



Idaho Division of
**VETERANS
SERVICES**

*Caring for
America's
Heroes*

BULLETIN

January

2009

STATE OF IDAHO

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GOVERNOR

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To be connected with a VA suicide prevention and mental health professional,
call the toll-free National Suicide Prevention hotline and indicate you are a veteran.
(800) 273-8255

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**If you would like to receive the bulletin via email,
just email Jennel Binsky at
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groups of veterans and volunteer escorts to the Festival of Trees. As always, this was a very enjoyable time for all. Thanks to the Osborne family for the Heroes Tree currently located in our Dining Room. The Heroes Tree is in remembrance of those who have lost their lives in past and present conflicts. On Thanksgiving, we had many volunteers help serve the wonderful meal prepared by our dietary staff, and a large number of family members enjoyed Thanksgiving Dinner with their loved ones. It made for a very special day for our veterans. Thank you, volunteers for stepping up and helping us.

December 6th and 7th, we had the Annual American Legion Auxiliary Gift Shop for our veterans. It's always wonderful for our veterans to be able to shop for their family members at no cost to themselves. Out of town gifts are also mailed without cost to the veterans. This year, we had escorts from the the Mountain Home motorcycle group. Thanks to everyone for their help. Most of the shopping was completed on Saturday and the Auxiliary ladies were able to get all the gifts wrapped and ready to mail by Sunday. The evening of December 6th was the annual Luminous Lantern Parade, where a large group of young people showed off their lanterns. Our sincere thanks to Idaho Power Company and their employees for their continued support of this great program by providing monetary awards in three age categories. We would also like to thank Mike Fritz for his continued support by helping judge. Mike was instrumental in starting the program in 1991. We would also like to thank all the folks who participated and those who provided all the great cookies. Many school, church, and civic groups have come to the Home to perform for our residents during December. Gowen Field delivered Christmas gifts on the 22nd, and the Christmas Parties were at 2 p.m. on December 24th. Thanks to those of you who were able to help, as well as all of those who went out of their way to make Christmas special for our veterans.

I would like to again remind everyone of the importance of visiting the Veterans Home during January and February. People sometimes forget us after the holidays, and we need the veterans to know that volunteers and visitors will be here all year round to support the Home. May the peace and beauty of Christmas be with you throughout the coming year. And again, on behalf of all the veterans, staff, and volunteers, thank you.

IDAHO STATE VETERANS HOME – POCATELLO
VOLUNTEER SERVICES, Carey Hebdon

This past year seems to have flown by. Yet, in looking back - especially over these few months - it is amazing to note how many wonderful things have taken place in what seems to be a short period of time.

The Home's annual Volunteer Appreciation Social (held at a later date this year) is a mere drop in the bucket, compared to the gratitude and appreciation we at the Veterans Home feel. Our volunteers are held in the highest esteem and considered to be one of the greatest assets our Homes enjoy.

It was our pleasure and honor to recognize the recipients of Senator Crapo's "Spirit of Freedom" award on November 11th during our annual Veterans Day Program. While the attitude and display of respect for our veterans is evident throughout the year, gathering together to collectively reflect and honor those sacrifices is vitally important. Thank you to everyone who supports our Nation, our military, and our veterans. And a special thank you for taking time to participate and join us at the Veterans Home on these special days.

Shortly after Veterans Day, precious children from Malad journeyed to the Home to pay respect to our veterans with their annual musical and inspirational program. Upon their heels, the American Legion sponsored Food Convoy Drive graced our Home, filling our shelves and monetarily supporting the special programs, meals, and activities that happen only through such generosity. The thousands of dollars in goods and donations go such a long, long way in enhancing the lives of our residents.

The American Legion Auxiliary sponsored Christmas Gift Table and Staff Appreciation Day took place Thanksgiving weekend. This incredible generosity – countless hours and thousands of dollars – brings an even greater gift to our residents: the dignity and joy of giving a lovely present to loved ones.

Sponsored by VFW Post 735, the Pearl Harbor Day Remembrance Program on December 5th recognized the attack on the United States and subsequent years of sacrifice to preserve our present day freedoms. The incredibly talented "Trouveres" paid tribute in song, and ushered in the season of giving.

This season of giving and gratitude gives cause to be thankful for the goodness in life that we are privileged to enjoy. Sharing that love with others extends to those brave men and women who now look to us for care. Please know that we are mindful and grateful for the awesome and remarkable pouring out of love, caring, and blessings to our "Heroes on the Hill."

On behalf of those at our State Veterans Home in Pocatello – most importantly – our residents: "Thank you" for all the wonderful opportunities and donations bestowed this past year. May God bless you and keep you during this Holiday Season and throughout the upcoming year. We are, "Caring for America's Heroes."

2009 COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT

Congress has passed and President Bush has signed Public Law 110-324, which provides a 5.8% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) effective December 1, 2008, for disability compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation, clothing allowance, pension, and certain other related benefits. The percentage is based on the annual the annual Social Security index rate.

The COLA will be reflected in checks issued on or about January 1, 2009. Full VA benefits rate tables may be found at www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates. In addition, the following tables are provided for your use.

Disability Compensation – Basic Rates

Dependent Status	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Veteran	\$123	\$243	\$376	\$541	\$770	\$974	\$1,228	\$1,427	\$1,604	\$2,673
Veteran + spouse			421	601	845	1,064	1,333	1,547	1,739	2,823
Veteran + spouse + 1 child			453	644	899	1,129	1,409	1,634	1,837	2,932
Veteran + spouse + 2 children			472	674	936	1,174	1,461	1,694	1,904	3,007
Veteran + spouse + 3 children			494	704	973	1,219	1,513	1,754	1,971	3,082
Veteran + spouse + 4 children			516	734	1,010	1,264	1,565	1,814	2,038	3,157
Each additional child			22	30	37	45	52	60	67	75
Each additional schoolchild *			72	96	120	144	168	192	216	240
Additional for A/A spouse **			40	54	68	81	95	108	122	136

*Rates for each schoolchild are shown separately, and are not included with any other compensation rates. All other entries on this chart reflecting a rate for children show the rate payable for children under 18 or helpless. To find the amount payable to a 70% disabled veteran with a spouse and 4 children, one of whom is over 18 and attending school, take the 70% rate for a veteran with a spouse and 3 children, \$1,513, and add the rate for one school child, \$168. The total amount payable is \$1,681.

**Where the veteran has a spouse who is determined to require aid and attendance (A/A), add the figure shown as “additional for A/A spouse” to the amount shown for the proper dependency code. For example, the veteran has an A/A spouse and 2 minor children and is 70% disabled. Add \$95 additional for the A/A spouse to the rate for a 70% veteran with a spouse and 2 children, \$1,461. The total amount payable is \$1,556.

Improved Disability Pension Rates

Maximum Annual Pension Rate (MAPR) Category	Amount
Without spouse or child.....	\$11,830
With one dependent.....	\$15,493
Housebound without dependents.....	\$14,457
Housebound with one dependent.....	\$18,120
A/A without dependents.....	\$19,736
A/A with one dependent.....	\$23,396
For each additional child add to any category above.....	\$2,020

Dependency and Indemnity Compensation – Surviving Spouse

Veteran’s death was on or after January 1, 1993

The basic monthly rate is \$1,154. Add \$246 if at the time of the veteran’s death, the veteran was in receipt of or entitled to receive compensation for a service-connected disability rated totally disabling (including a rating based on individual unemployability) for a continuous period of at least 8 years immediately preceding death and the surviving spouse was married to the veteran for those same 8 years. Add \$286 if the surviving spouse is entitled to A/A. Add \$135 if the surviving spouse is entitled to Housebound.

Full 2009 VA benefits Cost-of-Living adjustment information can be found at www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates.

VA ANNOUNCES “IN HOUSE” OPTION TO IMPLEMENT IT ASPECTS OF NEW GI BILL

News Release, October 10, 2008

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced on October 10th that it will rely upon its own workforce to set up the information technology programs needed to implement the educational benefits of the new Post-9/11 GI Bill.

The Department's announcement came after VA officials did not receive enough proposals from qualified private-sector contractors to create an information technology program that implements the new benefit. At no time did the VA consider contracting out responsibility for actually administering this educational assistance. “Many private contractors were apparently reluctant to offer proposals because of external misconceptions as to the scope of the work involved. While it is unfortunate that we will not have the technical expertise from the private sector available to assist us in developing the information technology solution, the VA can and will deliver the benefits program on time,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake.

“The Post-9/11 GI Bill is unusually complex, with payments being tailored to tuition costs and going to both students and educational institutions,” said Patrick W. Dunne, the Under Secretary for Benefits. “Some benefits are determined by a school's zip code, and others by in-state rates for tuition.” Dunne said the Department would have been remiss if it had failed to assess the ability of the private sector to assist the VA to set up the technology aspects of the program's implementation.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill will provide educational assistance to veterans, military members, reservists, and National Guard members who have served since September 11, 2001. By law, the new benefits are scheduled to start on August 1, 2009.

ADDITIONAL HELP WITH HEATING BILLS AVAILABLE FOR LOW-INCOME IDAHOANS

News Release, November 18, 2008

Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter said on November 18th that extra help keeping warm is available this winter for Idaho’s low-income residents. The state has 54% more funding than it did last year from the federal government’s Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The \$17.9 million available to Idahoans this year could increase the average benefit to eligible households by more than \$100.

More than 32,000 low-income Idaho families received home heating assistance through the LIHEAP program last year, with an average payment of \$278 per household made directly to utility companies. This heating season’s average LIHEAP benefit is estimated at \$386.

“Many of our citizens are feeling the pressure of the economic downturn these days, so a little extra help is welcome news,” Governor Otter said. “Besides having more money to keep people warm, we’re changing the eligibility guidelines so more low-income folks will have access to assistance.”

Eligibility is based on income, and benefit amounts are calculated on “energy burden,” which factors income, annual energy costs, and geographic location. Areas that experience more severe cold weather or have higher annual energy costs are awarded a greater benefit through the program. Under the expanded income guidelines, a family of four with an income up to \$2,827 per month can still be eligible – a threshold \$177 per month higher than last year. The change should provide more help for Idaho seniors on fixed incomes. This year’s income guidelines for LIHEAP eligibility are:

2008-2009 Idaho LIHEAP Income Guidelines		
Family Size	Monthly Income	Annual Income
1	\$1,387	\$16,640
2	\$1,867	\$22,400
3	\$2,347	\$28,160
4	\$2,827	\$33,920
Each Additional Child	\$480	\$5,760

Those who meet income guidelines can contact their regional Community Action Agency to apply for assistance. You can find the nearest Community Action Agency office online at www.idahocommunityaction.org, or by contacting the 2-1-1 Idaho CareLine.

In addition to the low-income heating assistance, Idaho received approximately \$4.1 million in LIHEAP funding for the Weatherization Assistance Program, which helps low-income people repair or replace heating sources, insulation, weather-stripping, and caulking in their homes.

OBAMA TAPS SHINESKI AS NEXT VETERANS AFFAIRS CHIEF

By Jim Garamone, American Forces Press Service

December 8, 2008

President-elect Barack Obama has selected retired Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric K. Shinseki as his nominee to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "As we seek a new national security strategy that uses all elements of American power, we must also remember those who run the greatest risks and make the greatest sacrifices to implement that strategy – the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States of America," the President-elect said in announcing his choice on the 8th.

Obama echoed the words of Abraham Lincoln when he said the Nation has a sacred trust to serve those who have borne the cost of battle. "We must show them and their families the same devotion that they have shown this country," he said.

If confirmed by the Senate, Shinseki will succeed retired Army Lt. Gen. (Dr.) James B. Peake in leading the second-largest federal department, with 240,000 employees. Some 23.4 million veterans are alive today, and the department is their point of contact for compensation and pensions, medical care, education and training, home loans, and other benefits. Last year, the VA had a budget of \$93.4 billion.

"The government must do everything it can to help those veterans who suffer from the signature injuries of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury," Obama said in Chicago. Obama also promised to help those who leave the service to find work. The United States needs to modernize the VA, cut red tape there, and eliminate shortfalls, the president-elect said. "That is the kind of VA that will serve our veterans as well as they have served us," he said. "And there is no one more distinguished, more determined, or more qualified to build this VA than the leader I am announcing as our next secretary of veterans affairs -- General Eric Shinseki." "No one will ever doubt that this former Army chief of staff has the courage to stand up for our troops and our veterans," he continued. "No one will ever question whether he will fight hard enough to make sure they have the support they need."

Shinseki retired as Chief of Staff in 2003 after a four-year term. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., and served two combat tours in Vietnam as a young officer. He lost part of his foot in Vietnam, was awarded three Bronze Star awards and two Purple Hearts. Shinseki said today's veterans "are a part of an unbroken line of heroes that stretches back to the American Revolution." Still, there are veterans worried about keeping their health care or homes, he said. "Veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, in particular, are confronting serious, severe wounds - some seen, some unseen – making it difficult for them to get on with their lives in this struggling economy," he said. "They deserve a smooth, error-free, no-fail, benefits-assured transition into our ranks as veterans, and that is our responsibility, not theirs. "A word to my fellow veterans: If confirmed, I will work each and every day to ensure that we are serving you as well as you have served us," Shinseki continued. "We will pursue a 21st-century VA that serves your needs. We will open... new doors of opportunity so you can find a good job, support your families when you return to civilian life. And... we will always honor the sacrifices of those who have worn the uniform, and their loved ones."

NEW LAW AUTHORIZES VETERANS' SALUTES DURING NATIONAL ANTHEM

News Release, October 13, 2008

Veterans and service members not in uniform can now render the military-style hand salute during the playing of the National Anthem, thanks to changes in federal law that took effect in October. "The military salute is a unique gesture of respect that marks those who have served in our Nation's armed forces," said Dr. James B. Peake, secretary of Veterans Affairs. "This provision allows the application of that honor in all events involving our Nation's flag."

The new provision improves upon a little known change in federal law last year that authorized veterans to render the military-style hand salute during the raising, lowering, or passing of the flag, but it did not address salutes during the National Anthem. Last year's provision also applied to service members while not in uniform. Traditionally, members of the nation's veterans service organizations have rendered the hand-salute during the National Anthem and at events involving the national flag while wearing their organization's official head-gear.

The most recent change, authorizing hand-salutes during the National Anthem by veterans and out-of-uniform military personnel, was sponsored by Senator Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, an Army veteran. It was included in the Defense Authorization Act of 2009, which President Bush signed October 14th. The earlier provision authorizing hand-salutes for veterans and out-of-uniform service members during the raising, lowering, or passing of the flag, was contained in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008, which took effect January 28, 2008.

VA TO DEPLOY MOBILE COUNSELING CENTERS ACROSS AMERICA

News Release, October 22, 2008

The first of a fleet of 50 new mobile counseling centers for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vet Center program was put into service on October 22nd with the remainder scheduled to be activated over the next three months. “Our widespread distribution of this fleet from coast to coast marks a new chapter in VA’s innovation to reach rural and underserved veterans with high-quality readjustment counseling,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake.

Each vehicle will be assigned to one of the VA’s existing Vet Centers, enabling the center to improve access to counseling by bringing services closer to veterans. The 38-foot motor coaches, which have spaces for confidential counseling, will carry Vet Center counselors and outreach workers to events and activities to reach veterans in broad geographic areas, supplementing the VA’s 232 current Vet Centers, which are scheduled to increase to 271 facilities by the end of 2009.

Vet Centers, operated by the VA’s Readjustment Counseling Service, provide non-medical readjustment counseling in easily accessible, consumer-oriented facilities, addressing the social and economic dimensions of post-war needs. This includes psychological counseling for traumatic military-related experiences and family counseling when needed for the veteran’s readjustment.

The team leader at each Vet Center will develop an outreach plan for use of the vehicle within that region, not being limited to the traditional catchment area of a particular Vet Center. These vehicles will be used to provide outreach and direct readjustment counseling at active-duty, reserve and National Guard activities, including post-deployment health reassessments for returning combat service members. The vehicles will also be used to visit events typically staffed by local Vet Center staff, including homeless “stand downs,” veteran community events, county fairs, and unit reunions at sites ranging from Native American reservations to colleges.

While most of their use will be in Vet Centers’ delivery of readjustment counseling services, the local manager may arrange with VA hospitals or clinics in the region to provide occasional support for health promotion activities such as health screenings. The normal counseling layout can be converted to support emergency medical missions, such as hurricanes and other natural disasters.

The 50 vehicles are being manufactured for the VA by Farber Specialty Vehicles of Columbus, Ohio. The following cities where the 50 vehicles will be based are:

Alabama Birmingham	Kentucky Lexington	New Mexico Sante Fe Las Cruces	Tennessee Johnson City Memphis
Arizona Chinle Prescott	Illinois Springfield	New York Watertown	Texas Amarillo Midland San Antonio
Arkansas Fayetteville	Louisiana New Orleans	North Carolina Greenville	Utah Salt Lake
California Corona Fresno Santa Cruz Eureka	Maine Caribou Lewiston	North Dakota Minot Fargo	Vermont White River Junction
Colorado Colorado Springs	Massachusetts Springfield	Ohio Dayton	Virginia Richmond
Florida Pensacola	Michigan Escanaba	Oregon Eugene	Washington Spokane Tacoma
Georgia Savannah Macon	Minnesota St. Paul	Pennsylvania Erie Scranton	West Virginia Morgantown Beckley
Idaho Boise	Montana Missoula Billings	South Carolina Columbia	Wyoming Casper
Kansas Wichita	Nebraska Lincoln	South Dakota Rapid City	

VA TIGHTENS PROTECTIONS FOR VETERAN'S PAPERWORK

News Release, October 16, 2008

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake vowed swift action after a handful of documents related to veterans' applications for financial benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) were found among documents identified for shredding. The documents, which were not duplicated in government files, could have affected veterans' eligibility for benefits. "I insist on the highest possible standards for processing and safeguarding information in VA's custody," Peake said. "It is unacceptable that documents important to a veteran's claim for benefits should be misplaced or destroyed."

Peake said the VA's Office of the Inspector General (IG) is investigating the misplaced documents, and anyone who violated Department policy on protecting documents will be held accountable.

The documents were discovered by employees of the VA's IG office during an audit at three of the VA's 56 regional benefits offices, which process applications for disability pay, VA pensions, educational assistance, home loans and similar financial benefits. IG auditors found a handful of documents waiting to be shredded, which might have affected the fate of veterans' applications. The documents were returned to the proper offices for processing.

Retired Rear Adm. Patrick W. Dunne, the VA's Under Secretary for Benefits, immediately directed all of the VA's regional offices to suspend all document shredding while IG and VA officials determine whether the problem is more widespread. Directors of the regional offices will have to certify in writing that no original copies of key documents or records from veterans' cases under consideration are being destroyed.

The VA has procedures for determining the disposition of paperwork. Original copies of discharge papers, marriage certificates, and death certificates are returned to veterans or families when no longer needed. Duplicate copies of paperwork no longer needed are appropriately destroyed to protect the privacy of veterans and their families.

INDIANA-OHIO CENTER FOR TRAUMATIC AMPUTATION REHABILITATION RESEARCH

Recently, much national media attention has focused on the traumatic amputees of the Iraq and Afghan conflicts. However, there is little known about the long term outcomes of traumatic amputations arising from war. The largest remaining group with a lifetime of experience is the Vietnam War amputees. It is estimated there were 6,000 or more Vietnam veterans who came home with missing limbs.

The Department of Defense has funded a partnership between Indiana University and Ohio State University to create the Indiana-Ohio Center for Traumatic Amputation Rehabilitation Research. They are trying to locate Vietnam veteran amputees in hopes of gaining a better understanding of the needs of these veterans. The objective is to study the health, psychosocial, and rehabilitation needs of Vietnam veterans with amputations to help determine their needs and to help aid in the rehabilitation and adjustment for traumatic amputees from present and future conflicts.

The Center is currently establishing a database of Vietnam veterans who have had an amputation. The researchers are asking for those veterans to register by filling out an online questionnaire or obtaining a hard-copy version through the mail. Participant confidentiality will be strongly protected. The study currently has about 419 Vietnam vets enrolled, but there are many more out there and they are encouraged to call or visit the website for more details.

With endorsements from the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, Disabled American Veterans, former Army Surgeon General LTG Quinn Becker, MD, (Retired), and most recently, The Vietnam Veterans of America, the Center hopes to reach as many Vietnam amputees as possible. Their website, www.vietnamwaramputee.org, contains information on this project, as well as a forum where amputees can post questions or comments. The website will also serve as the registry for the veteran amputees who want to inquire or participate in this project. It is their hope that they can form strategic partnerships with state and national veteran affairs offices to help locate the veterans and promote the enrollment opportunity.

For more information on the Indiana-Ohio Center for Traumatic Amputation Rehabilitation, please visit their website at www.vietnamwaramputee.org or contact Chris Robbins toll free at (866) 283-2599.

VA ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO SERVICEMEMBERS' GROUP LIFE INSURANCE

News Release, December 8, 2008

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced some severely injured military personnel and veterans will be eligible for improvements to the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance Traumatic Injury Protection Program, known as TSGLI. "TSGLI was created to relieve some of the financial burdens on injured military personnel and their families," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "We believe these enhancements to the TSGLI program have made a good program even better."

The VA recently completed a comprehensive review to consider whether the program was meeting its intended purpose, whether new injuries or losses should be added, and whether improvements could be made in how the program is administered. As a result of this review, the VA has increased the number of injuries covered, as well as liberalized the criteria of other injuries. New injuries covered include the partial amputation of a hand or foot and the degree of injuries based on severe burns.

Another important change to the TSGLI program is the payment of a \$25,000 benefit to service members hospitalized for 15 consecutive days as a result of a traumatic injury. This allows payments to begin earlier and financial help to be provided more quickly.

Changes to benefits are retroactive to October 7, 2001, the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom, consistent with the original legislation creating TSGLI.

The TSGLI program is designed to provide severely injured service members and their families with short-term financial assistance. Service members who sustained certain severe injuries are entitled to payments ranging between \$25,000 and \$100,000. TSGLI was designed to offset the expenses a service member's parents or spouse often incur when they move to be with their loved one during long and difficult treatment and rehabilitation periods, frequently causing family members to leave their jobs and homes for extended periods.

Since the program began in 2005, over \$309 million in TSGLI benefits has been paid to injured members and their families. Veterans whose claims for TSGLI benefits were previously disallowed are being contacted if it appears their loss is now eligible for payment due to these changes.

Service members or veterans who sustained severe traumatic injuries are encouraged to check the VA Insurance website at www.insurance.va.gov for eligibility criteria and contact information. The Web site contains a link to the TSGLI application form, more information about the changes to the TSGLI benefit, and a complete copy of the latest review of the program. For additional information about VA benefits, contact the VA's toll-free number at (800) 827-1000.

YOU CAN NOW GET THE BULLETIN VIA EMAIL

In our continual effort to reduce costs and lessen our "ecological footprint," the Office of Veterans Advocacy is again asking for your help. In order to reduce printing and mailing costs, as well as the amount of paper used, we are asking you to volunteer to receive the bulletin via email.

The bulletin will arrive in your in-box every quarter as a Word document, which will allow to you forward or print and disseminate as many copies as you like. In addition to receiving the quarterly bulletin, you will also receive our annual Veterans Resource Directory via email.

If you can help us with our goal of reducing costs and the saving paper, please email Jennel Binsky at jennel.binsky@veterans.idaho.gov. Thanks for your help with this most worthwhile endeavor! And don't forget you can always view and print the Bulletin and Resource Directory by visiting our website at www.veterans.idaho.gov.

CONGRESSMAN FILNER'S BILL EXTENDS PURPLE HEART TO ALL DECEASED PRISONERS OF WAR

News Release, October 14, 2008

Bob Filner, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, announced that the Purple Heart will be presented posthumously to all prisoners of war who die in captivity. The legislation that makes this possible is Filner's bill, the *Honor Our Fallen Prisoners of War Act*, passed by Congress in 2006. The Department of Defense announced its complete implementation on October 6, 2008.

"The law now presumes that the death of all service members who die in captivity was the result of enemy action or the result of wounds incurred in action with the enemy during capture and imprisonment," said Chairman Filner (D-CA). "Before passage of my bill, prisoners of war who died during imprisonment of wounds inflicted by an instrument of war were eligible for posthumous Purple Heart recognition, but those who died of starvation, disease, abuse, freezing or other causes during captivity were not. There should be no false distinction indicating more courage or more sacrifice by some prisoners of war over others," said Filner.

The *Honor Our Fallen Prisoners of War Act* had over 200 co-sponsors and broad bi-partisan support in Congress. In addition, many major Veteran Service Organizations supported the bill, including the American Legion, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, and the American Ex-Prisoners of War. The Senate bill was introduced by Senator Barbara Boxer. "The inspiration for my bill came from Wilbert 'Shorty' Estabrook, who was imprisoned for more than three years during the Korean War, and Rick and Brenda Tavares. Brenda's uncle, Corporal Melvin Morgan, died in Korea of starvation and beatings in 1950 at the age of 20," said Filner.

Each military department will publish application procedures and will ensure that the information is accessible to the general public. Family members with questions may contact the Services: Army Military Awards Branch at (703) 325-8700, Navy Personnel Command Retired Records Section at (314) 592-1150, Air Force Personnel Center at (800) 616-3775, and Marine Corps Military Awards Branch (730) 784-9340.

VA TO PROVIDE PAYMENTS TO ELIGIBLE SURVIVING SPOUSES

Press Release, December 18, 2008

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced on December 18th immediate actions to quickly identify and pay surviving spouses who are eligible to receive a one-time compensation or pension payment for the month of the veteran's death. "This benefit payment is long overdue to many of our beneficiaries," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "In these difficult economic times, it is imperative that we take aggressive action to fix this situation for the families of our veterans."

Problems in the VA's implementation of a change in law that was effective in 1997 resulted in some surviving spouses not receiving the veteran's compensation or pension payment for the month of death. This problem was recently brought to the VA's attention by Senator Daniel K. Akaka, chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. Peake immediately directed the formation of a special task force to identify and pay the beneficiaries who never received the benefit or were inadvertently required to repay the money issued for the month of a veteran's death. Surviving spouses most likely to be affected by this processing problem are those who never applied to the VA for survivors' benefits following the death of a veteran.

The task force is in the process of reviewing the VA's payment records for veterans who died after December 31, 1996, and who are survived by a spouse. The review will identify those to whom the VA owes retroactive benefits for the month of the veteran's death. Current address information is being obtained for as many of these beneficiaries as possible. The VA will begin issuing retroactive payments to eligible surviving spouses at the end of this month. Payments will continue to be issued as additional unpaid beneficiaries are identified and the VA is able to obtain current address information.

Because there are deceased veterans for whom the VA does not have marital status information, a special Survivors' Call Center has been established for spouses who believe they may be entitled to this retroactive month-of-death benefit. Surviving spouses are encouraged to contact the Survivors' Call Center toll-free at (800) 749-8387. Call center agents will assist surviving spouses in providing the VA with the information needed to determine their eligibility. The Call Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm central standard time. Inquiries may also be submitted through the Internet at www.vba.va.gov/survivorsbenefit.htm.

The VA is aggressively changing its processing procedures to ensure this benefit is correctly paid to all surviving spouses in the future. The VA's disability payment system will also be enhanced to automate the month-of-death payment for all eligible surviving spouses.

SECRETARY PEAKE ANNOUNCES TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT INCREASES FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS

News Release, November 17, 2008

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced on November 17th that eligible veterans will see an increase in the mileage reimbursement they receive for travel to VA facilities for medical care. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake announced that he will use his authority to raise the mileage reimbursement from the 28.5 cents per mile to 41.5 cents per mile for all eligible veterans. “We owe it to our veterans to give them the best care possible,” said Peake. “The increase will once again provide assistance to our veterans, especially in these difficult economic times, to help offset gasoline costs and to assist veterans with access to the VA’s world-class health system.”

Congress, which mandates such increases, recently provided funding to the VA to increase the reimbursement rate, which goes into effect on November 17, 2008. Service connected veterans, veterans receiving VA pensions, and veterans with low incomes are eligible for the reimbursement.

“As I have travelled the country and spoken with many of our veterans, they have expressed the need for such an increase,” added Peake. “We are pleased to be able to provide them with the increase needed and we will continue to work with our veterans to ensure they receive the quality care they need.”

While increasing the payment, the current deductible amounts applied to certain mileage reimbursements will remain frozen at \$7.77 for a one way trip, \$15.54 for a round trip, and capped at a maximum of \$46.62 per calendar month. On January 9, 2009, these deductibles will decrease to \$3 for a one way trip, \$6 for a round trip, with a maximum of \$16 per calendar month. Deductibles can be waived if they cause a financial hardship to the veteran.

WHEELERS FOR THE WOUNDED EVENT IN BOISE

The Wheelers for the Wounded is a program to provide a weekend of off-roading for our country’s wounded military members. It is an opportunity to experience a much deserved adventure of fun and excitement as these veterans traverse the rugged Idaho desert in some of the most capable vehicles built.

This event will occur July 10, 2009, in the greater Boise area. Wounded servicemen and women will get to experience the beautiful country they unselfishly gave up so much for. Members of the Hillbilly Rock Krew will host the event and accompany them on the trails. After the run, veterans will be treated to a terrific meal, and an enjoyable time will be had by all involved!

All wounded servicemen and women interested in attending the event, are asked to contact rcksqrl@hillbillyrockkrew.com, so they can sign you up and accommodate any special needs you have. As the event is further arranged, more information will be posted on their website, hillbillyrockkrew.com.

The Hillbilly Rock Krew will be hosting many different charity events leading up to the even on July 9th, so there will be NO fees for the wounded veterans and their immediate family members for the event, food, and festivities.

IDAHO WOMEN VETERANS CONFERENCE

Women are often called the “invisible” veterans because of their reluctance to embrace their status as veterans, and because of an underutilization of the benefits and services they have earned. There are approximately 8,000 women veterans residing in Idaho and only a small percentage receive benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Many women veterans do not know they are eligible for VA benefits.

The Idaho Division of Veterans Services is inviting female veterans from Idaho to attend the Idaho Women Veterans Conference free of charge. Women veterans from Idaho will be converging on the Doubletree Riverside Hotel in Boise, Idaho on August 29, 2008.

A variety of workshops concerning veterans’ benefits and entitlements, women’s health issues, and employment and job seeking tips will be offered. Lunch will be served free of charge. The Outstanding Idaho Woman Veteran Award will also be presented. Women veterans are greatly encouraged to come learn about the veteran benefits they have earned from their service in the U.S. Armed Forces. If you know of a women veteran, please pass this information on to her and encourage her to attend this worthwhile event.

We have negotiated a room rate of \$86 at the Doubletree Riverside Hotel. For room reservations, please call 343-1871 and let them know you are with the Idaho Women Veterans Conference.

The flyer, registration, and nomination form for the Outstanding Idaho Woman Veteran Award are located on the next three pages. Registration is required. For more information about the conference or registration, please email gina.stamper@veterans.idaho.gov or call (208) 246-8761.

Idaho Women Veterans Conference 2009



SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE! SAVE THE DATE!

What: Conference for Women Veterans

When: August 29, 2009

Who: ALL WOMEN WHO SERVED
IN THE MILITARY

Where: Doubletree Riverside Hotel
Boise, Idaho

Details: No Cost for Participation

Registration is required

******FREE LUNCH******

Informative workshops on VA benefits and healthcare.
Employment assistance.

Most veterans do not know about ALL of their benefits.

Comments from the 2008 Tri-state conference participants:

*"This was very fun and informative."
"A sense of belonging that I haven't felt in years."*

Outstanding Idaho Woman Veteran Award to be presented.

For more information,
email gina.stamper@veterans.idaho.gov
or call (208) 246-8761

2009 IDAHO WOMEN VETERANS CONFERENCE
AUGUST 29, 2009



DOUBLETREE RIVERSIDE HOTEL
BOISE, IDAHO

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

E-mail address: _____

Branch of Service: _____

Dates of Service: _____

**There is no charge for this conference, just a serious commitment to attend.
Lunch will be served no charge.**

Please list any special needs (such as wheelchair accommodations of a vegetarian lunch):

*For room reservations at the Doubletree Riverside Hotel,
Please call 343-1871
Let them know you are with the Idaho Women Veterans Conference*



Please return this registration form **NO LATER THAN** July 15, 2009, to:
Gina Stamper
320 Collins Road, Boise, ID 83702

*Remember to complete and return your nomination form for the
Outstanding Idaho Woman Veteran.*

For more information,
email gina.stamper@veterans.idaho.gov
or call (208) 246-8761



Outstanding Idaho Woman Veteran Nominee Form

Name of Woman Veteran Nominated for Award: _____

Nominee's Dates and Branch of Service: _____

Nominee's Address/phone/email contact information: _____

In nominating an individual as an Outstanding Woman Veteran, the following criteria will be considered:

- Provide a brief military history of the nominee.
- Explain the woman veteran's contributions to the community.
- Describe adversities the nominee has overcome, if any.
- Describe any volunteer work on behalf of veterans or other organizations.
- Describe the nominee's involvement in reaching out to assist fellow veterans or other women in need.
- Any other outstanding attributes related to the betterment of veterans issues.
- Any awards, recognition, commendations, accomplishments, news articles or note worthy information.
- Any additional information pertinent to nomination.

This Award is submitted by:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please attach all documentation in support of your nomination to this form
and submit to:

Gina Stamper
Idaho Women Veterans Coordinator
Idaho Division of Veterans Services
320 Collins Road
Boise, ID 83702
Phone: (208) 246-8761
Fax: (208) 246-8790

DATES TO REMEMBER

January 1.....	New Year's Day
January 19.....	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February 2.....	Groundhog Day
	Army Nurse Corp created, 1901
February 8.....	Boy Scouts of America founded, 1910
February 14.....	Valentine's Day
February 16.....	President's Day – <i>See the history of President's Day at the bottom of this page</i>
March 3.....	Star Spangled Banner made the U.S. National Anthem, 1931
March 12.....	Girl Scouts of America founded, 1912
March 16.....	U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY founded, 1802
March 17.....	St. Patrick's Day

CONVENTION SCHEDULES

American Legion

- Mid-Winter.....January 15-17, 2009, Boise, ID
- National.....August 21-27, 2009, Louisville, KY

AMVETS

- National.....August 7-14, 2009, New Orleans, LA

Disabled American Veterans

- State.....May 6-9, 2009, Boise, ID
- Mid-Winter.....October 24-25, 2009, Burley, ID
- National.....August 22-25, 2009, Denver, CO

Marine Corps League

- National.....August 3-7, 2009, Rochester, MN

Military Order of the Purple Heart

- State.....May 6-9, 2009, Boise, ID
- National.....August 11-15, 2009, Rogers, AR

Retired Enlisted Association

- National.....September 13-19, 2009, Rapid City, SD

Veterans of Foreign Wars

- Mid-Winter.....January 15-17, 2009, Boise, ID
- National.....August 15-20, 2009, Phoenix, AZ

THE HISTORY OF PRESIDENTS DAY

The original version of the holiday was in commemoration of George Washington's birthday in 1796 (the last full year of his presidency). Washington, according to the calendar that has been used since at least the mid-18th century, was born on February 22, 1732. According to the old style calendar in use back then, however, he was born on February 11th. At least in 1796, many Americans celebrated his birthday on the 22nd, while others marked the occasion on the 11th instead.

By the early 19th century, Washington's Birthday had taken firm root in the American experience as a bona fide national holiday. Its traditions included Birthnight Balls in various regions, speeches and receptions given by prominent public figures, and a lot of revelry in taverns throughout the land. Then along came Abraham Lincoln, another revered president and fellow February baby, born on the 12th of the month. The first formal observance of his birthday took place in 1865, the year after his assassination, when both houses of Congress gathered for a memorial address. While Lincoln's Birthday did not become a federal holiday like George Washington's, it did become a legal holiday in several states.

In 1968, legislation (HR 15951) was enacted that affected several federal holidays. One of these was Washington's Birthday, the observation of which was shifted to the third Monday in February each year, whether or not it fell on the 22nd. This act, which took effect in 1971, was designed to simplify the yearly calendar of holidays and give federal employees some standard three-day weekends in the process.

Apparently, while the holiday in February is still officially known as Washington's Birthday (at least according to the Office of Personnel Management), it has become popularly (and, perhaps in some cases at the state level, legally) known as "President's Day." This has made the third Monday in February a day for honoring both Washington and Lincoln, as well as all the other men who have served as president.

DAV VAN SCHEDULES TO AND FROM VA MEDICAL CENTERS

LEWISTON & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE AND WALLA WALLA VAMC'S

Wednesdays: Spokane VA Medical Center. 6:00 a.m. departure from the State Veterans Home at 821 21st Avenue.

Picks up in Genesee, Moscow, Viola, Potlatch, Tensed, Plummer, and Worley. Arrives Spokane at 9:30 a.m.

Fridays: Spokane VA Medical Center. 6:00 a.m. departure from the State Veterans Home at 821 21st Avenue.

Picks up in Uniontown, Colton, Pullman, Colfax, Steptoe, Rosalia, and Spangle, WA. Arrives Spokane at 9:00 a.m.

All appointments for rides must be made 48 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

Thursdays: Walla Walla VA Medical Center. 6:00 a.m. departure from the State Veterans Home at 821 21st Avenue.

Picks up in Clarkston, Pomeroy, Dayton, Waitsburg, and Dixie, WA. Arrives at Walla Walla at 8:30 a.m.

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Walla Walla VA Medical Center (888) 687-8863 ext. 22529

*****If you are interested in being a volunteer driver, please call Voluntary Services at (509) 434-7503*****

LIBBY & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC

Tuesdays and Thursdays: 6:00 a.m. departure from Libby, MT.

Picks up in Troy MT, Bonner's Ferry, Sandpoint, Priest River, and Newport WA. Arrives at Spokane VA Medical Center at 9:00 a.m.

All appointments for rides must be made 48 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

COEUR D'ALENE & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC

Daily: Door to door pick up and return, times variable.

All appointments for rides must be made 48 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

SANDPOINT & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays:

Picks up in Noxon, Clark Fork, Hope, Sandpoint, Laclede, Priest River, Newport, Diamond Lake, Chattaroy. Arrives at Walla Walla at 9:00 a.m.

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940 ext. 7019.

SALT LAKE CITY VA MEDICAL CENTER

January 5, 7, 9, 13, 15, 21, 23, 27, 29

February 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 18, 20, 24, 26

March 2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 16, 18, 20, 24, 26, 30

All appointments for rides should be made 24 hours in advance.

Call Heidi Hopper at the DAV Transportation Office (208) 221-0362 or (800) 613-4012 ext. 2003.



MOBILE CLINIC

JANUARY ~ 2009						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5 <i>On Station</i>	6 Moses Lake	7 Moses Lake	8 Moses Lake	9	10
11	12	13 Kettle Falls	14 Republic	15 Okanogan	16 Okanogan	17
18	19	20 Moscow	21 Osburn	22 Osburn	23	24
25	26	27 Libby	28 Libby	29 Libby	30 Bonners Ferry	31

FEBRUARY ~ 2009						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 <i>On Station</i>	3 Moses Lake	4 Moses Lake	5 Moses Lake	6	7
8	9	10 Kettle Falls	11 Republic	12 Okanogan	13 Okanogan	14
15	16 Moscow	17 Osburn	18 Osburn	19	20	21
22	23	24 Libby	25 Libby	26 Libby	27 Bonners Ferry	28

MARCH ~ 2009						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 <i>On Station</i>	3 Moses Lake	4 Moses Lake	5 Moses Lake	6	7
8	9	10 Kettle Falls	11 Republic	12 Okanogan	13 Okanogan	14
15	16	17 Libby	18 Libby	19 Libby	20 Bonners Ferry	21
22	23 Moscow	24 Osburn	25 Osburn	26 <i>On Station</i>	27	28
29	30 <i>On Station</i>	31 <i>On Station</i>				