

The Navigator

Waukesha County Veterans' Services

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FEDERAL, STATE & LOCAL BENEFITS UPDATE

NEWS UPDATE FOR FEDERAL BENEFITS



Letter from Eric K. Shinseki Secretary of Veterans Affairs

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (March 13, 2009) - Following is an open letter to Veterans from Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki:

"My name is Ric Shinseki, and I am a Veteran. For me, serving as Secretary of Veterans Affairs is a noble calling. It provides me the opportunity to give back to those who served with and for me during my 38 years in uniform and those on whose shoulders we all stood as we grew up in the profession of arms.

"The Department of Veterans Affairs has a solemn responsibility to all of you, today and in the future, as more Veterans join our ranks and enroll to secure the benefits and services they have earned. I am fully committed to fulfilling President Obama's vision for transforming our department so that it will be well-positioned to perform this duty even better during the 21st Century. We welcome the assistance and advice of our Veterans Service Organizations, other government departments and agencies, Congress, and all VA stakeholders as we move forward, ethically and transparently, so that Veterans and citizens can understand our efforts.

"Creating that vision for transforming the VA into a 21st Century organization requires a comprehensive review of our department. We approach that review understanding that Veterans are central to everything VA does. We know that results count, that the department will be measured by what we do, not what we promise, and that our best days as an organization

supporting Veterans are ahead of us. We will fulfill President Lincoln's charge to care for "...him, who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan..." by redesigning and reengineering ourselves for the future.

"Transforming any institution is supremely challenging; I know this from my own experience in leading large, proud, complex, and high-performing organizations through change. But the best organizations must be prepared to meet the challenging times, evolving technology and, most importantly, evolving needs of clients. Historically, organizations that are unwilling or unable to change soon find themselves irrelevant. You and your needs are not irrelevant.

"Veterans are our clients, and delivering the highest quality care and services in a timely, consistent and fair manner is a VA responsibility. I take that responsibility seriously and have charged all of the department's employees for their best efforts and support every day to meet our obligations to you. Our path forward is challenging, but the President and Congress support us. They have asked us to do this well - for you. Veterans are our sole reason for existence and our number one priority - bar none. I look forward to working together with all VA employees to transform our department into an organization that reflects the change and commitment our country expects and our Veterans deserve.

"Thank you, and God bless our military, our Veterans, and our Nation."

Signed: Eric K. Shinseki

COMMENTARY CORNER By: John L. Margowski, Director

I met with County Executive Dan Vrakas in March and have turned in my retirement notice. August 28, 2009 will be my last day. It has been an honor to work for Waukesha County veterans, their dependents and survivors for 32 years. This will also be the last issue of the "Navigator" that I will do. My replacement may change the name and/or the format but I am sure that Waukesha County Dept. of Veterans' Services will continue to inform the veteran community of all veteran news and issues. Again, thanks for the honor to have worked for you and thanks to my staff for their outstanding efforts and work over the past years on behalf of Waukesha County veterans.

I have included the list of legislative priorities that the Wisconsin Dept. of Veterans' Affairs has provided. These items are needed to provide stability to the Veterans' Trust Fund. They do not resolve the long term financial woes of the Trust Fund, but do stave off disaster for the immediate future if they are implemented.

At the Federal Level, the Administrators' decision to have private insurance companies pay for VA treatment of Service connected Disabilities has been withdrawn. This is an

excellent example of the voices of the veterans' community, in unity being heard.

Wisconsin's Veterans, 2009 Legislative Goals, Fund the Wisconsin Veterans Museum with GPR. Currently, this state treasure is funded almost entirely by veterans.

The current budget proposal does not include the Agency requested \$1.7 million annual GPR funding of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. Funding for the Museum will continue to come from the Veterans Trust Fund. Veterans alone should not have to pay to preserve Wisconsin's proud military history. The Veterans Trust Fund has not received any major GPR support since the mid 1980's, this is not a new problem. The solvency of the Veterans Trust Fund has been seriously weakened by the lack of GPR support for Wisconsin's veterans programs in general and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum in particular. This combined with the more recent economic decline and lack of a reliable revenue source have contributed to the current state of the Veterans Trust Fund. Delaying support of the Veterans Museum and Trust Fund will both speed its insolvency and make solutions ultimately all the more difficult.

Reverse the proposed 1% "transfer" of our veterans' funds to the General Fund to help balance the state budget.

The proposed 1% "lapse or transfer" takes cash from the Veterans Trust Fund, the Mortgage Loan Repayment Fund and the Homes Fund to fill holes in the state budget. The lapse will take money used to purchase medications, food, and pay for contracted

medical services for the residents of the Homes. It would also take thousands of dollars in private donations made to our Homes. Veterans programs and services to include grants to veterans in need, CVSO Grants and County Transportation Grants will be impacted providing less support to our veterans. This lapse could prevent the Department from having the resources to meet federal requirements and could cause the loss of key federal revenues. As the stewards of the Veterans Trust Fund, we are especially concerned about the potential for a lapse or transfer of funds that would hasten insolvency of the Veterans Trust Fund. Under the proposed budget insolvency is projected to accelerate to 2012, two years earlier than under the agency budget submitted.

Exempt the Wisconsin Veterans Home from the Bed Tax increase.

In most private care settings, the proposed bed tax increase could be offset by a similar increase in Medicaid reimbursement. However, an increased bed tax on the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King would be different. The Home is already at the Medicaid upper limit and not eligible for increased payments. The bed tax increase proposal at the Wisconsin Veterans Home at King would pull an additional \$1.5 million over the biennium from the Home, with no additional Medicaid Offset. This is in addition to the proposed lapse of an additional \$1.5 million discussed above. Instead, the Home will have to make ends meet by increasing private pay rates charged to residents and their families or by decreasing services provided while our money goes to fill holes in the state budget.



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If you have any questions or comments about the contents of the newsletter, please contact Waukesha County Veterans' Service Office at 262-548-7732.

VA to Provide Payments to Eligible Surviving Spouses Quick Action Taken to Resolve Problem Identified by Senate Chairman

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (Dec. 18, 2008) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced immediate actions to quickly identify and pay surviving spouses who are eligible to receive a one-time compensation or pension payment for the month of the veteran's death.

"This benefit payment is long overdue to many of our beneficiaries," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "In these difficult economic times, it is imperative that we take aggressive action to fix this situation for the families of our veterans."

Problems in VA's implementation of a change in law that was effective in 1997 resulted in some surviving spouses not receiving the veteran's compensation or pension payment for the month of death. This problem was recently brought to VA's attention by Sen. Daniel K. Akaka, chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Peake immediately directed the formation of a special task force to identify and pay the beneficiaries who never received the benefit or were inadvertently required to repay the money issued for the month of a veteran's death.

Surviving spouses most likely to be affected by this processing problem are those who never applied to VA for survivors' benefits following the death of a veteran.

The task force is in the process of reviewing VA's payment records for veterans who died after December 31, 1996, and who are survived by a spouse. The review will identify those to whom VA owes retroactive benefits for

the month of the veteran's death. Current address information is being obtained for as many of these beneficiaries as possible.

VA will begin issuing retroactive payments to eligible surviving spouses at the end of this month. Payments will continue to be issued as additional unpaid beneficiaries are identified and VA is able to obtain current address information.

Because there are deceased veterans for whom VA does not have marital status information, a special Survivors' Call Center has been established for spouses who believe they may be entitled to this retroactive month-of-death benefit.

Surviving spouses are encouraged to contact the Survivors' Call Center at the toll-free telephone number, 1-800-749-8387. Call Center agents will assist surviving spouses in providing VA with the information needed to determine their eligibility.

The Call Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm central standard time. Inquiries may also be submitted through the Internet at <http://www.vba.va.gov/survivorsbenefit.htm>.

VA is aggressively changing its processing procedures to ensure this benefit is correctly paid to all surviving spouses in the future. VA's disability payment system will also be enhanced to automate the month-of-death payment for all eligible surviving spouses.

VA Urges Vets to Sign-up for Direct Deposits

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (December 15, 2008) -- Every month, 730,000 veterans or survivors look for their compensation, pension checks or educational assistance payments in their mailboxes. Nearly all receive them, but theft and mail delays cause problems for some veterans, which can be prevented by direct deposits.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is urging those veterans and family members now receiving paper checks to join nearly 3.1 million others whose VA payments are safely deposited electronically.

"VA is teaming up with the Treasury Department in a new campaign to protect government beneficiaries against the theft of funds and of their identities," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake.

"Veterans earned -- and rely on -- the financial support we send them every month. I urge them to help VA ensure

they get those funds reliably and safely by signing up for direct deposit."

Peake cited several easy ways to sign up for direct deposit -- calling VA toll-free at (800) 333-1795 or enrolling online at www.GoDirect.org.

Veterans, and family members who receive VA payments, also can sign up by contacting a VA regional benefits office or their financial institution. Information about direct deposits will be included in VA's monthly compensation and pension envelopes throughout 2009.

The VA Secretary urged veterans to remember that direct deposits relieve worry about mail delivery being delayed by severe weather or natural disasters. The deposits also eliminate trips to banks or credit unions to deposit checks, while providing immediate access to money at the same time each month.

Vietnam Veterans May be Eligible for Compensation for Diabetes

The following information is from WDVA Media Relations <http://dva.state.wi.us>

(MADISON) - As the occurrence of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus is increasing, for Vietnam veterans, there is a statistically higher incidence of Type 2 Diabetes.

Because of this, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) declared a link between service in Vietnam and the disease, due to herbicide exposure to Agent Orange, the defoliant sprayed in the jungles throughout Vietnam to clear foliage covering enemy hiding places.

Special VA health care and compensation benefits are available to the 2.6 million men and women who served in Vietnam proper between January 9, 1962 and May 1975. VA has a presumptive policy that presumes all military personnel who served in Vietnam were exposed to Agent Orange, and federal law presumes that certain illnesses, including Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus and several forms of cancer are a result of that exposure.

Military veterans who served in Vietnam who now have Type 2 Diabetes are eligible for presumptive service-connected disability compensation and health care connected with this condition through the VA. Service in the waters offshore or in the air does not qualify a

veteran unless there is proof that he or she set foot on land in Vietnam. For most veterans who served in Vietnam, their service is clearly shown on their military discharge papers (DD-214). Veterans with qualifying service should obtain a detailed statement from their treating doctor that they are being treated for diabetes, as a successful VA claim could entitle them to compensation for diabetes.

Once the service-connected condition has been established, a VA claim can be reopened for secondary conditions discovered, such as diabetic retinopathy.

Veterans may receive care for Type 2 Diabetes at any VA medical facility. Both medical care and prescription drugs required to treat the condition are provided without cost for veterans service-connected for the condition.

Wisconsin veterans who have never previously filed a VA claim may contact a local County Veterans Service Officer (see list on the Wis. Dept. of Veterans Affairs website at www.WisVets.com/CVSO) or call the department toll-free at 1-800-WIS-VETS (1-800-947-8387) for more information.

VA Continues Notification Process for Veterans Affected by Reprocessing Issues

The following information is from WDVA Media Relations <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced 3,174 Veterans have already been notified of the results of testing they underwent recently, that testing was conducted because of improperly reprocessed endoscopy equipment that may have been used in their care. These Veterans, in the Tennessee, Georgia and South Florida areas were among 10,555 Veterans sent letters offering free testing.

VA patients, who believe that they may have been exposed to cross contamination, were patients that received endoscopic procedures at the VA's Murfreesboro, Tenn., facility from April 2003 to December 2008 and the VA's Augusta, Ga., hospital from January 2008 to November 2008 and the VA's Miami hospital from May 2004 to March 2009.

As of April 1, 2009, 17 Veterans have tested positive for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, or the Human Immunodeficiency (HIV) Virus. Five Veterans tested positive for Hepatitis B virus; eleven for Hepatitis C; and one for HIV. Of the positive test results, eleven were tested at VA's Murfreesboro, TN facility, and six were tested at VA's Augusta, Ga., hospital. These results do not indicate that there is any relationship between these patients' conditions and the endoscopy procedures they underwent. However, VA is conducting an epidemiologic investigation to look into the possibility of such a relationship.

While reviews indicate that the transmission of Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C virus as a result of endoscopy procedures is extremely small and that transmission of HIV through endoscopy has never been reported, VA will appropriately counsel and care for these patients, no matter what the source of their infections may be.

“Secretary Shinseki has demanded that all Veterans enrolled with VA

get the best health care available anywhere,” said Michael J. Kussman, MD, MS, MACP, VA's Under Secretary for Health. “We have an obligation to provide those who have served and sacrificed for our Nation the care they deserve.”

VA is continuing the process of testing and counseling Veterans who may be affected by this issue. The Department has added additional personnel at its Murfreesboro, Augusta and Miami hospitals to ensure that affected Veterans receive prompt testing and appropriate counseling. It is attempting to locate individuals whose letters have been returned as undeliverable, and to reach out to homeless Veterans with no known address. Affected Veterans are notified about their test results as soon as their results are verified.

“The VA prides itself on being accountable and we are extremely concerned about this matter and as a result we have initiated an investigation,” said Kussman. “Additionally, we are making sure to take corrective measures to ensure Veterans have the information and the care necessary to deal with this unacceptable development.”

VA is committed to reducing and preventing inadvertent harm to our patients as a result of their care. The Department is a leader in the health care industry in developing and nurturing a culture of safety at all its facilities. Patient safety managers at all 153 VA hospitals lead VA's 280,000 employees in efforts to reduce and eliminate harm.

VA patients and their families may call 1-877-575-7256, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for additional information.

Defense Dept. Announces Expedited Disability Evaluation System Process for Combat Wounded



The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

The Department of Defense announced today, in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), a process designed to expedite a service member seriously injured in combat from military to veteran status, by waiving the standard Disability Evaluation System (DES), resulting in receipt of benefits in three to four months, compared to a recovery and standard DES process that would normally take much longer.

"This new policy should allow service members and their families to focus on the essentials of recovery, reintegration, employment and independent living, with the combined assistance from DoD and VA," said Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Michael L. Dominguez. "The policy supports our belief that there must be a distinction for those who incur devastating disabilities in combat."

The expedited process applies to service members whose conditions are designated as "catastrophic" and whose injuries were incurred in the line of duty as a direct result of armed conflict. A catastrophic injury or illness is a permanent, severely disabling injury, disorder, or disease that compromises the ability to carry out the activities of daily living to such a degree that a service member or veteran requires personal or mechanical assistance to leave home or bed, or requires constant supervision to avoid physical harm to self or others.

Service members who participate in the expedited process will be rated by DoD at a combined rating of 100 percent, and the VA will identify the full range of benefits, compensation and specialty care offered by the VA. Dominguez emphasized that the new process is optional for qualifying service members.

Service members and their families will be empowered to decide, after counseling on the options and potential concerns and benefits, the most appropriate choice for their situation," said Dominguez.

The policy provides special consideration and exception for members who retire under the expedited DES process to reenter the service with a waiver, should they subsequently request reentry to the service after recovery and rehabilitation.

The expedited policy differs from the DES pilot program, currently underway to test a new process design eliminating the duplicative and time consuming elements of the current standard disability processes at DoD and VA. Key features of the DES pilot include one medical examination and a single-sourced disability rating. To date, more than 1,000 service members have participated in the pilot during the last 14 months.

Some Veterans to See Another Travel Reimbursement Increase

The following information is from WDVA Media Relations <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (Dec. 29, 2008) - Service-disabled and low-income veterans who are reimbursed for travel expenses while receiving care at Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities will see an increase in their payments beginning January 9.

A recently passed law allows VA to cut the amount it must withhold from their mileage reimbursement. The deductible amount will be \$3 for each one-way trip and \$6 for each round trip -- with a calendar cap of \$18, or six one-way trips or three round trips, whichever comes first. The previous deductible was \$7.77 for a one-way trip, and \$15.54 for a round trip, with a calendar cap of \$46.62.

"I'm pleased that we can help veterans living far from VA facilities to access the medical and counseling help they deserve, especially in the current economic climate," said

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "Together with the increased mileage rate approved last month, we can further reduce the financial hardship some veterans undergo to use our superior health care."

In November, Peake announced VA's second increase in the mileage reimbursement rate during 2008, from 28.5 cents to 41.5 cents a mile.

Service-disabled and low-income veterans are eligible to be reimbursed by VA for the travel costs of receiving health care or counseling at VA facilities. Veterans traveling for Compensation and Pension examinations also qualify for mileage reimbursement. VA can waive deductibles if they cause financial hardship.

VA Ramps Up Job Search for Injured Vets

The following information is from WDVA Media Relations <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (Dec. 30, 2008) - Thirty percent of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are veterans - the second highest ranking among cabinet departments after the Department of Defense -- and nearly 8 percent of VA employees are service-connected disabled veterans. But the VA intends to increase the number of disabled veterans who obtain employment in its workforce.

"I am proud of this effort," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "VA knows the true quality of our men and women, and we should be a leader in employing them."

Peake said all severely injured veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will be contacted by VA's Veterans Employment Coordination Service to determine their interest in -- and qualifications for -- VA jobs. So far, that office has identified 2,300 severely injured veterans of those wars, of whom 600 expressed interest in VA employment.

The coordination service was established a year ago to recruit veterans into VA, especially those seriously

injured in the current wars. It has nine regional coordinators working with local facility human resources offices across the country not only to reach out to potential job candidates but to ensure that local managers know about special authorities available to hire veterans. For example, qualified disabled veterans rated by the Defense Department or VA as having a 30 percent or more service-connected disability can be hired non-competitively.

"Our team is spreading the message that VA is hiring, and we want to hire disabled veterans," said Dennis O. May, Director of VA's Veterans Employment Coordination Service.

VA coordinators participate in military career fairs and transition briefings, and partner with veterans organizations, the Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service, as well as VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service, the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment and the Army's Warrior Transition Units.

VA Assisting Veterans with Health Care Costs

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (Jan. 6, 2009) -- For veterans struggling financially due to a job loss or decreased income, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers an assortment of programs that can relieve the costs of health care or provide care at no cost.

"With the downturn in the economy, VA recognizes that many veterans will feel the effects," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "Therefore, it is important that eligible veterans learn of the many ways VA has to help them afford the health care they have earned."

Veterans whose previous income was ruled too high for VA health care may be able to enter the VA system based upon a hardship if their current year's income is projected to fall below federal income thresholds due to a job loss, separation from service or some other

financial setback.

Veterans determined eligible due to hardship can avoid copays applied to higher-income veterans. Qualifying veterans may be eligible for enrollment and receive health care at no cost.

Also eligible for no-cost VA care are most veterans who recently returned from a combat zone. They are entitled to five years of free VA care. The five-year "clock" begins with their discharge from the military, not their departure from the combat zone.

Each VA medical center across the country has an enrollment coordinator available to provide veterans information about these programs. Veterans may also contact VA's Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222 VETS (8387) or visit the VA health eligibility website at www.va.gov/healtheligibility.

INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES

<http://www.politics1.com/wi.htm>

<http://www.thewhellerreport.com/>

VA-NIH Study Offers Hope for Parkinson's Patients Study Says Deep-Brain Stimulation Has Benefits

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (January 13, 2009) -- Electrical stimulation of the brain -- a treatment in which a pacemaker-like device sends pulses to electrodes implanted in the brain -- is riskier than drug therapy but may hold significant benefits for those with Parkinson's disease who no longer respond well to medication alone.

That is the conclusion of researchers from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) who conducted a six-year study comparing deep-brain stimulation (DBS) to medication, along with speech, physical or occupational therapy, given as needed. The results of the trial, the largest of its kind to date, appear in the January 7 Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

"Deep-brain stimulation offers hope for a large number of patients with advanced Parkinson's disease who suffer from complications of long-standing medication therapy," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "This finding could mean improved quality of life for some of our patients."

The study included 255 Parkinson's patients at seven VA medical centers and six university hospitals. The VA sites were Portland, Ore., Seattle, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Houston, Richmond, Va., and Philadelphia, all members of VA's network of Parkinson's Disease Research, Education and Clinical Centers.

The JAMA article also noted VA's nationwide system of hospitals and specialized centers of excellence make the Department uniquely capable of conducting such large, multi-site trials of new therapies and medical devices. VA's patient population is especially suited for trials of treatments for chronic disease in the elderly.

Patients who took part in the study were on medication but are no longer seeing improvements in symptoms such as tremors or stiffness. Many were also developing side effects from the drugs, such as involuntary face, arm or leg movements.

Researchers followed the patients for six months, finding:

- ◆ Patients who received DBS gained an average of

4.6 hours per day of good motor control and few or no involuntary movements, compared with no gain for those on medical therapy alone;

- ◆ 71 percent of DBS patients showed significant gains in motor function, compared with only 32 percent of drug therapy patients; and
- ◆ Serious adverse side effects were nearly four times more common in the DBS group, but almost all of these effects in both groups were resolved during the six-month study. The most common side effects from DBS were infections, falls, depression, gait and balance problems, and pain.

Lead authors and study co-chairs were Frances Weaver, PhD, a researcher with the Center for Management of Complex Chronic Care at the Hines VA Hospital near Chicago, and Dr. Kenneth Follett, a neurosurgeon at the Omaha VA Medical Center and University of Nebraska. They emphasize that besides the higher likelihood of serious side effects with DBS compared with drug therapy, another drawback of the procedure is that, although it generally improves movement, it does little to help other Parkinson's symptoms such as depression, decline in mental ability, gait and balance problems, and trouble with gastrointestinal, urinary or sexual function.

"The results of the study should not be over- or under-stated," said Dr. Michael Kussman, VA's Under Secretary for Health. "Still, there are many good candidates for DBS among patients with Parkinson's disease whom we treat in VA."

The trial was sponsored by VA's Cooperative Studies Program and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, part of the National Institutes of Health. Additional support came from Medtronic, which makes the DBS system used in the study.

Parkinson's disease, a progressive neurological disorder, affects some 1.5 million Americans, with 50,000 new cases diagnosed annually.

VA treats at least 40,000 veterans with the disorder each year. Most patients are over age 50, but some forms of the disease can strike younger adults.

Shinseki Sworn In, Vows 21st Century Service to Veterans

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (Jan. 21, 2009) - Retired Army Gen. Eric K. Shinseki took the oath of office today as the Nation's seventh Secretary of Veterans Affairs, assuming the leadership of the Department of Veterans Affairs following Tuesday's confirmation by the Senate.

"The overriding challenge I am addressing from my first day in office is to make the Department of Veterans Affairs a 21st century organization focused on the Nation's Veterans as its clients," Shinseki said.

Shinseki plans to develop a 2010 budget within his first 90 days that realizes the vision of President Obama to transform VA into an organization that is people-centric, results-driven and forward-looking.

Key issues on his agenda include smooth activation of an enhanced GI Bill education benefit that eligible Veterans can begin using next fall, streamlining the disability claims system, leveraging information technology to accelerate and modernize services, and opening VA's health care system to Veterans previously unable to enroll in it, while

facilitating access for returning Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans.

Shinseki, a former Army Chief of Staff, takes the reins of a 284,000-employee organization delivering health care and financial benefits to millions of Veterans and survivors under a \$98 billion budget authorized this year through networks of regional benefits offices and health care facilities from coast to coast.

Born in 1942 on the island of Kauai, Hawaii, Shinseki graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., in 1965. He served two combat tours and was wounded in action in Vietnam. He served with distinction in Europe, the Pacific and stateside, eventually becoming the Army's senior leader from June 1999 to June 2003.

Retired from military service in August 2003, Shinseki's military decorations include three Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts.

Shinseki succeeds Dr. James B. Peake as Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

VA Suicide Prevention Hotline Created with 2,600 "Saves"

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON (Feb. 7, 2009) - As the military deals with a record number of suicides among active-duty forces, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki reminded Veterans and their families that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has an extensive array of services to help Veterans in distress.

"I urge Veterans and their loved ones to take advantage of our suicide-prevention program," said Shinseki. "Help for these heroes is a phone call away."

Since July 2007, VA has operated an around-the-clock suicide-prevention hotline that has received about 100,000 calls and has been credited with rescuing over 2,600 people. The number for VA's suicide prevention hotline is 1-800-273-TALK.

VA operates the largest mental health program in the country, with special efforts in each of the Department's 153 medical centers and more than 750 outpatient clinics to identify and treat at-risk patients.

In addition to operating the suicide-prevention hot-

line, VA has given all medical workers training in suicide prevention, created suicide prevention coordinators at each medical center, and given primary care clinics responsibility for mental health screening.

"We are reaching out to our newest generation of heroes - the Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan - to ensure they are aware of the services available to them," Shinseki added.

New requests or referrals for mental health appointments receive a preliminary evaluation within 24 hours and a comprehensive evaluation with 14 days. Emergency cases are dealt with immediately.

VA operates Readjustment Counseling Centers, commonly called Vet Centers, in 232 communities, where Veterans can receive care for a wide variety of issues related to leaving the military. Vet Center personnel are trained to identify at-risk Veterans and to counsel and connect them to appropriate VA medical services.

Camp Lejeune Water Contamination

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.opa.pressrel/>

The Department of the Navy has recently initiated a mail campaign to notify veterans stationed at the "Camp Lejeune" Marine Corps Base in North Carolina of toxic chemicals in the drinking water between 1957 and 1987. The letter invites service members and their families to participate in a registry of who may have consumed contaminated drinking water during that period.

Contamination

The following solvents were found in the drinking water at Camp Lejeune Base:

- ◆ Perchloroethylene or Tetrachloroethylene, from an off-base dry cleaning firm
- ◆ Trichloroethylene, from leaking underground storage tanks

Impact

It is not clear, at this time, that any of the military service members or their families were exposed to chemicals in drinking water at levels that would cause health problems.

VA Benefits Associated With Exposure

- ◆ There are currently no health screenings or health

benefits associated with this potential exposure. However, veterans who may have been exposed are encouraged to apply for enrollment, and if enrolled, should discuss any specific concerns with their VA healthcare provider.

- ◆ VA providers may direct concerned veterans to VHA Environmental Health program staff located at each medical center. These staff can offer informed discussions and answer health-related exposure questions.
- ◆ Veterans are encouraged to file a claim for VA disability compensation for any injury/illness they feel is related to their military service.

Additional Information

Veterans who received the letter from the Department of the Navy may visit the following websites for the most current updates:

- ◆ <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/lejeune/index.html>
- ◆ <https://clnr.hqi.usmc.mil/clsurvey/index.html>

For more information, call the Department of Navy toll-free at (877) 261-9782.

Stimulus Bill Provides \$198 Million for Filipino Veterans Congress Recognizes WWII Service

The following information was found on the internet <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/>

WASHINGTON - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced a new benefit for Filipino Veterans who aided American troops in World War II -- a cash payment authorized through the newly enacted American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Claims are now being accepted from Filipino Veterans eligible for one-time payments of \$9,000 for non-U.S. citizens and \$15,000 for Filipino Veterans with U.S. citizenship. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is working to begin making payments as soon as possible.

VA and the Embassy of the United States in Manila have announced locations in the Philippines where Veterans can apply immediately. The list has been posted at <http://manila.usembassy.gov>.

To receive information by mail, United States residents may call 1-800-827-1000. Philippine residents may call 632-528-2500 (within Metro

Manila) or from outside Manila at 1-800-888-5252. In addition, Filipino Veterans may request information via email at <https://iris.va.gov>.

The VA Regional Office in Manila will process all claims for this benefit. Therefore, U.S. residents should mail the application to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Regional Office, PSC 501, FPO AP 96515-100.

Extensive outreach is planned to alert World War II Veterans throughout the Philippines. Claims must be submitted by Feb. 16, 2010, a year after the bill's signing.

The payments do not affect other benefits Veterans may be receiving. The VA Regional Office in Manila currently provides approximately \$15 million monthly in monetary benefits to Veterans residing in the Philippines. About \$8 million of this goes to Filipino World War II Veterans or their survivors each month

VA Health Care—Beneficiary Travel Benefits

The following information was received carolyn.lamb1@va.gov

BENEFIT DESCRIPTION

If you meet the criteria below, you may be eligible for mileage reimbursement or special mode transport in association with obtaining VA health care services.

You Qualify If:

- ◆ you have a service-connected (SC) rating of 30 percent or more, or
- ◆ you are traveling for treatment of a SC condition, or
- ◆ you receive a VA pension, or
- ◆ your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or
- ◆ you are traveling for a scheduled compensation or pension examination

You Qualify for Special Mode Transportation (Ambulance, Wheelchair van etc.) if:

- ◆ your medical condition requires an ambulance or a specially equipped van as determined by a VA clinician, and
- ◆ you meet one of the eligibility criteria in 1 through 4 above, and
- ◆ the travel is pre-authorized (authorization is not required for emergencies if a delay would be hazardous to life or health)

MILEAGE RATES

General Travel—(effective November 17, 2008)
\$0.415 (41.5 cents) per mile

Scheduled appointments qualify for round-trip mileage. Unscheduled visits may be limited to return mileage only.

Deductible—\$7.77 one-way (\$15.54 round trip)

Deductible requirement is subject to a monthly cap of \$46.62. Upon reaching \$46.62 in deductibles or 6 one-way (3 round) trips, whichever comes first, travel payments made for the balance of that particular month will be free of deductible charges.

WAIVER OF DEDUCTIBLE

A waiver of the deductible will be provided if you are eligible for travel and you:

- ◆ are in receipt of a VA pension or;
- ◆ are a NSC veteran and your previous year's income does not exceed, or your projected current calendar year's income, in the year of application will not exceed the applicable VA pension rate, or
- ◆ are a SC veteran and your previous year's income does not exceed, or your projected current calendar year's income, in the year of application will not exceed the applicable national means test income threshold or,
- ◆ are traveling for a scheduled compensation and pension exam

Note: For detailed information visit the following links for National Means Test (MT) income thresholds <http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/library/pubs/VAIncomeThresholds/> and Pension income thresholds at: <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/rates/pen01.htm>.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Further information can be found in the Beneficiary Travel "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ) at <http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/Library/FAQs/BeneTravelFAQ.asp>.



In Memory...

WDVA Fact Sheet: Dept. of the Army Donations Program for Static Displays/Monuments & Ceremonial Rifles for Veterans' Organizations & Associations

The following information was received from Wisconsin Dept. of Veterans Affairs

A Veterans' Association is defined as a unit of any nationally recognized war veterans' association. Nationally recognized war veterans' associations are generally those organizations chartered by Congress and recognized by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Be advised that you, the recipient, are responsible for all costs associated with the conditional donation of U.S. Army property. These costs include the construction of a suitable display pad/foundation for the item, the cost of demilitarization and the cost of transportation from its current location to your display site.

To begin the application process, veterans' associations need to submit the documentation outlined below. All forms may be downloaded from www.tacom.army.mil/donations; however they must be submitted in hard copy with original signatures and raised notary seals.

All requests for materiel must be signed by the **commander, adjutant or quartermaster** or equivalent only. Requests signed by any other person will not be accepted. Written requests must be submitted to your national headquarters for approval and forwarded to:

U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command
ATTN: AMSTA-LC-CID, M/S: 419
6501 E. 11 Mile Road
Warren, MI 48397-5000

The request should include the type of equipment desired, intended display site of the item, street and mailing addresses of the requesting organization, phone number of the organization and the name, address and phone for the point of contact if other than the commander.

- ◆ Site photograph depicting the proposed display site of the donated item(s).
- ◆ Map of the area with directions pinpointing the location of the organization and the display site if different. Must be detailed enough to permit visitors and/or inspectors unfamiliar with local area to easily find.
- ◆ Photograph of the completed display pad or pedestal. [NOTE: **DO NOT** construct a pad or pedestal to hold your display item until contacted by this office and informed that a specific item is specifically identified and reserved for your organization. This will prevent the unnecessary expenditure of funds in the event an item is unavailable or an unforeseen delay occurs in the donation of an item to you.]
- ◆ **Certificate of Assurance of Compliance** with Title VI, Civil Rights Act.
- ◆ Demilitarization Intent Letter. If you opt to have the item demilitarized by someone other than TACOM, a letter is required from the organization you contract to perform this service (normally your local National Guard and/or reserve unit) stating that they will assume full responsibility for the proper demilitarization and certify to TACOM (**Certificate of**

Limited Demilitarization that it is done in accordance with published guidelines. Please keep in mind that false certification is a criminal act and punishable under federal law.

- ◆ Transportation Information. It is your responsibility to arrange for and provide the transportation of the donated item from its current location to your display site. If you opt to have the item demilitarized locally this may require a two step process. It may be necessary to move the item from its current location to your local National Guard unit for demilitarization, then transport to the display site. In some instances your local Guard unit may be able to perform the demilitarization on site; however this must be accomplished within 30 days of delivery. You are required to inform TACOM of the name, address, point of contact and phone number of the company you contract to perform this transportation for you. TACOM will notify the transporter and provide them with the necessary information to allow them to coordinate the movement with the current holder of the item being donated.

Conditional Deed of Gift. Upon delivery of your donated equipment, TACOM will forward two copies of a Conditional Deed of Gift. This Deed outlines your responsibilities for the retention, maintenance and conditions to retain this display item. Please sign both copies and return one copy to TACOM within 30 days. The other copy is for your files as proof of ownership. This document is equivalent to a title for this item with the U.S. Government as lien holder and should be protected as such.

Upon finalization of your display (must be completed with 60 days of receipt of the donated item) you are required to submit an 8X10 color photograph of the display. This photo is kept in TACOM's permanent record of the donation and is used as a reference for future certifications and inspections to insure proper maintenance of the display as outlined in your Conditional Deed.

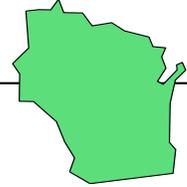
Annual Certification for Static Display Items is required to be submitted in January each year stating that you are properly maintaining the donated item and that you wish to retain it. This form must be accompanied by a 35mm photo showing the current condition of the display and properly notarized. It may also be used to inform TACOM in the event that you wish to turn the item back in to the government.

Additions to these basic steps may be required on a case by case basis.

If you want information regarding **static displays or monuments** and you live in Wisconsin, your personal representative is: Ms. Judith Milidrag, milidraj@tacom.army.mil

For more info on **Ceremonial Rifles**, and you live in Wisconsin, please contact: Ms. Audrey Clarke, clarkea@tacom.army.mil. For general information: Email: donations@tacom.5army.mil; Fax: (586) 574-7128.

NEWS UPDATE FOR STATE BENEFITS



ATTENTION A Tribute to The United States Armed Forces

The following information was received from: rebecca.boehlke@militaryvonesource.com



ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL & VETERANS*
A special Salute at Country USA

WHEN: Wed. June 24 & Sat. June 27, 2009

WHERE: Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Come in Uniform and Present a Valid Military I.D to Receive **2 FREE** General Admission Tickets.

*Veterans can present just military I.D.

For more information go to:
www.countryusaoshkosh.com

Featuring:

June 24, 2009:

Jimmy Wayne & Taylor Swift

June 27, 2009:

Diamond Rio, Julianne Hough,
 Rodney Atkins, & Dierks Bentley
 The Country USA Military Zone
 The Virtual Army Experience

A Special Performance by:
 the Volunteers of the Army Field Band
 Mass Swear-In Ceremonies on the Ford Mainstage
 on Saturday June 27, 2009.



King

Wisconsin Veterans Homes Quality Care for Veterans

The following information <http://dva.state.wi.us>

The State of Wisconsin offers two outstanding veterans homes that proudly serve military members and spouses who have served our country. The Wisconsin Veterans Homes at King and Union Grove offer veterans and their spouses quality care in an enriching environment that fits the need of the veteran.

“Our Wisconsin Veterans Homes provide top quality care to veterans and their families,” said Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) Acting Secretary Ken Black. “Our Homes provide veterans with an opportunity to enjoy the camaraderie of their fellow veterans with the support of caring and professional staff, and with many added amenities,” said Secretary Black.

Under the leadership of Commandant Bill Crowley, a Vietnam Veteran, the Veterans Home at King is a self-contained community on a 320-acre campus in Waupaca County on the shores of Rainbow Lake. The King Home includes four separately licensed nursing facilities that provide comprehensive nursing care to include a memory care unit, an on site dentist, a licensed librarian, pontoon boats, a bowling alley, and a complete wood working shop.

The Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove in Racine County is led by Commandant Randy Nitschke. Mr.

Nitschke, also a Vietnam Veteran, has extensive experience as a nursing home administrator. The Veterans Home at Union Grove includes assisted living facilities with many recently remodeled rooms, as well as a brand new skilled nursing facility and activity center. The Home at Union Grove also offers Medicare services as well a memory care unit.

Plans are underway to open a third state veteran’s home in Chippewa Falls. Initial funding requests have been approved, but the final approval by the Federal VA may not be announced until 2009 or 2010.

John L. Margowski, Waukesha County Veterans Service Officer, said, “Our Wisconsin Veterans Homes are a tremendous benefit for veterans and their spouses to receive the best health care possible and at a cost that is significantly less when compared with similar facilities.”

For photos and information about the Homes, to include admissions and eligibility, please visit www.WisVets.com/Homes, or contact your local County Veterans’ Service Office.

For information on all WDVA programs and services visit www.WisVets.com or call toll-free at 1-800-WIS-VETS (1-800-947-8387).



Union Grove

OPEN HOUSE & Military Aircraft Display—May 15-17, 2009

The following information was received from Paul Rogers prog@milwaukeeairshow.com Airshows of Wisconsin, Inc.



Wisconsin's Only Public Open House and Military Aircraft Display is Finally Back in 2009 !



After FIVE long years of dedicated operational commitments in defense of America, Milwaukee's own 128th Air Refueling Wing will once again host Wisconsin's only Annual Open House Event for the General Public, featuring a quality weekend of family fun & education at General Billy Mitchell Field.

year's Annual Open House Event, by purchasing an advertisement in the Commemorative Souvenir Program! This year's quality program will again be a magazine-style print piece, which offers long-lasting readership and exposure for your organization. All advertising purchases are fully tax deductible, supports Airshows of Wisconsin, Inc., the Wisconsin Civil Air Patrol, and the Marian Center For Non-Profits, a Milwaukee - based non-profit support center.

NOW is the time to showcase your company's patriotism, community support, and commitment for this

The public is invited to several exciting events in celebration of Armed Force Service. These events include a Ride for Armed Forces, Armed Forces Day at Miller Park and a military display.

For more information see our web-site at <http://armedforces.org/>



AD SIZES	DIMENSIONS	RATES	AD SIZES	DIMENSIONS	RATES
Full Page	7.5" x 10"	\$975	2/3 Page	7.5" x 7"	\$725
1/2 Page	7.5" x 5"	\$475	1/3 Page	7.5" x 3"	\$375
1/4 Page	3.75" x 5"	\$325	1/6 Page	4" x 3.25"	\$275
Biz Card	3.5" x 2"	\$135	Name Block	2.5" x 1.5"	\$ 85

AD SPECS & DEADLINE: April 25th, 2009

TO SEND AD BY EMAIL: Please Send to: prog@milwaukeeairshow.com. Please use the following file name: "AFW Print Ad + Your Company Name. CIRCULATION: 15,000. FORMAT: PDF, Mac or Windows. FONTS / GRAPHIC. Embed all fonts and graphics in file or include with original file. COLOR: CMYK

YES! I would like to purchase an ad in the Commemorative Souvenir Program!
Please check the appropriate box above to reserve your ad size

Company Name :		Authorized Signature:	
Address			
City:	State:	Zip:	Phone#:
Fax#:	E-Mail (Optional):		

TO RESERVE YOUR AD SPACE, PLEASE CALL 414-482-2069 or FAX TO 414-482-2069

*Event cancellation policy: Airshows of Wisconsin is not responsible for military display event cancellation due to acts of war, terrorism, government policy, or otherwise. Airshows of Wisconsin will provide distribution of the souvenir programs on the behalf of accepted advertisers in the event that the military display event cancels. By accepting advertising order, customer acknowledges this event policy.

Free Access to Wisconsin State Parks & Trails For Certain Disabled Veterans and Former POW's

The following information was received from: jstice_usowis@tds.net

(MADISON) – Beginning in October 2008, certain disabled veterans and former Prisoners of War (POWs) have been eligible to receive waivers of vehicle admission and trail pass fees for admittance to state parks, according to the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Eligible veterans include disabled veterans with a 70 percent or greater permanent or temporary disability rating by the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA). Also eligible are disabled veterans determined by the federal VA to be totally disabled due to Individual Unemployability (TDIU). A third group of veterans eligible to receive free admission to state parks and use of trails includes former Prisoners of War (POWs).

“With Spring here, this benefit will allow many disabled veterans and those POWs who served our nation through the most difficult of circumstances the opportunity to get outdoors, visit our state parks and use the trails,” said WDVA Acting Secretary Ken Black. “Working together with the DNR we can provide this wonderful benefit.”

“The DNR is proud to be part of this project that rightfully honors the service of disabled veterans and former Prisoners of War,” DNR Secretary Matt Frank said. “These brave men and women sacrificed so much for our freedom and we are happy to help provide greater opportunities for them to enjoy Wisconsin’s beautiful outdoors.”

After six months, 343 veterans have applied for and received waivers from the DNR. Veterans

may apply for the fee waiver by downloading and completing a Disabled Veteran Free State Park/Forest/Trail Pass Application (found at www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/parks/fees/waivers.html#veteran) and taking it to a County Veterans Service Officer (CVSO) to certify it. The application must be signed and stamped by a CVSO and mailed to: The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Parks and Recreation, 101 S. Webster St., P.O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707.

Veterans should not send medical records to the DNR. The Bureau of Parks and Recreation will mail out an identification card for a veteran to present each time he or she visits a state park, forest, or recreation area, which will then issue the veteran a courtesy pass for the day. Veterans are required to carry their identification cards with them when using state trails that require a trail pass.

Eligible Wisconsin veterans may contact a local County Veterans Service Officer (see list on the WDVA’s website at: www.WisVets.com/CVSO).

For more information, see WDVA’s webpage at www.WisVets.com/parks or DNR’s website at www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/parks/fees/waivers.html. Or call WDVA toll-free at 1-800-WIS-VETS (1-800-947-8387).



Stepping Stone Farms & Veteran’s Program Open House

The following information was received from steppingstonefarms.org

Come learn more about our emerging veteran’s programs, and see what we are doing to serve those who served !

**Lessons * Horsemanship * EAP/EAL
“Adopt-a-Horse” program information
And much more !**

WHEN: Sunday April 26, 2009
2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M.

WHERE: Stepping Stone Farms is located at:
S53 W29914 Holiday Road
Genesee, WI

For directions or further information call:

Stepping Stone Farms
414-379-2314

liafarrier@yahoo.com

And visit us online at steppingstonefarms.org

Waukesha Cold War Museum To Become a Reality Soon?

The following information was found at <http://www.gmtoday.com/news/local/>

WAUKESHA - Although some people might not know it, the proposed Cold War museum in Waukesha is on the verge of taking its next big step forward.

Chris Sturdevant, chairman of the Cold War Museum-Midwest Chapter, said the organization is gearing up for its fundraising drive and is building strong local support for the museum, which he said will propel the project into reality.

"Right now it's not just only the fundraising aspect, but getting people on board to help reach our goals," Sturdevant said. "We're also always looking for help and expertise to get exhibits going, and to build up the board. Looking for people right now is just as important as the money."

The proposed museum would be located at Hillcrest Park on the site of a former Nike missile battery. Its aim is to preserve the history of the Cold War and honor the veterans who served during that era.

Once owned by the federal government, Waukesha now owns Hillcrest Park through a program that transfers former federal sites into park space.

Mona Bauer, manager with the city parks, recreation and forestry department, said the plan by the organization must get approval from both the city and the National Parks Service before the museum can proceed.



The remains of radar equipment that made up part of the former Nike missile site still stand in what is now Hillcrest Park on Waukesha's east side. Fundraising for a proposed Cold War museum at the site is expected to begin in the near future.

MEMBERSHIP

YEARLY MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES					METHOD OF PAYMENT	
Business/Professional	\$150		Family	\$50	Visa	MasterCard
Individual	\$25		Student	\$15	Check/Money Order made payable to "The Cold War Museum"	
Contact me for an "in-kind" Contribution (I'd like to volunteer or I have Artifacts)					PayPal (can be used through coldwar.org/midwest/chapter)	

CREDIT CARD #: _____ Expiration Date: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

PHONE #: (Include area code) _____

**MAIL TO: THE COLD WAR MUSEUM, MIDWEST CHAPTER
PO BOX 1112, WAUKESHA WI 53187-1112 (262-227-1198)**

DATES TO REMEMBER

May 10 Mother's Day

June 14 Flag Day

May 17 Armed Forces Day

June 21 Father's Day

May 25 Memorial Day

June 21 Summer Begins



The end
is NEAR...

AFTER 32 YEARS IT'S TIME FOR A NEW WAY OF LIFE...

~~THE "TURKEY" HUNTER~~

is out of here ! !



- WHO:** John L. Margowski's - RETIREMENT PARTY
- WHEN:** AUGUST 20, 2009
- WHERE:** 500 Riverview Ave
"Brookfield Room" (RM. G137 Across from the Veterans' Service Office)
Waukesha WI 53188
262-548-7732
- TIME:** 11:00 A.M.—3:00 P.M. ("Roast" at 12:15 P.M. by Peter Schuler)

Please join us for cake & coffee and to wish John well in his retirement.



Good
Luck!

