



THE CENTURION

DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE

The Commission extends its greetings for the New Year to all veterans and their families. We are anxiously anticipating the appointment of a new Administrator for our Veterans Home. Interviews were conducted during late December and early January from a core of well qualified individuals. We expect that the Secretary of State will name an individual for the position in the very near future. Please remember that a tax deductible donation can be made to the Veterans Home with a check made payable to the following: Delaware Veterans Home Fund, Department of State, 401 Federal St., Suite 3, Dover, DE 19901. The continued involvement of our Armed Forces in stabilizing conditions in Iraq and Afghanistan continues to require our collective support. Our forces are now involved in providing all forms of relief to the people of Haiti as a result of the devastating earthquake that recently hit the island nation. We ask that you keep the people of Haiti in your prayers as well as assist them with whatever means available to you. I would like to thank our three State Veterans Service Officers for their outstanding work in assisting veterans during this past year. The number of individuals seeking assistance in filing claims to the Department of Veterans Affairs has increased substantially. Please contact your area Veterans Service Officer by calling the Commission office at (800) 344-9900 for assistance and / or an appointment. I have had the opportunity to talk to a number of our veterans that are utilizing both the Dover and Georgetown VA Clinics (CBOCs). All were satisfied with the caliber of care received and with the professional attitude of the medical staff assigned. A number of new CBOC initiatives will be forthcoming as the New Year unfolds.

Sincerely,
Paul V. Lardizzone
Chairman

THOUGHT FOR THE QUARTER

“The way things are going in Washington, some politicians who planned to run for office will be running for cover.”

DFAS MYPAY SYSTEM UPDATE

All existing Personal Email Addresses were deleted from MyPay on November 30, 2009. If you want a Personal Email Address you may enter it as a Secure Personal Email Address. It should be secure enough that sensitive information as well as general notifications may be sent to it and it may not match an existing email address on MyPay. To add your Personal Email Address as your Secure Personal Email Address, select the email address option located on your MyPay main menu. You must enter the Secure Personal Email Address twice. Questions regarding this MyPay change may be directed to the Centralized Customer Support Unit at 1(888)-332-7411, commercial (216) 522-5096, Defense Switching Network (DSN) 580-5096 (0700-1830 EST). (DFAS, November 2009)

WIDENER LAW SCHOOL VETERANS LAW CLINIC STARTS NEW PROGRAM: WILLS FOR VETS

The Veterans Law Clinic of Widener University Law School, a free legal clinic that has assisted veterans and dependents in presenting appeals from the Regional Office to the Board of Veterans Appeals since 1997, is starting a new program for veterans and dependents who need wills, advance care directives and durable powers of attorney. A will allocates your estate to whom you wish at your death. An advance care directive, another word for a “living will,” tells your loved ones and your doctors whether you want extraordinary measures to be used to preserve your life when you are unconscious and unable to express your wishes to them. A durable power of attorney allows someone you trust to manage your bank accounts and other property if you are unconscious and unable to manage for yourself. Prof. Tom Reed, the Director, said that any veteran who is at least 30% disabled is eligible for this service. He also indicated that a veteran who is not rated 30% disabled whose income is 150% of poverty level or less can also get

a free will, advance care directive and durable power of attorney. The Wills for Vets program will begin in February 2010. The Wills for Vets Program will be participating in a program on the Delaware campus of Widener University on Saturday, April 17, 2010, from 10:00 to 4:00 jointly with the Wills for Heroes Program. While the Wills for Heroes representatives will be drafting wills, advance health care directives and durable powers of attorney for first responders, e.g., EMT’s, firefighters and police officers, the Wills for Vets program will be scheduling interviews for veterans and dependents. If any veteran wants to have a will, advance care directive or durable power of attorney, the veteran should contact the Veterans Law Clinic to schedule an appointment. The number to call in Wilmington is 302-477-2090. You can request an appointment by e-mail to Prof. Reed at tjreed@mail.widener.edu. The clinic will send you a

worksheet to fill out ahead of your interview so that when you come in for an interview, your will, advance care directive and durable power of attorney can be ready for you to sign within an hour. (Tom Reed, Widener University, January 27, 2010)

VA BURIAL BENEFIT UPDATE

VA offers the following benefits and services to honor our Nation's deceased Veterans. For detailed information about all VA benefits and services, refer to www.va.gov:

- Headstones and Markers: VA can furnish a monument to mark the grave of an eligible Veteran.
- Presidential Memorial Certificate (PMC): VA can provide a PMC for eligible recipients.
- Burial Flag: VA can provide an American flag to drape an eligible Veteran's casket.
- Reimbursement of Burial Expenses: Generally, VA can pay a burial allowance of \$2,000 for Veterans who die of service related causes. For certain other Veterans, VA can pay \$300 for burial and funeral expenses and \$300 for a burial plot.

- Burial in a VA National Cemetery: Most Veterans and some dependents can be buried in a VA national cemetery.
- Time Limits: There is no time limit to claim reimbursement of burial expenses for a service related death. In other cases, claims must be filed within two years of the Veteran's burial. (VA Pamphlet 21-00-1, July 2009)

TRICARE RETIRED RESERVE

A new program will offer “gray area” reservists the opportunity to purchase Tricare health care coverage. While qualified members of the Selected Reserve may purchase premium-based coverage under Tricare Reserve Select (TRS), retired National Guard and Reserve personnel did not have Tricare health coverage options until they reached age 60. Under a provision of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2010, that’s all changed. The new provision will allow certain members of the Retired Reserve who are not yet age 60 (gray-area retirees), to purchase Tricare Standard (and Extra) coverage. Tricare Extra simply means beneficiaries have lower out of pocket costs if they use a network provider. “We’re working hard to coordinate all the details of eligibility, coverage and costs, and expedite implementation of this important program,” said Rear Adm. Christine Hunter, deputy director of the Tricare Management Activity. “This is a major benefit program with implementation on the same magnitude as TRS. It will require detailed design, development and testing, but qualified retired reservists should be able to purchase coverage by late summer or early fall of 2010.” While the health care benefit provided for gray-area retirees will be Tricare Standard and Extra – similar to TRS – the new program will differ from TRS in its qualifications, premiums, copayment rates and catastrophic cap requirements. The program is tentatively called Tricare Retired Reserve. The new statute requires premium rates to equal the full cost of the coverage. That is the major difference contrasted with TRS, where the statute provides that Selected Reserve members pay only 28 percent of the cost of the coverage. Premiums for the new gray area retiree program will be announced after

program rules are published in the Federal Register. This new program offers an important health coverage option for Reserve and National Guard members who served their country honorably before hanging up their uniforms at retirement, said Hunter. For more information about Tricare benefits go to <http://www.tricare.mil>. (Tricare News Release, December 2009)

VA STATEMENT ABOUT 2010 BENEFITS AND PROGRAMS

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) wants to inform Veterans of the following changes that will take effect in 2010:

- VA will Freeze Increase in Prescription Copayments: Any increase in Veterans out-of-pocket payments for pharmaceuticals will be delayed until June 30, 2010. This means the department will delay a scheduled \$1 increase – to \$9 – in the copayments facing Veterans for each 30-day supply of medicine for the treatment of conditions not related to military service. During this period, VA will also keep \$960 as the maximum, annual out-of-pocket payments for pharmaceuticals for non-service-related conditions. The yearly maximum out-of-pocket payment was scheduled to increase to \$1,080. There are no copayments associated with the treatment of conditions related to military service.
- VA will Distribute Insurance Dividends: Approximately 900,000 Veterans are in line to share \$286.4 million in annual insurance dividends during 2010. VA operates one of the nation’s largest life insurance programs, providing more than \$1 Trillion in coverage to seven million service members, Veterans, and family members. These payments will be made to insurance policy holders on the anniversary date of their policies. Payments will be sent automatically through different payment plans and the amounts will vary based on the age of the Veteran, the type of insurance, and the length of time the policy has been in place. **Consistent with private mutual insurance company practice, the VA is returning a portion of premium payments** back to policyholders because the agency had strong financial

results. Veterans who have questions about their policies may contact the VA insurance toll-free number at 1-800-669-8477 or send an email to VAinsurance@va.gov. They may also visit the Internet at www.insurance.va.gov.

- **No Adjustment in COLA for Disability Compensation + Pension Benefits:** As a result of negative inflation and the consumer price index going down over the past year the Social Security Administration has announced there will be no COLA this year for Social Security recipients. Under federal law VA's COLAs cannot exceed the Social Security COLAs. Therefore, VA is barred from making a COLA increase for recipients of its benefits. VA provides compensation and pension benefits to over 3.8 million Veterans and other beneficiaries. Presently, the basic monthly rate of compensation paid to Veterans ranges from \$123 to \$2,673. Annual income limits for disability pension begin at \$11,830 for a Veteran without dependents and increase for Veterans who have dependents, who are housebound, or who need regular aid and attendance. Veterans who have questions about their benefits may contact the VA's financial benefits toll-free number at 1-800-827-1000 or go to www.vba.va.gov/VBA. (VA News Release, January 07, 2010)

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that the Department of Veterans Affairs fields questions from Veterans 24 hours a day, seven days a week? Since 2002, VA has used the Inquiry Routing and Information System (IRIS) to receive questions from veterans via VA.Gov. Visitors can click on the "Contact the VA" link that appears on the VA home page to send VA a question. Inquiries are routed to the appropriate VA program office, medical center or network office, VBA Regional Office or National Cemetery Administration office either by self-selected choices on our Web site or by call center staff. IRIS is also the tool of choice for Veterans Benefits call centers that enter inquiries on behalf of veterans and others who contact VA via its national call centers. This application provides veterans and other VA Web site visitors with secure communication of

electronic messages and any attendant personal data, should they voluntarily choose to provide it to VA. In 2002, IRIS had 750 internal users and received between 2000 and 3000 inquiries per month. As of December 2009, IRIS has 2,000 internal users and receives approximately 30,000 inquiries per month with the numbers continually rising. IRIS also includes a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) knowledge base that receives more than 200,000 hits a month. (*Office of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, December 18, 2009*)

VA REACHING OUT TO STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS TO SPEED BENEFIT PAYMENTS "Shared Responsibilities" Among Schools, Students and VA

In a coordinated effort to speed up the processing of Post 9/11 GI Bill education benefits this spring, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has been reaching out to student Veterans, service members, university officials and other partners to meet its commitment to an aggressive processing goal by Feb. 1, 2010. February 1 is the first date spring payments are due and presently VA has processed over 72,000 of the approximately 103,000 spring enrollments received. Since inception of the historic new program last year, VA has paid over \$1.3 billion in benefits to more than 170,000 students. "Only by VA and all of our partners working together will students be better served," said VA's Acting Under Secretary for Benefits Mike Walcott. "We are making a concerted effort to reach out to everyone to provide the timely benefits that those who served our nation deserve." Walcott said there are "shared responsibilities between VA, universities and the students to ensure the success of processing the education benefits on time." VA has sent letters to university presidents and school certifying officials, state veterans affairs directors, and notified veteran service organizations, congressional members and other education stakeholders highlighting VA's emphasis on the importance of timely submission of school enrollment information. VA also released a "Hip Pocket" guide and checklist, with helpful tips to assist Veterans in the application process.

The guide and checklist can be found on college campuses and VA's GI Bill Web site, www.gibill.va.gov. VA is working to provide timely payments to all eligible Veterans to ensure that students are spared the financial hardships which some faced during the fall 2009 term. To help address the high volume of claims received for the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, VA hired 530 employees, bringing the total number of education claims processors to 1,200. Employees have been working mandatory overtime since August 2009. Additionally, the department awarded a temporary contract to assist with education claims processing. Veterans, service members, reservists, and members of the National Guard who served on active duty since September 11, 2001 are potentially eligible for the new Post-9/11 GI Bill. It provides payments for tuition and fees, as well as a housing allowance and stipend for books and supplies for many participants. Under the new GI Bill, some members of the armed forces may transfer benefits to a spouse or dependent children. Information about the Post-9/11 GI Bill, as well as VA's other educational benefit programs, is available at VA's Web site, www.gibill.va.gov, or by calling 1-888-GIBILL-1 (or 1-888-442-4551). (VA News Release, January 20, 2010)

COLA 2011

The Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that inflation rose 0.1% in October 2009 due to slight increases in energy and new car prices. The CPI is the measure used to make annual cost-of-living adjustments to military retired pay, survivor benefits, Social Security and other federal pensions. However, cumulative inflation 1.8% in the hole for COLA calculation purposes, since inflation actually declined 1.9% last year. If the October inflation rate of 0.1% were to continue every month, it would take until December 2010 to get out of the "COLA hole." And that would mean no COLA until December 2011 (payable in the Jan 2012 check). That may turn out to be a pessimistic forecast, as inflation could well heat up in time to generate a small COLA in December 2010. (MOAA Legislative Update, November 24, 2009)

SECRETARY SHINSEKI ANNOUNCES STUDY OF VIETNAM-ERA WOMEN VETERANS

Comprehensive Study Will Help VA Provide High-Quality Care

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is launching a comprehensive study of women Veterans who served in the military during the Vietnam War to explore the effects of their military service upon their mental and physical health. "One of my top priorities is to meet the needs of women Veterans," said Secretary Shinseki. "Our Veterans have earned the very best care. VA realizes that women Veterans require specialized programs, and this study will help VA provide high-quality care for women Veterans of the Vietnam era." The study, which begins in November and lasts more than four years, will contact approximately 10,000 women in a mailed survey, telephone interview and a review of their medical records. As women Vietnam Veterans approach their mid-sixties, it is important to understand the impact of wartime deployment on health and mental outcomes nearly 40 years later. The study will assess the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental and physical health conditions for women Vietnam Veterans, and explore the relationship between PTSD and other conditions. VA will study women Vietnam Veterans who may have had direct exposure to traumatic events, and for the first time, study those who served in facilities near Vietnam. These women may have had similar, but less direct exposures. Both women Veterans who receive their health care from VA and those who receive health care from other providers will be contacted to determine the prevalence of a variety of health conditions. About 250,000 women Veterans served in the military during the Vietnam War and about 7,000 were in or near Vietnam. Those who were in Vietnam, those who served elsewhere in Southeast Asia and those who served in the United States are potential study participants. The study represents to date the most comprehensive examination of a group of women Vietnam Veterans, and will be used to shape future research on women Veterans in

future wars. Such an understanding will lay the groundwork for planning and providing appropriate services for women Veterans, as well as for the aging Veteran population today. Women Veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the Veteran population. There are approximately 1.8 million women Veterans among the nation's total of 23 million living Veterans. Women comprise 7.8 percent of the total Veteran population and nearly 5.5 percent of all Veterans who use VA health care services. VA estimates women Veterans will constitute 10.5 percent of the Veteran population by 2020 and 9.5 percent of all VA patients. In recent years, VA has undertaken a number of initiatives to create or enhance services for women Veterans, including the implementation of comprehensive primary care throughout the nation, staffing every VA medical center with a women Veterans program manager, supporting a multifaceted research program on women's health, improving communication and outreach to women Veterans, and continuing the operation of organizations like the Center for Women Veterans and the Women Veterans Health Strategic Healthcare Group. The study, to be managed by VA's Cooperative Studies Program, is projected to cost \$5.6 million. (VA News Release, November 18, 2009)

REVISIT KOREA TOURS

Since 1975, the Republic of Korea has been inviting Korean War Veterans and family members to return to Korea on a subsidized visit to thank them for their sacrifices that saved their country from Communism. Thousands of veterans, from all the Allied Countries that participated in the war, have enjoyed this sojourn to the "Land of the Morning Calm." The Korean government pays for hotel rooms and meals for 5 nights and 6 days plus in country tours. Accommodation is based on two persons per room. Commencing in June 2010, the Revisit Korea tours will be increased "three fold" and, for the first time, the ROK government is planning to subsidize the airfare of both the veteran and his family member/companion. A veteran is allowed to bring one family member. The eligibility requirements will also be relaxed in view of the age

of the veterans. The exact dates have not been published. However, they are planning on five major commemorations, the first being the Invasion Anniversary, June 25th. This will be followed by the Pusan Perimeter, the Inchon Landing, the Liberation of Seoul and the Northern Winter Campaign of 1950. Applications are available at www.kwva.org/graybeards/gb_09/gb_0912/gb_0912_revisit_korea_application.pdf. A \$400 deposit per person is required to be included with the application and payment in full must be made prior to 60 days of the tour departure. Participants are required to have a valid passport. A visa is not required for 15 days or fewer in Korea. Registrations will be date stamped and will be "First Come - First Served"! To register, call (800) 722-9501 or (703) 590-1295. Check the KWVA web site at www.KWVA.org or www.miltours.com for tour dates. You can also mail the Revisit Coordinator at mhtours@miltours.com, to request a brochure. Those eligible to participate include:

- Veterans who supported ground, naval, or air operations between June 25, 1950 and October 25, 1954.
- A widow or family member of a veteran killed in action during the war.
- A family member of a Korean War veteran physically unable to travel.
- Anyone who has previously participated in the Revisit Korea program (www.kwva.org, December 2009)

SECRETARY SHINSEKI RELEASES HOSPITAL REPORT CARD *Transparent Look at Quality and Safety Gives VA High Marks*

For the second consecutive year, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has released a "hospital report card" as part of VA's effort to provide the public with a transparent accounting of the quality and safety of its care. "This report demonstrates VA's determination to be open and accountable," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "As a health care organization, transparency of information is essential to providing quality care for our Veterans." In addition, for the first time, data

from both the 2008 and 2009 reports will be available to the public in machine-readable format on Data.gov. To empower Veterans and the public at large to track quality, safety, and access to Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities, VA's hospital report cards include raw data on care provided in outpatient and hospital settings, quality of care within given patient populations, and patient satisfaction and outcomes. VA issued its first facility-level report on quality and safety in May 2008. As part of the Obama Administration's commitment to open government and accountability, VA highlights its rigorous quality programs and actions taken to address the issues VA identified from the last report. The report gives the health care system high marks, with VA facilities often outscoring private-sector health plans in standards commonly accepted by the health care industry. "Patient-centric care is our mission," said Shinseki. "As Secretary, I am committed to continuing to meet and surpass our high standards of care each and every day." In addition to allowing VA to demonstrate the quality and safety of its care, the report card provides opportunities to enhance health services.

Some of the marked improvements that VA showed in 2009 include:

- Smoking cessation counseling provided to 89 percent of Veteran patients, a six percent improvement from 2008; and
- Among all ages at risk, 94 percent of Veterans received a pneumonia immunization, a four percent improvement.

The report notes there is more to be done for women Veterans. To address this priority and provide women Veterans with the highest quality care, VA has implemented several initiatives, such as placement of women advocates in every outpatient clinic and medical center, and creating a "mini-residency" program on women's health for primary care physicians. The report also found minority Veterans are generally less satisfied with inpatient and outpatient care than other Veterans. In addition to targeting outreach efforts to these Veterans, a minority Veteran program coordinator has been placed in every medical center. "VA's hospital report card will become a valuable resource

of information for Veterans, stakeholders and the department." said Shinseki. "It will allow VA's health care system to be forward looking and focused on advancement." (*VA News Release, December 09, 2009*)

VA MEDICAL SCHOOL AFFILIATIONS

To ensure Veterans receive 21st century care, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki has vowed to strengthen the partnership between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the schools that train the nation's health care professionals. Secretary Shinseki said, "Schools of medicine and other institutions of higher education for health care professionals have been essential partners with VA in caring for Veterans for over 60 years. VA is strengthening that relationship to ensure it provides accessible, world-class health care for the men and women who have served this nation in uniform." Shinseki's remarks came in response to a report by a blue-ribbon panel appointed to advise VA on strengthening relationships with medical schools and other colleges and universities for health care professionals. Two key recommendations from that report, which are among the 50 for which Shinseki said VA will have an implementation plan by January, are:

- Formation of a standing, federally-chartered advisory committee to help VA realize the full potential of its partnerships with health professional schools; and
- Examination and streamlining of policies and procedures that impede those partnerships.

The report reaffirms the vital importance of academic affiliations and calls for VA to strengthen its partnerships with the academic community to enhance health care for Veterans. VA manages the largest medical education and health professions training program in the United States. VA facilities are affiliated with 107 medical schools, 55 dental schools and more than 1,200 other schools for health care professionals. Each year, 100,000 health professionals are trained in VA medical centers. About two-thirds of the physicians practicing in the United States have had some of

their professional education in the VA health care system. "We welcome this opportunity to build even stronger bonds that will benefit not only the Veterans we serve, but also the tens of thousands of health professional trainees who receive some of their professional education in VA facilities," said Shinseki. The Blue Ribbon Panel on VA-Medical School Affiliations, which included members from within and outside VA, was chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act in 2006. It was led by Dr. Jordan Cohen, professor of medicine and public health at George Washington University and president emeritus of the Association of American Medical Colleges. (*VA News Release, November 16, 2009*)

**VA HONORS TOP HEALTH CARE
FACILITIES
Bay Pines, Louisville
Receive Coveted Carey Awards**

The Bay Pines VA Healthcare System in Florida and the Louisville VA Medical Center in Kentucky were selected this year as the top health care facilities within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), culminating an intense, fact-based evaluation of VA operations. Deputy Secretary W. Scott Gould, who presided over the awards ceremony, said the 13 VA organizations cited in the awards are "at the forefront of organizational excellence – organizations that want to improve upon their accomplishments and build a legacy of excellence by delivering high quality care and benefits to America's men and women who have served in uniform." Bay Pines and Louisville will share this year's Robert W. Carey Performance Excellence Trophy – VA's top honor for organizational performance. The Bay Pines Healthcare System in Florida consistently performs in the top 5 percent of all VA health care facilities. Bay Pines demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation through its use of technology, "Go Green" chemicals, and adoption of the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association's "Get with the Guidelines" program. Bay Pines is also pursuing Magnet Recognition, an award for nursing excellence given

by the American Nurses Credentialing Center. The Louisville VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Kentucky partners closely with the Ireland Army Community Hospital at Fort Knox to provide integrated care to service members as they transition to Veteran status. Louisville VAMC has been recognized consistently for its effective operations that result in better outcomes for Veterans. Recent recognitions for the Louisville facility include the 2009 Kentucky Award for Performance Excellence, Level 3 Achievement (the second-highest of four award levels); the 2008 VA Carey Excellence Award, and a three-year winning streak for its Systems Redesign Team in VA's Mid-South Healthcare Network. "At VA, we have been blessed with a career force of men and women who come to work every day with one goal in mind – to care for Veterans," Gould added. "Whether in operating rooms, rehabilitation clinics, benefits offices or cemeteries, the Department's mission resonates powerfully with the workforce." Selection criteria for the Carey award are based on the Malcolm Baldrige Performance Excellence criteria and scoring guidelines. The Baldrige criteria assess leadership, strategic planning, customer focus, knowledge management, workforce focus, process management and results. As part of the selection, a panel of external Baldrige criteria experts reviewed and objectively assessed the performance of VA organizations competing in this program. Other top-performing VA organizations recognized by the Robert W. Carey Performance Excellence program include:

- The Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System, for its model practices in emergency medical response, transforming care at the bedside, and outreach to Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom;
- The James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital and clinics in Tampa, Fla., whose Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center is recognized by VA as one of the finest and most comprehensive chronic pain rehabilitation programs in the nation.
- South Texas Veterans Health Care System in San Antonio, with one of three National Institutes of Health-sponsored clinical research centers in VA

and several joint ventures with the Department of Defense.

Other VA organizations receiving special recognition as achievement winners include:

- Camp Nelson National Cemetery in Kentucky;
- The Central Texas Veterans Health Care System;
- The VA Maryland Health Care System in Baltimore;
- The Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks, in Fayetteville, Ark.; and
- The Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center.

Three previous Carey Award-winning facilities -- the Minneapolis VAMC, the Cooperative Studies Program Clinical Research, Pharmacy Coordinating Center in Albuquerque, N.M., and the White River Junction VA Medical Center in Vermont -- will be honored during the ceremony with "Circle of Excellence" awards for sustained excellence.

The Robert W. Carey Quality Award, presented annually since 1992, is named for the former director of the VA Regional Office and Insurance Center in Philadelphia who died in 1990. He was a champion for excellence in the federal government and led his office in initiating a total-quality management approach to serving Veterans and their families. (*VA News Release, November 13, 2009*)

SNAP

The USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, renders service to up to 28 million needy families every month. Food stamps have become a life blood for countless low-income families struggling to put food on the table. SNAP can provide you a specific amount for you to buy nutritious food from participating supermarkets. You will be given an Electronic Benefits (EBT) Transfer Card which will be pre-loaded with an amount specified by your state office to claim your SNAP benefits. The EBT Card is similar to an ATM or a debit card which can be used to purchase groceries at participating supermarkets. Eligible households may purchase food items such as fruits and vegetables; breads and cereals; meats, fish and poultry; and dairy products. SNAP cards may also be used to purchase plants and seeds that could

produce food for the family. Restaurants in some parts of the country may also accept SNAP payment in exchange for low-cost meals to certain individuals like the homeless, elderly and disabled. SNAP cannot be used to purchase alcoholic beverages, tobacco products, vitamins and medicines, domestic supplies, pet foods and toiletries. SNAP provides a specific budget allocation per eligible family. The food allowance will depend on the family's income and household size, plus other factors to determine what specific amount will be allocated to your family by your state. Each eligible family should fill out a State application form available in Local/State offices detailing the eligibility requirements. A complete listing of contact information plus eligibility requirements for every state can also be found at <http://familyfinancialhelpusa.com/category/food-stamps/>. You can access these listings by filling in your name, email address, city and state. SNAP benefactors who are able-bodied adults without dependents between 18 to 50 years of age may only receive benefits from SNAP for 3 months in a 36-month period if they do not work or participate in an employment or training program. In other cases, able-bodied individuals from 16 to 60 should be employed or participate in an employment or training program referred to them by their local office. Benefactors who do not comply with this agreement could be disqualified from the program. The amount of monthly benefit is determined by the net income of a qualifying household. That amount will be multiplied by 0.3 (studies show that families spend 30% of their income on food), and the resulting amount will then be subtracted from the Maximum Monthly Allotment per family member to determine the SNAP family budget. For example: A two member eligible household with a net monthly income of \$1167 could receive \$367 monthly. Households have to meet the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) income tests unless all members are currently receiving assistance from the TANF or SSI. Both net and gross income would be considered unless the household has an elderly or disabled member currently receiving disability benefits. A prescreening tool to help you determine your

eligibility can be found at www.snapstep1.usda.gov/fns/. Note that this is not an application. At

www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/contact_info/hotlines.htm

can be found a list of telephone numbers to get information on SNAP benefit questions in the States and areas of States listed. (www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/Default.htm, November 2009)

VA TO BEGIN RECOVERY OF POST-9/11 GI BILL ADVANCE PAYMENTS

The Department of Veterans Affairs is beginning the process of recovering advance payments made available during the fall 2009 semester to Veterans and service members who applied for education benefits. “The advance payments were a huge success and helped thousands of student Veterans during the first days of the historic Post 9/11 GI Bill focus on studies and not their finances,” said Keith Wilson, Director of Education Services at VA. “Now, we can get to the business of closing the books on advance payments and focus supporting Veterans for the spring semester.” VA will begin sending out notification letters this week explaining the repayment process. In October, VA instituted an advanced payment process for all eligible students who were currently enrolled in an institution of higher learning for the fall 2009 term to ensure that all Veterans and eligible students were able to focus on their academic studies and not be burdened with financial concerns. As part of that process, a web portal was established to allow electronic submission for advance payment. Advance payments were also made on-site at VA offices around the country. At that time student Veterans were told that advance payments would be deducted from future benefit payments. In collaboration with the Department of Defense, VA will also notify active duty service members who may have mistakenly applied for the advance payment of their options for returning un-cashed checks or reimbursing deposited funds. VA discontinued advance payments via the website portal following the conclusion of the Fall 2009 semester. VA is currently processing approximately 7,000 education benefits daily, up

from an average of 2,000 at the beginning of the fall 2009 term. As of January 22, 2010, the Department has processed more than 105,000 of the approximately 132,000 spring enrollments received. Since the inception of the historic new program last year, VA has paid out more than \$1.3 billion in education benefits, and opened the door to higher education to more than 183,000 Veteran students. (VA News Release, January 23, 2010)

VA, DOD EXPAND RANKS OF FEDERAL RECOVERY COORDINATORS

Key Members of Team Helping Most Severely Wounded

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the hiring of five new Federal Recovery Coordinators, bringing to 20 the number of professionals coordinating care for the most seriously injured service members. “Our Federal Recovery Coordinators are key members of a team of health care professionals, therapists, case managers and other specialists, who make up VA’s comprehensive care management system for returning service members and their families,” Shinseki said. The new coordinators will be added to the following locations, with the total number of coordinators in each location indicated in parenthesis:

- Eisenhower Army Medical Center, Ga. (3);
- San Antonio Military Medical Center, Texas, (4);
- Naval Medical Center, San Diego, Calif. (4);
- Tampa VA Medical Center (VAMC), Fla. (1);
- Bethesda, National Naval Medical Center, Md. (3);
- Walter Reed Army Medical Center, D.C. (3);
- Houston VAMC, Texas, (1); and
- Providence VAMC, R.I. (1).

The Federal Recovery Coordinators program was created in 2007 to assist service members, Veterans and their families with access to care, services and benefits provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Defense (DoD), other federal agencies, states and the private sector. Currently, the coordinators work with 419 of the most seriously injured service members and Veterans. The program is administered by VA and

operated jointly with DoD. The program's clients include service members and Veterans who are receiving acute care at military treatment facilities; diagnosed with specific injuries or conditions; considered at risk for psychological complication; or likely to benefit from a recovery plan. (*VA News Release, January 14, 2010*)

VETERAN SERVICE OFFICERS

Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs

(New Castle County) - Mr. John K. Williams - located in Bear, DE, may be reached Monday - Friday, 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM, (302) 834-8046. Please call for an appointment.

(Kent County) - Mrs. Melanie E. Bronov - Dover office - may be reached Monday -Friday, 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM, (302) 739-2792 or (800) 344-9900 (in State). Please call for an appointment.

(Sussex County) - Ms. Laurie A. White - Pyle State Service Center located in Roxanna, DE, may be reached Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM, (302) 732-9560. Please call for an appointment.

MOBILE VETERANS SERVICE CENTER

Ms. White will be providing services for veterans from the mobile Service Center at the following locations:

- FEB 02 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- FEB 03 Georgetown Cheer Center
- FEB 04 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- FEB 09 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- FEB 10 Home of the Brave
- FEB 11 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- FEB 16 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- FEB 17 Seaford Senior Center
- FEB 18 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- FEB 23 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- FEB 24 Delaware Veterans Home
- FEB 25 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- MAR 02 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- MAR 03 Georgetown Cheer Center
- MAR 04 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- MAR 09 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- MAR 10 Home of the Brave
- MAR 11 Delaware Veterans Cemetery

- MAR 16 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- MAR 17 Seaford Senior Center
- MAR 18 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- MAR 23 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- MAR 24 Delaware Veterans Home
- MAR 25 Delaware Veterans Cemetery
- MAR 30 Delaware Veterans Cemetery

For more information, contact Ms. White at the Pyle State Service Center, (302) 732-9560.

American Legion

Robert McBride, Dept. Service Officer, (302) 993-7256, will visit the following posts between 9:00 AM and 1:00 PM on the following dates:

- FEB 05 Oak Orchard/Riverdale, 945-1673
Post 28 (8:00-12:00)
- FEB 12 Walter L Fox, Post 2 674-3922
- FEB 19 Laurel Post #19 875-9948
- FEB 26 David Harrison, Post 14 633-1711

- MAR 05 Oak Orchard/Riverdale, 945-1673
Post 28 (8:00-12:00)
- MAR 12 Walter L Fox, Post 2 674-3922
- MAR 19 Laurel Post #19 875-9948
- MAR 26 David Harrison, Post 14 633-1711

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

DAV Dept. Service Officers: 302-697-9061

Paul Lardizzone: 302-382-3448

H. Mark Wischman: 302-382-3449

DAV Chapter Service Officers: 302-697-9061

Abe Velez: 973-868-8725

Charles Picaroni: 302-547-6538

Kent County Schedule:

DAV Headquarters Building, 183 South Street, Camden, DE 19934

Monday thru Thursday 8:00-12:00 PM (Walk-ins)
1:00-3:00 PM (Appt only)

Sussex County Schedule:

Department of Labor (Div of Employment & Trng) 20093 Office Circle, Georgetown, DE 19947

Thursday 8:00-12:00 PM (Walk-ins) 302-856-5230
Kent & Sussex evening appointments prescheduled by request only.

USN Veterans Association

CDR Jim Anderson.....(302) 295-7051

Paralyzed Veterans of America (DE/MD PVA)

Darrell Johnson, Sr., National Service Officer, VA Regional Office, 1601 Kirkwood Hwy, Room 26, Wilmington, DE 19805, (302) 993-7252 or (302) 993-7253. Mr. Johnson will make home visits upon request for Vets who do not have transportation to the VA. He will be in the Oak Orchard area the 1st Tuesday, Dover the 2nd Tuesday, Frederica the 3rd Tuesday and at the Home of the Brave on the 4th Tuesday of each month. In addition to our service officer at the Wilmington VA Regional Office, we also have a representative, David Timberman, National Liaison Service Officer, at the Home of the Brave on the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays from 10:00 AM until 2:00 PM. The Home of the Brave is located at 6632 Sharps Rd, Milford, DE (302) 424-1681 or 1682.

Purple Heart NSO (MOPH)

Deborah Frazier, National Service Officer, VA Regional Office, 1601 Kirkwood Hwy, Wilmington, DE 19805, (302) 993-7263 M-F 8:30 to 4:30 by appt only.

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)

James Withrow, Dept. Service Officer, VA Regional Office, 1601 Kirkwood Hwy, Room 21, Wilmington, DE 19805, (302) 993-7260 .

1ST Thursday

Delaware DOL (993-7260) 8:00-11:00 AM
Milford VFW (422-4412) 1:30-4:00 PM

2nd Thursday

Delaware DOL (993-7260) 8:00-11:00 AM
Milton VFW (684-4975) 1:30-4:00 PM

3rd Thursday

Delaware DOL (993-7260) 8:00-11:00 AM
Rehoboth VFW (227-3469) 1:30-4:00 PM

4th Thursday

Delaware DOL (993-7260) 8:00-11:00 AM
Seaford VFW (629-3092) 1:30-4:00 PM

5th Thursday

Delaware DOL (993-7260) 8:00-11:00 AM

NOTE: All persons interested in Outreach Services should first call our office so that some advance information may be obtained to accelerate the application process. Kent & Sussex County residents may call 1-302-993-7260. NOTE: persons desiring assistance at the Thursday-downstate locations should be at the Delaware DOL no later than 9:00 AM or at the afternoon locations by 2:00 PM. The VFW provides services to veterans and their dependents without respect to veteran service organization affiliation; membership in the VFW is NOT required for service.

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)

Terry Baker, National Service Officer, VA Regional Office, 1601 Kirkwood Hwy, Wilmington, DE 19805, (302) 993-7250 or (302) 993-7251.

DELAWARE VETERANS HOME

100 Delaware Veterans Blvd.....424-6000
Milford, DE 19963

DELAWARE VETERANS MEMORIAL CEMETERY

New Castle Co. Section (Bear, DE).....834-8046
Sussex Co. Section (Millsboro, DE).....934-5653

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

Claims, Benefits, Veterans Services
(Regional Office).....1-800-827-1000
VA Hospital Scheduling.....1-800-461-8262
.....302-994-2511
Dover VA Outpatient Clinic.1-800-461-8262 x2400
Georgetown VA Outpatient
Clinic.....1-800-461-8262 x2300
Veterans Outreach Center
(New Castle County).....302-633-5360
(Kent and Sussex Counties).....302-422-8011

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Al Barclift (Wilmington).....302-761-8093
Allen Jones (Wilmington).....302-761-8141
James Williams (Newark).....302-368-6622
Cliff Rumph (Dover–M, Tues, & Fri).302-739-5473

(Georgetown-Wed. & Thurs.) 302-856-5230

RETIREE ACTIVITIES

Retired Activities Office

MSgt (R) Bill Oldham (woldham10@gmail.com),
Bldg 520, Room 105, Dover AFB, DE 19902,
(302) 677-4612.

Retired Navy Activities Affairs Office

Naval & Marine Corps Reserve Center, 3920
Kirkwood Hwy, Wilmington, DE 19808, (302)
998-5194.

VETERANS ORGANIZATIONS POC

Air Force Sergeants Association

Bill McMullen.....(302) 697-9750

American Legion

Richard "Ric" Santos.....(302) 628-5221

AMVETS

Albert Weir.....(302) 629-4141

Colonial Paralyzed Veterans of America

Ron Hoskins.....(302) 368-4898

Phyllis Palabrica.....(302) 368-4898

DELVETS

Robert Wasson.....(302) 798-2951

Disabled American Veterans

Paul Lardizzone.....(302) 697-9061

40 & 8

Eugene "Chip" Rosan.....(302) 678-8077

Jewish War Veterans

Len Markovitz.....(302) 234-4785

Korean War Veterans Association

George Goss.....(302) 424-0461

Marine Corps League

James Thompson.....(302) 284-2708

Military Officers Association of America

Tom Kelly (New Castle Co.).....(302) 834-9659

Ron Sarg (Kent Co.).....(302) 678-1603

Dick Cecil (Sussex Co.).....(302) 645-0432

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Cornelius "Bill" Carroll.....(302) 655-3820

Military Order of the World Wars

COL (Ret) Eugene A. Hebert.....(302) 335-0110

E-mail: gene@hebert.net

The Reserve Officers Association

CWO John V. Hawkins, Sr. (Ret)...(302) 328-8115

U.S. Navy Veterans Association

Jim Anderson.....(302) 295-7051

Veterans of Foreign Wars

Paul Phillips Jr.....(302) 656-5022

Vietnam Veterans of America

Tom Daws.....(302) 738-8875

WAVES Nat'l

Ruth Harden.....(302) 998-1373

COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Commissioners may be reached by calling (800)
344-9900.

Paul Lardizzone (Chairman).....DAV

Jesse Kitson (Vice Chairman)VFV

Cornelius "Bill" Carroll.....MOPH

Robert P. Corsa.....VVA

Maurice Evans.....American Legion

George T. Goss.....KWVA

Ruth B. Harden.....WAVES NAT'L

Charles Keithley.....40 & 8

Joseph "Joe" Lank.....MOWW

Barry Newstadt.....JWV

Ronald G. Sarg.....MOAA

David W. Timberman.....CPVA

Jim Thompson.....MCL

Robert E. Wasson.....DELVETS

Albert W. WeirAMVETS

The Centurion is published for informational purposes only and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Commission of Veterans Affairs or the State of Delaware. Paid for with State Funds.

As a result of the state's current economic climate, "The Centurion" newsletter will be distributed electronically. To receive your copy by email, subscribe to "The Centurion" at our web site: www.veteransaffairs.delaware.gov. To obtain a hard copy of the newsletter, visit one of our office locations or your local veterans post home. This policy will remain in effect until further notice. Thank you for your consideration and understanding.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill Spring 2010

The new Post-9/11 GI Bill is the most extensive education benefit package ever offered to our nation's Veterans, servicemembers, and their families. It has a potential to pay for your entire college education, to include housing, books, and supplies.

Unfortunately, many of the great features of this program have also made it far more complex to us to process than other benefit programs. This student guide contains some quick facts and tips to help you plan for the coming spring term.

The more you understand about this benefit and the process, the more you can assist us in moving your claim along.

Enrolling for Spring?

Whether you are enrolling for the first time, or continuing your studies, we realize trying to get ready for school and getting your VA benefits together can be overwhelming. We've collected a few tips on making the process as smooth as possible.

TIPS

Get your school to submit enrollment certifications early (VA Form 22-1999). Remind your school they do *NOT* need to wait for your Certificate of Eligibility (COE) to submit enrollment certifications.

To qualify for the housing benefit, you must be enrolled in at least one on-campus class and be registered for at least 51% of full-time credit hours. For example, if full-time at your school is 12 hours, you must take 7 hours or more to get the housing benefit.

Use the GI Bill website to explore answers to questions (www.gibill.va.gov); most are there. You can use our "Ask A Question/Get An Answer" feature to ask questions you can't find.

Be sure to inform VA if you change your direct deposit information.

Reminders

Remember that the Post-9/11 GI Bill housing and books and supplies stipends are paid "in arrears." This means that your housing stipend for January won't be received until February. Also, if you are starting school for the first time, your first payment may not be for a full month of housing because we pay from the actual day you start school. So, if you start January 8th, your February payment will be for 23 days you attended in January.

Get to know your VA School Certifying Official (hint: check with the Financial Aid Department or Registrar). They certify your actual enrollment (that's what triggers your payments). We've noticed some schools wait until the drop/add period is over to certify your enrollment, so check out the policy for your school.

Tuition and fee payments go directly to the school.

Other Financial Help:

If your personal financial situation makes it difficult for you to cover your living expenses, you may want to apply for either federal or private loans. Many of these loans are available interest free until graduation. You can also check with your local school for any scholarship or grants that are available in your local area, www.studentaid.ed.gov.

If you have not already,
*Meet your School
Certifying Official (SCO)
Today!*

Locate and introduce yourself. SCOs play an important role in making sure you receive your benefits.



Not Yet Signed Up for Benefits?

Before applying for education benefits, investigate your options where you want to go to school, look at what benefits you are eligible for, and how much you are entitled to under each benefit. The decision to elect the Post-9/11 GI Bill is irrevocable.

Go to the GI Bill website (www.gibill.va.gov) and use the “What Benefit Is Best For Me” button to help you decide.



Once you make your decisions, VA will need two things:

Your Application
(VA Form 22-1990 or 22-1990E)
- Submitted by *you*

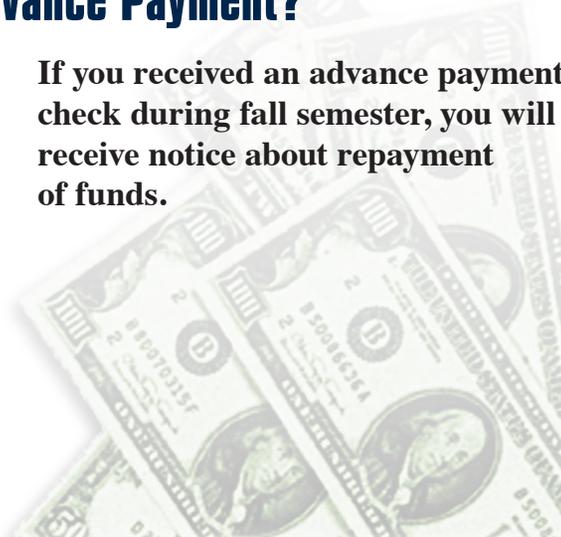
Your Certificate of Enrollment
(VA Form 22-1999)
- Submitted by your *school*

Remember: The sooner you get these documents to VA, the sooner VA can begin processing your claim.



Did You Collect an Advance Payment?

If you received an advance payment check during fall semester, you will receive notice about repayment of funds.



Visit Us Online:
www.gibill.va.gov

OR



Find Us On Facebook:
www.facebook.com/GibillEducation

Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Benefits Administration
Washington, DC 20420

GI Bill Hip-Pocket Guide
January 2010

GI Bill Hip-Pocket Guide



Hip-Pocket Guide to Spring 2010 Semester

Going to College on the Post-9/11

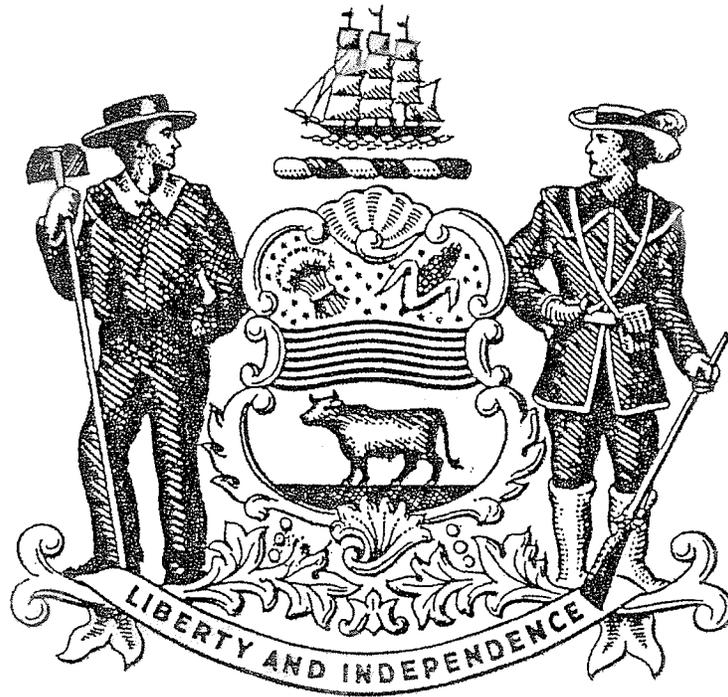
GI BILL



Department of
Veterans Affairs

STATE OF DELAWARE

"Serving Delaware's Veterans"



Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs
Robbins Building
802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100
Dover, Delaware 19904

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