

# NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office  
St. Petersburg, FL



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The "News and Notes for Florida Veterans" is published monthly by the Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, Florida, to provide information on VA benefit programs to veterans and dependents in Florida. The material presented does not have the effect of laws or regulations. Please send questions or comments on this newsletter to Veterans Service Center, ATTN: "News and Notes," PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. We do not have the resources to maintain a mailing list for distribution to individuals; however this newsletter is available on the St.

Petersburg

VA Regional Office web site at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/stpetersburg/>.

**VA, SSA AND IRS CUT RED TAPE FOR VETERANS AND SURVIVORS** (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today it is cutting red tape for Veterans by eliminating the need for them to complete an annual Eligibility Verification Report (EVR). VA will implement a new process for confirming eligibility for benefits, and staff that had been responsible for processing the old form will instead focus on eliminating the compensation claims backlog.

Historically, beneficiaries have been required to complete an EVR each year to ensure their pension benefits continued. Under the new initiative, VA will work with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to verify continued eligibility for pension benefits.

VA estimates it would have sent nearly 150,000 EVRs to beneficiaries in January 2013. Eliminating these annual reports reduces the burden on Veterans, their families, and survivors because they will not have to return these routine reports to VA each year in order to avoid suspension of benefits.

All beneficiaries currently receiving VA pension benefits will receive a letter from VA explaining these changes and providing instructions on how to continue to submit their unreimbursed medical expenses.

More information about VA pension benefits is available at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/pension> and other VA benefit programs on the joint Department of Defense—VA web portal *eBenefits* at [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov).

**U.S TREASURY REQUIRING ELECTRONIC FEDERAL BENEFIT PAYMENTS** (<http://www.godirect.org/>) The Treasury Department is phasing out paper check payments and requiring federal benefit recipients to get their money electronically. Recipients can choose to get their payments by direct deposit to a bank or credit union account or to a Direct Express® Debit MasterCard® card account.

Recipients must switch to electronic payments by March 1, 2013. They can sign up for direct deposit or the Direct Express® card by contacting the U.S. Treasury Electronic Payment Solution Center at (800) 333-1795. They may also sign up for direct deposit online at <https://www.godirect.gov/gpw/index.gd>.

Persons applying for federal benefits will get their money electronically from day one. They should be ready to choose direct deposit or the Direct Express® card when they fill out their application.

Recipients who do not choose an electronic payment option by March 1, 2013, may receive their payments via the Direct Express® card.

Recipients already receiving their federal benefit payments electronically will not be affected by this change.

**VA SEEKS TO EXPAND TBI BENEFITS** (VA News Release) WASHINGTON— The Department of Veterans Affairs is publishing a proposed regulation in the Federal Register that would change its rules to add five diagnosable illnesses which are secondary to service-connected Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). VA proposes to add a new subsection to its adjudication regulation by revising 38 CFR 3.310 to state that if a Veteran who has a service-connected TBI also has one of the five illnesses, then the illness will be considered service connected as secondary to the TBI.

Service connection under the proposed rule depends in part upon the severity of the TBI (mild, moderate, or severe) and the period of time between the injury and onset of the secondary illness. However, the proposed rule also clarifies that it does not preclude a Veteran from establishing direct service connection even if those time and severity standards are not met. It also defines the terms mild, moderate, and severe, consistent with Department of Defense (DoD) guidelines. Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted over the next 60 days. A final regulation will be published after consideration of all comments received.

VA's decision is based on a report by the National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine (IOM), "Gulf War and Health, Volume 7: Long-Term Consequences of TBI." In its report, the IOM's Committee on Gulf War and Health concluded that "sufficient evidence of a causal relationship" - the IOM's highest evidentiary standard - existed between moderate or severe levels of TBI and diagnosed unprovoked seizures. The IOM found "sufficient evidence of an association" between moderate or severe levels of TBI and Parkinsonism; dementias (which VA understands to include presenile dementia of the Alzheimer type and post-traumatic dementia); depression (which also was associated with mild TBI); and diseases of hormone deficiency that may result from hypothalamo-pituitary changes.

Specific information about the Defense and Veteran Brain Injury Center is available at <http://www.dvbic.org/>. Information about Gulf War and VA's services and programs are available at: [http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/hazardous\\_exposures.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/hazardous_exposures.asp).

**HIRING OUR HEROES JOBS FAIRS IN 2013.** This year the U.S Chamber of Commerce will hold Hiring Our Heroes Jobs Fairs in Florida as follows:

**Tampa** January 17 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM at Raymond James Stadium, 4116 N Himes Avenue.  
<https://events.recruitmilitary.com/events/tampa-veteran-job-fair-january-17-2013#registration>

**Orlando** February 7 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM UCF Fairwinds Alumni Center, 4000 Central Florida Blvd.  
<https://events.recruitmilitary.com/events/orlando-veteran-job-fair-february-7-2013#registration>

**Tampa** April 9 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM Ragan Park Community Center, 1200 East Lake Avenue.  
<https://hoh.greatjob.net/sc/viewEvent.action?id=743196>

**West Palm Beach** April 16 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM Palm Beach County Convention Center 650 Okeechobee Blvd  
<https://hoh.greatjob.net/sc/viewEvent.action?id=743238>

**Lake City** June 4 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM American Legion Post 57, 2602 SW Main Blvd.  
<https://hoh.greatjob.net/sc/viewEvent.action?id=818211>

Job seekers may register for events by clicking on the link for the event they wish to attend.

**REPORT REVEALS FURTHER REDUCTION IN VETERANS HOMELESSNESS** (VA News Release) The Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) today announced that a new national report shows that homelessness among Veterans has been reduced by approximately 7 percent between January 2011 and January 2012.

## VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

### SUICIDE PREVENTION 1-800-273-8255

**National Call Center for Homeless Veterans**  
1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838)

**VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg** - PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731 1-800-827-1000

**Regional Processing Office, Atlanta, GA** (education claims) - PO Box 100022, Decatur, GA 30031-7022  
1-888-GIBILL1 (442-4551)  
Telephone number for Chapter 30 self-verifications  
1-877-823-2378

**VA EFT Information Hotline** (electronic funds transfer - direct deposit) 1-877-838-2778

**Veterans Health Administration Toll-Free Hotline** (medical care) - 1-877-222-8387

**VA Health Revenue Service** (information on amounts owed to VA Medical Centers) 1-866-793-4591

**VA Insurance Center, Philadelphia** (VA Insurance) - PO Box 42954, Philadelphia, PA 19101 1-800-669-8477

**VA Health Administration Center** (CHAMPVA and Spina Bifida health care) 1-800-733-8387 CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023; CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024 Spina Bifida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025

### National Cemeteries

10,000 Bay Pines Blvd N, Bay Pines FL 727-398-9426  
6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell FL 352-793-7740  
6501 S State Rd 7, Lake Worth, FL 561-649-6489  
4083 Lannie Rd, Jacksonville FL 904-766-5222  
Naval Air Station, Pensacola FL 850-453-4108/4846  
9810 State Hwy 72, Sarasota FL 877-861-9840  
104 Marine St, St Augustine FL 352-793-7740

**National Cemetery Administration Office of Memorial Programs** (headstones and markers) - 5109 Russell Rd Quantico VA 22134-3903 1-800-697-6947

**Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center** (certificates of eligibility) PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120  
1-888-244-6711

**Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)** - 711

### INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:

**VA Web Site:** [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

**VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS)** [www.warms.vba.va.gov](http://www.warms.vba.va.gov)

**VA Workload and Performance Reports;**  
<http://www.vba.va.gov/reports/>

**St. Petersburg VA Regional Office:**

<http://www.benefits.va.gov/stpetersburg/>

**Property Management (sale of VA-repossessed homes):** <http://va.equator.com>

**Florida Dept of Veterans' Affairs:** [www.FloridaVets.org](http://www.FloridaVets.org)

**Library of Congress (information on pending legislation)** [thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov)