



NEWSLETTER

A PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS
OF THE DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
DEPARTMENT OF NEW YORK

Volume 17 Number 4

October 2008

COMMANDER'S COLUMN

Robert J. Finnerty, Department Commander

I would like to start off by thanking PDC Dennis Krulder. Dennis accompanied me touring the following VA Hospitals – Castle Point, Montrose, Rochester and Canandaigua. The staffs at all these campuses were just super and very helpful. The grounds at Montrose, Castle Point and Canandaigua were breathtaking. Castle Point and Montrose overlook the Hudson River. What a scenic view it is! Thank you Dennis for your support to the Department.

On last Sunday, along with Prospero Sodano and my wife Margaret, we attended a wonderful ceremony at Calverton National Cemetery. It was the 30th Anniversary of the Cemetery. The United States Marine Corps Band from North Carolina played great military music for us. The ceremony was just outstanding. I wish that all of you could have attended it.

On February 17, 2009, all televisions with digital antenna in the United States will need a converter box to receive broadcasts. This digital to analog converter box has to be purchased. You can get a \$40.00 coupon and help offset the cost. To apply online for the coupon, go to the website address www.ntia.doc.gov <<http://www.ntia.doc.gov>> . Or, you can call the toll free number 1-888-388-2009. The Federal Communication Commission site is <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/digitaltv.html> or the Commission's DTV site at www.dtv.gov. You will definitely enjoy HDTV!

NOBODY ASKED ME – BUT!!!

Sidney Siller, Sr., PDC; Department Adjutant

As an old time citizen soldier, and having enjoyed a full professional career as a trial lawyer in 18 of the 62 counties in the "Empire" State of New York, very few things are a real surprise. That is not to say I have become a jaded cynical veteran with hardened views. Just the opposite, on introspection; I am born optimist that looks for the inherent merits essential to enjoying life.

So what has caused me to have this rare moment of surprise? On October 15, 2008, our National Service Director Randy Reese released a news release statement, which publicly acknowledged that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) role as "veterans advocate" has been recently tainted by the alleged falsification of performance data in the New York, New York VA Regional Office and alleged destruction of claims file evidence in the Detroit, Michigan VA Regional Office.

These nefarious acts were caught by routine internal VA oversight audits. The revelations have caused management employees to be placed on administrative leave (with pay) pending the outcome of the internal investigations.

What stressed me the most was the outrageous betrayal of our veterans by a federal agency created to care for us.

There is no question that many of us have been hurt by the arrogance of the administrators who are directly involved in the investigations.

There are currently more than 800,000 cases that are awaiting adjudication. The damage to these men and women is incalculable.

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PRESIDENT SIGNS COST OF LIVING INCREASE FOR VETERANS

President Bush has signed into law legislation providing a 5.8 percent cost-of-living increase in VA compensation benefits.

The measure increases compensation paid to veterans with service-connected disabilities, as well as dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of deceased veterans. Last year's cost of living adjustment was 2.3 percent.

The benefit increase, to take effect Dec. 1, is pegged to changes in the Consumer Price Index, a key measure of inflation, and is tied to the annual increase for Social Security recipients. The increase, which applies to about 2.8 million veterans and survivors, will first appear in January VA benefit checks.

ALL CHAPTERS MUST NOW FILE WITH THE IRS

Anthony Mirando, Department Treasurer

All Chapters must now file a 990-N form with the Internal Revenue Service. Unfortunately, this must be filed electronically using a computer. The website address is <http://epostcard.form990.org>. You will first be asked to create a login and password for your Chapter. You will then be instructed on filling out the form and submitting it.

Membership Status as of 10/29/08

Trial Members: 2,523
Part Life Members: 2,757
Full Life Members: 49,257
Total Members: 54,537
Goal for Full Life Members: 49,606 (99.30%)

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

Department of New York

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Continued from Sidney Siller, Sr.'s column, page 1

The extent of the damage awaits the results of the investigations. How deep does the extent of the misconduct go?

Are the transgressions due to corruption; neglect; or malfeasance; misfeasance; or nonfeasance?

We know that there has been a virtual hiring freeze for some years, how has that impacted the problem?

The VA is our collegial adversary. We need this agency to have the highest level on integrity in pursuit of its' mission. We need it to serve our veterans with unlimited dedication.

What we need to do now is to request that the investigations be expedited, and full blown to the extent that there are assurances that no other VA installations are involved, and that there will be appropriate sanctions for those involved.

If I can offer two suggestions, it is that the VA retain an "Ombudsman," at a dollar a year to assist the Secretary in prevention and control of such calamities in the future.

Secondly, let's thank Director Reese and our National DAV Staff for communicating this problem to us; as usual, with many of our problems, the press has been rather silent.

STATEMENT BY THE DAV REGARDING VBA INVESTIGATIONS

DAV Release October 23, 2008

The Disabled American Veterans is outraged by what appears to be the attempted deliberate destruction of documents pertinent to veterans' benefits claims at some Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Offices and serious problems elsewhere. The DAV has urged the VA to take immediate corrective actions to ensure the integrity of claims submitted by veterans.

National Service Director Randy Reese assures veterans who submitted claims evidence through DAV National Service Offices that records are kept to validate that evidence has been properly submitted. Reese said any documents submitted by veterans to DAV Chapter, Department or Transition Service Offices, through DAV National Service Offices have been recorded in DAV's Case Management System (CMS) and serve as credible evidence of submission to the VA.

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The DAV urges the VA to take prompt corrective action to ensure the mishandling of claims documents is not repeated, that individuals found to be responsible are held fully accountable and recommended the VA institute prompt new training programs for VA claims representatives in the administration of claims documents.

Reese said the DAV will cooperate fully with the VA during their investigation and DAV records will be made available for the purpose of assisting the VA to reconstitute their own records.

The DAV believes that this investigation, which Reese says has been the most open in recent memory, will permit the VA leadership to act decisively to protect the sanctity of claims records and to increase the professionalism of VA claims adjudicators.

SURVEY SHOWS MOST AMERICANS WANT GOVERNMENT TO STAND UP FOR VETERANS

DAV Press Release

WASHINGTON—Americans believe that providing medical care to injured, sick and disabled veterans should be near the top of our nation's priorities, in line with resolving the war in Iraq and lowering gas prices, according to a new nationwide survey. What's more, three-quarters of the public think the federal government is not doing enough to support military veterans.

And what do Americans think should be done? A large majority (83 percent) favor requiring Congress to determine the Department of Veterans Affairs health care budget one year in advance to prevent funding delays, and five in 10 say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who supported this change in funding.

According to the survey, over four in 10 Americans (44 percent) say that providing medical care to injured, sick and disabled veterans should be a "top priority" for the next President and Congress. Similar numbers place a high priority on resolving the war in Iraq (45 percent) and energy policies to lower gasoline prices (43 percent).

"The results of this survey clearly show that the American public supports efforts by the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and others to ensure sufficient, timely and predictable funding for veterans

health care," said DAV Washington Headquarters Executive Director David W. Gorman. "And it shows broad public support for legislation being introduced in Congress today that would change the way veterans health care is funded."

These are among the key findings of a nationally representative telephone survey of 827 adults conducted between Aug. 20 and Aug. 24 by Belden Russonello & Stewart on an omnibus questionnaire for the Disabled American Veterans. The margin of sampling error for a sample of this size is ± 3.4 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level.

ENHANCED VA MORTGAGE OPTIONS NOW AVAILABLE FOR VETERANS

VA Press Release WASHINGTON (Oct.24) -- Veterans with conventional home loans now have new options for refinancing to a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) guaranteed home loan. These new options are available as a result of the Veterans' Benefits Improvement Act of 2008, which the President signed into law on October 10, 2008.

"These changes will allow VA to assist a substantial number of veterans with subprime mortgages refinance into a safer, more affordable, VA guaranteed loan," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "Veterans in financial distress due to high rate subprime mortgages are potentially the greatest beneficiaries."

VA has never guaranteed subprime loans. However, as a result of the new law VA can now help many more veterans who currently have subprime loans.

The new law makes changes to VA's home loan refinancing program. Veterans who wish to refinance their subprime or conventional mortgage may now do so for up to 100 percent of the value of the property. These types of loans were previously limited to 90 percent of the value.

Additionally, Congress raised VA's maximum loan amount for these types of refinancing loans. Previously, these refinancing loans were capped at \$144,000. With the new legislation, such loans may be made up to \$729,750 depending on where the property is located.

Increasing the loan-to-value ratio and raising the maximum loan amount will allow more qualified veterans to refinance through VA, allowing for sav-

ings on interest costs or even potentially avoiding foreclosure.

Originally set to expire at the end of this month, VA's authority to guaranty Adjustable Rate Mortgages (ARMs) and Hybrid ARMs was also extended under this new law through September 30, 2012. Unlike conventional ARMs and hybrid ARMs, VA limits interest rate increases on these loans from year to year, as well as over the life of the loans.

Since 1944, when home loan guaranties were offered with the original GI Bill, VA has guaranteed more than 18 million home loans worth over \$911 billion. This year, about 180,000 veterans, active duty servicemembers, and survivors received loans valued at about \$36 billion.

For more information, or to obtain help from a VA Loan Specialist, veterans may call VA at 1-877-827-3702 or visit www.homeloans.va.gov.

WORLD'S LARGEST DISABLED SKI CLINIC AT SNOWMASS, COLO.

Registration open until November 30, 2008

WASHINGTON – Registration for participation in the 23rd National Veterans Winter Sports Clinic is open and will close on November 30, 2008 for the more than 450 disabled veterans, who are expected to register to ski the Rocky Mountains at the 23rd National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic in Snowmass Village, April 1 - 4, 2009. Among those are nearly 120 recently injured during Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF). Contact Teresa Parks, Administrative Coordinator of the Clinic at (970) 263-5040 to obtain a registration package.

The Clinic is an annual rehabilitation program open to U.S. military veterans with traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, orthopedic amputations, visual impairments, certain neurological problems and other disabilities who receive care at a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facility or military treatment facility.

Co-sponsored by VA and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), the Clinic is a world leader in promoting rehabilitation by instructing veterans with disabilities in adaptive Alpine and Nordic skiing, and introducing them to a number of other adaptive

recreational activities and sports. For many newly injured veterans, the Clinic offers them their first experiences in winter sports and gives them the inspiration for continued self development.

Known for inspiring "Miracles on a Mountainside," the Clinic shows that the lives of disabled veterans can be changed forever when they discover the challenges they can overcome.

For further information, contact Teresa Parks, Clinic Administrative Coordinator at (970) 263-5040 or Jenny Tankersley Ballou, VA public affairs coordinator, Winter Sports Clinic, at (757) 728-3450; or Rob Lewis, DAV Communications, at (859) 442-2049. You can log onto: www.wintersportsclinic.va.gov for information about last year's event.

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY EXPANSION

Washington Post Michael Laris article 18 Sep 08

Arlington National Cemetery, the final resting place for more than 340,000 soldiers, presidents and other distinguished Americans, has moved a step closer to adding thousands of gravesites. On September 16th, Arlington County officials approved a 4.3-acre land swap with the federal government that will allow the cemetery to add as many as 3,440 burial sites. The move is part of expansion plans set forth more than four decades ago that military officials say will allow burials to continue until 2060. After that, plans are less clear. The 4.3-acre portion will convert Navy Annex land west of the Pentagon to gravesites. Arlington County's Southgate Road would have divided the new cemetery space. The county will swap land that includes the road for a comparable piece of the annex that the county can use for a potential history complex and for redevelopment along Columbia Pike. The exchange is scheduled for 2011, although that timeline could change, federal and local officials said.

George W. Dodge, president of the Arlington Historical Society said, "It's not just a cemetery now; it's a shrine. It's a shrine to valor and the sacrifices American men and women have made. Given the space constraints, there are only a finite number of days or years it can stay open . . . so acreage becomes an issue. You can trace the history of this country through all the interments there. It's like a walk through history. If it's cut off at some point, you're going to lose that." Soldiers from the

Revolutionary War to the Iraq war have been buried on the 624-acre grounds, including William Russell, a colonel from the Virginia regiment who was present during the winter at Valley Forge. Presidents William H. Taft and John F. Kennedy are there, as are North Pole explorers Robert Peary and Matthew Henson. Dirt dug from graves today is moved nearby to help prepare future sites. Officials estimate that each acre can accommodate 600 to 800 graves. In other expansion plans, the cemetery is building a wall along Route 110 that will hold 6,500 niches for cremated remains. A third project will add sites near Fort Myer. And what happens a half-century from now, when the land runs out? "It's hard to say," said Kaitlin Horst, a cemetery official. "I don't know that that's been discussed at this point. We're working on the three we have now, and I guess we'll cross that bridge when we get to it."

NOVEMBER MSO STOPS

The following is the November 2008 MSO stops in our area. The time for all stops is from 10:00 am until 4:00 pm. Please contact NSO Supervisor Jeff Hall with any questions you may have at (212) 807-3157.

Tuesday, November 18, 2008 - Kingston

VFW Post #1386
708 East Chester Street

Wednesday, November 19, 2008 - Amenia

Sheriff's Sub Station
Route 22, Amenia 12501

Thursday, November 20, 2008 - Castle Point

Castle Point VA Medical Center
Route 9D

Friday, November 21, 2008 - Goshen

Dikeman Engine Hose Company #3
Dikeman Street

AMERICAN VETERANS BY THE NUMBERS

Source: US Census Bureau

23.6 million - The number of military veterans in the United States in 2007.

1.8 million - The number of female veterans in 2007.

16% Percentage of Persian Gulf War veterans in

2007 who were women.

2.4 million - The number of black veterans in 2007. Additionally, 1.1 million veterans are Hispanic, 278,000 are Asian, 165,000 are American Indian or Alaska Native, and 27,000 are Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. (The numbers for blacks, Asians, American Indians, and Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders cover only those reporting a single race.)

9.3 million - The number of veterans age 65 or older in 2007. At the other end of the age spectrum, 1.9 million were younger than 35.

7.9 million - Number of Vietnam-era veterans in 2007. Thirty-three percent of all living veterans served during this time (1964-1975). In addition, 5 million served during the Gulf War (representing service from Aug. 2, 1990, to present); 2.9 million in World War II (1941-1945); 3 million in the Korean War (1950-1953); and 6.1 million in peacetime.

358,000 - In 2007, number of living veterans who served during both the Vietnam era and in the Gulf War.

Other living veterans in 2007 who served in two or more wars:

315,000 served during both the Korean and Vietnam wars.

69,000 served during three periods: World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War.

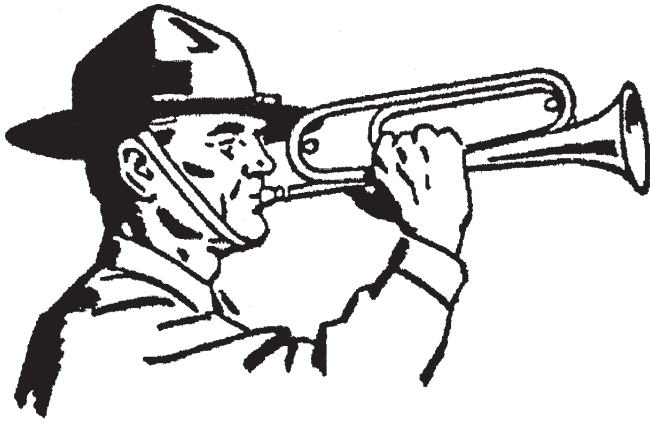
263,000 served in World War II and the Korean War.

The number of states with 1 million or more veterans in 2007 are California (2.1 million), Florida (1.7 million), Texas (1.7 million), New York (1.1 million), Pennsylvania (1.1 million), and Ohio (1 million).

November 11, 2008 is VETERAN'S DAY



A celebration to honor America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good. Thank you to all our veterans.



TAPS

Department has been notified that the following comrades have been called into final formation above:

Salvatore J. Barone, Chapter #117, 6/08

Joseph A. Brindisi, Chapter #117, 6/08

Daniel Cary, Chapter #117, 6/08

Robert Felber, Chapter #117, 6/08

Fredrick J. Hammer, Chapter #117, 6/08

John F. McCarthy, Chapter #117, 7/08

Marvin L. Rothman, Chapter #117, 7/08

Frank J. Stabilr, Chapter #117, 7/08

Andrew Bokrosh, Chapter #117, 9/08

Henry N. Casone, Chapter #117, 9/08

Bertram Chericke, Chapter #117, 9/08

Robert H. Gericke, Chapter #117, 9/08

John T. O'Connor, Chapter #117, 9/08

Orfeo Oliva, Chapter #117, 9/08

Sam Parisa, Chapter #117, 9/08

James V. Sabia, Chapter #117, 9/08

Richard F. Willemann, Chapter #117, 9/08

Robert F. Gooshaw, Chapter #69 Adjutant, 9/23/08

Stella Gnatek, PSC (1983-84) DAVA #177, 9/13/08

Kenneth Woodward, Chapter #153, 10/13/08

Henry H. Marlette, Chapter #153, 10/17/08

Victor R. Azzoto, Chapter #30 Past

Commander, 10/26/08

Department and the membership extend deepest sympathies to the family members, friends and comrades of these fallen heroes. May each one rest in honor.

Please feel free to call, write or e-mail davny@optonline.net Headquarters if you have a loss in your Chapter that you would like to include in this column.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2009 Mid-Winter Conference

February 22, 2009 to February 25, 2009

Crystal Gateway Marriott

Arlington, VA 22202

State Executive Committee Meeting

March 13, 2009 to March 15, 2009

Hudson Valley Resort

Kerhonkson, NY

Department of New York's 88th

Anniversary Celebration

Sunday May 17, 2009

El Caribe Country Club

Brooklyn, New York

Department of New York Convention

June 28, 2009 to July 1, 2009

Hudson Valley Resort

Kerhonkson, New York

Rehab Cruise XVII

July 14, 2009

Nautical Empress

Freeport, NY

2009 National DAV Convention

August 22, 2009 to August 25, 2009

Sheraton Hotel Denver

Denver, CO 80202