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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS



www.FloridaVets.org

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Governor, Cabinet Give Nod to Vet Homes' Review

TALLAHASSEE – Gov. Rick Scott and the Cabinet gave unanimous approval Feb. 22 to the independent study of state veterans' home operations in Florida.

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs operates six skilled nursing facilities and one assisted living facility in the Sunshine State.

The study, to be submitted to the governor and Cabinet by Dec. 15, 2011, would consist of a cost-benefit analysis of three options: business as usual, forming a public corporation within the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, and privatization.

The study's goal is to identify the option that provides the highest quality of care to veterans' home residents and supports retaining and recruiting the best health care staff in the long-term care industry.

"During my initial review of our homes' program, I was surprised to find that our veterans' homes had a staff turnover rate of more than 50 percent each year," FDVA Interim Executive Director Bob Milligan said. "Recruiting and retaining top quality nurses and certified nursing assistants



is difficult when the state is unable to pay competitive rates or allow for pay variations for weekend or shift work."

Improved recruiting and retention rates mean greater staff stability, which increases quality of care, particularly with dementia residents, and lowers training costs.

"Through our preliminary research, we believe the public corporation concept is the best option for Florida's veterans," said Milligan, a retired Marine Corps Lieutenant General. "The corporation would be operated as a public instrumentality, governed by a board of trustees, which we hope would be the governor and Cabinet. Operating as a public instrumentality would also allow the state to retain U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and other non-taxpayer funding streams."

Another benefit of the public corporation concept is the ability to continue to operate in the open, according to Florida's Sunshine Law.

Legislation authorizing the study is being proposed in the 2011 Florida Legislative Session, which begins March 8, to direct FDVA to provide for an independent study.

"Expanding benefits and assistance outreach to Florida's more than 1.6 million veterans, their families and survivors is also essential to our advocacy mission," Milligan said. "We hope to eliminate more than \$5 million in general revenue funding for our homes' program in the process and work with the legislature to realign some of these taxpayer funds to assist veterans with pension and disability claims."

Subject to the approval of the governor, Cabinet and legislature in the 2012 legislative session, the decision to move forward with a public corporation, if warranted, would be implemented on July 1, 2012.

For more information, visit the department online at www.FloridaVets.org.

News of the Month

Veterans' Home Review
FDVA's Veterans Bills
Stop Loss Deadline
Warrior Resources
Sarasota VA Cemetery
Caregiver Support Line
2012 VA Budget Request
Homeless Vet Resources

Conferences and Events

References for Veterans

FDVA Introduces Four Bills in 2011

TALLAHASSEE -- The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs is introducing four bills in the 2011 Florida legislative session, which begins March 8.

Senate Bill 430 and House Bill 171 add veterans of *Operation New Dawn* in Iraq, which began in 2010 as a follow-on to *Operation Iraqi Freedom*, to existing Florida statutes for future benefit determination.

Senate Bill 236 and House Bill 95 add Gold Star parents to the list of those eligible for free lifetime admission to Florida State Parks.

Senate Bill 765 and House Bill 704 propose making Aug. 7 of each year Purple Heart Day in Florida.

Senate Bill 520 and House Bill 465 seek to establish a Florida Veterans Hall of Fame, to be placed in the Capitol.

March 4 is Final Day to Claim 'Stop Loss' Pay

Courtesy of American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON -- People whose military service was involuntarily extended or whose retirement was suspended between Sept. 11, 2001, and Sept. 30, 2009, have until March 4 to file for retroactive payments of \$500 for each month of their extended service under the "Stop Loss" policy.

For more information, call the following numbers:

- Army (877) 736-5554
- Navy (901) 874-4427
- Marine Corps (877) 242-2830
- Air Force (800) 525-0102

National Directory Links Wounded Warriors, Families to Resources

Courtesy of American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON -- From benefits and compensation to education and training, an online directory is providing wounded warriors, veterans and their families a direct connection to thousands of state, local and national resources.

The Defense, Labor and Veterans Affairs departments created the National Resource Directory -- located at <http://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/> -- to link wounded warriors, servicemembers, veterans, their families and caregivers to nationwide resources that support recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration.

The directory contains information on a broad range of topics, including benefits and compensation, education and training, employment, caregiver support, health, housing, and transportation and travel.

Florida's veterans can also visit www.FloridaVets.org for specific information on state and federal benefits.



Gov. Rick Scott and First Lady Ann Scott present a check for \$200,000 from remaining inaugural funds to the Wounded Warrior Project during a reception at the Governor's Mansion, Feb. 2, 2011. *Photo by Eric Tournay.*

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VA Announces \$15.9 Million Construction Contract for Sarasota National Cemetery

Courtesy of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs awarded a \$15,924,000 contract to Kadell Industries – C & C Contractors, JV, a service-disabled veteran-owned small business firm from Notasulga, Ala., to begin the next phase of development at the Sarasota National Cemetery.



The new construction will include about 11,500 pre-placed crypts, 9,000 in-ground sites for cremated remains, a columbarium with 7,000 niches, an administration and public information complex with an electronic gravesite locator and public restrooms, a maintenance facility, entrance and flag assembly areas, a memorial wall, and two committal shelters for funeral services.

Other infrastructure elements include roadways, landscaping, environmental preservation, utilities and an irrigation system.

The 50-acre development is part of the 295-acre cemetery in Sarasota County located along State Route 72 west of Interstate 75. Burials began in January 2009.

Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained by visiting www.cem.va.gov.

For information on Sarasota National Cemetery, call the cemetery office at (941) 922-7200.

New VA Support Line Provides Important Assistance to Caregivers

Courtesy of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is increasing its support to caregivers with a new, toll-free telephone line for the caregivers of veterans of all eras.

The National Caregiver Support Line -- 1-855-260-3274 -- will serve as the primary resource and referral center to assist caregivers, veterans and others seeking caregiver information.

The support line will provide information regarding new caregiver benefits, referrals to local caregiver support coordinators as well as emotional support to those concerned with their ability to provide care to loved ones who are veterans.

The National Caregiver Support Line is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 11 p.m., Eastern time; and Saturday, 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Licensed VA social workers and health technicians are staffing the support line.

For more information, visit www.caregiver.va.gov.

Veteran Organization Conventions, Events and Job Fairs

Sponsor	Event	Date	Location	Contact Information
Camp Gordon Johnston Association	Camp Gordon Johnston Days 2011 Reunion	March 10-12	Carrabelle, Franklin County	www.campgordonjohnston.com
RecruitMilitary	Veteran Opportunity Expo	March 24 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Sun Life Stadium, Miami	(513) 683-5020 www.RecruitMilitary.com
Northeast Florida Ability 1st	Buffet Dinner and Remarks by USMC Veteran Josh Bleill	March 25 6:30 p.m.	Goodwood Museum and Gardens, Tallahassee	(850) 575-9621, Ext. 101
James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital	4th Annual Welcome Home Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans	March 26 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.	USF Marshall Student Center, Tampa	(813) 972-2000, Ext. 7009
Veterans of the Battle of the Bulge	Luncheon Meeting	April 10 11:30 a.m.	Hilton Hotel, Palm Beach Airport	(561) 585-7086 www.VBOB62.com
Indian River State College	Veteran's Open House	April 14 5:30-7:30 p.m.	Kight Technology Center	(772) 462-7443 (772) 462-7799
Patrick Air Force Base	Retiree Appreciation Day	April 16 9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Base Theater	(321) 494-5463
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs	Job Fair & Career Expo	April 16 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Orlando VA Medical Center, 5201 Raymond Street, Orlando	(321) 397-6272
Florida Navy Nurse Corps Association	NNCA Annual Meeting	April 30-May 1	Marriott Courtyard, Downtown Pensacola	(904) 298-3096
Naval Aviation Museum Foundation	2011 Symposium	May 4-6	National Museum of Naval Aviation, NAS Pensacola	(800) 327-5002 www.NavalAviationMuseum.org
Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida State Coalition	24th Annual Florida Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion	May 5-8	Wickham Park, Melbourne	(321) 453-7498 www.FloridaVeteransReunion.com
American Military Retirees Association, Department of Florida	Annual Convention	May 7 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.	DAV Hall, 1150 SW California Blvd., Port St. Lucie	(772) 342-2653
American Legion, Department of Florida	2011 Department Convention	June 23-26	Caribe Royale, Orlando	(407) 295-2631, Ext. 232

Editor's Note: All times local. Florida's Veterans Service Organizations and veteran-related agencies provided the information in the table above. To submit event information, contact the editor at MurrayR@fdva.state.fl.us

VA Announces 2012 Budget Request

WASHINGTON -- President Obama released the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs budget proposal Feb. 14, which includes \$132 billion for 2012. More information about VA's fiscal year 2012 budget proposal is available at www.va.gov/budget/products.asp.

Homeless Vet Resources Available

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has pledged to end veteran homelessness in five years. Learn more about treatment, Stand Down events, job training and other services by visiting <http://www.va.gov/homeless/> or call 1-877-4AID-Vet.

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Gov. Rick Scott speaks at the kickoff ceremony for the Centennial of Naval Aviation at NAS Pensacola, Jan. 20, 2011. Photo by Eric Tourney.

References for Veterans

2011 Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide

www.FloridaVets.org -- then click on "Benefits Guide"

Federal Benefits for Veterans & Dependents Guide

http://www1.va.gov/OPA/publications/benefits_book.asp

Florida Veterans Foundation

www.FloridaVeteransFoundation.org

Employ Florida Vets - veteran employment resources

<http://veterans.employflorida.com/portals/veteran/>

Florida's State Veterans' Nursing Homes

www.floridavets.org/tours.asp

Florida's Veteran Service Organizations

www.floridavets.org/organization/commanders.asp

Florida Department of Military Affairs

<http://dma.myflorida.com/>

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

www.va.gov

Burial, Headstone and Marker Information (VA)

www.cem.va.gov

Returning OEF/OIF Veterans (VA)

<http://www.oefoif.va.gov/>

National Resource Directory - for wounded warriors

<http://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>

Post-9/11 G.I. Bill and Veteran Education Benefits

www.gibill.va.gov

National VA Homeless Hotline - 24 Hour

Toll Free at 1-877-424-3838

National Veteran Suicide Prevention - 24 Hour

www.mentalhealth.va.gov

Toll Free at 1-800-273-8255, Press 1

Social Security Administration

www.socialsecurity.gov

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

www.esgr.mil

Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses

www.osd.dms.state.fl.us

Center for Women Veterans

<http://www1.va.gov/womenvet/>

VeteransPlus is Recipient of 2011 Champion of Financial Literacy Award

Courtesy of Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater

TALLAHASSEE -- Florida CFO Jeff Atwater has named Clearwater-based VeteransPlus as the winner of the 2011 Champion of Financial Literacy Award for providing financial education to more than 4,000 military personnel and their families at 38 events in Florida last year.

VeteransPlus provides one-on-one counseling with licensed, certified financial counselors to veterans, active-duty servicemembers and their families.

For more information about VeteransPlus, visit: <http://www.veteransplus.org/> or call (866) 991-9579.

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Florida's Veterans' Homes

Robert H. Jenkins Jr. Veterans' Domiciliary Home

(Columbia County) *Lake City* (386) 758-0600

Emory L. Bennett State Veterans' Nursing Home

(Volusia County) *Daytona Beach* (386) 274-3460

Baldomero Lopez State Veterans' Nursing Home

(Pasco County) *Land O' Lakes* (813) 558-5000

Alexander Nininger State Veterans' Nursing Home

(Broward County) *Pembroke Pines* (954) 985-4824

Clifford C. Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home

(Bay County) *Springfield* (850) 747-5401

Douglas T. Jacobson State Veterans' Nursing Home

(Charlotte County) *Port Charlotte* (941) 613-0919

Clyde E. Lassen State Veterans' Nursing Home

(St. Johns County) *St. Augustine* (904) 940-2193

Supporting Veterans' Homes

Your purchase of the *Florida Salutes Veterans* or one of the approved Army, Navy, Air Force or Coast Guard license plates directly helps veterans.



The \$15 surcharge goes into a trust fund for the operation and maintenance of Florida's veterans' homes.

A portion of the Marine Corps and *Support Our Troops* license plates also supports the State Veterans' Homes Program.

Anyone can purchase these plates.

You may also support the State Homes for Veterans Trust Fund by making a \$1 contribution when renewing your Florida Driver License.



FDVA on Facebook

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs is on *Facebook*, the social network service and website. FDVA seeks to connect veterans and their families with unclaimed benefits.

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