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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS



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News of the Week

Medal of Honor Unveiling Ceremony

From the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs

SPRINGFIELD, Fla., April 4 -- The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs is hosting a Medal of Honor Unveiling Ceremony April 18 at the Clifford Sims Veterans' Nursing Home in Springfield, Fla. The home is named for Clifford C. Sims, an Army Staff Sergeant who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroic actions in Vietnam in 1968. The ceremony, scheduled to begin at 2:30 p.m. CDT, will be held at the home at 4419 Tram Road. The Sims Nursing Home, which accepted its first resident in October 2003, is a 120-bed facility offering skilled nursing and dementia care.

South Florida VA National Cemetery to Open Section Early for Burials

From the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs

LAKE WORTH, Fla. -- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will open its fifth national cemetery in Florida for interments on April 16. The South Florida VA National Cemetery, located in Lake Worth, Fla., is located off U.S. 441 just south of Lantana Road and north of Boynton Beach Boulevard. For information regarding burial and eligibility, contact cemetery staff by calling (561) 649-6489.

In addition to the new national cemetery in Palm Beach County, the VA is developing two additional land sites in Florida to become national cemeteries. One is in Jacksonville and the other is in near Sarasota. More information about VA's National Cemetery Administration is available online at www.cem.va.gov.

Deputy Defense Secretary Calls for Immediate Fix to Disability Process

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, April 12 -- Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England called for a new policy that moves wounded troops from Iraq and Afghanistan to the front of the line in the disability rating process while system-wide fixes to the disability and health care systems are put in place.

England recommended an immediate measure to speed combat-wounded troops through the DOD disability system and smooth their transition to the Department of Veterans Affairs system. The goal, he said, is "an uninterrupted, seamless continuum of care and support" that ensures nobody falls through the cracks or gets mired down in bureaucratic red tape.

Wounded troops represent about 11 percent of the 25,000 servicemembers being processed through DOD's disability system. The problem, England told the senators today, is that this 11 percent is funneled through the system just as the other 89 percent, many of them career servicemembers preparing to retire.

This "one-size-fits-all rating process" bogs down the processing of combat-wounded troops cases, England said.

Instead, he recommended that DOD expedite its cases to smooth their transition into VA care. Many of the wounded troops' cases are relatively clear-cut and can be moved through the system quickly, he said.

England acknowledged that this immediate fix is just one step toward improving the way wounded troops are cared for and, when appropriate, processed through the disability system. He said he's looking forward

to hearing what the many studies, reviews, commissions and panels have to say about the matter when they report their findings before the year's end.

What's needed, he said, is a broad-based system that ensures combat-wounded troops get the care and treatment they deserve. "In my judgment, it is time to step back and take a holistic look at the system instead of just applying fixes to the system," England told the committees. "We need an integrated, systemic solution with the right mechanisms in place ... that makes sense from the soldier's perspective."

That requires thinking about what the best system would look like if it were being built from scratch and what steps would have to be taken to get it, he said.

England said it also may require looking to other national systems associated with disability determination and compensation: the Social Security Administration's disability payments, the Department of Labor's workmen's compensation program and the Department of Veterans Affairs and DOD disability systems, among them.

"They are all carried out in different ways, against different systems to achieve different ends," he said.

The differences between these complex programs can be confusing to benefit recipients, England said, suggesting the need for a new national approach for compensating disabled workers. "It may be time to cast a wider net and look at this whole area of disability," he said.

Independent Medical Review Group Presents Preliminary Conclusions

By Jim Garamone

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, April 12 – The problems wounded servicemembers and their families experienced at Walter Reed Army Medical Center here are systemic, members of the Independent Review Group said.

The group met with members of the Defense Health Board and presented preliminary conclusions at a meeting at the hospital.

"There has always been an American ethic and that ethic is that America always takes care of its wounded," said John O. Marsh, co-chairman of the group and former Army secretary. "We've got to be certain that we always emphasize that ethic."

The group is looking exclusively at conditions Walter Reed and the National Naval Medical Center at Bethesda, Md. Yet the group's findings indicate problems beyond the two flagship military medical centers.

"We have reason to think that the observations we make are systemic," Marsh said. "We did encounter indications that some of the problems ... do exist in other medical facilities of our armed forces."

Former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Togo West, co-chairman of the group, said there were failures of leadership at Walter Reed. Army Secretary Francis Harvey, Army Lt. Gen. Kevin Kiley, and Walter Reed Commander Maj. Gen. George W. Weightman were fired for those failures.

West said there was a "virtually incomprehensible inattention to non-medical facilities," and an "almost palpable disdain" for the long-term treatment that outpatients need.

Marsh said the circumstances at Walter Reed created a "perfect storm." The Army did not expect the number of injured from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Army officials did not invest in the Walter Reed facility once it was placed on the base realignment and closure list, and they tried to fill the void by hiring contractors to provide critical outpatient services. Medical personnel did not understand how to cope or treat servicemembers affected by traumatic brain injuries from improvised explosive devices and post-traumatic stress disorder. Finally, there is a systemic breakdown of the disability review process.

The group will recommend speeding up closure of Walter Reed Army Medical Center, West said. Under the base realignment and closure commission, Walter Reed and Bethesda are to be consolidated in Bethesda and the whole complex named the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. The group recommends speeding up construction at Bethesda and ensuring that there is no "dying on the vine" for the facilities at Walter Reed until the complex is open. This will require funding improvements at a facility that is due to close, group officials said.

The group will recommend more money to research traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder. Medical personnel need to know the best diagnostic tools and treatments for these conditions.

The group will recommend more case workers for outpatient servicemembers, and better training for the case workers. The group will also study what part contracting out played in the hospital's "perfect storm."

Finally, the group is unanimous regarding the disability review process, West said. "The horrors that are inflicted on our wounded servicemembers and their families in the name of physical disability review, simply must be fixed," he said.

All servicemembers go through three separate board proceedings to determine disability. In the Army it is four proceedings. There are different stands and results from these boards and they appear "wildly incomprehensible" to wounded servicemembers and their families, West said.

The system needs to be combined and consolidated into a reasonable process from the servicemembers point of view, West said.

"To be sure it was the degradation of the physical facilities that caught the eye of the media," West said. "Important as that is, we believe there is far more important things to be dealt with here than applying paint or crawling around basements to deal with electrical problems.

"This is our bottom line: We are the United States of America," he continued. "These are our sons and daughters and sisters, uncle and aunt, maybe even a grandparent or two. ... Their families are our families. We are their neighbors. Their anguish is ours. We can and must do better."

New Legislation to Help Veterans with Burn Injuries

Up to \$50,000 for housing modifications – \$11,000 for a vehicle

News from the ranking member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs

WASHINGTON, April 12 -- U.S. Senator Larry Craig announced that he is joining Sens. John Cornyn (R-Texas) and Daniel Akaka (D-Hawaii) in sponsoring legislation to provide financial help to veterans with severe burn injuries, and to make housing assistance programs available to servicemembers who are recuperating from the their burns – before they transition to veteran status.

The Veterans Housing Benefits Enhancement Act of 2007 (S. 1096) will provide up to \$50,000 to help servicemembers – those with severe burn injuries – modify their homes to meet their unique needs. The

legislation will also provide up to \$11,000 for the purchase or modification of an auto mobile or other vehicle for veterans with extensive burns.

Current law provides such benefits to those who have lost the use of their arms or legs, or who have lost their sight.

"There are unique home and auto modifications needed by those with serious burns. Our legislation updates existing programs to account for injuries we are seeing from our returning combat veterans," said Craig (R-Idaho), the top Republican on the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. "I commend Sen. Cornyn for his leadership in bringing this legislation forward."

Last year Sen. Craig sponsored legislation – that is now law – which provides funding to modify the homes of the families (usually parents) of severely injured veterans. Prior to that change, veterans had to own the home in order to qualify for the grants.

"With the change we are proposing this year, payments will be made available to the families while the servicemember is still listed on active duty and recuperating at military hospitals like Walter Reed. Hopefully changes to the family house can be made before the veteran returns back home," Craig said.

The new legislation, if approved by Congress, will also require VA officials to provide Congress with a detailed report about other severely injured veterans who may not be covered by existing law. That report would be due by the end of this year.

"I am highly confident that we can pass this legislation quickly. It's needed now," Craig said.

Army Upgrades Services for Army Survivors

From the U.S. Army Long Term Family Case Management

ALEXANDRIA, Va., April 4 - The Army Families First Casualty Call Center, which assists families of fallen soldiers, recently underwent several changes to better serve the those who seek support in the months and years following the loss of a loved one. These upgrades include a new interactive Web site and a new name for the organization. Now known as the Long Term Family Case Management, this name change more accurately reflects how LTFCM assists families. Putting "families first" continues to be the number one priority in providing long-term support to families of fallen soldiers by offering assistance and connecting survivors to services and programs 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Family members can access the new Web site by visiting www.altfcm.army.mil. The site includes enhanced features with detailed information on survivors' benefits, soldier services, reports, and support programs. Finally, the enhanced site features interactive tools to determine whether a family is eligible to apply for the Death Gratuity or retroactive Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance benefits.

As a central point of contact in the months and years following a loss, LTFCM support coordinators continue to aid survivors with retroactive death benefits, entitlements like education and counseling (financial and emotional), and posthumous awards and citations for fallen servicemembers.

Casey Takes Over Army Helm

By Carmen L. Gleason

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, April 10 – After nearly four decades of military service, Gen. Peter Schoomaker handed the reins of Army chief of staff to Gen. George W. Casey Jr., who most recently served as commander of Multinational Forces Iraq.

Casey became the 36th Army chief of staff.

This was the second time Schoomaker has retired from Army life; he first retired in 2000 but was asked to return in 2003 to serve in the Army's top billet.

"Every so often an institution needs a leader to remind it of its core values," Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said of Schoomaker. "He's done that by emphasizing the Warrior Ethos, focusing on physical fitness and basic skills like marksmanship and hand-to-hand combat."

Gates said this has led to a renewal of timeless values like personal courage and pride in one's physical and mental strength. "These are integral parts of the moral fiber and institutional memory that has, throughout history, made our military so effective against our enemies and so respected by our friends," the secretary said.

Top defense officials have credited Schoomaker with engineering the Army's greatest reorganization since World War II, as well as revamping training protocol across the force, all while the Army was engaged in combat.

The general led the transformation from a division-based to brigade-based Army that provided a fully modular force that was not only lighter but also more lethal, Gates said. The timetable to deploy brigades has become days or weeks, rather than months under Schoomaker's leadership, he said.

Gates said Schoomaker showed remarkable ability in leading individuals as well as institutions during his more than 30 years in the military. "He prepared our forces for the kinds of wars we are fighting and the ones we may be called upon to fight in the future," Gates said. "It is a difficult task in an environment that requires a rifleman and a smart bomb, an unconventional approach as well as conventional power."

As he said farewell to the Army, he took the opportunity to pass along words of advice to the many top military brass and political leaders in attendance. "I believe that this is the most dangerous period of my lifetime," Schoomaker said. "We are still closer to the beginning than the end of this fight."

He told the audience the pace of the Army's transformation and adaptation must accelerate, as well as the pace of conflict in Iraq. "Although the burden of the long war is slowly beginning to shift to a more balanced approach using all elements of our nation's power," he said, "the road ahead will not be easy, and the stakes couldn't be higher."

The general, both the son and father of soldiers, quoted former Army Chief of Staff Gen. Creighton Abrams as saying, "People are not in the Army, they are the Army."

"My four years as Army chief have only affirmed that soldiers are our greatest strength because war is fought in human dimensions, and the men and women both in and out of uniform who are willing to put their boots on the ground are absolutely essential," he said.

Schoomaker said that while the technology of the Army has changed in its nearly 232-year history, the dedication to duty, patriotism and steely-eyed resolve of its soldiers has not.

"I have looked into the eyes of today's warriors, and I am proud to report that they continue to exceed every expectation for courage, dedication and selfless service," he said. "They are the heart of all we do; they are our future."

"Our Army is strong today and every soldier is a warrior because of your vision and leadership," Casey told Schoomaker during the ceremony.

Casey, who has spent 30 months as the commander of forces in Iraq, said that U.S. combat veterans have been baptized by fire and blood, but they have come out as strong as steel. He said he takes great pride in now being their leader.

He said the next decade will likely be one of persistent conflict. "We've been at war for over five years, fighting for our freedom, our security and our future as a nation," Casey said. "We have made hard sacrifices, and we will be called on to make more."

Casey said the quality of the men and women of the Army is the best he's seen in his 36 years of service. "The remarkable men and women of our all-volunteer force, supported by their families, are a national treasure and will be cared for accordingly," he said.

He added that soldiers' care and quality of life should be commensurate with the magnificent service they render the American people. "I want to renew my personal commitment to ensure these standards are met and maintained for our soldiers, civilians and their families," Casey said.

Bush Thanks Troops, Legionnaires

By Donna Miles

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, April 10 – President Bush praised the troops defending the United States and the veterans who set a powerful example and continue to support them.

Bush traveled to American Legion Post 177 in Fairfax, Va., to recognize the spirit of service and volunteerism he said makes the United States a shining example for the rest of the world. "There's something to be said for a country where people serve something greater than themselves, where people in this era volunteer in the face of danger to defend" it, he said.

The president said it's difficult facing the personal losses the war on terror has inflicted. "We've lost some fantastic young men and women," he said. "And we honor their service and their sacrifice by completing the mission, by helping a generation of Americans grow up in a peaceful world."

Bush said he prays for the families of the fallen troops and recognizes the pain they're enduring. "And it's very important for me to make it clear to them that I believe the sacrifice is necessary to achieve the peace we all long for," he said.

The president thanked the Legionnaires who, like today's troops, sacrificed for the country. They provide inspiration for those in uniform today, he said, and continue to serve through their long tradition of support to the military.

Bush noted that World War I veterans gathered in November 1944 to found the Fairfax post as a way to rally support for those in uniform. "These veterans understood what it meant to be in war, what it meant to be far from home, and they provided necessary support for our troops," he said.

It's a tradition the group continues today, from visiting wounded troops in military hospitals to awarding ROTC scholarships at nearby George Mason University.

Bush also thanked the group for taking the time to send care packages to deployed troops Iraq and Afghanistan "to remind those who wear the uniform that you support them."

These and other efforts the country is making send a solid message of support to troops far from home and the lift they sometimes need, he told them. "It matters," he said.

The American Legion is among myriad groups, corporations and private citizens around the country showing support for the men and women in uniform. These efforts are showcased through the Defense Department's America Supports You program. Launched in November 2004, the program helps directly connect military members to the support of the America people and offers ways the general public can find meaningful ways to support the military community.

Air Compassion for Veterans

From Air Compassion for Veterans

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. -- Air Compassion for Veterans provides medically related air transport services to troops, veterans and their families affected by military deployment in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. ACV is committed to the ongoing healing process and will provide transport for activities that aid in the process.

Air Compassion for Veterans provides no-cost travel services for eligible troops, veterans and their families. The organization serves to arrange and provide charitable patient travel that does not duplicate any of the efforts of any other charities.

You may access help provided by Air Compassion for Veterans by calling 1-888-662-6794. Learn more about Air Compassion for Veterans by logging on to www.AirCompassionforVeterans.org.

VA Seeks Volunteers to Play 'Taps' at National Cemeteries

by Gerry J. Gilmore

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON (AFRNS) – Hundreds of volunteer buglers and trumpeters are being sought to participate in Armed Forces Day observances held at veterans' cemeteries nationwide and overseas, a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs official said.

The event, called "Echo Taps Worldwide," takes place May 19 and is co-sponsored by the VA's National Cemetery Administration and "Bugles Across America," a volunteer group, said Michael Nacincik, the cemetery administration's chief of communications and outreach support.

"Echo Taps" will take place at VA-operated national cemeteries, U.S. Department of the Interior/National Park Service national cemeteries, and American Battle Monuments Commission cemeteries located overseas, Mr. Nacincik said.

"It is an extremely important event for a number of reasons," Mr. Nacincik said. "It honors the service of veterans to our country."

The initiative also encourages musicians to perform as live buglers at veterans' funeral ceremonies year round, Mr. Nacincik said. In 2006, 688,000 veterans died in the United States, he added, with most belonging to the World War II generation.

"There is overwhelming popular support to have 'Taps' played at veterans' funerals," Mr. Nacincik said. "And, obviously, with that many burials taking place, there are not enough buglers to provide a live bugler at every burial."

Nevertheless, Bugles Across America has done "a very good job" of obtaining volunteers to play "Taps" at military funerals, Mr. Nacincik said.

"It is important that our nation preserves the tradition of a live bugler to play final military honors," Leslie Hampton, a Navy veteran and Bugles Across America volunteer, stated in a recent VA news release.

"Hopefully, 'Echo Taps' will go even further and help to identify people who know how to play 'Taps' or are willing to learn how to play 'Taps' and motivate them to want to provide the service when they're available at veterans' funerals in the future," Mr. Nacincik said.

Volunteer buglers and trumpeters must register through the VA's Web site, which is attached to the "Echo Taps" site at www.echotaps.org, Mr. Nacincik said.

The VA operates 124 veterans' cemeteries across the United States, Mr. Nacincik said. Generally, persons who have received other than dishonorable discharges after completion of military service are eligible for burial at a VA-operated national cemetery, he added.

Florida Atlantic University Hosts Veterans Business Event

From Florida Atlantic University's Small Business Development Center

BOCA RATON, Fla. -- Florida Atlantic University's Small Business Development Center is sponsoring a networking expo April 18 from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on FAU's Jupiter campus.

The goal of this free expo is to assist South Florida businesses in networking with area veteran-owned and run companies, supporting the potential of contracting, sub-contracting, and general business enhancement. Continental breakfast and lunch are included. The morning session will encompass a keynote speaker, several informative presentations and a panel discussion. After lunch, there will be an expo where sponsoring agencies and companies will present their material and hold individual discussions with attendees. Florida Atlantic University and local business leaders will be supporting the event. Numerous large and small businesses from the South Florida service area will participate.

Registration, directions and additional details are available on the center's Web site at <http://www.fausbdc.com/index.php?src=events&submenu=Training&srctype=profile&refno=2753>.

2007 Legislative Session Report

Bill Action List

The 2007 Regular Legislative Session is nearing the end. Below is the Bill Action List of key bills the department is tracking and their recent activity. If you wish to view all the legislation the department is following, please visit our tracking Web page at <http://www.floridavets.org/information/legislink.asp>.

Bills in Committee:

Date	Time	Location	Chamber	Committee	Bill	Title	Sponsor
April 10	9:30 a.m.	110 Senate Office Building	Senate	Judiciary	914	Relating to Civil Court Fees/Indigents/Waiver	Crist
April 10	9:30 a.m.	301 Senate Office Building	Senate	Military Affairs and Domestic Security	122	Relating to Child Custody/Not Modifying Child Custody	Posey
April 10	2 p.m.	37 Senate Office Building	Senate	Higher Education	2006	Relating to Veterans' Tuition Assistance Act	Crist
April 12	8 a.m.	Morris Hall	House	Jobs and Entrepreneurship Council	191	Relating to Instant Bingo	Dean
April 12	8 a.m.	404 House Office Building	House	Economic Expansion & Infrastructure Council	903	Relating to Specialty License Plates/Gold Star	Cretul
April 12	8 a.m.	404 House Office Building	House	Economic Expansion and Infrastructure Council	935	Relating to U.S. Marine Corps License Plate/Fee	Patronis
April 12	8 a.m.	404 House Office Building	House	Economic Expansion and Infrastructure Council	975	Relating to Specialty License Plates	Hays
April 12	2:30 p.m.	110 Senate Office Building	Senate	Governmental Operations	1630	Relating to U.S. Marine Corps License Plate/Fee	Dockery
April 13	8:30 a.m.	309 Capitol	Senate	Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations	1448	Relating to Service Members/Dependent Assistance	Military Affairs and Domestic Security
April 13	10 a.m.	212 Knott Building	House	Policy and Budget Council	35	Relating to Education/Children of POWs or MIAs	Jordan
April 13	10 a.m.	212 Knott Building	House	Policy and Budget Council	491	Relating to Veterans' Tuition Assistance Act	Scionti

Bills in Session:

Date	Time	Chamber	Committee	Bill	Title	Sponsor
April 13	3 p.m.	Senate	Special Order Second Reading	412	Relating to Education/Children of POWs or MIAs	Baker
April 13	3 p.m.	Senate	Special Order Second Reading	728	Relating to Veteran's Employment Preference	Fasano
April 13	3 p.m.	Senate	Special Order Second Reading	156	Relating to Veterans Defined/Wartime Service	Geller
April 13	3 p.m.	Senate	Special Order Second Reading	116	Relating to Armed Forces Member/Use of Name	Atwater

Key Legislative Dates:

April 19 10:30 – 11:30 a.m. Florida House of Representatives' Military Appreciation Day, House Chamber at the Capitol. Seating is on a first-come, first-served basis.
 May 4 Final Day of Regular Session

[News from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#)***New Polytrauma Website***

WASHINGTON, April 11 – The Department of Veterans Affairs' Polytrauma System of Care has a new Web site - www.polytrauma.va.gov. This site contains general information about Polytrauma and is home to a page for each of the VA's 21 facilities - four Polytrauma Rehabilitation Centers and 17 additional Polytrauma Network Sites (the Rehabilitation Centers are considered Network Sites as well).

Additionally, there are Polytrauma Support Clinic Teams - current plans put the final number of these near 75. The VA's expectation is that the facility pages will be able to provide contact information for these Clinic Teams as well as their own.

April is National Donate Life Month

VA raises awareness about its National Transplant Program and organ donation.

WASHINGTON, April 9 -- By proclaiming April as National Donate Life Month, President Bush focuses attention on those who have donated organs, marrow and tissue and their "kind and compassionate" acts. During the month, public and private groups, including VA, are working to raise public awareness to help more citizens understand the impact of organ donation.

More than 95,000 Americans currently await organ transplants, and hundreds more are added to transplants list each month. VA has been at the vanguard of organ transplantation since 1961 when the first VA kidney transplant was performed at the Denver VA Medical Center by Dr. Thomas E. Starzl, who also performed the world's first liver transplant. Since that beginning, the VA National Transplant Program has expanded to provide heart transplant services (1980), bone marrow (1982), liver (1989) and

lung transplants (1991). Last year, VA conducted 395 transplants at its 10 transplant centers. Approximately 1,200 veterans are referred for transplants each year.

Learn more about VA’s National Transplant Program and organ donation by visiting the program’s Web site, <http://www1.va.gov/transplant/>.

VA’s Performance Report among Best in Federal Sector

Department Cited Eight Years in a Row

WASHINGTON, April 12 – Continuing its commitment to give veterans a clear, meaningful view of how the Department of Veterans Affairs is performing, VA was recently rated by an independent research center as having one of the best annual performance reports in the federal sector for the eighth year in a row.

“The findings of this prestigious research center show that we’re among the best in the federal sector at providing meaningful information to the American public about our operations and performance,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson.

Since 2000, the Mercatus Center of George Mason University has examined the performance and accountability reports issued annually by federal agencies. This year, VA tied for second-best in the federal government, receiving 51 points on a 60-point scale. VA also tied for having the highest score in transparency, an example of the Department’s commitment to provide information that is useful and easy to understand.

Called *Eighth Annual Performance Report Scorecard: Which Federal Agencies Best Inform the Public?*, the new Mercatus study found VA’s reports are “rich in information on efforts to improve programmatic and managerial performance.”

“These findings show that VA has developed a management culture that sets high standards, measurable goals and accountability to the American public,” Nicholson said.

VA published its latest performance and accountability report in November 2006. It documents VA’s progress toward ensuring that America’s veterans and their families receive timely, compassionate, high-quality care and benefits. The Department’s report can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.va.gov/budget/report>.

2007 Veteran Organization Convention Schedule and Events

Organization	Event	Date	Location	Contact
Florida Council, Fleet Reserve Association - First Coast Branch 91 and Unit 91	Florida Meeting	April 13-15	5391 Collins Rd. Jacksonville	Jim Robbins (904) 269-2136
Lakeland Area Multiple Sclerosis Support Group	Support group meeting for vets, family and friends of people	April 14 1 p.m.	DAV Chapter 28 303 Veterans Ave. S. Lakeland	Lisa Garcia (863) 644-0239 http://home.earthlink.net/~tbl5142

	with MS			
Patrick Air Force Base Retiree Activities Office	Patrick AFB Military Retiree Day	April 21 9 a.m.- 1:30 p.m.	Patrick AFB	PAFB Retiree Activities Office (321) 494-5463
Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard	20 th Annual VVB Reunion	April 26-29	Wickham Park, Melbourne	Greg Welsh vets2gether@cfl.rr.com
Italian-American War Veterans of the U.S.	National Ladies Auxiliary Testimonial	April 27-29	Hawthorn Suites, 7450 Augusta National Dr. Orlando	Vito M. Rao vroao@broward.org
Korean War Veterans Association, Department of Florida	2007 Annual State Convention	May 11-13	Kenilworth Lodge Sebring	Joan Arcand Richard.arcand@verizon.net
Vietnam Veterans of America	Florida State Council Meeting	June 8-10	Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites Universal 5905 Kirkman Road Orlando	Jerry Klein jaklein9@adelphia.net Florida State Council (561)797-9475

Editor's Note: Veteran Service Organizations in Florida provided the information in the table above. If you would like to submit event information to include in the *e-floridavetsNews*, please e-mail the editor, Courtney Heidelberg, at heidelbergc@fdva.state.fl.us.

Florida Job Fair Information

Job Fair Coming to Jacksonville

Separating servicemembers, veterans and military family members welcome
From the Fleet and Family Support Center

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -- Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers from three naval installations are hosting a Navy Tri-Base Job Fair. The event will take place April 17 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Jacksonville at the Morocco Shrine Center, 3800 St. Johns Bluff Rd. S.

For more information and a list of employers, contact:

- Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay, Ga., Fleet and Family Support Center at (912) 573-4513
- Naval Station Mayport, Fla., Fleet and Family Support Center at (904) 270-6600 ext.120
- Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Fla., Fleet and Family Support Center at (904) 542-2766 ext. 130

National and local companies will be hiring, so bring copies of your resume and come dressed for success!

*Additional job fair information from the Florida Agency for Workforce Innovation is available online at: http://www.floridajobs.org/onestop/os_job_fairs.html.

Upcoming Military Air Shows in Florida

Thunderbirds – U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron

April 14-15: Eglin AFB

May 5-6: Fort Lauderdale

Golden Knights – U.S. Army Parachute Team

April 14-15: Eglin AFB (Air Show)

May 5-6: Fort Lauderdale (Air and Sea Show)

2007 Eglin Air Show

Heritage to Horizons ... Celebrating 60 years of Airpower

Retrieved from Eglin Air Force Base Web site

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. -- Eglin Air Force Base welcomes the Air Force Thunderbirds, Army Golden Knights and the Air Force Reserve Bi-plane demonstration teams to its 2007 Open House and Air Show at 9 a.m. April 14 and 15. Key events also include the Doolittle Raiders Dedication with B-25s. All visitors are subject to security checks. Admission and parking are free. Learn more about Eglin's Open House and Air Show by logging onto <http://www.eglin.af.mil/airshow/index.asp>.

Supporting Veterans

License Plates Support Florida Veterans' Homes

Your purchase of the "**Florida Salutes Veterans**" or one of the **approved Army, Navy, Air Force or Coast Guard Military Service license plates** helps people who need it most, when they need it most. The entire \$15 surcharge goes into a Trust Fund for the operation and maintenance of critically needed Veterans' Homes in Florida. A portion of the Marine Corps License Plate also supports the State Veterans' Homes Program.

Headstones and Markers

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs furnishes upon request, at no charge to the applicant, a government headstone or marker for the grave of any deceased eligible veteran in any cemetery around the world. For all deaths occurring before Sept. 11, 2001, the VA may provide a headstone or marker only for graves that are not marked with a private headstone.

Spouses and dependents buried in a private cemetery are not eligible for a government-provided headstone or marker.

Flat markers in granite, marble, and bronze and upright headstones in granite and marble are available. The style chosen must be consistent with existing monuments at the place of burial. Niche markers are also available to mark columbaria used for inurnment of cremated remains.

When burial or memorialization is in a national cemetery, a headstone or marker will be ordered by the cemetery officials based on inscription information provided by the next of kin. When burial is in a private cemetery, [VA Form 40-1330, Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker](#) (PDF), must be submitted by the next of kin or a representative, such as funeral director, cemetery official or veterans counselor, along with [veterans military discharge documents](#), to request a Government-provided headstone or marker. Do not send original documents, as they will not be returned.

To learn more information regarding headstones and markers including eligibility criteria, placing orders, inscriptions, replacements and more, click on http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/hm_hm.asp.

Do Your Homework before Donating Money

From the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs receives calls from Floridians who have been contacted by various organizations requesting that they donate money or other assets to their causes. Requesting organizations frequently have 'veteran' or other military and patriotic-related words in their titles, which can be misleading. Although many of these groups are doing great things with donated funds, some prey on innocent people to fatten their pocketbooks. Never give your social security number, date of birth, credit card number, or other personal and financial information to someone who you do not know. Although the department cannot tell you what organization to give your money to, we can make some recommendations to help you make an informed decision.

The Florida Department of State's Division of Corporations posts information on registered corporations online, including non-profit organizations, at www.sunbiz.org/. To see if a particular organization is registered with the Division of Corporations, from sunbiz.org, click *Online Searches and Document Images*; select *Corporations, Trademarks, Limited Partnerships, & Limited Liability Companies*; then choose *Name List*. Here you will enter the name of the organization you are researching in the text box and click on *Submit*. If the organization you are looking for is registered with the Division of Corporations, then you will be able to access information such as its address, officers, and certain reports and documents. As you will notice while navigating through the Web site, there are many other options for finding information that you may want to explore.

Another good resource for gathering information on charitable organizations is the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' *Gift Givers' Guide*, which can be accessed at <http://app1.800helpfla.com/giftgiversguide/>. Just input the name of the organization you are researching and click on *Search*. The guide will provide you with revenue information, as well as costs, surplus and more.

You can also find information on large charitable organizations by logging onto <http://www.charitynavigator.org/>. This site only includes charities that take in at least \$500,000 per year and have existed for a minimum of five years; thus, some of the new and small charities, although legit, may not be included in this Web site. Charity Navigator also includes helpful tips like *Top 10 Best Practices of Savvy Donors*, *Six Questions to Ask Charities before Donating*, and much more.

If you want to donate money to help out fellow veterans or current servicemembers, a good rule of thumb to go by is to donate to organizations that you know are legitimate and well-established. Your local veterans service organizations are a good place to start. The VA has published a *Directory of Veterans Service Organizations*, which you can access by logging onto <http://www1.va.gov/vso/>.

Vietnam Memorial Traveling Wall 2007 Schedule

Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard is hosting a Vietnam Traveling Wall. The wall is a 3/5 scale replica of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C., and is based in Brevard County, Fla. The traveling wall visited Ocala earlier this week and will be on display in Melbourne, Fla., April 22-29. For more information on the Traveling Memorial Wall, visit the Traveling Wall Web site at www.TravelingWall.us

[State of Florida Veterans' Homes](#)

Take a [virtual tour](#) of a **State Veterans' Nursing or Domiciliary Home**. The tour includes ten 360-degree fully interactive pictures. No additional software is required to view these images. Simply click on the desired picture and the tour begins.

[Links and References for Veterans](#)

[Click here](#) for a copy of **Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide**.

[Ask Benefits Questions Via E-MAIL](#): For specific Compensation and Pension benefits questions and local regional office issues, the contact list is by state and geographical area of jurisdiction.

[Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents](#) (Current Edition) - The current edition of this booklet lists the variety of federal benefits available to veterans and their dependents. Selecting the link above will allow you to download the booklet as a [PDF](#) file in English or Spanish.

La versión en Español de el folleto "Beneficios Federales para los Veteranos y sus Dependientes", el cual explica la variedad de beneficios disponibles para los veteranos y sus dependientes, se encuentra disponible en versión PDF al presionar [aquí](#).

[VA State Summary for Florida](#) – As of December 2006.

[Florida Veterans Mobile Service Center](#) - The Florida Veterans Mobile Service Center uses a state of the art 40-foot van equipped with two exam rooms, as well as facilities for dental care, to travel the state performing intervention with homeless veterans who live in rural encampments. This mobile unit offers a unique opportunity to provide homeless veterans immediate assistance of food and clothing, health screening and assessment, VA benefit determination and counseling, as well as assessment of housing, mental health, substance abuse, employment, educational and vocational needs.

The Mobile Service Center will host the following events in Florida soon:

April 26-29	Melbourne Vietnam Veterans Reunion
May 26-27	Panama City Stand Down
June 29-30	Miami Stand Down

[Florida Government](#)

[Federal Government](#)

[Florida State University's Institute on World War II and the Human Experience](#)

[Library of Congress, Veterans History Project](#)

[Issues and Action: Federal Veterans Issues](#)

[Find your member of Congress](#)

[United States Senate](#)

[U.S. House of Representatives](#)

[Combat Veterans Information](#)

[Transition Assistance Program](#)

[Survivors Benefits](#)

[Women Veterans Information](#)

New! [National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder](#)

(Some links require [Adobe Acrobat Reader, which can be downloaded here.](#))

[Florida Relay Service](#)

If you or someone you know is hearing or speech impaired, you should know about the resources available from the Florida Relay Service. The Florida Relay Service is the communications link for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/blind, or speech-impaired. Through the Florida Relay Service, people who use specialized telephone equipment can communicate with people who use standard telephone equipment. To call Florida Relay, dial 7-1-1, or use the appropriate toll free numbers:

- 1-800-955-8771 (TTY)
- 1-800-955-8770 (Voice)
- 1-877-955-8773 (Spanish)
- 1-877-955-8707 (French Creole)

More information is available from the Florida Relay Service Web site at <http://www.ftri.org/>. Also, you may write to the Florida Relay Service at 1820 East Park Ave., Suite 101, Tallahassee, FL 32301.

Please encourage others to sign up for *e-floridavetsNews*. Sign up, unsubscribe or change your e-mail address at <http://www.floridavets.org/news/newsletter.asp>.

[Editor's Note](#)

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