

NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

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



November 2010

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/>.

NO COLA FOR 2011 Cost-Of-Living Adjustments (COLA) for VA compensation and pension benefits are tied to the Social Security COLAs. The Social Security Act provides for an automatic increase in Social Security and SSI benefits if there is an increase in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) from the third quarter of the last year a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) was determined to the third quarter of the current year. As determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there is no increase in the CPI-W from the third quarter of 2008, the last year a COLA was determined, to the third quarter of 2010, therefore, there can be no COLA in 2011.

VETERANS DAY World War I officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919. However, fighting ceased seven months earlier when an armistice, or temporary cessation of hostilities, between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. For that reason, November 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of "the war to end all wars."

In November 1919, President Wilson proclaimed November 11 as the first commemoration of "Armistice Day." An Act of Congress approved May 13, 1938, made the 11th of November in each year Armistice Day, a legal holiday. In 1954 the Act of 1938 was amended by striking out the word "Armistice" and inserting in its place the word "Veterans." With the approval of this legislation November 11th became a day to honor American veterans of all wars.

Veterans Day was changed to a Monday holiday beginning in 1971. It quickly became apparent that the commemoration of this day on November 11 was a matter of historic and patriotic significance to a great number of our citizens, and so the annual observance of Veterans Day was returned to its original date beginning in 1978.

Many people confuse Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Memorial Day is a day for remembering and honoring military personnel who died in the service of their country, particularly those who died in battle or as a result of

wounds sustained in battle. Veterans Day is the day set aside to thank and honor *all* those who served honorably in the military - in wartime or peacetime. In fact, Veterans Day is largely intended to thank *living* veterans for their service, to acknowledge that their contributions to our national security are appreciated, and to underscore the fact that all those who served - not only those who died - have sacrificed and done their duty.

"Veterans Day," not "Veteran's Day" or "Veterans' Day" is the correct spelling. Veterans Day does not include an apostrophe but does include an "s" at the end of "Veterans" because it is not a day that "belongs" to veterans, it is a day for honoring all veterans.

NEW MEDICAL FORMS WILL STREAMLINE VETERANS CLAIMS PROCESS (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has released three new disability benefits questionnaires for physicians of veterans applying for VA disability compensation benefits. This initiative marks the beginning of a major reform of the physicians' guides and automated routines that will streamline the claims process for injured or ill veterans.

These new questionnaires are the first of 79 disability benefits questionnaires that will guide veterans' personal physicians, as well as VA physicians, in the evaluation of the most frequent medical conditions affecting veterans.

Accurate and timely medical evaluations are a critical element of VA's continued commitment to high-quality and prompt decisions about the nature and degree of conditions afflicting Veterans. Streamlining this process by directly involving veterans' treating physicians in providing specific information needed to evaluate their claims will lead to completeness in the examination and faster compensation decisions.

The disability benefits questionnaires are part of VA's automated health records system which prompts VA physicians conducting disability examinations to include precise information in a standardized way to assist claims adjudicators in ensuring veterans receive the benefits they

deserve as quickly as possible. These VA examination results are electronically available to claims adjudicators in VA regional offices.

For veterans who receive their care from private physicians, VA has placed the disability benefits questionnaires on its Internet site (<http://www.vba.va.gov/disabilityexams>) with instructions for physicians to submit examination results on veterans' behalf.

The first three questionnaires cover B-cell leukemia (such as hairy-cell leukemia), Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease. VA recently published a final regulation to be implemented October 30, 2010, that will establish the presumption of eligibility to VA disability compensation benefits for veterans with one of these three conditions who were exposed to Agent Orange, a herbicide agent used extensively in Vietnam.

VA BEGINS PAYING BENEFITS FOR NEW AGENT ORANGE CLAIMS (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun distributing disability benefits to Vietnam veterans who qualify for compensation under recently liberalized rules for Agent Orange exposure. The expansion of coverage involves B-cell (or hairy-cell) leukemia, Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease. VA officials encourage all Vietnam veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and suffer from one of the three diseases to make sure their applications have been submitted.

The three new illnesses are added to the list of presumed illnesses previously recognized by VA. Other recognized illnesses under VA's "presumption" rule for Agent Orange are: Acute and Subacute Transient Peripheral Neuropathy; Chloracne; Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia; Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2); Hodgkin's Disease; Multiple Myeloma; Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma; Porphyria Cutanea Tarda; Prostate Cancer; Respiratory Cancers; Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or Mesothelioma); and AL Amyloidosis.

Veterans interested in applying for disability compensation under one of the three new Agent Orange presumptives should go to www.fasttrack.va.gov or call 1-800-827-1000.

REMINDER: DEADLINE FOR RETROACTIVE STOP LOSS SPECIAL PAY EXTENDED 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 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>.

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

VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS) 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

Florida Dept of Veterans Affairs: www.floridavets.org

"Florida Vets First:" www.FloridaVetsFirst.com

Library of Congress (information on pending legislation) thomas.loc.gov