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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS



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**This Issue:**

■ **News of the Week**

- *National Guard Day at Capitol Showcases Florida's Military Capabilities ...2*
- *South Florida Lawmaker Hosts Veterans Town Hall Meetings .....2*
- *FDVA Briefs at Retiree Appreciation Day .....3*
- *DOD Health Affairs Nominee to Bring Patient's Perspective to Job .....3*
- *Veterans Groups Join Democrats in Support of Budget Resolution .....4*
- *Craig Warns Funding Plan Could Hurt Returning Troops .....5*
- *Craig Finds More Support for His Veterans Health Care Empowerment  
Legislation .....6*
- *2007 Eglin Air Show .....7*
- *Florida Atlantic University Hosts Veterans Business Event .....7*
- *TRICARE and DMDC Offer Help to Beneficiaries with Medicare Prescription  
Plan .....7*
- *Wounded Warriors' Wives Get Help .....8*
- **2007 Legislative Session Report .....9**
- **News from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs .....10**
- **2007 Veteran Organization Convention Schedule and Events .....12**
- **Florida Job Fair Information .....12**
- **Upcoming Military Air Shows in Florida .....13**
- **Supporting Veterans .....13**
- **State Veterans' Homes .....15**
- **Links and References .....15**
- **Editor's Note .....16**

## **News of the Week**

### ***National Guard Day at Capitol Showcases Florida's Military Capabilities***

*Florida National Guard brings presence to state Capital to draw public attention to Guard roles and missions*

By Tech. Sgt. Michelle L. Thomas  
Florida National Guard Public Affairs

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- Last month Governor Charlie Crist saw firsthand the dedication and hard work of the Florida National Guard during the tornado devastation in central Florida. Last week, he got the chance to see more of what the Guard can do.

Crist and other Capitol-area state employees, legislators and staff got a close-up look at some of the major weapons systems and equipment the Guard uses in its State, Homeland Security and other federal missions.

Held each year during the regular legislative session, Florida National Guard Day brings troops from across Florida to Tallahassee to educate the public and government officials on the many roles and missions of the Florida National Guard.

Established during the early 80's, the day-long event that was once held at the Headquarters of the Florida National Guard in St. Augustine, moved to the State Capitol and has become a mainstay during the legislative session and a chance for the Guard to highlight its contribution in Florida as well as the Nation—at home and abroad.

In the Capitol Plaza, attendees visited an assortment of military equipment used during emergency and combat operations by units such as the 44th Civil Support Team (CST), based at the Camp Blanding Joint Training Center. Members of the joint 22-person team answered questions about the equipment they use to identify chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive agents or substances.

Along with the displays of weaponry and other combat capabilities, the Florida National Guard's 13th Army Band from Miami played an assortment of military and patriotic music during the lunch hour which featured food prepared inside of a mobile military kitchen. The band is the official band of the Florida National Guard. Before Governor Crist spoke to the crowd, Major Gen. Douglas Burnett, Florida's Adjutant General, applauded the women and men in the Guard for their hard work and perseverance in Iraq, Afghanistan and along the Nation's Southwest border, and for their outstanding hard work during the tornados. Governor Crist thanked the men and women of the Florida National Guard for their federal and state service, especially during the aftermath of the tornado devastation last month. "The two most important words I can say are "thank you," said Crist.

### ***South Florida Lawmaker Hosts Veterans Town Hall Meetings***

Released from Rep. Ron Klein's Office

Congressman Ron Klein (D-Fla.) will host town hall meetings next month to discuss "How we can best serve our veterans." Dates, times and locations for these meetings are listed below:

#### **April 5: 10 a.m.**

West Palm Beach VA Medical Center  
7305 N. Military Trail

Room 2-C149  
West Palm Beach, FL 33410

**April 9: 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.**

(Joint Town Hall Davie/Cooper City)  
Davie Police Station  
1230 S. Nob Hill Road  
Davie, FL 33324

**April 9: Noon – 1 p.m.**

(Joint Town Hall Plantation/Wilton Manors/Oakland Park)  
Plantation City Hall  
400 NW 73rd Ave.  
Plantation, FL 33317

**April 9: 7 – 8 p.m.**

(Joint Town Hall Coral Springs/Parkland)  
Commission Chambers  
Coral Springs City Hall  
9551 West Sample Road  
Coral Springs, FL 33065

Veterans and the general public are invited to attend. Meet Rep. Klein and others to discuss concerns as well as ideas on how to best meet the health care needs of all military veterans. To RSVP or for more information, call (954) 522-4579.

***FDVA Briefs at Retiree Appreciation Day***

From the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs

ORLANDO, Fla. -- More than 1,100 retired servicemembers and their spouses attended the Fort Stewart Retiree Appreciation Day March 24 at Orlando's Rozen Plaza Hotel. FDVA representatives spoke to the audience concerning its role in advocating the many federal and state benefits they have earned through their military service, legislation the department is advancing on their behalf, and how they can contact state and federal agencies to assist them. Eileen Watson and Curt Ebitz, two of Florida's Commissioners on Veterans' Affairs, were in attendance. FDVA representatives distributed more than 1,000 FDVA-produced "Florida Veterans' Benefits Guides," more than 800 "Veterans, Military Members and Families" brochures from the Agency from Workforce Innovation and more than 800 veteran home buyer flyers from the Florida Housing Finance Corporation.

***DOD Health Affairs Nominee to Bring Patient's Perspective to Job***

By John D. Banusiewicz  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, March 28 -- President Bush's nominee to be the Defense Department's next top health care official promised the Senate Armed Services Committee that he'd bring a patient's perspective to the job if confirmed.

At his confirmation hearing, Dr. S. Ward Casscells III told senators he'd experienced DOD health care firsthand as an Army Reserve colonel in Iraq and later was frustrated by "the bureaucracy that has been in the news lately" upon his return.

"If it's frustrating for a colonel, you can imagine how frustrating it is for a sergeant or corporal," he said, "particularly if they've had a head injury or their family are 1,000 miles away and can't be advocates for them. So, ... we've got to fix that and make it fair and fast."

Casscells suffered an elbow injury in Iraq when the Humvee he was riding in swerved to avoid an improvised-explosive-device tripwire. The injury became infected, and he was treated at the 10th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad.

"I wasn't badly injured," he said. "It was a small injury, but it was just enough to get me into the system as a patient."

Casscells, who is a distinguished professor and vice president of biotechnology at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston and director of clinical research at the Texas Heart Institute, said his experience gave him "an interesting insight" into the dedication of the military's medical personnel.

"As the major was draining my elbow, an Army captain, who is a nurse, came in and said, 'Heads up everybody. We've got three birds coming in with about six Iraqi victims, bad IEDs. Everybody who hasn't given blood lately, roll up your sleeves.' ... And then she caught sight of me and said to the major, 'What's that colonel doing here? Get him out in the hall. I need that bed!'"

Casscells said he would continue -- and accelerate, if possible -- efforts by current Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Dr. William Winkenwerder Jr. to implement electronic medical records and other improvements to efficiency and accountability. He cited his own experience in acknowledging that the current system needs attention.

"I do know that when I was in Iraq, it amused me to look up my record on Army Knowledge Online -- one of our Web sites -- and to find that my deployment status was 'amber,' which means I was not fit to be deployed, and yet there I was," he said. "So clearly there are issues like that."

The DOD health affairs nominee said that if confirmed, he'll need time to assess the findings of various task forces and hearings investigating issues related to military health care and its bureaucracy, but he added it's clear to him the military is taking these matters "very seriously."

"It sounds like there's a lot of support for improving things - to take a system which is very good and make it absolutely superb," he said.

### ***Veterans Groups Join Democrats in Support of Budget Resolution***

*Outstanding Marks for First Quarter Veterans Report*

Released from the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

WASHINGTON, March 27 – Chairman Bob Filner (D-Calif.) was joined by veterans service organizations, Chairman of the Committee on the Budget John Spratt (D-S.C.), Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Chet Edwards (D-Texas), and members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee to unveil a significant budget that begins to address the needs of America's veterans.

“This week, the House will consider the budget for 2008 which increases VA health care by \$6.6 billion over 2007 figures,” said Filner, Chair of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. “This increased funding is \$3.5 billion over the Administration's request. Democrats have demonstrated unwavering support for our nation's veterans by working for the largest annual increase in VA health care spending in 77 years.”

A number of veterans' service organizations have offered support for the budget proposal, including The American Legion, Vietnam Veterans of America, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Disabled American Veterans.

"In the first three months of this Congress, we have demonstrated that Democrats recognize veterans' health care as a cost of war," said Chairman Filner. "In February, we passed a Continuing Resolution that included \$3.6 billion above the 2006 baseline. Then, last week the House passed a Supplemental Appropriations Act for 2007 that included \$1.7 billion for key veterans programs."

"I want to thank Speaker Pelosi, Chairman Spratt, Chairman Obey, Chairman Edwards, the members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee and the countless veterans and veterans groups that have worked tirelessly to ensure that this budget recognizes the importance of veterans," said Chairman Filner. "As a Congress, we are acting on behalf of a grateful nation. This budget shows the respect, love and dignity that our veterans deserve."

### ***Craig Warns Funding Plan Could Hurt Returning Troops***

*"We must not put our war wounded in longer lines for care," Craig says.*

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

WASHINGTON, March 23 -- U.S. Senator Larry Craig, the ranking member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, thanked his colleagues for their efforts to help America's warriors. But at the same time he issued a strong warning about the latest budget resolution passed by the Senate.

"This is not about the quantity of money. This is about how they plan to spend the money that worries me," Craig said. "I am absolutely committed to providing the highest quality of care to our veterans. I've supported a 70 percent increase in VA medical care funding since President Bush took office. I've spoken frequently about not sparing any expense when it comes to getting the highest quality of care to our Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, and veterans with service-connected disabilities."

"But what I see in this resolution put forward by Democrats has me deeply concerned. It may harm the care provided to the very veterans who are our number one priority – our combat wounded."

Craig noted that under the budget resolution, VA's health care system will be expected to be reopened to upper income veterans – those with no service-connected disabilities – at a time when veterans in serious need are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"All I've been hearing from the Democrats for the last two years is how we must not make our veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan wait in lines for mental health care, traumatic brain injury treatment, or other specialty care. I agree. That is why their proposal puzzles me," said Craig, the top Republican on the veterans' committee. "Where is the sense of priority here? It's like we're trying to keep a ship afloat by pouring tons of water onto the deck. It doesn't make sense. If everyone is a priority, then no one is a priority. We must not put our war wounded in longer lines for care."

Craig noted that four years ago, just as the nation was preparing to go to war, then-Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony Principi suspended enrollment to those who were financially stable and who had no disabilities caused by their military service.

"At that time the Secretary warned us that we have a responsibility to ensure we have the capacity to treat men and women who may be disabled. This resolution assumes implementation of a policy that would break the trust that needs to be there for our men and women now returning from combat," Craig said.

There are 24 million veterans alive today and of those, 5.3 million currently use the VA health care system.

"There has been zero discussion about the long-term consequences of the Democrats' proposal of opening up the system to every veteran. I'm afraid veterans with service connected injuries who need VA care, as well as taxpayers, will fall victim to the law of unintended consequences if, as I suspect, millions of veterans show up for care at VA hospitals which will soon be overwhelmed by the Democrats' proposal," Craig said.

Senator Craig has proposed legislation – the Veterans Health Care Empowerment Act – which would allow veterans with service-connected disabilities to receive treatment from the hospital or medical clinic of their choice.

"We need to ensure veterans get the top health care in a timely way. If some policies assumed in this resolution are adopted, there will be an even stronger reason for passing the Veterans Health Care Empowerment Act," Craig said. "Frankly if the Democrats don't have the courage to say who can't come in, then I believe it is necessary to say who can get out."

### ***Craig Finds More Support for His Veterans Health Care Empowerment Legislation***

*"It was needed yesterday," Craig says*

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

WASHINGTON, March 27 -- Just over two weeks ago U.S. Senator Larry Craig introduced historic new legislation which would enable veterans with service-connected disabilities to receive medical treatment outside the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. He had the opportunity to discuss it more with his colleagues at a hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, where he picked up support for the bill.

"I know that VA is the system of choice for millions of our veterans. I say 'system of choice' because I know that over three million veterans have other options for health care – such as Medicare, TRICARE, or private insurance. But they still choose VA," said Craig. "I think they should also have the power to say, 'If you don't treat me right or if someone else can provide me with better medical service, I'll go somewhere else.' And I have introduced legislation that would provide our service-disabled veterans with that power."

During the hearing, the Idaho Republican asked the Director of the state of Illinois' Department of Veterans' Affairs what she thought about the goal of his bill.

"I certainly would support that, however, not at the expense of more funds going to the VA," said Tammy Duckworth, the director of the state of Illinois' Department of Veterans' Affairs, and a double amputee who was injured when the Blackhawk helicopter she was piloting in the current conflict was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade. "At the same time as that funding, we also need access to private practices."

Under Craig's watch as chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, spending on the Department of Veterans Affairs increased by \$12 billion. The Idaho Republican has indicated his support for spending even more on VA's health care system next year.

"Tammy and I may not agree on every detail, but I'm pleased that she appears to support the goal I have, which is to make sure that our veterans with service-connected injuries can be seen by the best doctors in the country, whether they work for the VA or not," Craig said.

Craig's legislation now has the cosponsorship of Sens. Ted Stevens of Alaska and Johnny Isakson of Georgia, and others senators have expressed interest in cosponsoring the legislation.

"There is no time to catch up. There is a huge private sector capability that is needed now, today. It was needed yesterday," Craig said.

### **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>.

### **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>.

### **TRICARE and DMDC Offer Help to Beneficiaries with Medicare Prescription Plan**

Released from Department of Defense Military Health System

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – Each month since the beginning of the Medicare Part D prescription drug program in January 2006, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has automatically enrolled individuals that become eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare benefits (so-called "dual eligibles") into Medicare prescription drug plans. These auto-enrollments generally include all dual eligibles who are not yet enrolled in a Medicare Part D plan, potentially including TRICARE beneficiaries.

"Each of these individuals receives an enrollment notification from the CMS and the Medicare Part D plan that tells them about their enrollment and their opportunity to change plans or opt out of the Medicare Part D plan altogether," said Army Maj. Gen. Elder Granger, Deputy Director of the TRICARE Management Activity.

Affected TRICARE beneficiaries who try to use their TRICARE prescription drug benefit may not realize this occurred or may determine that enrollment in Medicare Part D is not necessary. Each individual's

case is unique and all aspects of a person's drug coverage need to be considered before making such a decision. According to federal law, the TRICARE pharmacy benefit is a secondary payer to a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan. Therefore, TRICARE has established payment rules with their claims processor to ensure compliance with federal law.

The TRICARE Management Activity, the Defense Manpower Data Center, and CMS have jointly developed a customer-focused process for beneficiaries to resolve Medicare Part D and TRICARE coverage issues, and obtain their prescriptions quickly.

If a TRICARE beneficiary is denied prescription coverage due to Medicare Part D enrollment, and believes that he or she is not enrolled in Medicare Part D or disenrolled from Medicare Part D, the beneficiary should contact Express Scripts at 1-866-363-8779. The Express Scripts customer service representative will ask for the beneficiary's permission to access Medicare Part D coverage information from CMS and determine whether the beneficiary is currently in a Medicare Part D plan. If CMS records show no Medicare Part D coverage, DMDC will update the beneficiary's Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System information, in one business day. Additionally, a representative from DMDC will contact the beneficiary to confirm the record correction.

If Express Scripts discovers that CMS shows the beneficiary as having Medicare Part D coverage, they will advise the beneficiary how to obtain confirmation of disenrollment or cancellation from Medicare Part D, and how to forward the disenrollment or cancellation information to DMDC to update the beneficiary's DEERS record. Once DMDC receives this documentation, a customer service representative will update the DEERS records and telephone the beneficiary to confirm the correction.

To view current Medicare Part D enrollment status on the Medicare Web site, beneficiaries may go to [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov), select the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder option, "Check Current Enrollment" option, then select View Your Current Plan" and follow the instructions.

#### *About TRICARE Management Activity*

TRICARE Management Activity, the Defense Department agency that administers the health care plan for the uniformed services, retirees and their families, serves more than 9.1 million eligible beneficiaries worldwide.

### ***Wounded Warriors' Wives Get Help***

By Samantha L. Quigley  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, March 29 -- Understanding the critical role spouses play in the recovery of wounded warriors, Operation Homefront has created the Wounded Warrior Wives Project to help them navigate the challenges they may face.

"While the military sees to their physical health, the key to the short- and long-term stability and full restoration of our wounded warriors lies in the support of their spouses," Meredith Leyva, founder of Operation Homefront, said. "It is the spouses, not the wounded warriors, who are most responsible for key family issues such as financial viability and seeking assistance."

The Wounded Warrior Wives Project is an opportunity for spouses to get together and really discuss issues surrounding their servicemembers' recovery, Leyva said. And though the title specifically mentions wives, "we are certainly open to everyone," she said.

The Wounded Warrior Wives Project began at Operation Homefront's annual chapter presidents' meeting, Leyva said. The group recognized that each new phase of recovery and rehabilitation brings new challenges not only for the patient, but the caregivers, Leyva said.

"It's a comprehensive program," Leyva said. "We catch them in the hospital at the acute phase (and) they can continue with physical support groups at the rehabilitation centers."

The Wounded Warrior Wives Project strives to help provide caregivers with an emotional and practical support system to navigate those challenges. Through the program, Operation Homefront will provide support groups at each major military medical facility, Leyva said.

It will continue this support network beyond the family's involvement in the medical system with Web-based magazine content and discussion forums that will directly address pertinent issues. This content will launch April 2, she said.

The Web content will become a new section on CinCHouse.com, Operation Homefront's online community. Dr. Julia Storey, a retired Air Force psychologist, and Tonia Sargent, a Marine wife whose husband suffered severe head injuries, will lead this endeavor, Leyva said.

Local support groups are primarily peer-to-peer with the goal of presenting information on all the programs available for military families, Leyva said.

"However, we will not be allowing command officials and program officials into the inner workings of the support group meetings, as a matter of privacy, unless the support group members specifically request that," Leyva said. "People need to be able to talk openly and without fear of reprisal, and I think command officials understand this."

## **2007 Legislative Session Report**

### ***Bill Action List***

The 2007 Regular Legislative Session is progressing and nearing its midway point. 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:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Chamber</b>	<b>Committee</b>	<b>Bill</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Sponsor</b>
March 27	12:30 p.m.	110 Senate Office Building	Senate	Judiciary	122	Relating to Child Custody/National Guard Member	Posey
March 27	1 p.m.	212 Knott Building	House	Schools and Learning Council	35	Relating to Education/Children of POWs or MIAs	Jordan
March 27	1 p.m.	212 Knott Building	House	Schools and Learning Council	491	Relating to Veterans' Tuition Assistance Act	Scionti
March 29	9 a.m.	401 Senate Office Building	Senate	Environmental Preservation and Conservation	94	Relating to State Parks/Florida National Guard	Baker

**Bills in Session:**

Date	Time	Chamber	Action	Bill	Title	Sponsor
March 28	1 p.m.	House	Special Order	699	Relating to Veteran/Public Employment Preference	Sachs
March 28	2:30 p.m.	Senate	Third Reading	1026	Relating to Ad Valorem Tax/Disabled Veterans	Haridopolos

**Note Special Order:** The bill will be presented for first time on the floor of the Chamber. Lawmakers have the opportunity to question the bill sponsor and to amend the bill. The next step for the bill is Third Reading whereupon debate will occur.

**Note Third Reading:** The bill will be presented a second time on the Chamber floor and lawmakers will have the opportunity to debate the bill then vote for or against final passage.

**Calendar of Key Legislative Dates:**

- March 30 Florida Senate to publish its final Budget proposal
- April 2 Florida House of Representatives to publish its final Budget proposal
- April 19 Military Appreciation Day at Capitol, Florida House of Representatives
- May 4 Final Day of Regular Session

**FDVA Budget Highlights from the proposed Budgets\*:**

Department Request	In Governor's Budget	In Senate Budget	In House Budget
Nine new positions to handle increased Benefits and Assistance	Yes	Yes	No
Thirteen new positions to comply with new nursing home staffing ratios for patient care	Yes	Yes	Yes
\$4.4 million general revenue to drawdown federal match for proposed St. Johns State Veterans' Nursing Home	Yes	Yes	Yes

\* As of March 28, 2007

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

***Iraq Veteran Wins Prestigious Truman Scholarship***

*Education Made Possible by VA's Montgomery GI Bill*

WASHINGTON, March 29 -- Since 1944, GI Bill educational benefits have opened the doors of opportunity for nearly 22 million veterans. Matt Stiner, a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom and a senior at Oklahoma State University, is one of the latest additions to that 63-year-old success story.

A native of Tulsa, Okla., majoring in political science, Stiner was among only 75 college juniors to receive a prestigious \$30,000 Truman Scholarship. The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation honors students who are entering public service.

“VA is proud to see a veteran using the GI Bill receive such a prestigious honor,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. “Stiner is a perfect example of how VA’s education programs continue to work for our newest generation of combat veterans.”

“The GI Bill was part of the reason I joined the military,” said Stiner. “It has enabled me to attend college and really focus on my studies. I received information about the GI Bill during my first day at boot camp and always knew I would benefit from it.”

After graduating, Stiner, who began using the Montgomery GI Bill in July 2004, plans to pursue a master’s degree in public administration from the University of Georgia.

In 2000, Stiner enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps and served four years as an assistant chief of a 155 mm howitzer section, as a Marine combat instructor of water survival and as a Green Belt martial arts instructor. Stiner spent seven months in Iraq.

“This country was founded on the principles that led to the GI Bill and I hope other veterans will get out and use it,” said Stiner. “If you are passionate about something, it will certainly help you accomplish your dreams -- not only in a college setting but through vocational training and other opportunities. If I can do it, anybody can.”

The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation was created in 1975 to support college juniors with exceptional leadership potential who are committed to careers in government, the nonprofit or advocacy sectors, education or elsewhere in the public service.

The GI Bill’s educational benefits trace their roots back to June 22, 1944, when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed into law the GI Bill of Rights, which gave veterans financial assistance with advanced educational or vocational training. The current version of that landmark legislation, the Montgomery GI Bill, was enacted in 1985.

Since 1944, 21.8 million veterans and active-duty personnel have received more than \$75 billion in benefits for education or training. For information about the Montgomery GI Bill, please visit: <http://www.gibill.va.gov>.

### ***Vets Helping Vets***

*VA selects Serviced-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business to build VA facility.*

WASHINGTON, March 27 -- Veteran Construction 1, a joint venture between a Serviced-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business and an Alaskan Native corporation, marks the first time a SDVOSB has been selected to build a VA facility as a prime contractor.

VA’s Center for Veterans Enterprise played a vital role in turning the venture into reality. After receiving an e-mail from Alaskan Native Corporation CCI Inc., looking to team with another small business, Center for Veterans Enterprise’s Tyrone Lassiter found a suitable SDVOSB to fit the bill. He contacted Tony Jacobs, president of Metropolitan Enterprise, Inc., and in just three weeks was able to bring the two businesses together to win a \$31 million contract.

The facility in Menlo Park, Calif., is one of four that will be built at VA polytrauma centers to house separate education and diagnosis screening programs for Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder patients in support of the VA Medical Centers throughout the country. This is an excellent example of “vets helping vets.” For more information about Center for Veterans Enterprise and its services to veterans in business, visit [www.VetBiz.gov/](http://www.VetBiz.gov/).

## **2007 Veteran Organization Convention Schedule and Events**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Contact</b>
Blinded Veterans of America - Florida Regional Group	First district meeting	April 7 11:30 a.m.	Mesquite Charlie's Steak House 5901 North W. St. Pensacola	Darryl Goldsmith (850) 554-7819 <a href="mailto:dandv5@cox.net">dandv5@cox.net</a> <a href="http://www.bvafrg.org">www.bvafrg.org</a>
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
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 <sup>th</sup> Annual VVB Reunion	April 26-29	Wickham Park, Melbourne	Greg Welsh <a href="mailto:vets2gether@cfl.rr.com">vets2gether@cfl.rr.com</a>
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 <a href="mailto:vrao@broward.org">vrao@broward.org</a>
Korean War Veterans Association, Department of Florida	2007 Annual State Convention	May 11-13	Kenilworth Lodge Sebring	Joan Arcand <a href="mailto:Richard.arcand@verizon.net">Richard.arcand@verizon.net</a>

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 [heidelberg@fdva.state.fl.us](mailto:heidelberg@fdva.state.fl.us).

### **Florida Job Fair Information**

#### **Job Fair Heads to Tampa Next Month**

From [RecruitMilitary.com](http://RecruitMilitary.com)

TAMPA, Fla. -- [RecruitMilitary.com](http://RecruitMilitary.com) is hosting a Career Fair in Tampa in April. Veterans, servicemembers separating from the military, National Guard and Reservists, and spouses are all welcome to attend. The Career Fair will be held April 12 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Museum of Science and Industry, 4801 East Fowler Ave. If you plan to attend, be sure to bring multiple copies of your resume and dress professionally.

## **Job Fair Coming to Jacksonville Next Month**

*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 next month. 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](http://www.floridajobs.org/onestop/os_job_fairs.html).

## **Upcoming Military Air Shows in Florida**

### **Blue Angels – U.S. Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron**

March 31: MacDill AFB  
April 1: MacDill AFB

### **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)

## **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](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/](http://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 (VVB) 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. VVB is currently developing this year's schedule, which is slated to visit two cities in Florida to date. The current schedule is listed below. For more information on the Traveling Memorial Wall, visit the Traveling Wall Web site at [www.TravelingWall.us](http://www.TravelingWall.us)

Florida Showings:

April 5-8        Ocala  
April 22-29     Melbourne

### **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.

[Florida Government](#)

## [Federal Government](#)

### [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](#)

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

### **NEW!** [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.

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## **Editor's Note**

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