones. These planes soar over Iraq or Afghanistan, but the pilots sit at military bases back in the United States. A new Pentagon study shows that almost 30 percent of drone pilots surveyed suffer from what the military calls "burnout." It's the first time the military has tried to measure the psychological impact of waging a "remote-controlled war."

The report, commissioned by the U.S. Air Force, shows that 29 percent of the drone pilots surveyed said they were burned out and suffered from high levels of fatigue. The Air Force doesn't consider this a dangerous level of stress.

However, 17 percent of active duty drone pilots surveyed are thought to be "clinically distressed." The Air Force says this means the pilots' stress level has crossed a threshold where it's now affecting the pilots' work and family. A large majority of the pilots said they're not getting any counseling for their stress.

<More at: <http://www.npr.org/2011/12/19/143926857/report-high-levels-of-burnout-in-u-s-drone-pilots>

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

NO ONE IS AS WEARY OF THE WARS AS THOSE WHO ARE SERVING TODAY!

Great compilation of demographic data on who is serving and who is dying in Iraq and Afghanistan.

<http://www.npr.org/2011/07/03/137536111/by-the-numbers-todays-military>

11-YEAR OLD COMPLETES 18-MONTH LONG MISSION TO SEND THANK-YOU CARDS TO ALL U.S. TROOPS OVERSEAS

ROCHESTER, N.Y., Dec. 16, 2011 /PRNewswire/

After nearly two years of devotion to writing messages of thanks and creating hand-decorated cards, 11-year-old Stephen Goodman from Surprise, Ariz. has exceeded his amazing goal of making 180,000 personalized thank-you cards for every U.S. service member deployed overseas. <More at: <http://nation.foxnews.com/military/2011/12/16/11-year-old-completes-18-month-long-mission-send-thank-you-cards-all-us-troops-overseas>

NEW ACCESS TO OLD DISCHARGE UPGRADE MANUAL

The Connecticut Veterans Legal Center at Yale has put David Addlestone's *Military Discharge Upgrading, and Introduction to Veterans Administration Law: A Practice Manual*, along with its 1990 supplement, on line at <http://ctveteranslegal.org/resources/>. Although the manual is dated, it is still an excellent resource when used with current regs. [From Kathleen Gilbert]

GOOD OPPORTUNITY IF YOUR ORGANIZATION PROVIDES THESE SERVICES

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR VETERAN FAMILIES PROGRAM

General Information

The Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program is a new VA program that awards grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives who will provide supportive services to very low-income Veterans and their families residing in or transitioning to permanent housing. The grantees will provide a range of supportive services designed to promote housing stability.

The 2011 SSVF Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) has been published in the Federal Register! Please click on the links provided below to view the NOFA as well as for resources and instructions regarding the grant application process.

 [SSVF 2011 NOFA](#)

 [2011 SSVF Application for Supportive Services Grant \(New Applicants\)](#)

 [2011 SSVF Renewal Application for Supportive Services Grant](#)

 [2011 SSVF Applicant Budget Template](#)

 [2011 SSVF NOFA Workshop Schedule and Registration Form](#)

 [SSVF NOFA Workshops](#)

To learn about the NOFA, application, and scoring process, please view the National Center's [SSVF Program Overview Webcast](#). This webcast was recorded on September 30, 2010, however, the procedural information is applicable to this year's NOFA announcement and grant application process.

Note: To view these files, please download VLC Player at <http://www.videolan.org/vlc/>.

<http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp>

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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