

SOUND OFF!



VOL. IV, NO 4

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

"VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER"

10 OCTOBER 2008

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

WE WANT SOME TOO!

The sky is falling! The sky is falling!

50,000 wheelers and dealers (otherwise known as brokers, financial advisors, CEOs and CFOs) were in danger of losing their second homes. Treasury (headed by one of their own) to the rescue!

\$700 billion of our money had to be committed instantly, with no oversight by Congress, no review by the courts, no strings, no sh*t. The specific language is telling: "Decisions by the Secretary pursuant to the authority of this act are non-reviewable and committed to agency discretion, and may not be reviewed by any court of law or any administrative agency."

Secretary Paulson needn't have worried about Congressional oversight nor review by the court -- that hasn't happened recently anyway. Just review our class-action suit for a recent example. But following on the heels of our case, the language confirms the general view, as expressed by the VA's lawyers, that no one has a right to question, review, critique, evaluate, or even comment on decisions made by government departments.

Instead of taking a deep breath, sitting down, and trying to figure out what was best for the nation, our Congress decided they had to tweak it around the edges so that they could claim to be the true saviors and thereby upstage the administration. Of course at first it didn't work. They had to add \$150 billion of sweet pork to get enough votes to give our money away, and they needed time to protect those legislators who were too stupid or too afraid to be able to explain it to their constituents -- and after all, getting reelected is duty number one. One could argue that they were helping to defend the nation since some of that pork went to bail out a firm that makes children's wooden arrows – you

know, the kind with the suction cup on the end. Al Q'aida must be terrified!

Some of the money will be going to bail out perhaps the largest insurance company in the world – AIG. The executives of AIG were so overwhelmed with gratitude that they immediately traipsed off to a resort and spent \$400,000 on massages, gourmet meals, and fine booze.

Now there are quite a few veterans who don't really care about the stock market. Their lives are often desperate, and they don't have to worry about investing the benefit payments they are not receiving. But the stock market is only the manifestation of the deeper problem of the credit market – and many of those same veterans will be really hurt by the paralysis in the credit market. Loans, mortgages, car payments, credit cards -- all the things necessary in modern society to make lives marginally livable – are going to be very much more difficult to get and to pay off.

If they are lucky, when the credit crunch hits their employer they will only lose the few benefits they might have been linked to their employment. If they are unlucky, they will lose their jobs.

Those same veterans will never be able to afford the vacation that the AIG executives rewarded themselves with, so they won't miss the massages anywhere near as much as they will miss that next paycheck.

We're not going to complain however. All we want is for Secretary Peake to follow suit. We want him to go to Congress, demand \$850 billion, deny everyone the right to oversight, and use the bucks to fix the mess in his own Department.

Just think! He could write contracts all day outsourcing claims processing, appeals review, benefits denial, facility expansion and upgrade – all those

things he seems to be unable to do with the 250,000 employees, contractors, and volunteers and the \$97 billion he currently has at his disposal. With \$850 billion he could really help 23 million veterans. With about \$37,000 per veteran he could almost assign one contractor to each veteran and have a few bucks left to vacation with the AIG folks.

At the least Secretary Peake could change the policy so that there was always a presumption of benefit for every veteran's claim rather than the current presumption that every veteran lies, and that all veterans want is to rip off the taxpayer.

Every veteran could just pick up the phone and place a call to his or her own private number in Mumbai, Bangalore, or some other distant locale. The veteran would hear a friendly greeting, answer three or four simple questions, get a positive response, and shortly thereafter by e-mail receive a doctor's appointment for the next day, a check, the grant letter, or whatever was necessary to satisfy the claim.

Veterans would be happy, and the Indian economy would prosper.[Ed.]

REVELLE - WAKE-UP CALLS – CALLS TO ACTION

NEED LEGAL HELP IN AN APPEAL TO THE DVA?

Try these two websites: Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program www.vetsprobono.org/index.htm. United States Court of appeals for Veterans Claims "Public List of Practitioners" are members of the court's bar www.vetapp.gov/practitioners/

WAKE UP! SPREAD THE NEWS!

Membership is open, free, and very worthwhile! Get your fellow veterans, and veterans' family members to join VUFT! We are beginning to be heard, and we need you to help us get the message out. If each of us would bring in one new member every month, what an impact we could have!

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

Class Action Suit: Our advocates are currently working on the appeal to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Case Progress to Date:

7/23/2007 Suit filed w/Federal District Court

9/25/2007 Defendant's Motion to Dismiss

2/11/2208 Motion for Preliminary Injunction

2/25/2008 Preliminary Injunction Hearing

4/21/2008 Trial

6/25/2008 Judgment based on jurisdiction

7/25/2008 Appeal notice filed w/9th Circuit Court of Appeals

10/11/2008 Brief to be filed

Here is a link to the legal [documents](#) on the lawsuit.

PLEASE CLICK THROUGH AND READ THIS EXCELLENT EDITORIAL BY OUR LEAD ADVOCATE (AND HERO) IN THE CURRENT ISSUE OF *HUMAN RIGHTS* MAGAZINE

THE NEW SUSPECT CLASS ~ TRAGICALLY, OUR VETERANS

by Gordon P. Erspamer

One of the most obscure discrimination issues existing today relates to our country's treatment of its veterans, a group that hardly qualifies under the legal definition of a "suspect class" as currently conceived. Nevertheless, it remains a fact that veterans are the most prominent remaining class of persons who suffer from invidious forms of institutionalized discrimination. <More at: http://www.abanet.org/irr/hr/spring08/erspamer_spring08.html> NOTE: The "VCS" in the editorial is the abbreviation for the joint Veterans for Common Sense/Veterans United For Truth class action lawsuit.

VETERANS TELL VA, 'OPEN FRONT DOOR' TO DISABILITY CLAIMS

Marilyn Bechtel - People's Weekly World Newspaper - 09/25/08

As the number of veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan grows, vets and members of Congress are stepping up demands that the long wait many endure before disability claims are accepted must be drastically shortened.

On Sept. 22, New York Democrats Sen. Hillary Clinton and Rep. John Hall joined with Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America to announce introduction of a Senate equivalent to the Disability Claims Modernization Act (HR 5892), passed by the

House in July. The bill would revise the disability rating system, update the way the VA decides claims and extend key benefits to veterans' families.

Citing HR 5892 as among several positive developments in Congress, Paul Sullivan, executive director of Veterans for Common Sense (VCS), said between 600,000 and 800,000 vets are now waiting an average of more than six months for the VA to decide about their disability benefits. Even those figures are distorted by the VA's practice of mixing statistics for the quicker pension claims with those for disability, he said.

"If the veteran files a claim for a mental health condition like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the decision usually takes about a year," Sullivan, a former VA staffer, said. If a veteran has to appeal because the VA denied the claim, awarded an incorrect amount or set a wrong effective date, an appeal can take three or four more years, he added.

VCS and Veterans United for Truth are co-plaintiffs in a class-action lawsuit on behalf of thousands of wounded Iraq veterans whose claims were rejected by the VA. While calling the VA's performance "troubling," a judge ruled in July that overhauling the system was beyond the court's jurisdiction. The two veterans' groups have appealed.

<More at: <http://www.pwww.org/article/articleview/13754/>>

HERE WE GO AGAIN! YOUR BOARD HAS JUST AGREED TO ADD VUFT TO THE *AMICUS CURIAE* BRIEF IN THIS CASE. WE ARE GLUTTONS FOR PUNISHMENT!

PEAKE V. SANDERS: SUPREME COURT CASE ON VETERANS BENEFITS

DATE: October 1, 2008

On June 16, 2008, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear a case regarding the right of military veterans to obtain benefits for service-connected disabilities. A federal appeals court held that when the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) makes procedural mistakes in handling a disability-benefits case, the VA should bear the burden of demonstrating that the claimant was not prejudiced by the VA's error. The VA has appealed that decision to the Supreme Court; it argues that the burden should be on the veteran to demonstrate that (s)he was prejudiced by those errors.

The Washington Legal Foundation (WLF) is a public interest law firm that regularly appears in Supreme Court proceedings. WLF believes that Congress intended disability benefits procedures to give the benefit of all doubts to the veteran. WLF believes that when, as here, the VA admits that it made procedural mistakes in handling an application, it is only fair that it bear the burden of proof on the issue of whether the mistakes prejudiced the veteran. Accordingly, WLF plans to file an *amicus curiae* ("friend of the court") brief in the Supreme Court in support of the veterans and against the VA.

BE A MEMBER If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to [our website](#) and join. Membership is free. The more our numbers grow, the greater voice we have. It shouldn't be that way, but it is, so join us and help us take the fight to Congress and the state legislatures. Please encourage your friends who either are veterans, are related to veterans, or who support veterans' causes to join VUFT, Inc.

SUPPORTING THE CAUSE If you wish to donate to our work you may now do so via PayPal or Visa on [our website](#) "[Donate](#)" page. Every little bit helps. We are a 501(c)(3): your donations are deductible on your federal taxes. You can also buy our handsome pins using the same method. If you wish to volunteer your services to the organization, please contact the Chair at rhandy@vuft.org or the Vice Chair at scook@vuft.org. Watch for details at www.vuft.org

DO YOU PASS THIS ON TO ANYONE?
IF YOU DO. PLEASE LET US KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE YOU SEND IT TO
NO NAMES. JUST NUMBERS

MAIL CALL - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS AND OTHERS [SOME EDITED FOR LENGTH]

REQUESTING HELP

5975 West 11850 North, Highland, UT 84003 - 7 October 2008

I am a student at Utah Valley University, and my major is Political Science with an emphasis in International Relations. I would appreciate some direct input from you for a research paper in my Vietnam War history class. I am deeply interested in the Vietnam war and in finding out what attitudes you have, how they were formed, and what role music played in their shaping. And I'd like to know what can be done for my generation to understand your past so as to apply lessons you learned to our generation.

What I want to do is to get your responses to a series of questions about the Vietnam era's reaction to protest music and popular culture. I want to find out how much of an effect there was on the soldier before, during, and after his/her tour of duty in Vietnam. I would like to argue that music meant something more back then. That it may have stood for something very significant with regard to the war and society. All I ask from you is just 10 minutes of time via email. I feel that your thoughts would help me and my peers in conservative Utah better understand. I already feel especially interested in Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young songs like "Ohio," and "What are their Names," and "Peace Train" by Cat Stevens or "It Better End Soon" by Chicago. ~~ Respectfully, Caleb Bishop Christian snowskiwater@hotmail.com

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

THESE ARE ON THE PRESIDENT'S DESK.

While it is important to recognize the exceptional service of the Code Talkers, and it is likewise important to hinder desecration of military graves, there are much bigger fish that are left un-fried. There were 599 bills in the 110th Congress dealing with "veterans", and precious few of them passed. <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

H. R. 4544

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Code Talkers Recognition Act of 2008".

SEC. 2. PURPOSE.

The purpose of this Act is to require the issuance of medals to express the sense of the Congress that—(1) the service of Native American code talkers to the United States deserves immediate recognition for dedication and valor; and (2) honoring Native American code talkers is long overdue.

H.R.3480

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the 'Let Our Veterans Rest in Peace Act of 2008'.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND DECLARATION.

The Congress finds and declares that--

- (1) every cemetery should do all it can to protect each grave marker, headstone, monument, or other object, intended to permanently mark a grave;
- (2) every citizen of the United States should be watchful and mindful of desecrations of any gravesite and report any such suspected behavior to local, State, or Federal law enforcement authorities; and
- (3) all citizens, including veterans, have earned the right to rest in peace.

NOW IF THEY CAN JUST GET PEAKE TO SPEND THE MONEY

FILNER APPLAUDS ENACTMENT OF VETERANS' SPENDING BILL

October 1, 2008

Washington, D.C. – "Yesterday, the President signed into law a veterans' spending bill that built upon the achievement of last year, when Congress provided the VA with the largest increase in the 77-year history of the Department of Veterans Affairs and its predecessor agency. This year's bill provides \$4.5 billion in discretionary spending above last year's level, nearly \$3 billion more than the Bush Administration requested. It is the second budget in a row that exceeds the request of the *Independent Budget*, which is formulated by a coalition of veterans' organizations.

CALIFORNIA WAR VETS TO GET PTSD, TBI TESTING

Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer - Oct 9, 2008

Reacting to complaints of delays in care as well as a recent report that found hundreds of thousands of combat veterans are living with undiagnosed traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a bill providing screening and mental health care for California war veterans.

SB 1401, authored by State Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, Calif., requires that the Defense Department or Veterans Affairs Department reach out and assist all National Guard members and discharged combat veterans returning to California to receive screening for PTSD or TBI. <more at: http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/10/military_california_veterans_100803w/>

SUMMARY OF FY09 DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

<See this summary at: http://www.moaa.org/lac/lac_issues/lac_issues_major/lac_issues_major_adgr/lac_issues_major_adgr_09ndaa.htm>

RETREAT – NEWS

IRAQ, US AGREE ON TROOPS WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLE BEFORE END OF 2008

10/6/2008

BAGHDAD, Oct 6 (KUNA) -- Iraqi Vice President Adel Abdul Mahdi said his country set the end of 2008 as the date for US troop withdrawal from Iraq. Abdul Mahdi clarified in a statement that the Iraqi leaders agreed with a visiting US delegation for exerting effort to put and end to the US troop presence in the country before the end of 2008, as part of the security agreement.

Iraqi Presidential Council meeting, held at residence of President Jalal Talabani in Al-Sulaimaniya town last Saturday, was attended by US Secretary of State Assistant John Negroponte -- during which topics of a draft agreement with the US on the troops pull out were examined. The American side during the meeting took the Iraqi demands into consideration, he said.

Saturday's meeting was attended by the deputy premier, Barham Ahmad Salih, and US ambassador to Iraq, Rayan Croker, as well as the officer in charge of Kirkuk and other disputed areas dossiers. Mandate of the US troops' presence in Iraq will expire on paper by the end of this year. <http://www.kuna.net.kw/NewsAgenciesPublicSite/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=1942050&Language=en>

'GRIM' AFGHANISTAN REPORT TO BE KEPT SECRET BY US

Brian Ross - September 23, 2008

"No Plans to Declassify" New National Intelligence Estimate for White House

US intelligence analysts are putting the final touches on a secret National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Afghanistan that reportedly describes the situation as "grim", but there are "no plans to declassify" any of it before the election, according to one US official familiar with the process. <More at: <http://www.abcnews.go.com/print?id=5867448>>

BRITISH ENVOY SAYS MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN IS DOOMED, ACCORDING TO LEAKED MEMO

Charles Bremner and Richard Beeston - The Times UK - 01 October 2008

The official version of the US-led campaign in Afghanistan received a blow today with a leaked report that the British Ambassador in Kabul believes that US strategy is wrong and the war is as good as lost.

The potentially explosive views were published by Le Canard Enchaîné, a respected French weekly, which said that they were direct quotations from a diplomatic cable written by François Fitou, the French Deputy Ambassador in Kabul. Mr Fitou reported to President Sarkozy's office and his own Foreign Ministry that Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, the British Ambassador, believed that "American strategy is destined to fail" in Afghanistan, according to the newspaper. It published a reproduction of what it said was the coded cable, in which the French diplomat summarised the ambassador's main points from a September 2 meeting.

"The current situation is bad. The security situation is getting worse. So is corruption and the Government has lost all trust. Our public statements should not delude us over the fact that the insurrection, while incapable of winning a military victory, nevertheless has the capacity to make life increasingly difficult, including in the capital.

The presence - especially the military presence - of the coalition is part of the problem, not the solution. The foreign forces are ensuring the survival of a regime which would collapse without them. In doing so, they are slowing down and complicating an eventual exit from the crisis (which, moreover, will probably be dramatic)." <More at: <http://www.truthout.org/100108R>>

ARMY MAKING TOXIC MESS IN WAR ZONES

Kelly Kennedy - Staff writer - Oct 3, 2008

The U.S. Army is creating a toxic mess in Afghanistan and Iraq, according to a new report that details cases of hazardous waste dumped in ditches, soldiers setting up tents on top of fuel spills and service members exposed to cyanide gas during overseas deployments.

The report by the Rand Corp. think tank also says the Defense Department has no overarching policy to ensure environmental mishaps in Iraq and Afghanistan don't harm troops' health, create political disputes and avoid costly clean-up efforts when it's time to leave those countries. <More at: http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/10/military_toxiciraq_100208w/>

Full report available from the Rand Corp. for \$29.25 at: <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG632/> (even though you already paid for it with your tax dollars).

DOD ANNOUNCES ACTIVATION OF UNIFIED GEOGRAPHIC COMMAND

October 01, 2008

The Department of Defense today announced the activation of United States Africa Command, the sixth unified geographic command within the DoD unified command structure.

... U.S. Africa Command will coordinate military-to-military contacts and focus on relationships between the United States and 53 African nations, as well as African military and security organizations. The command is headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany, with select personnel assigned to U.S. embassies and diplomatic missions in numerous African nations.

<More at: <http://www.defenseink.mil/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=12254>>

PENTAGON DOCTRINE PUSHES NATION-BUILDING

Peter Goodspeed – National Post – October 07, 2008

Eight years ago, during a presidential debate in the 2000 election, George W. Bush declared armies were for fighting.

"Let me tell you, I'm worried about an opponent who uses nation-building and the military in the same sentence," he said.

"See, our view of the military is for our military to be properly prepared to fight and win war and, therefore, prevent war from happening in the first place.

"I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation-building," added the man who was soon to become U. S. president.

Yesterday, all that changed, officially, when the Pentagon unveiled a new military doctrine that declares nation-building

missions are now probably more important than conventional warfare. <More at: <http://www.nationalpost.com/news/world/story.html?id=865619>

Download the new manual (34MB file) at <http://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-07.pdf>

NOTE THE QUOTE BELOW ~ I THOUGHT THAT IT WAS CONGRESS, ON THE ADVICE OF THE PRESIDENT, WHO DECIDED WHAT THE "CORE MISSIONS" FOR THE MILITARY WERE. SEE U.S. CONSTITUTION. SECTION 8.

NEW PRESIDENT WILL FACE ERA OF SHRINKING MILITARY BUDGETS

Jim Mannion - Oct 10, 2008

Riding the crest of the longest defense buildup in its history, the US military is heading into a funding crunch that will force wrenching change no matter who is elected president in November, analysts say. Doubts about how the military will meet a range of challenges -- from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to preparing for different kinds of conflicts in the future-- have intensified with the upheaval on Wall Street.

Even before the world financial crisis, though, the Defense Department was bracing for shrinking budgets as the war in Iraq winds down and competing claims on the federal budget swell, analysts say.

"The DoD (Department of Defense) is no longer going to have the luxury of not having to make choices," said Travis Sharp, an analyst with the Center for Arms Control Policy.

"They are going to have to start making some real decisions about what are the core missions for the United States military and the world, where are American interests fundamentally threatened, where do we need to be operating," he said. <More at: <http://www.nasdaq.com/aspx/content/NewsStory.aspx?cpath=20081010ACQDJON200810100037DOWJONESDJONLINE000007.htm&&mypage=newsheadlines&title=New%20President%20Will%20Face%20Era%20Of%20Shrinking%20Military%20Budgets>>

PANEL TO STUDY MILITARY EAVESDROPPING

Scott Shane - October 10, 2008

WASHINGTON — The chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Senator John D. Rockefeller IV, said Thursday that the committee would investigate claims by two military eavesdroppers that they routinely listened in on private calls home from American military officers, aid workers and journalists stationed in Iraq.

Mr. Rockefeller, Democrat of West Virginia, called the accusations "extremely disturbing." "Any time there is an allegation regarding abuse of the privacy and civil liberties of Americans it is a very serious matter," he said.

The two former intelligence officers, Adrienne Kinne, an Army reservist, and David Murfee Faulk, a Navy linguist, spoke Thursday to ABC News. They also were interviewed for a book on the National Security Agency by James Bamford, a former ABC producer and author of two earlier books on the agency, that is scheduled for publication next week.

Ms. Kinne and Mr. Faulk, both Arabic linguists, were based at Fort Gordon, Ga., where the N.S.A. has a large listening post focused on the Middle East. Ms. Kinne was there from 2001 to 2003 and Mr. Faulk was there from 2003 to 2007, Mr. Bamford said. <More at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/10/washington/10nsa.html>>

HOUSTON SOLDIERS' SUICIDES PROMPT SCRUTINY

Lindsay Wise - 2008 Houston Chronicle - Sept. 26, 2008

An alarming number of suicides among Houston-based Army recruiters — including two in recent weeks — has prompted calls by a senator and veterans' advocates for closer scrutiny of high-stress recruiting duty during wartime.

Staff Sgt. Larry G. Flores Jr., 26, and Sgt. 1st Class Patrick G. Henderson, 35, are the fourth and fifth recruiters at the Houston Recruiting Battalion to kill themselves since 2001. Both men belonged to the battalion's Tyler Company, and both were combat veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"Clearly, there's a problem," said David Rudd, a former Army psychologist and psychology chair at Texas Tech University. "Somebody needs to look and see if there's a broader national problem outside of this one battalion. Is it a problem placing these combat veterans in recruiting positions?" <More at: <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/front/6023927.html>>

ARMY CREATES SUICIDE PREVENTION BOARD

Mike Mount - CNN Pentagon Producer – 9/30

WASHINGTON (CNN) – The U.S. Army is establishing a suicide prevention board to examine the mental health of its recruiters around the country after the fourth suicide in three years by Houston, Texas-based recruiters, according to Army officials. The board will look at how to handle the high-stress climate facing recruiters who may be both under pressure from their job and victims of post-combat deployment stress, according to Douglas Smith, a spokesman from the U.S. Army Recruiting command. <More at: <http://www.cnn.com/2008/US/09/29/recruiters.suicide/index.html>>

MILITARY RECRUITING BONUSES GROW BY 25 PERCENT

Lolita C. Baldor – 10/2/08

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Army and Marine Corps doled out nearly \$640 million in the past year in bonuses to entice recruits to join the military, as the two services continue to bear the brunt of the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Buoyed by incentives that can be as high as \$40,000 each, and coupled with the promise of thousands more for education or house down payments, the annual cost grew by 25 percent over last year's totals for the two services, The Associated Press has learned. <More at: http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5jGqkVigOw8nOOqvDqpNAlfqXIF_gD93IL8A00>

THIS COULDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH RECRUITING THUGS TO MAKE YOUR QUOTA, COULD IT?

ARMY PRIVATE SUBJECTED TO ANTI-SEMITIC ATTACKS BRUTALLY BEATEN BY SOLDIERS

Jason Leopold - The Public Record - September 30, 2008

A U.S. Army soldier was brutally beaten by other soldiers in his platoon earlier this month following two incidents in which a drill sergeant allegedly used anti-Semitic slurs to address the soldier. Pvt. Michael Handman, 20, who has just completed his fifth week of basic training at Fort Benning, Georgia, was recently released from a hospital where he was treated for a concussion, facial wounds, and severe oral injuries following the attack, according to the boy's father, Jonathan Handman.

... Jonathan Handman said his son was lured into a laundry room at the Fort Benning Army base by other soldiers, knocked unconscious and beaten while he lay on the ground.

Michael Handman enlisted in the Army earlier this year. He wears a yarmulke with his uniform, which apparently led his drill sergeants to refer to him as a "fucking Jew" and a "kike" and a demand that he remove the yarmulke during dinner, according to his father. <More at: <http://www.pubrecord.org/component/content/362.html>>

CLICK THROUGH ON THIS ONE! IT WILL MAKE YOU VERY ANGRY.

"MY DAUGHTER'S DREAM BECAME A NIGHTMARE": THE MURDER OF MILITARY WOMEN CONTINUES

Ann Wright - truthout Perspective - 07 October 2008

"My daughter's dream became a nightmare," sadly said Gloria Barrios, seven months after her daughter, US Air Force Senior Airman Blanca Luna, was murdered on Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas.

On March 7, 2008, Senior Airman Luna, 27, was found dead in her room at the Sheppard Air Force Base Inn, an on-base lodging facility. She had been stabbed in the back of the neck with a short knife. Luna, an Air Force Reservist with four years of prior military service in the Marine Corps including a tour in Japan, was killed three days before she was to graduate from an Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Heating training course. <More at: <http://www.truthout.org/100708A>>

SHOULD THIS COURSE BE A PREREQUISITE FOR RECRUITERS?

MIND TRAINING HELPS TROOPS WITH COMBAT, THEN PTSD

Kevin Maurer – AP - Oct 7, 2008

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. (AP) - The explosion of practice mortars sent Army Spc. Kade Williams into panic attacks, and nightmares plagued his sleep. The ravages of post-traumatic stress had left the veteran of the war in Afghanistan vulnerable, and he was desperate for help. But sitting silently on the floor with his eyes closed while listening to a soft-spoken instructor tell him to find a focal point by pressing on his lower stomach as guitar music hums in the background? That seemed a bit far-out.

Until he tried it. "I will be the first one to admit that I was wrong," Williams said.

Warriors have long used such practices to improve concentration and relaxation - dating back more than 1,000 years to the techniques of the samurai. Here at coastal Camp Lejeune, 100 miles inland at the Army's Fort Bragg and at several bases in California, such meditation now comes with a name: Warrior Mind Training.

The course is catching on in military circles as a way not only to treat both post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injuries, but to improve focus and better prepare soldiers and Marines for the rigors of combat. It can also improve shooting range performance and raise training test scores, said Sarah Ernst, a senior Warrior Mind instructor.

<More at: <http://www.chron.com/disp/story.mpl/ap/nation/6044078.html>>

YET, THERE ARE ALWAYS THOSE WHO REALLY CARE, AREN'T THERE?

OFFICERS LEARN TO HELP VETERANS IN CRISIS

Darryl E. Owens - Miami Herald - Sep. 29, 2008

Though aging vets from past wars present ongoing problems, Barbara Lewis, crisis intervention training commander for the Orange County Sheriff's Office, said deputies are facing the issue more now because of veterans home from the current wars.

"We're seeing it in these economic times: stressors in their lives pushing them over the edge," Lewis said. "Anything we can do as law-enforcement officers to protect our returning vets is important."

<More at: <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/southflorida/story/705579.html>>

TO THE COLOR - GATHERINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Where</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Who</u>	<u>Notes</u>
10/10	1100-1400	Radisson Hotel Boston 200 Stuart St, Boston, MA	Boston Military Career Fair		617-482-1800
10/14	1100-1400	Crowne Plaza 4100 Presidential Blvd, Philadelphia, PA	Philadelphia Military Career Fair		215-477-0200
10/14		Dixon, CA	Stand Down	Patrick Stacio	707-344-3743
10/15		Dothan, AL	Resource Fair	Earl C. Jones, Jr.	334-596-1413
10/16		Colorado Springs, CA	Resource Fair	Patricia Frank	719-667-3703
10/16	1100-1400	Omni San Antonio Hotel 9821 Colonnade Blvd, San Antonio, TX	San Antonio Military Career Fair		210.691.8888
10/16-19		3803 Highway 45 N Jackson, Tennessee	The Wall That Heals	Cocks-Danuiels VFW Post 1848	

10/17		Nashville, TN	Stand Down	Bill Burleigh	615-321-3919
10/17		Albuquerque, NM	Resource Fair	Larry J. Campos	505-841-8517
10/17		Augusta, GA	Resource Fair	Kathleen Scott	706-733-0188 x-6392
10/17-18	1600-1800	Harold's Country Club Yemassee, S.C.	Yemassee Train Depot Reunion	Yemassee Train Depot Marine Reunion C'mttee	843-589-3385
10/18		Latham, NY	Resource Fair	Donna K. Vaughn	518-626-5167
10/20		Hilton Huntington 598 Broadhollow Road, Melville, NY	Long Island Military Career Fair	Register	631.845.1000
10/21		Columbus, OH	Resource Fair	Robert O'Keefe	614-559-6058
10/22		Detroit, MI	Resource Fair	Norman Wilcox	248-808-0929
10/23	1000-1600	Crowne Plaza LAX 5985 W. Century Blvd, Los Angeles, CA	Western Regional Career Event	Register	
10/24		Huntsville, AL	Stand Down	Sandra Childress	256-714-1974
10/24		Grand Junction, CO		Bethany Hall	970-248-7572
10/31		St. Cloud, MN	Resource Fair	Nick Johnston	320-255-6320

We are a non-partisan organization. We will advertise all legitimate veterans' events, regardless of purpose.

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

VA, DOD ELECTRONICALLY "HAND OFF" RECORDS OF WOUNDED PATIENTS

September 25, 2008

WASHINGTON – Instant electronic medical information from the Department of Defense (DoD) about severely wounded troops soon will be transferred to four Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) special treatment centers. The two departments completed a successful pilot project sharing patient information between Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the Polytrauma Unit at the Tampa, Fla., VA Medical Center. <More at: <http://www1.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1587>>

BUSH ORDER GIVES HELP TO MILITARY SPOUSES SEEKING FEDERAL JOBS

Jeff Schogol - Stars and Stripes - Pacific edition - October 3, 2008

ARLINGTON, Va. — If you are a military spouse facing a permanent change-of-station move, it just got easier for you to land a job with the federal government. President Bush has signed an executive order that makes certain military spouses eligible for noncompetitive appointments to civil service jobs, said Patricia Bradshaw, deputy undersecretary of Defense for civilian personnel policy. One goal is to provide greater employment opportunities for military spouses, whose careers are often disrupted by PCS moves, Bradshaw said Tuesday. Details of when military spouses would become eligible for such appointments have not yet been worked out, she said. <More at: <http://www.stripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=57855>>

RED TAPE SNARLS VET VOTER REGISTRATION

Inter Press Service - September 30, 2008

NEW YORK -- With the presidential polls just over a month away, tens of thousands of U.S. war veterans are still wondering whether they will be able to vote for the candidate of their choice.

About 100,000 veterans residing in government-run facilities can no longer vote because they cannot register without assistance from volunteers due to disabilities and serious illnesses.

Rights groups say they want to help war veterans with the registration process, but officials at the Department of Veterans Affairs are creating hurdles for them. <More at: <http://www.military.com/news/article/red-tape-snarls-vet-voter-registration.html>>

VA'S DELAYS PREVENTING URGENT CARE FOR VETERANS

Lou Michel - News Staff Reporter - 09/29/08

Congestion, system of funding at issue

Delonne J. Scharf has lost a lot in his service to the United States. Now the 64-year-old disabled Vietnam War-era veteran from West Valley may face life-or-death consequences because the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system, he says, is overwhelmed by returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I want other veterans to know what I have gone through. Maybe it will help someone else," said Scharf, who Thursday finally won a battle to have the VA pay for follow-up cancer surgery and tests at Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

In two weeks, when the procedures are performed, he says, he will know for sure whether his cancer has spread. Scharf said that Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Buffalo imposed repeated delays in providing him care and that he never once saw a VA cancer specialist after he first complained of a lump below his right ankle in May.

His story of delays is a familiar one, according to the Disabled American Veterans, a Washington, D. C., veterans advocacy group. "It sounds like Mr. Scharf has been caught up in the funding system," said Thom Wilborn, an official of the group, explaining that toward the end of the federal fiscal year in September, medical procedures and referrals are sometimes delayed.

"Without Congress' approval of a funding plan, the VA is forced to reduce its health care services," Wilborn said.

<More at: <http://www.buffalonews.com/cityregion/story/450769.html>>

VETERANS' APPEALS COURT MAY GET BOOST

Marcia Coyle - National Law Journal - October 02, 2008

Heeding a steady drumbeat of concern about a skyrocketing caseload unlikely to decrease as two wars continue, Congress is moving toward providing help to the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans' Claims.

The Senate recently passed, by unanimous consent, an omnibus veterans' benefits measure that includes provisions increasing temporarily the number of judges on the court from seven to nine and eliminating the limit on the number of days per year a retired CAVC judge may serve. The measure, sponsored by Senate Veterans Affairs Chairman Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii, also would, for the first time, open to judicial review by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit Veterans Administration (V.A.) regulations used to assign ratings to veterans' disabilities and diseases.

<More at: http://www.dailyreportonline.com/Editorial/News/singleEdit.asp?individual_SQL=10/2/2008@26470>

VA UNDER FIRE FOR GI BILL DELAYS

Stars and Stripes - Leo Shane III - September 26, 2008

WASHINGTON -- Lawmakers angrily criticized Veterans Affairs officials Wednesday for possible delays in implementing the new GI Bill benefits by the August 2009 deadline, calling for more urgency and ingenuity by department leaders.

Keith Pedigo, assistant deputy undersecretary for veterans benefits administration, told members of the House that the VA does not have the technical expertise or manpower to handle the transition from the old education benefits system to a larger, more complex formula. As a result, the department expects to contract out the work. But he said the 11-month window left to get that work done will create challenges for the program.

House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner, D-Calif., charged that officials aren't working hard enough to find solutions. "I could find a geek to do this stuff for \$1 million," he said. "We've got kids all over the country that could do this work. Maybe it's a little more complicated than your normal computer work ... but it's not that conceptually difficult."

<More at: <http://www.military.com/features/0,15240,176187,00.html>>

REUNIONS DELAYED FOR SOLDIERS RETURNING FROM IRAQ

Will Higgins - September 29, 2008

Members of Indiana National Guard will forgo 48-hour pass to tend to mental health

After months of dodging roadside bombs and battling monotony in the Iraqi desert, about 3,200 Indiana National Guard soldiers are expected home in November. But a change in how troops demobilize will delay family reunions.

Previously, Hoosier soldiers got an immediate 48-hour pass before returning to Camp Atterbury for a few days of paperwork.

This time, there's no pass for the returning 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, which has been in the Middle East since March. Instead, families are invited to join their soldiers at a one- to two-hour airport hangar reception, according to an Army directive. When the time is up, the soldiers will get on buses and head for Camp Atterbury, the Johnson County Army base, for three to five days of decompressing that puts an emphasis on mental health.

The new exit strategy is part of an Army-wide plan to help smooth out veterans' return to civilian life.

<More at: <http://www.indystar.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080929/LOCAL/809290358>>

MARINES UNAWARE OF RISKS

Robert J. O'Dowd - Salem-News.com - Oct-06-2008

More information about the toxic waste exposure of Marines at the El Toro Air Station is emerging, but government data regarding the site remains elusive.

(SOMERDALE, N.J.) - The Marine Corps takes great pride "in taking care of its own", but the Naval services have not done a good job notifying veterans who were stationed at former MCAS Toro that they are at risk for exposure to toxic chemicals as a result of the contamination of the soil and groundwater. Very few know of their exposure.

Marines who served at Camp Lejeune, El Toro and possibly several locations, have been exposed to trichloroethylene (TCE) and Perchloroethylene (PCE), and they may suffer serious health consequences, and have no idea of what hit them. Most Marine and Navy veterans stationed at El Toro have no knowledge of the toxic chemicals found on the base, its place on the EPA Superfund, eventually closure in 1999, and sale at a public auction by the Navy in 2005 to a joint venture for \$650 million.

But it is a fact that a number of Marines report serious illnesses linked to toxic exposure, and neither the Navy nor the Marine Corps have made any attempts to notify El Toro veterans. <More at: http://salem-news.com/articles/october062008/tce_marines_ro_10-5-08.php>

A BETTER HOT LINE OPTION

Military Times - 29 Sep 08

At a recent congressional hearing, Department of Veterans Affairs officials talked about how pleased they are with VA's year-old suicide prevention hot line, which they credit with saving the lives of some 1,600 veterans.

Then they issued data that raise disturbing questions about how many lives may not have been saved.

The VA hot line piggybacks on the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, (800) 273-TALK (8255), which is available to anyone in the nation who is having suicidal thoughts. A prompt invites callers who are veterans to press 1, which routes their calls to a VA call center staffed by VA counselors.

The problem is that large numbers of nonveterans think that pressing 1 will help them get better or faster service. According to VA data, only 26,009 — about 43 percent — of the 59,932 people who pressed 1 this year proved to be veterans. At times, those nonveterans overwhelmed the VA call center, and calls were transferred to an answering service that directs callers to contact their nearest VA medical facility.

That is as sad as it is appalling.

There is a better way. Instead of the "press 1" option, the national lifeline counselors should initially engage all callers. Then, after ensuring there is no immediate crisis, counselors can ask callers whether they are veterans and offer to transfer them to VA's call center if they desire.

Of the nation's 25 million veterans, 18 commit suicide every day, according to VA. Those who are trying to save themselves by calling a help line should not be given the runaround. http://www.militarytimes.com/community/opinion/navy_editorial_hotline_092908/

"PILOT PROJECTS" { GIVEN YEARS TO RUN TRIALS IN ONLY A FEW LOCATIONS TO SEE IF THEY CAN "IMPROVE" THE SYSTEM.

HEY, VA! OUR GUYS ARE HURTING TODAY – THEY CAN'T WAIT ANOTHER THREE YEARS!

AND WHAT IF YOU DECIDE AFTER THREE YEARS THAT THESE PILOT PROGRAMS DON'T WORK? HOW MANY MORE YEARS WILL IT BE?

CHANGES COMING TO DISABILITY CLAIMS PROCESS

Rick Maze - Staff writer- Oct 3, 2008

Lawmakers have high expectations that they can reduce the backlog and processing time for veterans' benefits claims through a combination of new procedures, including two pilot projects.

The Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2008, which passed Congress on Saturday and is being prepared for submission to the White House for President Bush's signature, pushes the Department of Veterans Affairs to use electronic filing and processing of claims to try to improve the speed of claims decisions, reduce the disparity in decisions involving similar issues and cut the number of claims decisions that end up being overturned.

The bill also creates a new authority to provide a temporary disability rating for some veterans who have severe and multiple disabilities that are not fully healed. Stabilized and unstabilized disabilities that have an impact on employment could be

considered in assigning the temporary rating that would be used to provide disability compensation during the first year after leaving the military.

One of the pilot projects ordered by the compromise bill requires special, expedited treatment for disability claims where the veteran had the help of a veterans' service officer to prepare the paperwork. This one-year test would be carried out in at least 10 regional offices.

A second pilot project, to run over three years in at least four regional office, would have processors and veterans use a checklist when submitting claims in an effort to bring more organization and uniformity to the claims process.

The bill also gives VA one year to develop a program using information technology to process claims that would allow veterans to file applications and to track the progress of their claim online.

<More at: http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/10/military_va_disability_100108w/>

VETERANS TOLD TO MOVE OUT OF SHELTER

October 10, 2008

Rent 8 Months Past Due

CLARKSVILLE, Tenn. -- Several veterans in Clarksville said they are being evicted. The Leaf Chronicle is reporting the veterans are being told to move out of their shelter because the rent there is eight months past due.

The owner of the Veterans Service Center claims that **sponsoring federal agencies are responsible for paying the rent, but those agencies don't have the available funds.** The owner says he is working to find solutions for the veterans.

<http://www.wsmv.com/news/17687378/detail.html>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF OCTOBER 7, 2008

This week the Army, Navy and Air Force announced an increase, while the Marine Corps and Coast Guard announced a decrease. The net collective result is 2,465 more reservists activated than last week. At any given time, services may activate some units and individuals while deactivating others, making it possible for these figures to either increase or decrease. The total number currently on active duty from the Army National Guard and Army Reserve is 94,117; Navy Reserve, 6,205; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 12,101; Marine Corps Reserve, 7,790; and the Coast Guard Reserve, 734. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 120,947, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/oct2008/d20081007nqr.pdf>

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE FRIDAY 10 OCTOBER 2008

NOTE: STATISTICS FOR WOUNDED ARE GETTING SHAKIER - DoD REVISES NUMBERS – DROPS NON-HOSTILE "OTHER"

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (2,016 DAYS)		OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (2,545 DAYS)	
KILLED US	4,180	KILLED US	605
WOUNDED US [9/1/08]	1030,634	OTHER CASUALTIES US [10/2007]	1,994
OTHER US CASUALTIES [4/5/08]	≥38,634	KILLED COALITION	376
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [3/1/08]	145	WOUNDED US [8/2/08]	2,309
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1	WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/2007)	1,472
KILLED UK	176	KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 8,619
KILLED OTHER COALITION	138	KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (7/2004)	≥ 3,525
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819	WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (7/2004)	32,034
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [6/30/07]	1,001	AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY	≥ 47,555		
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [9/5/08]	≥ 96,355- 638,579		
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS	≥ 400K – 1.246M		
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2. 5M	COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$561,324,239,595

NOTE: SOME NUMBERS DO NOT CHANGE BETWEEN ISSUES BECAUSE UPDATED FIGURES ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT PRESS TIME

* This entry has been changed to "Non-mortal casualties" which includes wounded, non-hostile casualties, and diseased where medical air transport was required. To see detailed demographic data on the casualties go to <http://siadapp.dior.whs.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm>

** Includes 280 additional contractor casualties reported in international press but not in US official figures

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

BOOTS TO BOOKS: THE COLLEGE CLASS FOR COMBAT VETERANS

Will Frampton - Reporter/Multimedia Journalist

ROSEVILLE, CA – At Sierra College, some of the students are true freshmen. Others are re-starting college after a long break, or perhaps finishing off their last classes before graduation. Then, there's room 116 at the satellite campus in Roseville.

That's where nearly everyone is a combat veteran. The class is designed for them.

"As soon as I got into the class, I realized I was with a lot of veterans, and that makes it a lot easier on you," said Cpl. Brian Taylor-Weber, who served two tours in Iraq.

"You know you're not the only one going through it," said Petty Officer Darrin Terrazas, who served with the Navy in Kosovo. "You're in (class) with your crew pretty much." <More at: <http://www.news10.net/tools/printfullstory.aspx?storyid=48585>>

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

IT ISN'T JUST COMBAT THAT FOSTERS PTSD

PTSD AFTER MILITARY PEACEKEEPING

Rick Nauert, Ph.D. - Senior News Editor - John M. Grohol, Psy.D. – October 2, 2008

Thursday, Oct 2 (Psych Central) -- The feeling of being unable to control a situation at the time of trauma can result in PTSD among peacekeeping veterans.

The disorder can have significant impairments in health-related quality of life.

Dr. J. Donald Richardson of The University of Western Ontario and his co-workers discovered anxiety disorders such as PTSD are associated with impaired emotional well-being, and this applies just as much to peacekeeping veterans as to combat veterans.

"This finding is important to clinicians working with the newer generation of veterans, as it stresses the importance of including measures of quality of life when evaluating veterans to better address their rehabilitation needs," says Dr. Richardson.

"It is not enough to measure symptom changes with treatment; we need to objectively assess if treatment is improving their quality of life and how they are functioning in their community."

<More at: <http://psychcentral.com/news/2008/10/02/ptsd-after-military-peacekeeping/3049.html>>

AND HERE IS A GREAT GUIDE TO PASS ON TO YOUR KIDS, GRANDKIDS OR TO ANY OTHER YOUNG PERSON WHO IS CONSIDERING SERVING; REALLY HELPFUL IN BECOMING AN INFORMED CANDIDATE FOR MILITARY SERVICE.

WHAT THE RECRUITER NEVER TOLD YOU

The ultimate guide for joining the military. Detailed information about choosing which service to join, the enlistment process, and advantages and disadvantages about joining the United States Military, including detailed pay & benefits information... <More at: <http://usmilitary.about.com/cs/joiningup/a/recruiter.htm>>

NOTICE

If at any time you cannot open a link in this newsletter to an article or web page that interests you, please let me know at scCook@vuft; I keep a copy of most of the full articles, or can research an alternative route to the information. [Ed.]

VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

ADVISORY BOARD

GOVERNOR MICHAEL DUKAKIS (FRMR USA)
EVELYN (PAT) FOOTE, BG USA (RET)
HON. JOHN GARAMENDI (CA LT. GOVERNOR)
D. O. HELMICK, (FRMR CMSNR CHP ~ FRMR CANG)
ART HICKS, CMSGT USAF (RET)-[TUSKEGEE AIRMAN]

JOSEPH P. HOAR, GEN USMC (RET)
HON. P. N. (PETE) McCLOSKEY, COL USMCR (RET)
HON. WADE SANDERS CAPT USNR (RET) (FRMR DEPUTY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY)
HON. JEROME (JERRY) WALDIE (FRMR USA)

EXECUTIVE BOARD

CHAIR BOB HANDY
VICE CHAIR SANDY COOK
SECRETARY HARLAN HOBGOOD
TREASURER RUSS WEED
AT LARGE RON DEXTER
AT LARGE GEORGE GIACOPPE

AT LARGE DON KATZ
AT LARGE VITALY MOSKOVOJ

COMMITTEES
COMMISSION GEORGE GIACOPPE
NEWSLETTER SANDY COOK

Fair Use Notice

This newsletter may contain copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in our efforts to advance understanding of active-duty military and veterans' issues, etc. We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material from this site for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use', you must obtain permission from the copyright owner.

Are you forwarding this newsletter to others? Please let us know.

Want to join us? Please apply for membership at www.vuft.org It's FREE!

EDITOR'S NOTE: I have been asked what guides my selection of articles. In general, I try to stick with articles that deal exclusively with our target group: serving military, veterans, retirees, and their families. I also favor articles that deal with the effect of Legislative or Executive inaction or bad actions that adversely affect our target group. I try not to pick those articles that have already been beaten to death in the regular press, but rather try to bring the reader articles that he or she might not run across in another medium. While we are non-partisan, I do not believe articles critical of government actions to be partisan as long as they are accurate and fair. Criticism, like dissent, is fair. Finally, I screen hundreds of articles for inclusions and for every article I include, I throw five or six away – good articles, but not as important as the ones selected.

I always appreciate contributions, whether it is opinion in Letter-to-the-Editor form, or articles that the reader believes would be good for our readership. Since I get a chance to vent once in awhile in these newsletters, I will certainly consider Op-Ed copy for inclusion. I always welcome reader comment or complaint. [Sandy Cook](#), Editor