

NEWSLETTER

March - April 2007

Disabled American Veterans
Blind Veterans National Chapter

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WELCOME ABOARD

William Craft KS

TAPS

Willis Wheat Oklahoma

May He Rest in Peace

The 1st meeting of the BVNC will be held at 9:30 am, on Friday, August 10th

The “Call for Delegates” form is being sent out with a return date of April 15th

The Blind Veterans National Chapter holds its meeting at the DAV National Convention. The chapter holds three meetings for the purpose of conducting chapter business.

1. The first meeting's business will include the first nomination of officers for the next year, assignment of delegates and alternates to DAV National Committees, reading of the minutes from last year's meetings, a review of the financial report for the previous year's business along with any old and/or new business.
2. The second meeting will address the election of officers and other outstanding business.
3. The third meeting will be preceded by a breakfast after which the newly elected officers will be installed. The meeting will follow shortly after this.

CHAPLAIN

Please let the Blind Chapter Chaplain know if you are sick, hospitalized or you know of one of our members who is. Contact Reverend Anthony Martino at 25016 87th Street, Unit 2, Salem Wisconsin 53168. His phone number is 847 736 2111 and his email address is Deaconmart@wi.rr.com.

Sick & Distress

Del Landers has recently had two heart attacks.

“DAV NATIONAL CONVENTION”

The DAV National Convention will be held at the Hilton Riverside in New Orleans. The inclusive dates for the Blind Veterans National Chapter will be August 11 – 14, 2007

If you do not receive your “Call for Delegate” form please contact Adjutant Fox using the information at the beginning of this newsletter.

LEGISLATION

Background Information

Following is a listing of Congressional bills of interest to the military community that have been introduced in the 110th Congress. Support of these bills through cosponsorship by other legislators is critical if they are ever going to move through the legislative process for a floor vote to become law. A cosponsor is a member of Congress who has joined one or more members in his/her chamber (i.e. House or Senate) to sponsor a bill or amendment. The first member to sign onto a bill is considered the Sponsor, members subsequently signing on are Cosponsors. Any number of members may cosponsor a bill in the House or Senate. At <http://thomas.loc.gov> you can determine the current status of each bill, the committee it has been assigned to, and if your legislator is a sponsor or cosponsor of it. The key to increasing cosponsorship is letting our representatives know of veterans feelings on issues. At the end of some of the below listed bills is a web link that can be used to do that. Otherwise, you can locate on <http://thomas.loc.gov> who your representative is and his/her phone number, mailing address, or email/website to communicate with a message or letter of your own making:

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H.R 797. To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve compensation benefits for veterans in certain cases of impairment of vision involving both eyes, and for other purposes.

HOUSE VA COMMITTEE VOTES YES!

Benefits for Visually Impaired Veterans

H.R. 797 Dr. Allen Veteran Vision Equity Act

Adequate Funding for VA Healthcare

We need to be assured that in addition to the current medical care needs that the needs of wounded servicemen returning from Afghanistan and Iraqi will be met.

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.R.0136: Identity Theft Notification Act of 2007. A bill to amend title II of the Social Security Act to provide that individuals and appropriate authorities are notified by the Commissioner of Social Security of evidence of misuse of the Social Security account numbers of such individuals. Sponsor: Rep Gallegly, Elton [CA-24] (introduced 1/4/07). Cosponsors (4).

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H.R.0402: Veterans' Disability Compensation Automatic COLA Act.

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A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for annual cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) to be made automatically by law each year in the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities and the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain service-connected disabled veterans. Sponsor: Rep Knollenberg, Joe [MI-09] (introduced 1/11/07). Cosponsors (23). To support this bill and/or contact your Representative refer to

[http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9330146&queueid=\[capwiz:queue_id\]](http://capwiz.com/usdr/issues/alert/?alertid=9330146&queueid=[capwiz:queue_id]).

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BENEFITS

SOURCE: Chapter 7 of the 2007 Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents*

Burial and Memorial Benefits

Eligibility, Burial in VA National Cemeteries, Inscribed Headstones and Markers, Burial Flags Furnished by VA, Reimbursement of Burial Expenses, Military Funeral Honors Provided by DOD Upon Request, Veterans Cemeteries Administered by Other Agencies

Eligibility: Veterans discharged from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable and servicemembers who die while on active duty, as well as spouses and dependent children of veterans and active duty servicemembers, may be eligible for VA burial and memorial benefits. The veteran does not have to pre-decease a spouse or dependent child for them to be eligible.

With certain exceptions, active duty service beginning after Sept. 7, 1980, as an enlisted person, and after Oct. 16, 1981, as an officer, must be for a minimum of 24 consecutive months or the full period of active duty (as in the case of reservists or National Guard members called to active duty for a limited duration). Eligibility is not established by active duty for training in the reserves or National Guard.

Reservists and National Guard members, as well as their spouses and dependent children, are eligible if they were entitled to retired

pay at the time of death, or would have been if they were over age 60.

VA national cemetery directors verify eligibility for burial in their cemeteries. A copy of the veteran's discharge document that specifies the period(s) of active duty and character of discharge, along with the deceased's death certificate and proof of relationship to the veteran (for eligible family members) are all that are usually needed to determine eligibility.

This chapter contains information on the full range of VA burial and memorial benefits. Readers with questions should contact the nearest national cemetery, listed by state in the VA Facilities section of this book, call 1-800-827-1000, or visit the website at <http://www.cem.va.gov/>.

Burial in VA National Cemeteries

Burial in a VA national cemetery is available for eligible veterans, their spouses and dependents at no cost to the family and includes the gravesite, grave-liner, opening and closing of the grave, a headstone or marker, and perpetual care as part of a national shrine. For veterans, benefits also include a burial flag (with case for active duty) and military funeral honors. Family members and other loved ones of deceased veterans may request Presidential Memorial Certificates.

VA operates 124 national cemeteries, of which 84 are open for new interments and 20 of these accept only cremated remains. Burial options are limited to those available

BENEFITS

TRAVEL PAY

at a specific cemetery but may include in-ground casket, or interment of cremated remains in a columbarium, in ground or in a scatter garden. Contact the nearest national cemetery to determine if it is open for new burials and which options are available.

Seven new national cemeteries are scheduled to open in the next few years near the cities of Bakersfield, California.; Birmingham, Alabama.; Greenville, South Carolina.; Jacksonville, Florida.; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.; Sarasota, Florida.; and West Palm Beach, Florida.

The funeral director or the next of kin makes interment arrangements by contacting the national cemetery in which burial is desired. VA normally does not conduct burials on weekends. Gravesites cannot be reserved; however VA will honor reservations made under previous programs.

Surviving spouses of veterans who died on or after Jan.1, 2000, do not lose eligibility for burial in a national cemetery if they remarry.

Burial of dependent children is limited to unmarried children under 21 years of age, or under 23 years of age if a full-time student at an approved educational institution. Unmarried adult children who become physically or mentally disabled and incapable of self-support before age 21, or age 23 if a full-time student, also are eligible for burial.

Some Travel Costs to Receive VA Medical Care May be Reimbursed by VA

Certain veterans may be reimbursed for travel costs to receive VA medical care. Reimbursement is paid at \$.11 per mile -- or \$.17 per mile if called for a repeat Compensation & Pension (C&P) exam -- and is subject to a deductible of \$3 for each one-way trip and an \$18-per-month maximum payment. Two exceptions to the deductible are travel for C&P exam and special modes of transportation, such as an ambulance or a specially equipped van.

Eligibility: Payments may be made to the following:

1. Veterans whose service-connected disabilities are rated 30 percent or more.
2. Veterans traveling for treatment of a service connected condition.
3. Veterans who receive a VA pension.
4. Veterans traveling for scheduled compensation or pension examinations.
5. Veterans whose gross household income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension.
6. Veterans whose medical condition requires a special mode of transportation, if they are unable to defray the costs and travel is pre-authorized. Advance authorization is not required in an emergency if a delay would be hazardous to life or health.

RESOURCES

FREE Military Handbooks Request Form

<http://www.militaryhandbooks.com/request.htm>

or call (888) 333-9335 and then press 1.

Publisher's Note: These FREE Handbooks are currently only available in an electronic version (PDF file). However, we are planning to offer FREE print versions of these handbooks in the near future. If you want us to send you FREE print versions when they become available you need to obtain the order form and fill it out and submit it.

Other books that can be ordered:

- 2007 US Military Handbook
- 2007 US Military Retired Handbook
- 2007 Getting Uncle Sam to Pay for Your College Degree
- 2007 After the Military Handbook
- 2007 Benefits for Veterans and Dependents
- 2007 Veterans Healthcare Benefits
- 2007 Military Children's Scholarship Handbook

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AWARE, a national not-for-profit organization, has recently launched www.VisionAWARE.org -- a free and practical website specifically designed

to provide self-help information to adults with vision loss, their families and friends, and those who work with them. The site aims to compliment services provided by state and local agencies, and has been developed by experienced vision rehabilitation personnel from the field of blindness and low vision.

..... **How You Get Credit For Special Extra Earnings**

www.socialsecurity.gov

The information that follows applies **only** to active duty military service earnings from 1940 [through 2001](#). Here's how the special extra earnings are credited:

Service In 1978 through 2001

For every \$300 of active duty basic pay, you are credited with an additional \$100 of earnings up to a maximum of \$1,200 a year. If you enlisted after September 7, 1980, and didn't complete at least 24 months of active duty or your full tour, you may not be able to receive the additional earnings. Check with Social Security for details.

Service In 1957 Through 1977

You are credited with \$300 of additional earnings for each calendar quarter in which you received active duty basic pay.

Service In 1940 Through 1956

If you were in the military during this period, including attendance at a service academy, you did not pay Social Security taxes. However, your Social Security record may be credited with \$160 a month in earnings for military service from September 16, 1940, through December 31, 1956, under the following circumstances:

- You were honorably discharged after 90 or more days of service, or you were released because of a disability or injury received in the line of duty; or
- You are still on active duty; or
- You are applying for survivors benefits and the veteran died while on active duty.

You cannot receive credit for these special extra earnings if you are already receiving a federal benefit based on the same years of service. There is one exception: If you were on active duty after 1956, you can still get the special earnings for 1951 through 1956, even if you're receiving a military retirement based on service during that period.

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Phone Numbers

Education 1-888-442-4551
Headstones and Markers
1-800-697-6947
Health Care 1-877-222-8387
Life Insurance 1-800-669-8477
Special Health Issues 1-800-749-8387
Telecommunication Device

for the Deaf (TDD) 1-800-829-4833
VA Benefits 1-800-827-1000

Web Sites

- Burial and Memorial Benefits www.cem.va.gov/
- Department of Defense www.defenselink.mil/
- Education Benefits www.gibill.va.gov/
- Federal Jobs www.usajobs.opm.gov/
- Health Care Eligibility www.va.gov/healtheligibility/
- Home Loan Guaranty www.homeloans.va.gov/
- Life Insurance www.insurance.va.gov/
- Records www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/
- Returning Veterans www.seamlesstransition.va.gov/
- Veterans Employment and Training www.dol.gov/vets/
- Veterans Preference www.opm.gov/veterans/index.asp
- Vocational Rehabilitation www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/index.htm
- VA Benefit Payment Rates www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates/
- VA Facilities www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp
- VA Forms www.va.gov/vaforms/
- VA Home Page www.va.gov/