

THE CENTURION

DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Robbins Bldg – 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100, Dover, Delaware 19904

(302) 739-2792 or (800) 344-9900 (in state)

Internet Address: <http://www.state.de.us>

Thomas R. Carper, Governor
Edward J. Freel, Secretary of State

James L. Thompson, Chairman
Antonio Davila, Executive Director

Volume 7, Number 2

Apr-Jun 2000

ADMINISTRATION SEEKS RECORD VA BUDGET INCREASE

The White House delivered to Congress the largest increase in discretionary spending for veterans ever proposed by any President - \$1.5 billion for 2001. "With this budget, the President signals the Nation's continuing commitment to her veterans, their families and the selfless professionals within this Department who assist them," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Togo D. West, Jr. "The median age of the Nation's veterans is about 58, and more than nine million are at least 65 years of age. As they age, their health-care requirements and the assistance they need from VA increase dramatically. The President's budget recognizes this and responds to it." VA's 2001 budget would provide \$48 billion for the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1, 2000. It will fund benefits and services for millions of eligible veterans and family members. There are 25 million veterans and 44 million family members who are potentially eligible for VA benefits and services. The budget's priorities include:

- Improved access and service in health care to reduce appointment waiting times;
- Enhanced standards for patient safety;
- Full funding for new emergency and extended care benefits;
- Adding more than 1,000 claims processors since 1999;
- Funding for more federal and state veterans cemeteries;
- Preservation of national cemeteries as shrines to our veterans.

Medical Programs

The 2001 request contains \$20.9 billion for medical care. This is a 7 percent increase over last year's spending for VA health care. VA expects to treat 3.9 million patients next year, an increase of 2.6 percent. The budget reinforces VA's changing health-care focus, permitting the department to continue the shift from hospital inpatient care to outpatient and non-institutional care. This change will enable the department to provide better and timelier care to more veterans. The budget invests \$400 million to reduce waiting times by redirecting personnel and contract services, altering infrastructure, and improving scheduling systems. To continue to enhance VA's leadership in patient safety, the department is seeking \$137 million for oversight and training on safety issues. The budget proposes a total of \$340 million to treat hepatitis C in veterans, and \$548 million to fully implement the provisions of last year's Millennium Act which provided for expanded

THOUGHT FOR THE QUARTER

Nothing makes a man or woman so modest about his or her income as a tax form to fill out.

emergency care, extended care, and mental health services.

Benefit Programs

The Administration's budget asks for \$22.8 billion to provide compensation and pension benefits to veterans and their survivors. Nearly 2.3 million veterans and 301,000 survivors will receive compensation benefits in fiscal year 2001. Pension benefits will be provided to more than 363,000 veterans and 253,000 survivors. The proposed budget provides \$999 million -- \$139 million over the FY 2000 level -- to further ensure the timely delivery of compensation, housing, education, pension and vocational rehabilitation services to veterans. An additional 586 full-time employees will be added in FY 2001 to process disability claims efficiently, totaling more than 1,000 people since 1999. The Administration proposes a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to all compensation beneficiaries including spouses and children receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. The COLA, which will be determined by changes in the Consumer Price Index, is estimated to be 2.5 percent. The increase would be effective Dec. 1, 2000, and would cost an estimated \$345 million during fiscal year 2001. If Congress approves the budget request, VA will pay full disability compensation to veterans of Filipino units during World War II who now live in the United States. Currently, by federal law, they receive benefits at half the rates of U.S. veterans. This measure would cost \$25 million over five years.

Veterans Cemeteries

The Administration seeks \$110 million for national cemeteries, an increase of \$13 million. These additional funds will help support the Administration's commitment to preserve the Nation's cemeteries for veterans as national shrines. New national cemeteries will be in operation in 2001 at Albany, New York; Chicago; Dallas/Ft. Worth; and Cleveland. VA officials will begin master planning on sites in Atlanta, Detroit, Miami and Sacramento.

Construction Program

Finally, the Administration is seeking new budget authority of \$309 million for VA's construction program. The budget request provides funding for major construction projects, resources for minor construction, and grants for state veterans' nursing homes and cemeteries. New budget authority totaling \$62 million is requested for VA's major construction program, which includes funding for a seismic corrections project at Palo Alto, California, and a gravesite development project at Ft. Logan National Cemetery, Colorado. (*Office of Public Affairs, Washington, DC, February 7, 2000*)

HEPATITIS C AWARENESS DAY

"The Silent Epidemic"

VA Medical Center – Auditorium

Saturday, May 6, 2000

10 AM – 3 PM

FREE Confidential Screening for Veterans

Panel Discussions – Medical Specialists – Education & Awareness – Testing & Treatment Information – Claims Assistance – Support Services & Resources – Veterans' Advocates – Registration in VA Healthcare System

Free Screening for Spouses of Veterans funded by VATA, Inc

A Partnership of Caring:

VA Medical & Regional Office Center
Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 83
Veterans Aimed Toward Awareness
DE Commission of Veterans Affairs
DE Division of Health & Social Services
City of Wilmington
Christiana Hospital

Funding by Veterans Aimed Toward Awareness

Health Care Professionals Invited to Attend

Refreshments

Provided by Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 83

VA MEDICAL & REGIONAL OFFICE CENTER

1601 Kirkwood Highway

Wilmington, DE 19805

Are you at Risk for Hepatitis C?

If any of the following applies to you, you should participate in this event:

- Transfusion of blood/blood products prior to 1992
- Vietnam veteran or Vietnam era veteran
- Combat veteran
- Korean War Veteran
- Healthcare Professionals
- Injection drug use
- Multiple sexual partners (past or present)
- Chronic hemodialysis
- Tattoos or body piercing
- Intemperate alcohol use
- History of sexually transmitted disease

Did you know.....????

Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) has been identified recently as the single most important emerging health issue in the VA healthcare system.

One in every 10 US veterans using outpatient medical facilities is infected with HCV, a rate 5 times greater than the 1.8% infection rate among the general population.

VA's policy is that every veteran patient for whom therapy is indicated and who wants it will receive it.

For Information Call: Terry Baker, Service Officer, Vietnam Veterans of America, (302) 633-5357 or (800) 461-8262, ext. 5357 or Carol Waters, Marketing Manager, VA Medical & Regional Office Center, (800) 461-8262, ext. 5331.

HUNTING, TRAPPING AND FISHING LICENSES

The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs (DCVA) in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC), Division of Fish & Wildlife will be issuing Hunting, Trapping and Fishing ID cards for those Delaware veterans and members of the Armed Forces who meet the exceptions to requirements for licensing under Title 7, Chapter 5, Section 502 of the Delaware Code. For more information, please call (302) 739-2792 or (800) 344-9900.

NEWARK MEMORIAL DAY PARADE

Delaware's largest military and veterans parade will be held on Sunday, May 21, 2000. From the small display in 1935 to the larger participation 64 years later, the purpose remains the same, to honor and remember those who have served our country. We begin traditionally at 1:00 PM, with a stirring military service on the mall in front of Memorial Hall on the campus of the University of Delaware. The service will be followed by a parade of military, veterans, and civic groups down Main Street. This year the parade will honor the United States Army, highlighting the 50th Anniversary of the Korean Conflict and recognizing the contributions of Miss Loretta Ianni to the State of Delaware. The City of Newark and the Memorial Day Parade Committee are pleased to extend an invitation to the citizens of Delaware to attend the ceremonies and parade honoring those who have given so much to their country and to us as individuals. In order to maintain this state-wide memorial, tax deductible contributions would be greatly appreciated and should be forwarded to: Newark Memorial Day Committee, P.O. Box 390, Newark, DE 19715.

MEMORIAL DAY SERVICES

AMVETS and the Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs will host Memorial Day Services, Tuesday, May 30, 2000. The service will be at the Memorial Bridge Plaza, Delaware Memorial Bridge, New Castle, Delaware, beginning at 10:30 AM. Following the services at the Memorial Bridge Plaza, the Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Bear, Delaware, will hold its service at 1:30 PM. For further information, contact (800) 344-9900 or (302) 739-2792.

DELAWARE VETERANS HALL OF HEROES

The Delaware Veterans Hall of Heroes Association has been formed to pay homage to Delaware Veterans, who have received medals of valor (i.e., Medal of Honor, the Service Crosses, Air Medals, Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and other Medals of Valor) in the service of their country. The veteran must have been a Delaware resident at the time of award; be honorably discharged; have proof of the award; copy of Certificate of Discharge (DD 214). Veterans or family and friends of inductees living or posthumous, please call Wilson K. Smith (302) 655-4642, Thomas H. Brown (302) 658-2580, or Paul L. Cathell, Jr. (302) 994-2061. We would also appreciate hearing from relatives of the Delaware Medal of Honor Recipients (12) from the earlier conflicts to the Civil War.

NEW LOCATION FOR THE COMMISSION

We've moved! The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs has relocated to the Robbins Building, 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100, Dover, DE. Hours of operation are Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

KEY BILLS WOULD PROVIDE FEHBP ACCESS TO ALL MILITARY RETIREES

HR 3573, introduced by Rep. Ronnie Shows and Rep. Charlie Norwood, and S 2003, introduced by Sen. Tim Johnson, Sen. Paul Coverdell and Sen. John McCain, would provide all military retirees access to the Federal Employees Health Benefit Plan (FEHBP), regardless of age. The language of this legislation differs from HR 2966 due to the fact that HR 2966 provides FEHBP to all Medicare-eligible military retirees. HR 3573 and S 2003 would provide FEHBP to all military retirees who enrolled prior to June 7, 1956 for free, just as in HR 2966. In addition, HR 3573 and S 2003 would allow all other military retirees to enroll in FEHBP and pay the associated premiums. At a press conference on February 9, 2000 on Capitol Hill the key members of Congress involved in these bills spoke of the importance of keeping the promise made to military retirees. Also in attendance was TREA National President Fred Athans who stated, "I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to all the members of Congress who have worked together, across party lines, on this important legislation. In particular, I would like to thank Senator Tim Johnson, of my home state of South Dakota, for the roll he played in introducing this important legislation in the Senate. Without him, I do not know if we would have a Senate bill today." Presently, HR 3573 has 141 co-sponsors and S 2003 has 11. TREA strongly supports these two important bills and urges all military retirees to contact their members of Congress and ask them to co-sponsor these two pieces of legislation. Please contact Capitol Hill toll free at 1-877-778-9001, compliments of the National Military/Veterans Alliance. In another development which we hope is a positive sign from the Department of Defense, while testifying before the Senate,

Defense Secretary William Cohen said in response to a question about military health care for retirees: "We made a pledge, whether it's legal or not, it's a moral obligation that we will take care of all of those who served, retired veterans and their families, and we have not done so. There are bills involved in this. This is no small matter." This was followed by a comment from Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Henry Shelton added: "We've got actual recruiting posters that very vividly state that not only would they be taken care of, but that their families would be taken care of. And of course, in their minds, they – we have broken that commitment. And I think we have." We hope that these statements signify DoD's willingness to work with the military retiree community to develop a viable health care program with options for military retirees.

HR 303, legislation introduced by Rep. Michael Bilirakis (R-FL), which would completely eliminate the dollar for dollar off-set of military retirement pay faced by retirees who are receiving VA disability compensation has gained a significant number of co-sponsors in recent months. With 239 members of the House of Representatives now signed on, the time has come to make one final push to get 300 co-sponsors. Please contact your elected officials at the above number. Find out if they are co-sponsors of this legislation. If they already have, then express your thanks for their supporting legislation important to retirees. If they have not, explain how important this issue is and ask for their support.

As the House and Senate Armed Services Committees prepare to develop the Fiscal Year 2001 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), it is imperative that members of Congress hear from their constituents on important issues. By having a large number of co-sponsors, legislation has a greater chance of being recognized as something important to many members of Congress, thereby increasing the possibility of having it included in the NDAA. (*The Retired Enlisted Association, February 11, 2000*)

A PROGRAM HONORING KOREAN WAR VETERANS

A program honoring Veterans of the Korean War is planned for Friday, May 5, 2000, at the Milford Senior Center and Saturday, May 13, 2000, at the Rehoboth Beach Bandstand. Music will be provided by the Milford Community Band, including the Armed Forces Tribute featuring the themes of each branch of service and a number of audience participation numbers. The program will be interrupted for news bulletins concerning the progress of the War. Members of the Korean War Veterans Association will participate. All Veterans and their families are invited to attend. The planners would like to locate a Chaplain who served in the Korean War to offer the Invocation. Anyone having this information is asked to contact Rev. Malcolm Foster at (302) 422-8251.

KOREAN WAR 50TH ANNIVERSARY

You may wish to check out the following website for information on the 50th Anniversary Commemoration activities for the Korean War at: <http://Korea50.army.mil/> and click on Commemorative Events.

(*VA Intergovernmental Affairs, 2/2/00*)

THE NATIONAL D-DAY MUSEUM PAYS TRIBUTE TO WORLD WAR II HEROES

The National D-Day Museum will open its doors on June 6, 2000, in the historic New Orleans Warehouse District to honor the millions of men and women who served in World War II and to mark the single most decisive event of the 20th Century. The Museum, founded by best-selling author and noted historian Dr. Stephen E. Ambrose, will stand as America's tribute to the men and women who made all the invasions of World War II possible, and as an inspiration to future generations. The Museum's Grand Opening will begin with a four-day program (June 3-6) that will include several public and private events. Festivities on June 6th will begin with a morning dedication at the Museum, a parade through downtown New Orleans and a special public ceremony that will be held at the New Orleans Arena. On hand will be tens of thousands of veterans and their families along with a celebrity list headed by Museum founder Stephen E. Ambrose, Steven Spielberg, Tom Hanks, and Tom Brokaw. The Museum's 70,500 square feet on 4 levels will feature exhibits and artifacts that tell the story of the United States amphibious operations around the globe. These collections represent invasions fought by the Navy, Marines, Army, Army Air Force and Coast Guard. Located on the main floor of the Museum will be the "Road to Victory," a collection of personalized bricks honoring the many heroes of World War II. The rich collection of artifacts include American and German vehicles, allied aircraft, uniforms, home front materials, sentry boxes, a wide array of weapons, and equipment used by both sides during the conflict, as well as privately owned artifacts donated by veterans. Included in the Museum will be a 110-seat auditorium where the film *D-Day Remembered*, an Academy Award nominated documentary film produced by the Museum, will be shown. There will also be four interactive galleries which profile America's role in World War II through exhibits featuring electronic maps, mini-theaters, photomurals, text panels and reproductions of artifacts that allow visitors to try on a piece of history. One of the most impressive pieces of World War II to find a place in The National D-Day Museum is the reproduction of the Higgins Boat Landing Craft (LCVP). This reproduction was constructed according to the original plans from the Higgins Industries Plant in New Orleans, where over 20,000 Higgins Boats were produced. General Dwight Eisenhower credited the Higgins Boat with winning the war because of its ability to land troops and supplies directly onto the beaches. This boat was built by volunteers, including some of the surviving employees of the Higgins Industries Plant and many who rode the boats to shore. The Higgins Boat will be

the centerpiece in the Louisiana Memorial Pavilion, a magnificent entrance hall to the Museum. This Pavilion will represent Louisiana's tribute to its veterans and all American veterans and citizens on the home front who secured the Allied victory. While the exhibits will continue to grow once the Museum is open, the original collection will feature an American Grumman Avenger and a British Spitfire suspended 50 feet in the air. There will also be jeeps, a tank, a half-track, two German officer staff cars, a motorcycle, and two sentry boxes that were part of Hitler's "Atlantic Wall" defense system in France. The Pavilion will also house traveling and interpretive exhibits and provide space for educational programs, meetings and conferences for school children and veteran reunion groups. Some of the most powerful accounts of the events of World War II will come from oral histories taken from over 2,000 veterans during the past 20 years. There is no more powerful way to hear the stories of battles than from the people who participated in them. Standing as a tribute to the men and women who made these invasions possible, The National D-Day Museum will present their stories to an international audience, preserving material for future research and scholarship and inspiring future generations to apply the lessons learned from the most complex military operations ever staged. (*The National D-Day Museum, New Orleans, Louisiana*)

TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs is assessing whether a need exists to provide a "basic training" informational seminar (non-accredited) to post level veteran service officers and other interested parties concerning the Department of Veterans Affairs, benefits and entitlements as described in Title 38, United States Code (USC) and Title 38, Code of Federal Regulation (CFR). The seminar will emphasize benefits and entitlement eligibility as well as define those issues surrounding "well grounded" claims under the Morton vs. West recent Court decision. Other topics for dissemination will focus on the Veterans Benefits Administration's new initiative concerning certification of accredited service officers. The Commission's intention is to supplement rather than supplant any training initiatives currently provided by the Veteran Service Organizations. Interested individuals should contact the Commission office at (800) 344-9900 (in state) or (302) 739-2792.

THE FINAL INSPECTION

The soldier stood and faced God,
Which must always come to pass
He hoped his shoes were shining
Just as brightly as his brass.
"Step forward now, you soldier,
How shall I deal with you?"

Have you always turned the other cheek?
To My Church have you been true?"
The soldier squared his shoulders and
Said, "No, Lord, I guess I ain't
Because those of us who carry guns
Can't always be a saint.
I've had to work most Sundays
And at times my talk was tough,
And sometimes I've been violent,
Because the world is awfully rough.
But, I never took a penny
That wasn't mine to keep...
Though I worked a lot of overtime
When the bills got just too steep,
And I never passed a cry for help,
Though at times I shook with fear,
And sometimes, God forgive me,
I've wept unmanly tears.
I know I don't deserve a place
Among the people here,
They never wanted me around
Except to calm their fears.
If you've a place for me here, Lord,
It needn't be so grand,
I never expected or had too much,
But if you don't, I'll understand."
There was a silence all around the throne
Where the saints had often trod
As the soldier waited quietly,
For the judgment of his God,
"Step forward now, you soldier,
You've borne your burdens well,
Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets,
You've done your time in Hell."

(Submitted by CSM Bob Trice, Retired)

BATTLESHIP NEW JERSEY FOUNDATION, INC.

The Battleship New Jersey Foundation would like to establish contacts with the veterans who served on the ship during its four active tours. The purpose is to be able to keep them informed of the overall program to establish the battleship as a world-class Educational Museum. There will be specific activities that could involve their participation, such as movement of the ship to its final berthing site, museum dedication ceremonies, special events, etc. Please contact the Battleship New Jersey Foundation at the following address: 1715 Highway 35, Suite 103, Middletown, NJ 07748 (*Lawrence Engel, Vice President-Operations, Jan. 17, 2000*)

WHY IS THE PENTAGON IGNORING THE DEFENSE SCIENCE BOARD?

Congressional Republicans and Democrats this election year will try to outdo each other in heaping money on the Pentagon.

But their game of “Can You Top This?” avoids asking the hard and troubling questions about our national defense, including these:

- Why are we sacrificing the seed corn of future weaponry-research and development dollars to feed today’s demanding and already-fattened hogs, Cold War-era weapons and commitments?
- Why is the Pentagon ignoring its own outside board of wise men in preparing for the next war?
- What happens if foreign firms, which now make an increasingly large share of vital parts for American weapons, decide not to deliver them in the middle of a war?
- How much is too much to pay to recruit and keep one volunteer soldier just to avoid the political pain of going back to the draft?

Not since the late Rep. Les Aspin, D-Wis., chaired the House Armed Services Committee in the late 1980s has any congressional body seriously questioned where national defense policy is going and why. Although Congress commissioned the Pentagon to evaluate itself in 1997, the resulting Quadrennial Defense Review endorsed existing policies. Surprise, surprise. The Pentagon’s own budget numbers are signaling trouble. One set of numbers shows that the current hogs in the Pentagon budget are eating up development dollars, the seed corn money that scientists and engineers need to design weapons that will give the American soldier the edge on tomorrow’s battlefield. Don’t blame the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps for this. Blame President Clinton as commander in chief and the lawmakers who went along with him. Although they rightly continued on with President Bush’s downsizing of the military in response to the ending of the Cold War, they neither demanded that the Europeans take over missions in their own backyard nor shed the U.S. role of international policeman. Clinton instead, with Congress’s blessing, ordered American military commanders to cover the same old global hotspots, plus some new ones, with a smaller and older force. This policy of doing more with less wore out people and equipment, and provoked an exodus of skilled troops. Pressed to find money to pay for this high tempo of operations, general and admirals robbed the future-looking accounts, such as research and development, to finance the here-and-now patrolling, flying, and steaming. Most of that day-to-day spending money is lodged in the Pentagon’s operation and maintenance account. For all their talk about keeping the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps ready to fight, politicians have shortchanged both the research and the operations-and-maintenance accounts ever since the Cold War ended in 1989. The Pentagon’s green book of figures issued by the comptroller shows that spending on research dropped 21 percent in the post-Cold War period, from \$47.4 billion in 1989 to \$37.4 billion in 1999 in comparable fiscal 2000 dollars. Operations-and-maintenance spending in the same 11-year period dropped about 15 percent, from \$115.7 billion to \$98.5 billion. The Defense Science

Board, the Pentagon’s friendly panel of wise men whose charge is to peer ahead for the Secretary of Defense, recently warned that the research picture is even bleaker than those Pentagon figures portray. This is because private industry has also been spending less of its own money on military research since the Cold War ended. In their struggle to survive, defense firms have been fighting for Pentagon projects that will bring in big bucks quickly-fast-return contracts such as upgrading a tank, ship, or plane. The companies figure that because their designers’ futuristic paper sketches will not reach the profitable metal-cutting stage for 10 years, if ever, why spend company money now on far-out research that might not boost the bottom line? In addition to this dual hit to research spending, military leaders have asked contractors to keep making the old and comfortable Cold War weapons – what the Pentagon calls its “legacy systems.” “The result is severely depressed U.S. military technological innovation and a defense industry devoted primarily to the development of [armed] service-preferred legacy system replacements-not necessarily what the services need to meet emerging strategic challenges,” lamented former Pentagon research director Donald A. Hicks in introducing the 137-page report of his Defense Science Board task force in December 1999. The board’s reports are widely unread on Capitol Hill. The Defense Science Board, far from being anti-defense-because its members come chiefly from the military-industrial complex-also sketched out a worrisome mismatch between the preparations the Pentagon and its potential enemies are making for the next war. The board concluded that the armed services are preparing to fight the last war and are spending too much of their money on a Maginot Line of Cold War weapons that future enemies will be able to make end runs around. Specifically, the board says enemies are planning to destroy or disable the launching pads and corridors that U.S. forces use here and abroad to get to the battle: air bases, seaports, and over flight rights. “By 2010-2020,” the Defense Science Board warned, “potential adversaries, exploiting a truly global military-technical revolution, will likely have developed robust capabilities-conventional and unconventional-for disrupting U.S. homeland preparations to deploy to the theater of conflict; denying U.S. forces access to the theater; degrading the capabilities of the forces the U.S. does manage to deploy; and in the process raising, perhaps prohibitively, the cost of U.S. intervention.” A 1995 study by the board estimated that lesser powers could disrupt, if not derail, U.S. expeditionary forces by spending about \$20 billion over 10 years on ultra-quiet diesel submarines, anti-ship cruise missiles, sea mines, and land attack missiles “expected to be available in the thousands” on the international arms market early in the new millennium. Nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons also could be used by smaller powers to deny access to the battlefield by U.S. forces. Part of the foundation for this compelling but largely ignored forecast is the new and uncomfortable reality that the leaders of the world’s militaries can ferret out one another’s secrets, including how-to instructions for making weapons, by

mobilizing the Internet. Also, the really important ingredients of modern weapons, like software and space age electronics, can be bought by anybody on the commercial market. The Defense Science Board took note of these new realities, declaring that “technological leveling” will be the engine that drives the ability of enemies to deny America access to ports and airfields. “Globalization is irresistibly eroding the military advantage the U.S. has long sought to derive through technology controls,” the board concluded. So how should President Clinton, Defense Secretary William S. Cohen, and members of Congress respond to these new realities? By not letting the armed services continue to break their bank accounts by building their Maginot Line of Cold War weapons. In the view of the board, the continued reliance on Cold War “legacy” weapons “has a clear and high opportunity cost”: The Pentagon will lose the “investment agility” necessary to shift research dollars quickly into weapons that will counter the “challenges posed by global military-technological leveling.” The Defense Science Board did not name the weapons that it believes are taking the armed services to the poorhouse in Cadillacs. Pentagon figures, however, show that legacy systems that are eating up scarce dollars include the Army’s M-1 tank (of which the service bought 8,100 at \$5.6 million each, even though its active forces could use only 2,530 of them); the Navy’s 30 new nuclear-powered attack submarines (Virginia class-projected to cost \$65 billion, or more than \$2 billion each); and the Air Force’s F-22 fighter (estimated to cost \$62.7 billion for 341 planes, or \$184 million each). Another side effect of the globalization of technology is that the Pentagon is buying an increasing portion of its weapons parts from foreign firms, or firms whose nationalities are increasingly hard to determine—such as Daimler Chrysler. This raises another question that lawmakers are unlikely to address as they throw money unquestioningly at the Pentagon this year: What happens if a foreign government bans weapons sales to the United States to protest an intervention or peacekeeping operation it doesn’t like? Finally, all signs point to Congress’s focusing on what more it can do this election year for men and women in uniform, and for veterans. Dividing the number of service people on active duty into the Pentagon’s personnel account provides one measure of the escalating cost of the All-Volunteer Force. In 1973, when draft calls stopped, annual personnel are spending per service member came to \$41,000 in fiscal 2000 dollars. By 1999, that cost had shot up to \$51,000. And still the armed services are having trouble attracting and holding volunteers. Rep. John P. Murtha of Pennsylvania, ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, dared suggest last year that the government may have to resort to some form of conscription to fill the military’s billets. But don’t expect anybody to utter the word “draft” this election year. Regarding defense, the operative word is “more.” (By George C. Wilson, *National Journal*)

FACTS ABOUT THE 1973 ST. LOUIS FIRE AND LOST RECORDS

(This article has been published again due to many requests from interested veterans) The National Archives and Records Administration is the official depository for records of military personnel separated from the United States Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy. The records are housed in three locations: the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., the Washington National Records Center in Suitland, MD, and the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis, MO. The NPRC contains records relating to:

- U.S. Army officers separated after June 30, 1917, and enlisted Army personnel separated after October 31, 1912.
- U.S. Air Force officers and enlisted personnel separated after September 1947.
- U.S. Naval officers separated after 1902, and naval enlisted personnel separated after 1885. U.S. Marine Corps officers separated after 1895, and enlisted personnel separated after 1904.
- U.S. Coast Guard officers separated after 1928, and enlisted personnel separated after 1914. Civilian employees of predecessor agencies (Revenue Cutter Service, Life-Saving Service and Lighthouse Service) of the U.S. Coast Guard from 1864-1919.

The Fire

A fire at the NPRC in St. Louis on July 12, 1973, destroyed about 80 percent of the records for Army personnel discharged between November 1, 1912, and January 1, 1960. About 75 percent of the records for Air Force personnel with surnames from “Hubbard” through “Z” discharged between September 25, 1947, and January 1, 1964, were destroyed.

What Was Lost

It is hard to determine exactly what was lost in the fire, because:

There were no indices to the blocks of records involved. The records were merely filed in alphabetical order for the following groups:

World War I:	Army	Nov 1, 1912-Sep 7, 1939
World War II:	Army	Sep 8, 1939-Dec 31, 1946
Post World War II:	Army	Jan 1, 1947-Dec 31, 1959
	Air Force	Sep 25, 1947-Dec 31, 1963

Millions of records, especially medical records, had been withdrawn from all three groups and loaned to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) prior to the fire. The fact that one’s records are not in NPRC files at a particular time does not mean the records were destroyed in the fire.

Reconstruction of Lost Records

If a veteran is advised that his or her records may have been lost in the fire, he or she may send photocopies of any documents they possess to the NPRC, particularly separation documents. The address is National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records, 9700 Page Blvd, St.

Louis, MO 63132-5100. This enables the NPRC to re-establish files by adding those documents to the computerized index and filing them permanently.

Alternate Sources of Military Service Data

In the event a veteran does not have any records in his or her possession, the essential military service data may be available from a number of alternate sources.

- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) maintains records on veterans whose military records were affected by the fire if the veteran or a beneficiary filed a claim prior to July 1973.
- Service information may also be found in various kinds of "organizational" records such as unit morning reports, payrolls and military orders on file at the NPRC or other National Archives and Records Administration facilities.
- There also is a great deal of information available in records of the State Adjutants General and other state "veterans services" offices.

By using alternate sources, NPRC may often be able to reconstruct a veteran's beginning and ending dates of active service, the character of service, rank while in service, time lost while on active duty, and periods of hospitalization. NPRC is usually able to issue NA Form 13038, "Certification of Military Service," considered the equivalent of a Form DD-214, "Report of Separation Form Active Duty," for the purpose of establishing eligibility for veterans' benefits.

Necessary Information for File Reconstruction

The key to reconstructing military data is to give the NPRC enough specific information so the staff can properly search the various sources. The following information is normally required:

- ✓ Full name used during military service
- ✓ Branch of service
- ✓ Approximate dates of service
- ✓ Service number
- ✓ Place of entry into service
- ✓ Last unit of assignment
- ✓ Place of discharge

(Texas Veterans Commission Journal, Jan/Feb 2000)

CENSUS BUREAU BEGINS TO RECRUIT HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF WORKERS FOR CENSUS 2000

The Census Bureau recently launched a recruiting campaign to find workers to fill thousands of short-term employment slots during Census 2000. To adequately staff the temporary local census offices in every state, a pool of some three million applicants will be needed. "Census 2000 will be the largest peacetime mobilization in our nation's history," said Commerce Secretary William M. Daley in a statement. Census Bureau Director Kenneth Prewitt urged everyone interested in a census job to call the agency's toll-free number at **1-888-325-7733**. While acknowledging that attracting qualified candidates will be a challenge in the current labor

market, Prewitt noted that Census 2000 jobs are ideal for retirees, students, and others seeking part-time work. For the first time, most federal employees will be allowed to work on the census outside their normal work hours. Pay rates range from \$8.25 to \$18.50 per hour. People hired will work primarily out of the 520 local census offices across the country. Generally, each of the local census offices will need about 1,000 workers, most of them during a period of four to six weeks. The largest number will be needed beginning in mid-April when census workers visit households that do not return their Census 2000 forms by mail. During the course of census operations, there will be more than 860,000 employment slots to be filled. Some workers will be hired for one slot, and then rehired later to fill another slot. "Our goal is to have a pool of local people who are familiar with their communities and committed to a successful count in their own neighborhoods, Prewitt stressed. Prewitt also underscored the fact that "the stakes are very high in the census since, in addition to its constitutional purpose of apportioning seats in the U.S. House of Representative, the census also is used in state legislative redistricting and to help determine the share of federal program funds made available to state, local, and tribal governments over the next decade. Data gathered will affect decisions on many matters of local importance, including education, health care, employment, housing, transportation, and the environment. (*Semper Fidelis Memorandum for Retired Marines, Winter 2000*)

USO DELAWARE

The USO Delaware, located in the Passenger Terminal on Dover Air Force Base, is looking for volunteers. We are specifically looking for volunteers during the evenings and weekends. USO Delaware boasts a large lounge with TV and VCR capability, a stocked kitchen with refreshments, games, tables, book and magazine library, dependents lounge with play area, cribs, changing table and rockers for weary parents. Remember what it was like to see a smile and friendly face while traveling? The warm feeling of home you can bring to someone with just a cup of coffee and a donut are still important in this high-tech world! Give back to your fellow retirees, soldiers and family members, Volunteer at USO Delaware! For more information, please call 677-2491 or Mary (Volunteer Coordinator) at 736.5018. (*Department of the Air Force, HQs 436th Airlift Wing, March 1, 2000*)

INFORMATION NIGHT FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

PRESENTED BY:
DE SMALL BUSINESS RESOURCE PARTNERSHIP
Small Business Development Center/Central Delaware
Chamber of Commerce
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 2000
DTCC @ TERRY CAMPUS
CONFERENCE CENTER, DENNYS RD, DOVER
6:00 – 8:00 PM

FOR: DELAWARE SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

Our Purpose: To connect Delaware's small business community with the State/Federal/Non-profit organizations that can provide the necessary information for making decisions when growing an existing business or starting a new one.

NETWORK WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM:

DE Division of Revenue	US Small Business Administration
Kent County Economic Development Council	US Dept. of Veterans Affairs
City of Dover	US Internal Revenue Service
Central Delaware Chamber of Commerce	DE Mfg. Extension Partnership
DE Dept. of Labor	Service Corps of Retired Executives
DE Div. of Corporations	First State Community Loan Fund
Small Business Dev. Center	Mid-Atlantic Business Finance Co.
US Dept. of Agriculture	Capital Works
US Dept. of Labor	Micro-Business Chamber of Commerce

We can help you.....

With business management problems, state and federal rules, compliance issues and employment questions.

BONUS: The DE Administrator of unclaimed property will be on hand to check your name against a data base of unclaimed property owners.

For more information, contact:

Jim Crisfield (302)678-1555 or Al Hedgecock (302)734-7513

LAW CHANGE AFFECTS RESERVISTS "FORGOTTEN WIDOWS"

The last of the reserve components' "forgotten widows" are now eligible for the two-year old Annuities for Certain Military Surviving Spouses benefit. The fiscal 2000 Defense Authorization Act removes an inequity written into Section 644 of the fiscal 1998 Act, which created the benefit. "Forgotten widows" describes widows and widowers previously ineligible for survivor annuities because their retirement-qualified military spouses died before having the chance to enroll in the active duty Survivor Benefit Plan, created in 1972, or the Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan, created in 1978. The fiscal 1998 law said retirement-qualified reservists had to have died between 21 September 1972, and 1 October 1978, for their surviving spouses to be eligible. The fiscal 2000 change removes the 1972 date. Eligibility criteria for Annuities for Certain Military Surviving Spouses benefit are:

- ❑ Deceased reserve member must have been eligible for reserve retired pay at age 60 by having completed at least 20 qualifying years of service,
- ❑ Members must have been married to the applicant on the date of death, and must have died before 1 October 1978.

Benefit rules are not automatic. Eligible surviving spouses must apply and provide supporting documents. Applicants are entitled to a monthly annuity of \$174.76. Under the new law beginning 1 December 1999, the monthly annuity is retroactive to 1 October 1999. (*Semper Fidelis Memorandum for Retired Marines, Winter 2000*)

WITHDRAWAL FROM SBP DUE TO TOTAL VA DISABILITY

Public Law (PL) 96-402 permits retirees who are rated totally disabled by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to withdraw from SBP provided:

He/She has held the total disability rating for a period of at least 5 continuous years if the disability rating was awarded at retirement

OR

He/She has held the disability rating for at least 10 continuous years if the disability rating was awarded and became effective later than the date of the member's retirement

A request for withdrawal requires the written consent of the member's spouse. There is no immediate refund of premiums; however, the surviving spouse will normally be eligible for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) paid by the VA upon the member's death. As long as the spouse submits an application for DIC to the VA within a year of the member's death, the spouse will be refunded all SBP premiums provided an application for the SBP annuity is submitted to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service - Cleveland Center (DFAS-CL). When a retiree sends a request to withdraw to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service - Cleveland Center (DFAS-CL), a written statement outlining the advantages and disadvantages of withdrawing will be furnished to the retiree by DFAS-CL. The change will not take effect until the member confirms receipt of the information and acknowledges that he/she still wishes to withdraw. If a member withdraws from SBP under the 100 percent VA disability provision, any Supplemental SBP (SSBP) coverage (if applicable) is also terminated and NO annuity will be payable; however, all premiums will be refunded to a surviving spouse upon the member's death. If the total VA disability rating is withdrawn or reduced, SBP (and, SSBP, if applicable) coverage may be resumed. (<http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/SBP/vadis.htm>)

MILITARY SCHOLARSHIPS

There is a new web site for veterans and family members to use that has over \$300 million worth of scholarships targeted toward the military community. The site also has links to over 500 schools and information on military credit, tuition and fees, job placement and information on each school. It also has all federal and state education benefits and tips on how to use military experience to get admitted to schools and much more. The target population is veterans getting out of the service and who aren't aware of what they are entitled to or where to get information. The web site address is <http://gibilexpress.com>. Five students at Arizona State University developed this site. It has been so successful they

have now gone into business. (NAVPA News, Fall-Spring 1999-2000)

COLLEGE OPPORTUNITIES ONLINE

College Opportunities is brought to you by the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. It was authorized by Congress in 1998 to help future students, currently enrolled college students, and their parents to understand the differences between colleges and how much it costs to attend. If you are not sure what colleges might be of interest, College Opportunities has the tools to help you conduct an efficient search. You can search for a college based on its location, program, or degree offerings. The more criteria you specify, the smaller the number of colleges that will fit your criteria. College Opportunities is your direct link to over 9,000 colleges and universities in the United States (<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/cool>). (Semper Fidelis Memorandum for Retired Marines, Winter 2000)

FACTS ARE SOMETIMES STRANGER THAN FICTION

Here is an interesting story that ties together 2000 plus years of technology development. The U.S. standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet, 8.5 inches. That's an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used? Because that is the way they built them in England, and the U.S. railroads were built by English expatriates. Why did the English people build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre-railroad tramways, and that's the gauge they used. Why did they use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons, which used that wheel spacing. Okay! Why did the wagons use that odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing, the wagons would break on some of the old long-distance roads because that is the spacing of the old wheel ruts. So, who built those old-rutted roads? The first long-distance roads in Europe were built by Imperial Rome for the benefit of their legions. The roads have been used ever since. And the ruts? The initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagons, were first made by Roman war chariots. Since the chariots were made for or by Imperial Rome, they were all alike in the matter of wheel spacing. So, why did the Romans pick that spacing? Because the Imperial Roman chariots were made to be just wide enough to accommodate the backends of two horses. What's this got to do with the Space Shuttle? The engineers who designed the solid rocket boosters, or SRBs, wanted to make them a bit fatter, but the SRBs had to be shipped by train from the factory to the launch site. The railroad line to the factory runs through a tunnel in the mountains. The SRBs had to fit through that tunnel. The tunnel is slightly wider than a railroad track, and the railroad track is about as wide as two horses' behinds. So,

in summary, a major design feature of the world's most advanced transportation system was determined by the width of two horses' behinds!! (Provided by Rob Kall, Wyoming Vets News, February 2000)

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION TO DELAWARE VETERANS

In January 1946, Walter W. Bacon, then elected Governor, authorized a state award to those who served in World War II. To honor this commitment to Delaware Veterans, Governor Thomas R. Carper has announced that the State of Delaware will provide a "Certificate of Appreciation" to all Delaware residents who shall have served honorably in the Armed Forces of the United States during time of peace, conflict or war. To request a "Certificate of Appreciation" the veteran/spouse or next of kin must submit the enclosed application (see page 15) along with a copy of veterans Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, (DD Form 214). **DO NOT SEND ORIGINAL.** If you are a member of a veteran's organization we recommend that you send your requests through them so they may be consolidated. The 8 1/2 X 11 inch certificate, suitable for framing, is printed in black lettering on parchment paper, has a gold border and the Delaware State Seal is depicted in the background. The embossed gold seal of the Commission of Veterans Affairs is attached in the lower right hand corner.

COLD WAR CERTIFICATE: HOW TO OBTAIN

As of April 5, 1999, the long-awaited Cold War Certificate is available by sending a copy of your discharge document to: *Cold War Recognition, 4035 Ridge Top Road, Suite 400, Fairfax, VA 22030. FAX (703) 275-6749. Help line: (703) 275-6279.* Anyone who served on active duty – including stateside – between September 1945 and December 1991 is eligible for the certificate. (VFW, May 1999)

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN DELAWARE HEALTH SCREENINGS

Health screenings will be conducted at the following locations from 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM in Kent and Sussex Counties:

APR 11	Smyrna American Legion Post 14 (12-8 PM)	378-6329
APR 13	Riverdale American Legion Post 28	945-7314
APR 20	Ocean View VFW Post 7234	539-9981
MAY 2	Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs	739-2792
MAY 4	Riverdale American Legion Post 28	945-7314
MAY 9	Smyrna American Legion Post 14	378-6329
MAY 18	Ocean View VFW Post 7234 (12-8 PM)	539-9981
JUN 1	Riverdale American Legion Post 28	945-7314
JUN 6	Smyrna American Legion Post 14	378-6329
JUN 15	Ocean View VFW Post 7234	539-9981

For more information contact:

Clyde Bragg, RN Outreach Health Screening Nurse
 (302) 633-5332 – Outreach Screening Clinic
 (302) 994-2511 – BEEPER 197 – RN
 (302) 633-5500 – Primary Care/Women’s Health Clinic
 (302) 633-5212 – Eligibility/Registration
 (302) 633-5519 – Health Care Hotline

COMMISSION MEETINGS

The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs meets the fourth Tuesday of each month, 11:00 AM, Robbins Building, 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100, Dover, DE. The meeting schedule varies for December and June of each year. These meetings are open to the public. If you would like to attend, please call 1-800-344-9900 (in state) or 302-739-2792.

VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER REPRESENTATION

The Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs Service Officers, Mr. Harry J. Sanchez and Ms. Melanie E. Bronov provide information and assistance in submitting claims concerning education, disability compensation, hospitalization, rehabilitation and pensions. In addition, Mr. Sanchez and Ms. Bronov are also available at the Pyle State Service Center located in Roxanna, DE, the last Monday of each month between the hours of 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM. *For further information, and/or an appointment you may call (302) 739-7447 or toll free at 1-800-344-9900 anytime. When you are prompted, enter 129 to leave a message.* DCVA also represents veterans throughout the State with The Retired Enlisted Association, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and the Marine Corps League.

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Roger Pleus (Wilmington).....302-761-8096
 Al Barclift (Wilmington).....302-761-8093
 Desiree Young (Newark).....302-453-4350 ext. 218
 Mike Wolanski (VA Regional Ofc, Elsmere)...302-633-5492
 Steve Flaherty (Dover).....302-739-5473
 Charlene Robinson (Dover AFB).....302-677-6942
 Allan Hopkins (Dover).....302-739-5473
 John Lapps (Georgetown).....302-856-5230
 Bob Dotterer (Georgetown).....302-856-5230

OUTREACH SERVICES

American Legion

Darrell Johnson, Sr., Dept. Service Officer, (302) 633-5323, will visit the following posts between 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM on the following dates:

APR 5 Laurel, Post 19 875-9948
 Seaford, Post 6

APR 12 Dover, Post 2 674-3922
 APR 20 Oak Orchard/Riverdale 945-1673
 Post 28
 MAY 3 Laurel, Post 19 875-9948
 Seaford, Post 6
 MAY 10Dover, Post 2 674-3922
 MAY 18Oak Orchard/Riverdale 945-1673
 Post 28
 JUN 7 Laurel, Post 19 875-9948
 Seaford, Post 6
 JUN 14 Dover, Post 2 674-3922
 JUN 22 Oak Orchard/Riverdale 945-1673
 Post 28

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Charles Kashner and Justus (Joe) Kehne, Department Service Officers (DAV), Kent County (302) 697-9061 or (302) 697-3335, Sussex County (302) 644-2477 or (302) 644-9445.

Every Wednesday: DAV Headquarters Building
 (Kent) 183 South Street
 Camden, DE 19934

Every Thursday: Department of Labor
 (Sussex) Div. Of Emp & Trng
 Georgetown Professional Park
 600 N. DuPont Hwy.
 Georgetown, DE 19947

American Veterans (AMVETS)

Michael Companion, National Service Officer, VA Regional Office, 1601 Kirkwood Highway, Wilmington, DE 19805 (302) 994-2511 ext. 4366.

Retired Navy Activities Affairs Office

Naval & Marine Corps Reserve Center, 3920 Kirkwood Hwy, Wilmington, DE 19808-5194, (302) 998-3328.

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)

James Withrow, Dept. Service Officer, VA Regional Office, 1601 Kirkwood Highway, Room 21, Wilmington, DE 19805 (800) 461-8262 ext. (302) 633-5326.

1ST Thursday Dover Armory (741-7516) 8:00-11:00 AM
 Milford VFW (422-4412) 1:30-4:00 PM
 2nd Thursday Dover Armory (741-7516) 8:00-11:00 AM
 Milton VFW (684-4975) 1:30-4:00 PM
 3rd Thursday Dover Armory (741-7516) 8:00-11:00 AM
 Rehoboth VFW (227-3469) 1:30-4:00 PM
 4th Thursday Dover Armory (741-7516) 8:00-11:00 AM
 Seaford VFW (629-3092) 1:30-4:00 PM
 5th Thursday Dover Armory (741-7516) 8:00-11:00 AM
 Georgetown VFW (856-6098) 1:30-4:00 PM

SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

American Legion.....302-633-5323
 AMVETS.....302-994-2511 ext. 4366

Date of Birth _____ Type of Discharge _____ Highest Rank Achieved _____
(only required if requesting rank on certificate)

LEGAL RESIDENT OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE

To meet the legal residency requirement (in addition to honorable military service) the veteran must have been:

- a. A legal resident of Delaware when he or she entered the Armed Forces of the United States; or
- b. A legal resident of Delaware at time of death

Please submit this application and a copy of Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, (DD-214) to:

**Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs
Robbins Building
802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100
Dover, DE 19904
Phone: (302) 739-2792 or 1-800 344-9900 (In state only)**

Signature of Veteran/spouse or next of kin _____ Date _____

Relationship if not veteran _____

NOTE: Please anticipate 4 to 6 weeks in receiving your Certificate

TO BE COMPLETED BY DCVA

___ Approved ___ Pending ___ Disapproved

Name _____ Date _____

Title _____

STATE OF DELAWARE

"Serving Delaware's Veterans"

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

**PRSRT STD
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
DOVER DE
PERMIT NO 120**

Address Correction Requested

DCVA 20-04-00-01-01