

SOUND OFF!



VOL. VI, NO 7

THE NEWSLETTER OF VETERANS UNITED FOR TRUTH, INC.

“VETERANS STANDING UP FOR EACH OTHER”

20 MARCH 2011

FIRST CALL – NOTES FROM THE FRONT

THIS WE’LL DEFEND??

The motto of the US Army is “*This We’ll Defend*” (not “Army Strong” or “Army of One” or any other of those other odd recruiting slogans). It is on the Army seal as a banner coming out of a snake’s mouth.

What is that “**This**” that we promised to defend, I wonder, particularly in today’s America? I think I used to know, but now I only know that I am not sure.

Now the USAF, the USN, and the USMC didn’t burden themselves with a motto on their seals, so maybe they don’t have the question. Of course the Marines’ actual motto, “*Semper Fidelis*”, serves its internal purposes well, but it is not a national motto and it’s not on their seal.

The USCG has “*Semper Paratus*”, but the question is, “*paratus*” or “prepared” for what? Given that they are in DHS, it’s probably pretty hard to figure out what they are supposed to be prepared for among all the guidance they undoubtedly get from the 21 offices and 7 agencies in that organization.

So I guess we Army guys are stuck with answering the question, “What is the **THIS** that we are supposed to defend?”

At least we have to try.

If we listen to today’s talk radio, or follow the cable “news” channels, we would be convinced that either:

1. We have to defend ourselves from screaming hordes of Muslims who are huddling on our border and are just waiting for the signal to swarm over us and impose Sharia law, after burning all the Christian churches, Jewish synagogues, Mormon Temples and Buddhist Ashrams; or,

2. We have to defend ourselves from all of the people who think that #1 (above) is true.

Somehow I don’t think that those approaches (or irrational fears, if you will) accurately state the case.

I do think that the original intent of the Army motto was to defend not just the Constitution, but to defend the American Idea captured in the Declaration (which the Constitution in all of its glory only partially realizes) that:

1. **All** men are created equal;
2. **All** have inalienable rights;
 - i. **To Life**
 - ii. **To Liberty**
 - iii. **To the Pursuit of Happiness**

3. That Governments are established to secure these rights;

4. That governments derive their power from the consent of the governed

5. That Governments must organize those powers in a way that seems most likely to effect **all men’s safety and happiness.**

*Of course this is “men” in its inclusive sense of mankind—men, women, and children—**all of them.***

We should not have any problem defending the five points above, and by doing so we are well on our way to meeting our obligations. This is particularly true when we understand that nothing in that Declaration says that these inalienable rights were exclusively for white colonists in the 13 original colonies; rather, they consistently use the words **all men**, and they do not otherwise qualify them. The case can be made that they mean **all mankind.**

Everything else in the Declaration cites the ills wished upon us by the Crown, and from that long litany we can take the lesson that it is the opposites of what they complained about that are fairly obviously the good and right.

Thus, citing some of those opposites, we know that our founders also wanted and would generally include in their Constitution the right to:

1. pass their own laws and not have them imposed upon them.
2. encourage immigration.
3. establish independent courts, with trial by jury.
4. not have a standing external Army, and that the military force be subservient to the civil authority..
5. free international trade.
6. taxes only with consent of the people.
7. the right to petition for redress.

The one thing that the Declaration did not include, nor did the subsequent Constitution, was that we should operate out of fear of others. The essence of the entire Revolution and the establishment of the United States was that we did not fear reprisal, nor did we fear others, merely that we would be prepared to defend ourselves if necessary. Perhaps more importantly we would defend our stated preference for a way of life and our form of government.

235 years after the Declaration, we have to ask ourselves, ‘Is there some force today that seems to wield the power that was exerted by George III, or very close to it; at least insofar as it affects me and most of my friends—ordinary citizens all?’

The answer would have to be, I am afraid, “Yes! The Corporate-Congressional Complex.” (Sorry Ike for the re-casting of your very useful phrase).

As we were not afraid to stand up to Great Britain then, we should be unafraid of standing up to those who would change us now.

For those who don’t believe that such a change is under way, you shouldn’t be fooled by the phony rhetoric from any political side that hides true intent.

Even though I served to defend the right of any American to work hard, and to be paid well for his or her work, I did that for **all** Americans. I never contemplated that the re-definition of “paid well” would include paying someone 400 times what his workers earned—no one performs well enough to earn that kind of money—no conceivable work short of

single-handedly finding the cure for cancer or the secret to world peace has that kind of value.

And when I served to protect America, that included the ability of **all** Americans to be secure in their homes, their jobs, and their persons. It did not include the right of bankers and others to prey on them, nor did it include the ability of manufacturers to rip their jobs out from under them just so that they and their stockholders could pocket a little more money.

When I served to protect America that included protecting the ability for **all** to enjoy **life**—including a really good education and good health; **liberty**—including the freedom to criticize and to carve out their own way of life; and **the pursuit of happiness**—where happiness was comfort, and security, and having enough of both in the company of friends and family—it did not mean just having fun, or a big house or yacht.

When I served it was to protect the ability for anyone who worked hard to have a fair share of the wealth and comfort of that mythical “American Dream”. It did not include a system that rewards unearned income more than earned income. It did not include a guarantee of more wealth for the already wealthy at the expense of workers.

When I served it was to help each American enjoy the fullest possible life, full of security, comfort, and joy. It was not to stand idly by while America’s economy was sold off to foreign investors so that a few Americans could live and retire in opulence.

I do not hate wealth, but I also do not envy it. I do not hate the wealthy, but I also neither envy them nor do I believe that they are somehow special or exceptional Americans, somehow different and better than the rest of us.

I do not even believe that America is exceptional except, in the most important sense that it was founded on the exceptional idea of equal opportunity and equal standing for **all**.

I believe that these ideas are what we veterans fought for, and it is these ideas that are worth defending today. Anything short of that is, to me, tantamount to treason.

We veterans must stand up for our fellow citizens once again, and convince our government that it there for all of us, and I turn to Ike to once again help us state our case.

“Though force can protect in emergency, only justice, fairness, consideration and co-operation can finally lead men to the dawn of eternal peace.” [Ed.]

REVEILLE - 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/. Also this site for west coasters <http://www.chapman.edu/law/programs/clinics/amvets.asp>.

ASSEMBLY - PROGRESS OF THE ORGANIZATION

VCS - VUFT LAWSUIT UPDATE:

Class Action Suit: On 12 August 2009 we appeared before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. An article from the LA Times on 24 August summarizes the results so far < <http://latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/healthcare/la-me-veterans-suit24-2009aug24.0.1423297.story>>

.Case Progress to Date:

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

9/25/2007 Defendant’s Motion to Dismiss

2/11/2008 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

12/10/2008 Appeal brief filed

12/15/2008 *Swords to Plowshares* and *Vietnam Veterans of America* file amicus briefs

12/22/2008 *Military Spouses for Change* and *United Spinal Association* file amicus briefs

3/4/2009 Appeal will not be subject to Mediation

4/6/2009 Requested an extension to reply to the DVA response to our brief

4/22/09 Extension granted to 1 May 2009

5/1/09 Appellants’ Reply Brief filed

6/11/09 Oral Arguments Scheduled for 12 August 2009

8/12/09 Oral arguments

9/14/09 Reply on mediation [changed date]

9/14/09 No agreement on mediation. 9th Circuit accepts the case.

03/20/11 NTR [The courts move veeerrry slowly] There is a rumor that we may yet be heard this session. NOTE: There is no first-in-first-out rule in the Court of Appeals, and there is no time constraint on the court.

Here is a link to the legal documents on the lawsuit. www.veteransptsdclassaction.org/

BE A MEMBER If you are getting this newsletter and have not yet joined, please go to www.vuft.org/membership.html 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. at www.vuft.org/membership.html

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 at www.vuft.org/donate.html. 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.

P L E A S E D O N A T E !

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

None this issue

RECALL - FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATION AND LEGISLATORS

SUPPORT HR 1092 MILITARY RETIREES HEALTH CARE PROTECTION ACT

On March 15, 2011, Reps. Walter Jones (R-NC-3) and Dan Boren (D-OK-2) introduced H.R. 1092, the Military Retirees Health Care Protection Act. The new bipartisan bill is basically a reintroduction of H.R. 816 from the 111th Congress in response to Pentagon proposals to increase TRICARE enrollment fees for military retirees. H.R. 1092 would prohibit the Department of Defense from increasing TRICARE fees without congressional approval.

Please urge your Representative to support this legislation by [clicking here](#).

LEGAL-FEE AID CUT HITS VETS, ELDERLY

David Rogers - February 23, 2011

Talk about collateral damage!

Taking aim at environmentalists last week, House Republicans dropped a round instead on low-income veterans and Social Security recipients, making it harder for them to retain counsel when taking on the government.

Adopted by 232-197, the budget amendment imposes a seven-month moratorium on all legal fees paid under the Equal Access to Justice Act (EAJA), a Reagan-era law designed to help the little guy battle Washington by making it easier for him to afford an attorney.

Conservatives from Reagan's own West were the driving force, accusing environmentalists of turning EAJA into a taxpayer-financed, money-machine for lawsuits harassing ranchers. But thousands of veterans and elderly found themselves swept under in the process, losing their ability to retain counsel in disputes with government agencies.

<More at: <http://dyn.politico.com/printstory.cfm?uuid=D5346896-C532-4DB5-997B-E64C1A9826CF>

VETERANS EQUAL TREATMENT FOR SERVICE DOGS ACT

WASHINGTON, March 17, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ —

VetsFirst, a veterans service program of United Spinal Association, joined Congressman John Carter, R-Texas, who today introduced the Veterans Equal Treatment for Service Dogs Act (VETS Dogs Act) that would prohibit the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) from disallowing the use of service dogs on VA property.

VetsFirst, along with AMVETS and Paws with a Cause, advocated for this critical piece of legislation that will permanently close a loophole in VA policy that has created hurdles to care for veterans with disabilities.

Under current VA policy, only seeing-eye (guide) dogs are exempt from the general prohibition against animals on VA property. Veterans who use service dogs due to their disabilities can still be denied access at the discretion of each VA facility director. <More at: www.veteransresources.org/2011/03/veterans-equal-treatment-for-service-dogs-act/>

TBI REHAB GETS DOSE OF PERSISTENCE ON CAPITOL HILL

By Rob McIlvaine - (ARNEWS) - Mar 18, 2011

WASHINGTON (Army News Service, March 17, 2011) -- Researchers, educators, family advocates and survivors of traumatic brain injury testified March 16 before the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, during what was dubbed "Brain Injury Awareness Day on Capitol Hill."

"If you're not persistent, and you don't have it in your bone marrow, you're not going to get anything accomplished," said Congressman Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.), who co-chairs the task force with Congressman Todd Platts (R-Pa.). Pascrell was referring to the persistence of his task force over the past 10 years to get funding for brain-injury research.

"This is our job. Not because there's 3.8 million people in our country who suffer with head injuries every year, not because of our brave wounded warriors who come back here, and now are getting the excellent service with their families, it's because there is no progress without families or relatives alongside and walking with us," Pascrell said.

<More at: www.army.mil/news/2011/03/18/53373-tbi-rehab-gets-dose-of-persistence-on-capitol-hill/>

RETREAT – NEWS

IT'S A MYSTERY: TROOPS NOT BITING ON EXTRA PAY

New York Times, March 8, 2011

WASHINGTON (AP) — They've sent out letters and flyers and have Tweeted and pleaded, but Pentagon officials are still struggling to give away a huge cache of money to troops and veterans.

The Defense Department said Tuesday that as of last week it had spent only \$300 million of \$534 million approved by Congress as special pay for service members forced after Sept. 11, 2001, to serve beyond their enlistment terms — a controversial practice called "stop-loss." <More at: www.usatoday.com/news/military/2011-03-08-Female-military-divorce_N.htm#>

CRIME-LAB WORKER'S ERRORS CAST DOUBT ON MILITARY VERDICTS

Michael Doyle and Marisa Taylor - McClatchy Newspapers

Life-and-death questions shadow misconduct at the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Laboratory, where investigators discovered that a lab analyst cut corners and falsified reports: Were the innocent convicted, and did the guilty go free? The answer is troubling: In many cases, the destruction of evidence and the passage of time make it impossible to know.

"How do you resolve the question when you have no way, when the original samples have been lost and there is no way to retest them?" attorney Frank Spinner asked lab official Michael Auvdel at a July 2008 court hearing.

"I cannot resolve it," Auvdel replied, a trial transcript shows.

Also unclear: Are there court-martialed men and women who still don't know about the discrediting of the analyst who contributed to their convictions?

"I think the odds are nearly 100 percent that there are," said William Cassara, an attorney for a former Navy officer whose conviction was tossed out.

The military said that no imprisoned defendants had been freed as a result of revelations about errors made by lab analyst Phillip Mills, but it didn't provide a complete list of defendants implicated by Mills. McClatchy Newspapers, though, was able to track down a number of individuals who blame their convictions on mistakes that Mills made. McClatchy's review also revealed that the military judicial system stacks the odds against defendants, because of severe appeals deadlines and constant turnover among defense attorneys. <More at: www.kansascity.com/2011/03/20/2739658/crime-lab-workers-errors-cast.html#ixzz1HAitqAOY>

VA HIRES CONVICTED FELON TO MANAGE VETERANS' MONEY

Jennifer Kraus - Consumer Investigator - Feb 21, 2011

They have served and sacrificed for our country. But now a NewsChannel 5 investigation is raising questions about a federal program that's supposed to help thousands of veterans and their families. The program is run by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or VA and handles more than \$700 million dollars in taxpayer money. But *NewsChannel5 Investigates* found the VA hired a rather unlikely person to oversee some of that money.

Dennis Keyser's father served two terms in Vietnam and then died from a service-related injury when Dennis was 7 years old. Now, Keyser gets monthly benefits from the VA as a dependent. Keyser has cerebral palsy and because of his disabilities, the VA hired a fiduciary for Keyser, someone to collect his benefits and manage his money. "He was supposed to pay my bills that I had coming to me and when I needed money, he was supposed to send me some," Keyser explained.

Keyser didn't know much about his VA fiduciary, a man by the name of James Hammonds, until a friend went online and Googled Hammonds' name. Bob Albertson, Keyser's friend, recalled, "It just blew my mind. I'm looking through it and I'm like, 'No, this can't be the same man.'" It turns out, Hammonds, a former investigator with the IRS, was a convicted felon. After learning this, Keyser wondered, "Why would they (the VA) assign a convicted felon to handle my money?"

Court records show Hammonds pled guilty less than two years earlier to 8 counts of tax fraud, admitting that he'd falsified tax records to help adult entertainment mogul Jerry Pendergrass hide millions of dollars from the federal government.

<More at: www.newschannel5.com/story/14071970/va-hires-convicted-felon-to-manage-veterans-money>

NOW FOR SOME GOOD NEWS FOR A CHANGE

INJURED MARINE SEMPER FI FUND RECEIVES \$2 MILLION FROM BOB BARKER

March 20, 2011

The Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund in Camp Pendleton, California, has announced a donation of \$2 million from television personality Bob Barker to provide assistance to injured members of the U.S. armed forces and their families. Barker, who was a fighter pilot during World War II, made the donation to inspire others to do the same. "The men and women we put in harm's way to maintain our freedom deserve the best care and support we can provide when they are injured," Barker said. "We also have an obligation to their families." Barker previously contributed \$3 million to the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund to help build the National Intrepid Center of Excellence, an advanced facility dedicated to research, diagnosis and treatment of traumatic brain injury suffered by U.S. military personnel.

<More at: http://foundationcenter.org/pnd/news/story_ih.html?id=331800008

ALSO SEE THESE TWO OLDER STORIES – PROPORTIONALLY MINISCULE WHEN COMPARED TO THE BOB BARKER DONATION, AND CONSIDERING THEIR PROFITS, BUT GOOD FOR VETERANS NONETHELESS

Walmart Pledges \$10 Million to Support Returning Veterans

<http://foundationcenter.org/pnd/news/story.jhtml?id=314200004>

Goldman Sachs Donates \$20 Million to Launch Coalition Serving Veterans

<http://foundationcenter.org/pnd/news/story.jhtml?id=317200006>

WOUNDED VETERAN GIVES PURPLE HEART TO GIFFORDS

Layla Tang *March 17, 2011*

TUCSON (KGUN9-TV) - A veteran wounded while fighting in Iraq has given his Purple Heart to U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, who was shot in the head January 8 in an assassination attempt. <More at: www.kgun9.com/Global/story.asp?S=14271371>

FEMALES IN MILITARY STRUGGLE WITH HIGHER DIVORCE RATE

3/8/2011

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two failed marriages were the cost of war for Sgt. Jennifer Schobey.

The breaking point in her first marriage came when her husband deployed to Afghanistan, the last in a long line of separations they had endured as they juggled two military careers. Schobey married another combat veteran, but eventually that union failed under the weight of two cases of post-traumatic stress disorder — his and hers. They are now getting divorced.

Separations. Injuries. Mental health issues. All are added weights to the normal strains of marriage.

For women in the military, there's a cold, hard reality: Their marriages are more than twice as likely to end in divorce as those of their male comrades — and up to three times as likely for enlisted women. And military women get divorced at higher rates than their peers outside the military, while military men divorce at lower rates than their civilian peers.

<More at: www.usatoday.com/news/military/2011-03-08-Female-military-divorce_N.htm#>

I AM SURE THAT THIS WILL HELP!!

DOD TO LIFT WOMEN IN COMBAT EXCLUSIONS?

March 14, 2011

A report released to the president and Congress recently recommends 20 changes in the way the military facilitates diversity, and suggests gender barriers be lifted on all career fields. The Military Leadership Diversity Commission is a group of 31 active-duty and retired officers, enlisted personnel and senior executives from major corporations. The commission is also recommending that the Department of Defense eliminate its combat-exclusion policies, which currently bar women from combat-arms specialties and from assignment in units battalion-size or smaller that have a routine mission to engage in direct combat. The Commission's final report is available on the [Military Leadership Diversity Commission website](http://www.military.com/military-report/dod-to-lift-women-in-combat-exclusions). - www.military.com/military-report/dod-to-lift-women-in-combat-exclusions

AF DETAILS PLAN TO CUT UP TO 2,000 OFFICERS

Michelle Tan - Staff writer - Feb 21, 2011

As many as 10,500 officers — from lieutenants to colonels — face special boards with the power to determine the fate of their careers. Four retention boards are scheduled to cut up to 2,000 officers. The exact number depends on how many choose to leave on their own.

The Air Force is cutting officers to meet its congressionally mandated end strength of 332,800 by the end of fiscal 2012. About 3,000 enlisted airmen received their walking papers in fiscal 2010 and the Air Force plans to hold the line on enlisted end strength; the service will let another 2,500 or so go in the next 18 months using programs already in place such as date-of-separation rollbacks and time-in-grade waivers. <More at: www.airforcetimes.com/news/2011/02/air-force-details-plan-to-cut-officers-022111w/>

ARMY WASTING MILLIONS ON UNTESTED, UNNEEDED GEAR

Geoff Ziezulewicz - Stars and Stripes - March 10, 2011

To give soldiers every advantage on the battlefield, the Army is purchasing 181 high-tech communications kits at \$800,000 a pop. But the service is spending that money — nearly \$145 million — for something that's still in the test phase and may never make it to infantry units on the front lines of the future.

<More at: http://starsandstripes.disqus.com/thread/report_army_wasting_millions_on_untested_unneeded_gear/reply.html>

NAVY INVENTING GROUNDS TO FIRE SAILOR

Associated Press March 10, 2011

CHARLESTON, S.C. -- The Navy is inventing grounds to fire a Sailor found in a bed with another male Sailor at the Naval Nuclear Power Training Command in South Carolina, the Sailor's attorney said.

Navy Petty Officer Stephen C. Jones is contesting his discharge for dereliction of duty because of unprofessional conduct. His lawyer, Gary Myers, said this week the Navy believes Jones is homosexual but has no proof and so charged him with something else. But he says publicity from the case, first reported in The Washington Post, could discourage the military from using excuses to oust gay members when the "don't ask, don't tell" policy against them serving openly is repealed.

According to Navy documents provided by Myers, Jones, of Pensacola, Fla., and another Sailor fell asleep on his bunk while watching "The Vampire Diaries" on a computer last month.

Myers said there were three versions of how the men were dressed but "in no version is either totally undressed." He said Jones was on top of the covers and the other Sailor under the covers. The other Sailor left when Jones' roommate returned to the room shortly after midnight.

Because Jones has been in the service for less than six years, he is not entitled to a formal military hearing on his dismissal but can have the decision of dismissal reviewed by filing documents with officials farther up the chain of command. In his filing, Myers calls the dismissal "bigotry disguised as the rule of law."

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/attorney-navy-inventing-grounds-to-fire-sailor.html?col=1186032320397>

TO THE COLORS – GATHERINGS

Date	Time	Where	What	Who	Notes
Every Sunday	1300-1600	Wilson & San Vicente Blvds. NE Corner, Los Angeles, CA	Save Our Veterans Land	Veterans Revolution	
3/23-3/25		Las Vegas, NV	Stand Down	Shalimar Cabrera	702-366-0456
3/24		Raleigh, NC	Resource Fair	John Youker	919-857-3864
3/24	0800	Hyatt Regency Chicago Hotel 151 E. Wacker Dr. Chicago Ill	"Hiring Our Heroes" Job Fair	Chicago Chamber of Commerce	more info
3/31-4/3		27 Union Street Concord, NC	The Wall That Heals	Cabarrus County Public Library	
3/18-3/21		Radisson Hotel Green Bay, WI	Women Veterans' Retreat	Wisconsin Dept. VFW	http://sheserveswi.org/retreat.html
4/7-4/9		Hidalgo, TX	The Wall That Heals		
4/11-4/14		American Bank Center Corpus Christi, TX	The Wall That Heals	Port of Corpus Christi	
4/14-4/15		Baltimore, MD	Resource Fair	Roslyn Hannibal-Booker	410-576-9626 x214
4/16		Tulsa, OK	Resource Fair	Keith Bartsch	918-582-8877

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

TATTOO - CURRENT ISSUES

VA NEEDS TO 'TREAT THE ROOT' OF CLAIMS BACKLOG

WASHINGTON, March 2, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/

Testifying before Congress today on the Department of Veterans Affairs fiscal 2012 budget proposal, The American Legion called upon VA to “treat the root” of the disability claims backlog problem. At a hearing today, American Legion Legislative Director Tim Tetz told members of the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee that VA’s disability claims system “is broken because VA places undue stress on the number of claims processed, and minimal stress on accuracy.”

<More at: www.pa-legion.com/va-needs-to-%E2%80%9Ctreat-the-root%E2%80%9D-of-claims-backlog/>

UNANIMOUSLY, SUPREME COURT BACKS VETERANS IN 2 CASES

Adam Liptak - New York Times - March 1, 2011

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court issued two unanimous decisions on Tuesday reflecting solicitude for members of the military. In one, the court relaxed a filing deadline that had served to deny benefits to disabled veterans. In the other, it made it easier for military personnel to sue private employers for discriminating against them based on hostility to their service.

<More at: www.nytimes.com/2011/03/02/us/02veterans.html>

HERE ARE THE BANKS~ ONCE AGAIN, DOING THEIR PART FOR THE TROOPS!

BANK TO PAYBACK MILITARY FAMILIES

February 28, 2011

Wells Fargo & Co. will pay \$175 to any eligible veteran who had a Department of Veterans Affairs Loan refinanced between Jan. 20, 2004, and Oct. 7, 2010, the bank said Tuesday. The move comes as part of a court settlement in a Georgia lawsuit that alleged the bank overcharged active-duty military personnel when they executed the refinances.

<More at: www.military.com/military-report/bank-to-payback-military-families?ESRC=miltrep.nl>

“THANKS FOR YOUR SERVICE” ~ DHS IS REALLY PROTECTING US!

ICE PAYS ARMY VETERAN \$400,000 FOR MISTAKEN DETAINMENT

Thoai Lu - February 28 2011

The LA Times reports that Rennison Vern Castillo, an army veteran, received a \$400,000 settlement and written apology from the U.S. government after being mistakenly identified as an undocumented immigrant and held in detention for over seven months. After realizing his detention was the result of his name being misspelled in immigration records, Castillo sued officials at the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency’s Northwest Detention Center.

Castillo, born in Belize, grew up in Los Angeles and became a naturalized citizen in 1998 while serving in the Army. In 2005, he served an eight-month jail term in Washington for a felony account for harassing a former girlfriend. Instead of being released after his sentence, he was transferred to the federal detention center in Tacoma, Washington, where a federal officer showed him records that supposedly proved that he was undocumented.

Immigration officers did not believe Castillo’s repeated pleas that he was a naturalized citizen. “They were disrespectful and told me that I would say anything to get out of detention. It was a nightmare,” Castillo later told reporters.

http://colorlines.com/archives/2011/02/immigration_agency_pays_army_veteran_400000_for_mistaken_detainment.html>

AND THE CONGRESS TAKES THE REST

10,000 NEW HOUSING VOUCHERS CUT FOR HOMELESS VETERANS

WASHINGTON, March 1, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ —

On Feb. 19, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 1, the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011, which would eliminate \$75 million for approximately 10,000 new permanent supportive housing vouchers for chronically homeless veterans in fiscal year (FY) 2011. <More at: www.veteransresources.org/2011/03/10000-new-housing-vouchers-cut-for-homeless-veterans/>

IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

TROOPS MAY MISS PAYCHECKS IN A SHUTDOWN

Derek Turner - Stars and Stripes - March 13, 2011

Troops would be forced to work without pay if the federal budget impasse leads to a government shutdown, according to multiple reports citing draft guidance circulating at the Pentagon.

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/report-troops-may-miss-paychecks-in-a-shutdown.html>

UNEMPLOYMENT FOR YOUNG VETS JUMPS TO 15 PERCENT

Rick Maze – Army Times

The unemployment rate for veterans took an unexpected jump in January — even as the overall unemployment rate fell. The Labor Department reported Friday that the national unemployment rate dropped 0.4 percentage point, to a new level of 9.0, but the rate for veterans climbed to 9.9 percent, up from 8.3 percent the previous month.

For Iraq and Afghanistan-era veterans, the unemployment rate for January was 15.2 percent. This is a sharp increase from 9.4 percent in November and 11.7 percent in December, a clear trend of a worsening job market for younger veterans, many of them combat veterans. <More at: www.armytimes.com/news/2011/02/military-unemployment-veterans-january-020411w>

VETERANS STRUGGLE TO LAND CIVILIAN JOBS

The Tennessean (Nashville) - March 20, 2011

NASHVILLE — America's military veterans rate as heroes willing to put their lives on the line during wartime, but at home they face a higher-than-average unemployment rate and a tough time transferring the skills they learn in the service to the private sector. • And with more veterans seeking jobs after returning from wars in Iraq and Afghanistan — and federal government efforts to slim down the military — the job outlook doesn't look great. On the bright side, though, veterans have access to a number of programs to help them shift into the civilian work force.

Employers have a split personality about hiring veterans, employment experts say. Some bosses see veterans as plum picks because of their proven leadership skills. However, others remain reluctant to hire, fearing that former soldiers may be too rigid and unable to adapt or that they may have unwanted baggage, including physical or mental problems.

"The employers are worrying that they're hiring people that have baggage from being in combat operations, but the military is so much more than hunters and killers," said Harold Riggins, transition services manager with the Army Career and Alumni Program at Fort Campbell, Ky., which helps soldiers prepare for civilian jobs.

Nationwide, overall unemployment fell to 9 percent for January. But joblessness rose to 15.2 percent for veterans in service since 2001 and to 9.9 percent for all veterans older than 18. <More at: www.tampabay.com/news/business/workinglife/article1158159.ece>

'THOUSANDS OF US VETERANS HOMELESS'

Press TV - Feb 22, 2011

Nearly 76,000 US military veterans were homeless on a given night in 2009, and close to 136,000 veterans resided in shelters that same year, a study has shown. According to an assessment recently released by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), on a single night in January 2009, 75,609 veterans were homeless with 57 percent of them staying in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program. The remaining 43 percent were either living on the street, in an abandoned building, or other uninhabitable places. <More at: www.presstv.ir/detail/166561.html>

ONE IS TEMPTED TO SAY, "NO SH*T"

COMBAT SOLDIERS CARRY TOO MUCH WEIGHT

SEATTLE — A newspaper report says combat soldiers are carrying too much weight, leading to increasing injuries.

The report by the Seattle Times found that the number of soldiers medically retired from the Army with at least one musculoskeletal condition increased nearly tenfold from 2003 to 2009, according to Army statistics.

The heavy loads contributed to rising numbers of Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans retiring with degenerative arthritis, cervical strains and other musculoskeletal injuries. The newspaper estimated that disability benefits for these injuries exceed \$500 million annually.

Since returning to western Washington 2½ years ago after serving in Iraq, Spc. Joseph Chroniger has been diagnosed with bone spurs in the vertebrae of his neck caused by a degenerative arthritic condition. While on patrol in Iraq, Chroniger carried about 70 to 80 pounds, including his body armor, his M14 rifle, radio batteries, food and ammunition.

"This is ridiculous," Chroniger said. "I'm only 25 years old. Arthritis is supposed to happen when you get old. What's it going to be like when I'm 50 or 60?"

An Army Science Board study in 2001 recommended that no soldiers carry more than 50 pounds. Yet the Times said a 2003 Army study found that soldiers on extended foot patrols carry an average load ranging from 87 to 127 pounds.

<More at: <http://coalitionforveterans.org/2011/02/report-combat-soldiers-carry-too-much-weight/>>

GIVE THEM ENOUGH DRUGS AND THEY WON'T BITCH ABOUT HOW HEAVY THE EQUIPMENT IS AND HOW SOUL-DESTROYING REPETITIVE DEPLOYMENTS ARE FOR SOME TROOPS, POWERFUL DRUG COCKTAILS HAVE DEADLY RESULTS

James Dao, Benedict Carey and Dan Frosch – February 12, 2011

In his last months alive, Senior Airman Anthony Mena rarely left home without a backpack filled with medications. He returned from his second deployment to Iraq complaining of back pain, [insomnia](#), anxiety and [nightmares](#). Doctors diagnosed [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) and prescribed powerful cocktails of psychiatric drugs and narcotics.

Yet his pain only deepened, as did his [depression](#). "I have almost given up hope," he told a doctor in 2008, medical records show. "I should have died in Iraq."

Airman Mena died instead in his Albuquerque apartment, on July 21, 2009, five months after leaving the Air Force on a medical discharge. A toxicologist found eight prescription medications in his blood, including three [antidepressants](#), a [sedative](#), a sleeping pill and two potent painkillers. Yet his death was no suicide, the medical examiner concluded. What killed Airman Mena was not an overdose of any one drug, but the interaction of many. He was 23.

After a decade of treating thousands of wounded troops, the military's medical system is awash in prescription drugs — and the results have sometimes been deadly. By some estimates, well over 300,000 troops have returned from Iraq or Afghanistan with P.T.S.D., depression, [traumatic brain injury](#) or some combination of those. The Pentagon has looked to pharmacology to treat those complex problems, following the lead of civilian medicine. As a result, psychiatric drugs have been used more widely across the military than in any previous war. <More at: www.nytimes.com/2011/02/13/us/13drugs.htm>

BATTLEFIELD BRAIN-INJURY ASSESSMENT TOOL HAS HIGH FAILURE RATE

Bob Brewin - 03/16/2011

This is the seventh story in the ongoing "[Broken Warrior](#)" series.

The standard tool the military services use to measure traumatic brain injury on the battlefield fails between 25 percent and 33 percent of the time, Army Surgeon General Lt. Gen. Eric Schoomaker told lawmakers on the House Armed Services Committee Tuesday.

In response to a question from freshman Rep. Joe Heck, R-Nev., an Army reserve doctor who served in Iraq, Schoomaker said the Automated Neuropsychological Assessment Metrics, known as ANAM, "is insensitive and nonspecific. It misses about a quarter to a third of [troops] who are concussed and includes about 50 percent of [troops] not concussed." <More at: www.nextgov.com/nextgov/ng_20110316_3265.php>

THE TRUTH ISN'T IMPORTANT, AS LONG AS THE REPORTS DECLINE!

DOD REPORTS DECLINE IN SEX ASSAULTS

Bryant Jordan - Military.com - March 19, 2011

Reports of sexual assault in the U.S. military dropped by 2 percent between fiscal 2009 and 2010, the Pentagon says in a just-released annual report. According to the Pentagon during that period there were 3,158 reports of sexual abuse involving servicemembers with 748 so-called "restricted reports" — which means the victim's information is recorded and medical care is provided but command isn't notified and no investigation is undertaken.

But by DoD's own estimates reported sexual assaults may represent only about 20 percent of all incidents. <More at: www.military.com/news/article/dod-reports-decline-in-sex-assaults.html>

PENTAGON FALLS SHORT IN TACKLING SEXUAL ASSAULT

IVAW

Former Marine corporal Sarah Albertson made a startling admission last month about serving in Iraq's war-torn Fallujah: "I actually felt much safer there than I did back at our command" in Southern California, she told NBC's Today.

Albertson says she was raped in 2006 by a superior, a fellow Marine, at Camp Pendleton. After reporting the incident to her command, she was threatened with a charge of "inappropriate barracks conduct" because she admitted to drinking heavily before the assault. She says she was ostracized and told to "suck it up" while being forced to work with her alleged assailant, report to him daily and live one floor below him. The incident was investigated, she says, but her attacker was never prosecuted. <More at: <http://coalitionforveterans.org/2011/03/pentagon-falls-short-in-tackling-sexual-assault/>>

FEMALE VETERANS DEAL WITH PHYSICAL, MENTAL SCARS

frhee@sacbee.com - Feb. 27, 2011

Samantha Frost has been getting acupuncture to relieve pain from a neck injury she suffered while a security officer in the Air Force.

Jennifer Hubbard gets inhalers for an asthma-like condition from her days as a Marine Corps welder.

Cherrilyn Pugh, who had a 20-year military career, comes in for regular checkups at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs McClellan women's clinic.

Increasingly, they are the face of the VA, joining Greatest Generation retirees and grizzled Vietnam vets. The ranks of female veterans are mushrooming in large measure because of our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Already, 100,000 and counting have returned from the war zones and left the military. Now, nonprofits and government agencies alike – the VA medical system in particular – are grappling with that surge. <More at: www.sacbee.com/2011/02/27/v-print/3431858/the-new-faces-at-the-va.html>

HELP HARD TO FIND FOR HOMELESS FEMALE VETERANS

Alex Branch - star-telegram - Wednesday, Mar. 09, 2011

FORT WORTH -- Clara "Ruth" Gordon, an Air Force veteran, spent four years homeless, living in shelters along East Lancaster Avenue.

A lingering foot injury she says she suffered years ago while in the military limited her employment options. She stayed in three shelters while she looked for housing programs for homeless veterans.

She says she found plenty -- for men. But other than four beds in the Presbyterian Night Shelter, there was little for female veterans. "There are special shelters for veterans, but they are all full of men," Gordon said. "Women were sort of on their own." <More at: www.star-telegram.com/2011/03/08/v-print/2906681/help-hard-to-find-for-homeless.html>

HOORAY! ANOTHER "PRE-EXISTING CONDITION" TO LET THEM OFF THE HOOK

RESEARCHERS DISCOVER BIOLOGICAL PATHWAY LINKED TO PTSD

Katie Moisse - ABC News Medical Unit - Feb. 23, 2011

Although most people exposed to the horrors of war, trauma or abuse recover emotionally, up to 20 percent develop post-traumatic stress disorder -- a debilitating psychiatric disorder marked by flashbacks and nightmares.

The biological basis for PTSD remains unclear. But a new study offers clues about why some people rebound from horrific events while others relive them, and may lead to predictive tests and even treatments.

... Based on previous evidence that the hormone-like molecule known as PACAP was important in the brain's response to stress, the researchers measured PACAP levels in the blood of their subjects. To their surprise, PACAP levels were higher in people with PTSD, and correlated with the severity of symptoms. But the boost was only significant in women. <More at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/Wellness/researchers-discover-biological-pathway-linked-ptsd/story?id=12972887>>

VA INSISTS BENEFITS WILL COVER CAREGIVERS OF VETS WITH TBI

Leo Shane III - Stars and Stripes - March 11, 2011

WASHINGTON — Veterans Affairs officials promised Friday that traumatic brain injury victims will be covered under new caregiver benefits scheduled to start this summer, but veterans advocates remain skeptical.

"It still seems like there are so many things they don't understand about what the care needs are for these veterans," said Sarah Wade, the wife of an Iraq War veteran who suffered TBI in a roadside bomb blast.

In testimony before the House Veterans Affairs Committee, Veterans Health Administration Undersecretary Robert Petzel said that "large numbers of TBI patients will be eligible" when the final benefits rules go into effect later this year. He anticipates the program will launch by June, although he acknowledged the program is already well behind its original January 2011 start date. <More at: www.stripes.com/news/va-insists-benefits-will-cover-caregivers-of-vets-with-tbi-1.137432>

HOW THE HELL CAN THIS HAPPEN ~ OVER AND OVER AGAIN?

FAMILIES OF SEVERELY WOUNDED VETERANS STILL WAITING FOR HELP

Rob Hotakainen - McClatchy Newspapers - Mar. 02, 2011

Fabienne Uran quit her job after her son, Matthew, broke his neck and fractured his skull and pelvis in a helicopter crash in the Kuwaiti desert in 2005. Now she takes care of the former pilot on a full-time basis. For her efforts, she figures she should get paid at least \$600 a week by federal taxpayers.

"I'm modest about my expectations," said Uran, 60, of Bellevue, Wash.

Like thousands of others who are taking care of wounded veterans at home, Uran had hoped to be getting checks from the Department of Veterans Affairs by now.

In May, President Barack Obama signed a new law that promised - for the first time in history - to pay family members and others who care for severely wounded soldiers at home. To qualify, soldiers had to be injured after Sept. 11, 2001. But the VA missed a Jan. 30 deadline to get the program up and running. That's angering many families of wounded veterans and many members of Congress, who are accusing the Obama administration of dragging its feet.

<More at: www.kansascity.com/2011/03/02/2693926/families-of-severely-wounded-veterans.html>

VA RECOGNIZES "PRESUMPTIVE" ILLNESSES IN IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN

March 18, 2010

Decision Makes It Easier for Gulf War Veterans to Receive Benefits

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki today announced the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is taking steps to make it easier for Veterans to obtain disability compensation for certain diseases associated with service in the Persian Gulf War or Afghanistan. This will be the beginning of historic change for how VA considers Gulf War Veterans' illnesses.

Following recommendations made by VA's Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Task Force, VA is publishing a proposed regulation in the *Federal Register* that will establish new presumptions of service connection for nine specific infectious diseases associated with military service in Southwest Asia during the Persian Gulf War, or in Afghanistan on or after September 19, 2001.

"We recognize the frustrations that many Gulf War and Afghanistan Veterans and their families experience on a daily basis as they look for answers to health questions, and seek benefits from VA," said Secretary Shinseki.

The proposed rule includes information about the long-term health effects potentially associated with the nine diseases: Brucellosis, *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Coxiella burnetii* (Q fever), malaria, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, Nontyphoid Salmonella, *Shigella*, Visceral leishmaniasis and West Nile virus. <More at: www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1869>

ARMY LOOKS TO IMPROVE GUARD LIFE

Bryant Jordan - Military.com - March 10, 2011

Starting next fall, the time a reservist spends at home between mobilizations will increase to four years, the Army Chief of Staff said yesterday during a meeting with members of the Army National Guard in Arlington, Va. Gen. George Casey said the longer time at home is necessary for the welfare of troops.

"We had to get there," he said. "Studies show that it takes a minimum of 24 to 36 months to recover from a combat deployment. The reality of it all is that we cannot go to war without the Guard and Reserve."

Casey previously announced that the Army's active-duty force would return so-called "dwell time" to two years home after a deployment. In recent years, some Soldiers have re-deployed barely a year after coming home. Guard and Army Reservists might be home two or three years after a deployment.

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/army-looks-to-improve-guard-life.html?ESRC=reservists.nl>

BUT NOT TOO MUCH!

LOOPHOLE IMPACTS RESERVE EARLY RETIREMENT

Terry Howell - March 11, 2011

Call it a glitch or a loophole; either way Pentagon lawyers have interpreted a technicality in the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act in a way that will make it harder for Guard and Reserve members to earn time toward early retirement. The 2008 law reduces the age that a retired Guard or Reserve member becomes eligible to receive the full benefit of their retirement by taking three-months off for every 90 days served on active duty. For example, a Guard member called up for a total of one year would be able to draw retired pay at age 59 versus the normal age 60; or two years could reduce the age to 58, etc.

The actual text of the law authorizes three months' retirement-age credit for each 90 days served on active duty "in any fiscal year." The issue comes down to an interpretation of the phrase "in any fiscal year." The DoD reads this to mean that each 90 day period must fall entirely within a single fiscal year.

<More at: <http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/03/loophole-impacts-reserve-early-retirement/?ESRC=reservists.nl>>

GIS WRONGLY PUNISHED FOR SKIPPING CONCERT

Associated Press March 09, 2011

RICHMOND, Va. -- A staff sergeant erred when he banished dozens of Soldiers to their barracks and ordered them to clean up after they refused to attend a Christian concert on an Army post last year, an investigation concluded. When the Army learned the Soldiers were punished, the company commander apologized to them the next day, according to the investigation's findings, released Tuesday to The Associated Press.

The actions of the staff sergeant, who was not named, were referred back to his battalion commander for nonjudicial action, according to Col. Daniel T. Williams, a spokesman for the Army's Document and Training Command, who detailed the findings of the investigation in a telephone interview. He said any punishment, if it occurred, would be kept confidential.

<More at: www.military.com/news/article/gis-wrongly-punished-for-skipping-concert.html>

A SOLDIER'S 39-YEAR BATTLE

Dennis Yusko - Staff writer, - February 28, 2011

ALBANY -- Disabled Army veteran Susan Frasier rides an overnight Greyhound bus alone each month to Washington, D.C., to walk the halls of Congress in search of elected officials who will support her where the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and federal courts have not.

Frasier, 60, blames her five months of Army training at Fort McClellan, Ala., in 1970 for decades of crippling health problems. She says toxic chemicals at the base poisoned her, causing her to suffer from fibromyalgia, autoimmune disorders and asthma. <More at: www.timesunion.com/local/article/A-soldier-s-39-year-battle-1032634.php>

TAPS – PASSINGS AND WAR STATISTICS

CAPTAIN ED FREEMAN, MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT!

Medal of Honor Recipient, Captain Ed Freeman, United States Air Force, died last Wednesday at the age of 70, in Boise, Idaho. He won his Medal of Honor for actions taken at LZ XRay on 11/11/67 when he made 14 flights into the hot LZ to rescue 29 wounded, after the CO had ordered the MedEvacs to stop coming in because of the heavy fire. He was wounded 4 times in the action. Rest in Peace, Ed.

FUNERAL SERVICES HONOR 'LAST SOLDIER' TO LEAVE SAIGON

KENS 5 Staff - March 16, 2011

SAN ANTONIO -- Retired Army Major General Homer D. Smith, who was key to saving thousands of lives in Vietnam, has died. He was 89. Smith was in charge of planning and execution of "Operation Frequent Wind" and "Operation Baby-Lift". "Frequent Wind" facilitated the evacuation of 7,500 South Vietnamese, as well as U.S. Embassy personnel and military, from Saigon as the North Vietnamese entered in 1975. "Baby Lift" was responsible for the evacuation of ethnically-mixed Vietnamese orphan's prior to the fall of Saigon. www.kens5.com/news/local/Funeral-services-honor--118107294.html

OIF/OEF – HACK DATE SUNDAY 21 MARCH 2011

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM/NEW DAWN (2,923 DAYS)

KILLED US	4,438/21
WOUNDED US [2/28/11]	31,938/111
OTHER US CASUALTIES [2/28/11]	40,445/899
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [2/28/11]	223/1
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	1
KILLED UK	179
KILLED OTHER COALITION	139
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION	1,819
**KILLED CONTRACTORS [11/9/08]	1,182
KILLED IRAQI POLICE/MILITARY [1/25/09]	≥ 48,874
KILLED IRAQI CIVILIANS [3/21/11]	≥ 109,359–1,421,933
WOUNDED IRAQI MIL/CIVILIANS[9/20/10]	≥ 400K–1.556M
IRAQ REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	2.1M/2.5M

OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM (3,452 DAYS)

KILLED US	1508
WOUNDED US [2/28/11]	10,468
OTHER CASUALTIES US [2/28/11]	12,674
DIED OF SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS [2/28/11]	57
MISSING OR CAPTURED US	0
KILLED COALITION	865
WOUNDED/INJURED COALITION (12/2/07)	1,602
KILLED AFGHANI POLICE/MILITARY[7/4/09]	≥ 11,152
KILLED AFGHANI CIVILIANS (9/10/2010)	≥ 8,813
WOUNDED AFGHANI MIL/CIVILIANS (2/24/2009)	46,322
AFGHAN REFUGEES INT./EXT. [9/27/07]	1.75M/4.8M
COST OF IRAQ WAR TO DATE	\$780,485,122,798
COST OF AFGHAN WAR TO DATE	\$388,211,484,326

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

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ACTIVATED AS OF MARCH 15, 2011

This week the Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard announced a decrease in activated reservists, while the Army and Marine Corps announced an increase. The net collective result is 17 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 67,595; Navy Reserve, 5,921; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, 9,589; Marine Corps Reserve, 5,110, and the Coast Guard Reserve, 797. This brings the total National Guard and Reserve personnel who have been activated to 89,012, including both units and individual augmentees. A cumulative roster of all National Guard and Reserve personnel who are currently activated may be found on line at <http://www.defense.gov/news/d20110315nqr.pdf>.

AFTERTHOUGHTS ~ MISCELLANEOUS AND OTHER STUFF

2011 NOMINEE FOR "ASSHOLE EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR"

Amanda Hara NEWS CHANNEL 5 - February 17, 2011

WOODBURY, Tenn. A military mom said she would do anything to answer her son's phone call from overseas, no matter what the cost. Some seven months ago, Lance Corporal Mark Rhyne left the little town of Woodbury, for the remote deserts of Afghanistan. "I told my son the day he deployed as he was about to get on that bus, 'I will stand in your stead while you are gone, I will stand,'" his mother Teresa Danford said.

On Monday, while working inside the Crane Interiors factory, Teresa Danford said she kept her word. Mark called from Afghanistan, using a Satellite phone. It was a rare opportunity he only gets maybe once a month. "You don't want to miss a word because truthfully that might be the last time you hear from them," Danford said.

Danford knew about Crane's no cell phone policy but answered anyway. "There is nothing in this world that would stop a mother from answering a phone call from her son and what if it was not my son? What if he'd been hurt and someone was trying to contact me?" asked Danford.

The next day, Teresa was suspended from work without pay for three days. This was a first offense, and managers told her next time, she'd be fired. <More at: www.newschannel5.com/story/14053076/military-mom-pays-high-price-for-speaking-with-son

ADD-ON ~ STUFF OF INTEREST

TRICARE CO-PAYS LIKELY TO INCREASE

February 22, 2011 - Terry Howell

In addition to the DoD proposal to increase TRICARE Prime enrollment fees for military retirees under 65, the 2012 Budget proposal includes a plan to increase co-pays on prescription medications. Under the proposed 2012 budget, TRICARE prescriptions filled on base will remain free, but, co-pays for medications purchased at retail pharmacies will increase. DoD is hoping that the increased co-pays will encourage beneficiaries to use TRICARE's mail-order "home delivery" option.

If passed the current \$3 co-pay for generics at retail outlets will increase to \$5 and the \$9 co-pays for brand name drugs will climb to \$12. "Tier 3" (non-formulary brand) drugs, which currently cost beneficiaries a \$22 co-pay will be raised to \$25 for both mail order and retail. In addition, the plan would remove the \$3 charge for mail order generic drugs. The new co-pays could save the DoD \$2.6 billion over five years. Here is a chart comparing the current and proposed TRICARE co-pays.

	Generic	Brand Formulary	Tier 3 (Non-Formulary)	Generic	Brand Formulary	Tier 3 (Non-Formulary)
	Current Benefit			Proposed Benefit		
Retail	\$3	\$9	\$22	\$5	\$12	\$25
On-Base	\$ —	\$ —	\$ —	\$ —	\$ —	\$ —
Mail Order	\$3	\$9	\$22	\$ —	\$9	\$25

<http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2011/02/tricare-co-pays-likely-to-increase/>

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 scook@vuft; I keep a copy of most of the full articles, or can research an alternative route to the information. [Ed.]

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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 <mailto:scook@vuft.org>

If you need to call us, our number is 1.805.530.6417.

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