

# 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/>.

**DEADLINE FOR RETROACTIVE STOP LOSS SPECIAL PAY EXTENDED** (Department of Defense News Release October 1, 2010) The deadline for eligible service members, veterans and their beneficiaries to apply for Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay (RSLSP) has been extended to December 3, 2010, allowing personnel more time to apply for the benefits they've earned. The deadline extension is included in the continuing resolution signed by President Obama yesterday, providing funding for federal government operations through December 3.

To apply, or for more information on RSLSP, including submission requirements and service-specific links, go to <http://www.defense.gov/stoploss>.

RSLSP was established to compensate military members whose service was involuntarily extended under Stop Loss between Sept. 11, 2001, and Sept. 30, 2009. Eligible members or their beneficiaries are required to submit a claim to their respective military service in order to receive the benefit of \$500 for each full or partial month served in a Stop Loss status. The original deadline for claims was Oct. 21, 2010.

When RSLSP began on Oct. 21, 2009, the services estimated 145,000 service members, veterans and beneficiaries were eligible. Because the majority of those eligible had separated from the military, the services have engaged in extensive and persistent outreach efforts throughout the year. Efforts including direct mail, engaging military and veteran service organizations, social networks and media outlets, will continue throughout the period of eligibility.

**VA PUBLISHES FINAL REGULATION ON "PRESUMPTIVE" ILLNESSES FOR GULF WAR AND IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN VETERANS** (VA News Release) A final regulation has been published in the Federal Register that makes it easier for veterans to obtain Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care and disability compensation for certain diseases associated with service in Southwest Asia (including Iraq) or Afghanistan was announced. The final regulation establishes new

presumptions of service connection for nine specific infectious diseases associated with military service in Southwest Asia beginning on or after the start of the first Gulf War on August 2, 1990, through the conflict in Iraq and on or after September 19, 2001, in Afghanistan. The diseases are:

**Brucellosis:** A bacterial disease with symptoms such as profuse sweating and joint and muscle pain. The illness may be chronic and persist for years. It must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year from the date of military separation.

**Campylobacter Jejuni:** A disease with symptoms such as abdominal pain, diarrhea, and fever. It must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year from the date of military separation.

**Coxiella Burnetii (Q Fever):** A bacterial disease with symptoms such as fever, severe headache, and gastrointestinal problems such as nausea and diarrhea. In chronic cases, the illness may cause inflammation of the heart. It must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year from the date of military separation.

**Malaria:** An infectious disease caused by a parasite. Symptoms include chills, fever, and sweats. It must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year from the date of military separation or at a time when standard or accepted treaties indicate that the incubation period began during a qualifying period of military service.

**Mycobacterium Tuberculosis:** An illness that primarily affects the lungs and causes symptoms such as chest pain, persistent cough (sometimes bloody), weight loss and fever.

**Nontyphoid Salmonella:** A condition characterized by symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. It must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year from the date of military separation.

**Shigella:** A condition characterized by symptoms such as fever, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. It must be at least

10% disabling within 1 year from the date of military separation.

**Visceral Leishmaniasis:** A parasitic disease characterized by symptoms such as fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anemia. The condition may be fatal if left untreated.

**West Nile Virus:** A disease spread by mosquitoes characterized by symptoms such as fever, headache, muscle pain or weakness, nausea, and vomiting. Symptoms may range from mild to severe. It must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year from the date of military separation.

The key to the new presumptions is the development of symptoms during or very shortly after service in the Middle East/Southwest Asia, usually within the same year of exposure. However, Visceral Leishmaniasis and Mycobacterium Tuberculosis have been granted unlimited presumption since they can develop much later. Veterans who served in Southwest Asia or Afghanistan and suffer chronic illness since their service in the Gulf should seek treatment at a VA medical facility for diagnoses.

Under VA regulations, the Southwest Asia theater of operations includes Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, and the airspace above these locations

For information about health problems associated with military service during operations Desert Shield, Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom, and Enduring Freedom, go to [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/).

For information about how to apply for disability compensation, go to [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) or [http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/compensation\\_benefits.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/compensation_benefits.asp).

**COST OF LIVING ALLOWANCE (COLA)** The VA compensation and pension benefits cost of living allowance (COLA) is paid based on the Social Security Administration (SSA) COLA. In general, the SSA COLA is equal to the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) from the third quarter of one year to the third quarter of the next. If there is no increase, there is no COLA. Because there was no increase in the CPI-W from the third quarter of 2008 through the third quarter of 2009, there was no COLA for 2010.

For there to be a COLA for 2011 (effective December 1, 2010) the third-quarter average CPI-W for 2010 must exceed the 2008 third quarter average.

The CPI-W for September, 2010, will be released on October 15, 2010, at which time whether or not there will be a COLA for 2011 will be determined.

## VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

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

**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) -

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 1-800-733-8387

### 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) Unit** - Chicago VA Regional Office 1-800-829-4833

### 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)

**St. Petersburg VA Regional Office:**

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

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

**Federal employment:** [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov)

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

**"Florida Vets First:"** [www.FloridaVetsFirst.com](http://www.FloridaVetsFirst.com)

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