



The Straight Scoop

Department Newsletter of the
Marine Corps League
Department of West Virginia
P.O. Box 11828
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Mideast Division NVC Bruce Rakfeldt Message

Greetings to all Members of the Mideast Division!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for electing me as your new National Vice Commandant at the 94th National Convention in Overland Park, Kansas. I, along with your newly elected Assistant Division Vice Commandant, Roger Ware (Do WV), look forward to continuing the positive momentum our Division has been doing in performing the mission of the League. It is an honor to serve all of you in this position as well as represent you wherever I travel. I want to also take this opportunity to recognize Past NVC Mike McLain for his four years of service and dedication to our Division. He is an outstanding Marine and a great friend. We look forward to seeing him at future Division Conferences and National events. I would also like to congratulate Mike McLain for being selected as the 2017 National Marine of the Year and Department of North Carolina Commandant, Jeffrey Jones, for being selected as the Kennel Dog of the Year! In addition, Roger Stockton, of the Greater Greensboro Detachment #260, from the Department of North Carolina, brought home the National Recruiter of the Year Award by recruiting 100 new members! The Mideast Division has a lot to be proud of with accolades such as these! Your new Mideast Division Staff is ready to serve you and that Staff Roster will be forwarded on to you by Mideast Adjutant Frank Mathers. We all look forward to serving you and performing the mission of the League! Again, thank you for this opportunity to serve as your National Vice Commandant for the next two years. As I visit your Departments and Detachments, I look forward to meeting old friends and always making new ones. Take care of yourselves and each other and let's always keep our overseas Marines and Corpsmen in our thoughts and prayers.

Semper Fidelis,
Bruce R. Rakfeldt
National Vice Commandant
Mideast Division, Marine Corps League
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Chaplain's Corner

To: Commander and Chief Spiritual Armed Forces, Jesus CD

Dear Lord,

I began writing this to You to request a transfer to a desk job. I herewith present my reasons: I began my career as a private; because of the intensity of the battle, You have quickly moved me up in rank. You have made me an NCO and have given me a tremendous amount of responsibility.

There are many Marines and recruits under my charge. I am constantly being called upon to dispense wisdom, make judgments, and find solutions to complex problems. You have placed me in a position to function as an NCO, when in my heart I only have the skills of a private. I realize that you have promised to supply all I would need for the battle. But Sir, I must provide You a realistic picture of my equipment. My uniform, once so crisp and starched, is now stained with tears and the blood of those I have tried to assist; the soles of my boots are cracked from the miles I have walked trying to enlist and encourage the instructed troops. My weapons are marred, tarnished and chipped from constant battle with the enemy. Even the Book of Regulations I was issued has been torn and tattered from endless use. The words are now smeared. You have promised You would be with me throughout, but the noise of the battle is so loud and the confusion is so great, I can neither see You nor hear You. I feel so alone. I'm tired and I'm discouraged. I have battle Fatigue. I would never ask You for a discharge. I love being in Your service, but I humbly request a demotion and transfer. I'll file papers or clean heads. Just get me out of the battle, please, Sir.

To: Faithful but tired Marine:

Subject: Transfer

Your request for transfer has been denied, I herewith present My reasons: You are needed in the battle. I have selected you, and I will keep My word to supply your need. You do not need a demotion and transfer. You need R&R: Renewal and Rekindling. I am setting aside a place on the battlefield that is insulated from all sound and fully protected from the enemy. I will meet you there and give you rest. I will remove your equipment and "make all things new" You have been wounded in the battle, My Marine; your wounds are not visible, but you have received grave internal injuries. You need to be healed. I will heal you. You have been weakened in the battle. You need to be strengthened. I will strengthen you and be your strength. I will instill in you confidence and ability. My words will rekindle within you a renewed love and enthusiasm. Report to me tired and empty; I will refill you.

Compassionately,

Your Commander in Chief JESUS CHRIST

Why most people go barefoot in West Virginia....

A man in Topeka, Kansas decided to write a book about churches around the country. He started by flying to San Francisco and started working east from there. Going to a very large church, he began taking photographs and making notes. He spotted a golden telephone on the vestibule wall and was intrigued with a sign, which read "Calls: \$10,000 a minute." Seeking out the pastor he asked about the phone and the sign. The pastor answered that this golden phone is, in fact, a direct line to heaven and if he pays the price he can talk directly to GOD. The man thanked the pastor and continued on his way. As he continued to visit churches in

Seattle, Houston, St. Louis, Chicago, Milwaukee, and many cities and towns all around the United States, he found more phones with the same sign, and the same answer from each pastor.

Finally, he arrived in Newton, WV.

Upon entering a church in the beautiful state of WEST VIRGINIA, behold, he saw the usual golden telephone. But THIS time, the sign read "Calls: 35 cents". Fascinated, he asked to talk to the pastor, "Reverend, I have been in cities all across the country and in each church, I have found this golden telephone and have been told it is a direct line to Heaven and that I could talk to GOD, but in the other churches the cost was \$10,000 a minute. Your sign reads only 35 cents a call. Why?" (I love this part) The pastor, smiling broadly, replied, "Son, you're in West Virginia now - *you're in God's Country where it's a local call.*

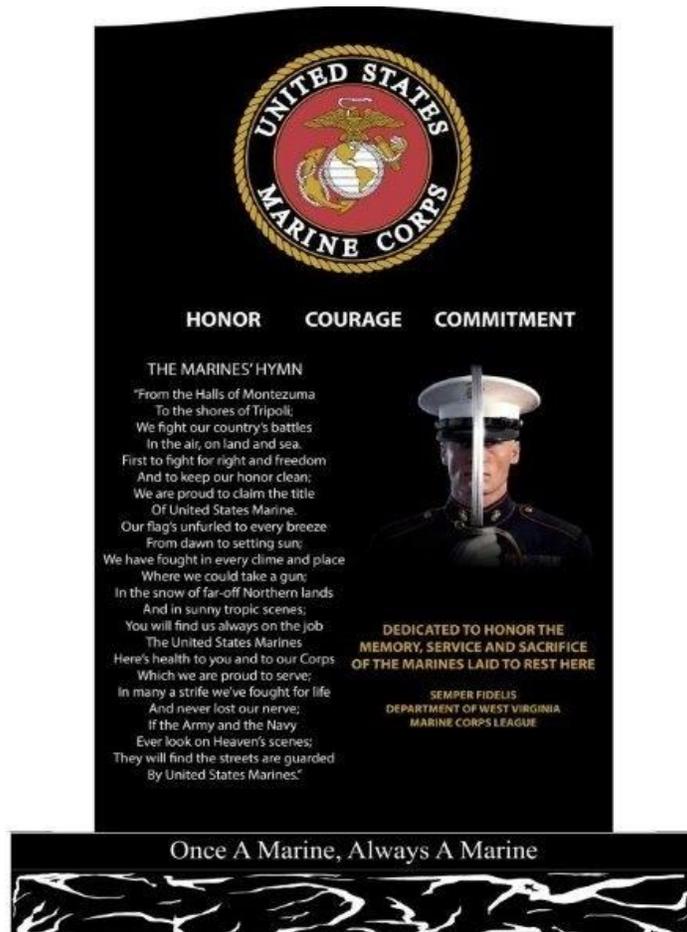
American by Birth, West Virginian by the Grace of God.

And why do West Virginians go barefoot?

CAUSE, When you're in WEST VIRGINIA, you're on Holy ground

MCL Monument Fund

Please consider a fund raiser to help generate funds for the placement of this USMC monument in the Donal Kinnard National Cemetery at Institute, WV. Make all funds payable to Dept. of WV MCL and mail to Dept. Paymaster Patti Leib.



Department Quarterly Meeting - September 9, 2017 in Logan

2017 Department of WV Quarterly Meeting will be September 9, 2017 hosted by Danny M. Greene Detachment 577 in Logan, WV at the old Henlawson Grade School & Vet Center. Dept. Staff Officer Meeting is 9:30 AM with general business meeting at 10 AM. WV Pack Growl will immediately follow Dept. Meeting.

Directions: Traveling from Charleston take 119 South to Logan. Turn right on Rte. 10 in Logan and travel about 4 miles to stoplight in Mitchell Heights. Watch for Chief Logan State Park on the left and the Henlawson Fire Station on the right. Follow Rt. 10 for a short distance beyond this point to an abandoned service station on the right and watch for the Henlawson Bridge. It is difficult to spot until you are right upon it. Watch for a white building that is marked Star Storage. This building is just beyond the bridge and is on the right of the highway. Turn right onto the bridge. As soon as you cross the bridge turn right at the first intersection onto Veteran's Avenue. Go two blocks to the Veteran's Center on the left. This center is a former one story, brick school. It is marked as VVA and there are usually two small, white Veteran's buses in front. There is ample parking beside the building and in the back.

Department of WV MCL Detachment Commandant's Report

2017 Department of WV Regular Meeting will be held on September 9, 2017 hosted by Danny M. Green Detachment 577 in Logan, WV at the Vet Center 21 Veterans Ave, Henlawson, WV 25624. Staff Officers Meeting is 0930 AM with general business meeting at 1000 AM. WV Pack Growl will immediately follow Dept. Meeting.

The uniform code has been modified for the department regular meetings as members can wear polo shirts and pants, with fore and aft cover. The uniform code must be followed for the Department Convention.

Department Regular Meeting Reports May 7, 2017 to Sept. 9, 2017

Detachment Commandants... The Dept. of WV requests that each detachment Commandant or appointed representative attend the department regular meeting to submit their detachment report.

In the event that attendance by your detachment is not possible, please contact the Department Commandant to be excused and mail or email a copy of your report to the Dept. Adjutant/Paymaster Patti Leib before the date of the regular meeting.

Bring 15 copies of your detachment report to set out on the reports table for other detachment Commandants and Officers to view. Ensure the Dept. Adjutant/Paymaster, Sr. Vice Commandant, Jr. vice Commandant, Judge Advocate and Chaplain get a copy of your report.

Professional Development training classes will be conducted during this meeting. A summary and overview of the new Department Guidebook for Detachments will be presented from a video disc. Copies will be given to every detachment in attendance. Commandants are advised

to bring their Adjutant/Paymaster or Adjutant and Paymaster with them for the class.

Commandants modify your reports to include the following:

Membership and Retention Team:

List number of paid life members: paid regular members: total paid: and total unpaid as of Sept. 1, 2017

Have you generated a dues notice letter for mailing to your unpaid members?

Do you have a roster of every member that includes mailing address, phone number, date of birth, and email address? Do you have an accurate data base for all members?

Does your detachment have a Membership Retention Team that includes detachment Jr. Vice Commandant, detachment Paymaster and one appointed member?

Does your detachments MRT report membership totals in your business meetings and list the unpaid members.?

How many new members have joined your detachment since May 7, 2017 and has each new member been assigned a mentor?

How does your MRT contact your unpaid and delinquent members and other members?

What recruiting events has the detachment conducted since May 7, 2017?

Does your MRT contact every detachment member at least once every 3 months?

Do you send your monthly meeting minutes to those members who do not attend meetings?

Report of Officer Installation:

Detachments must file an ROI every year even if they keep their current slate of Officers. Have you filed your ROI for this year?

Paid Life Member Audit:

Have you filed your annual PLM Audit using the National 6/30/17 roster with the Dept. Paymaster, Patti Leib? Include the date the PLM Audit was conducted on your report.

IRS 990-N

Have you completed your annual IRS 990-N and sent a confirmation copy to the Dept. Paymaster, Patti Leib? Include your EIN # and 990 submission received date in your report or include the date when your 990-N renewal is due for this year.

Annual Corporate Report with WV Sec of State

Have you completed your Annual Corporate Report with WV Sec of State?

Professional Development Training:

Is your detachment implementing Professional Development Training into your membership? Are you using the Guidebook for Det. Officers, Dept. DVD training disc to assist in training? What PDT classes have been conducted in your detachment meetings since May 7, 2017?

Chaplain's Report:

List deceased members from May 7, 2017 to Sept. 9, 2017. Have death notices for these members been filed by your detachment Chaplain and forwarded to the Dept. Chaplain?

Detachment Commandants additional Comments:

In this section of your report the Detachment Commandant can make comments, requests and or suggestions to the Dept. of WV Staff.

Americanism and Civic Events:

Summarize your most important activities or significant events.

Detachment Awards:

How do you recognize your members? Do you submit recommendations for department awards?

Membership attendance:

What are reasons that members chose not to attend detachment or quarterly meetings or department conventions?

Modern Day Marine Expo, Sept. 19-21, 2017, Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Virginia

MCL members are always needed to help staff the two MCL booths where welcome bags are distributed. MCL National Sgt-at-Arms Neil Corley is the point of contact and he will be in one of the booths commencing Monday Sep 18. The uniform for members working in the booths is polo shirt, MCL cover, black trousers and black shoes or black tennis shoes. It is highly recommended that anyone who wants to attend log onto the Modern Day Marine Expo website and click on Attendee Badge Registration and fill it out. Once you arrive at the Expo, go to Registration and pick up your name tag. Here is the schedule for events.

ATTENDEE INFORMATION

Schedule-of-Events

Tuesday, September 19

8:00 AM – 3:30 PM	Registration Open
9:45 AM – 10:00 AM	Opening Ceremony
10:00 AM – 3:30 PM	Exhibit Halls Open

Wednesday, September 20

8:00 AM – 3:30 PM	Registration Open
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM	Enlisted Awards Parade
10:00 AM – 11:30 AM	Reception in Exhibit Halls
10:00 AM – 3:30 PM	Exhibit Halls Open

Thursday, September 21

8:00 AM – 3:00 PM	Registration Open
10:00 AM – 3:00 PM	Exhibit Halls Open (Family Day)

To Attend

Uniformed Marines do not need to register for a badge. Retailers, Retired Marines and Contracting Officials may register at no charge. Manufacturers not exhibiting in Modern Day Marine must register and will be charged a non-exhibiting manufacturer fee

National Convention Summary

Approximately 886 members of the MCL, Ladies Auxiliary and MODD attended the 2017 National Convention in Overland Park, Kansas. These are the new National Officers: National Commandant: Wendell Webb, Sr Vice Commandant: Dennis Tobin, Jr Vice Commandant Johnny Baker and Judge Advocate Warren Griffin. Bruce Rakfeldt Department of NC was installed as NVC, Mideast Division. Roger Ware Department of WV was installed as Assistant NVC for the Division. Roger Ware was retained as MODD Kennel Veterinarian. Mike McLain was retained as MODD Kennel Deputy Police Dog and Roy Wood was retained as MODD Kennel Deputy Mad Dog. The Department of WV, Wood County Det. 1087 and L. D. Crawford Det. 956 were presented with a 2017 National Convention Steamer for the colors. The 2018 National Convention will be at the Buffalo Hyatt in Buffalo, New York. August 12-17, 2018. The National Marine of the Year was Michael McLain. The Kennel Dog of the Year was PDD Jeffrey D. Jones. The Kennel donated \$50,000 to The Children's Hospital in Overland Park, Kansas. PDD Leonard Spicer was installed as the Chief Devil Dog. Lt. General James B. Laster, Director, Marine Corps Staff, was the keynote speaker. There were no BL changes discussed as they were not submitted on time as per NBL and therefore were deferred. Any type black shoe may be worn with the MCL uniform as the current shoe has caused many orthopedic problems in older members. The 2019 National Convention will be in Billings, Montana.

Veterans Affairs Information presented at National Convention 19 August 2017

Subj: Veteran Service Officer Report.

Sir Commandant, I am submitting a written transcript of the topics that were discussed on the floor of this year's National Convention in Overland Park, KS.

VA Burial Benefits: The VA offers two different types of Burial Benefits when the Veteran passes away:

Service Connected Burial Benefit - If the Veteran passes away from a service connected condition or a presumptive condition that was not previously claimed, the VA will pay a one-time payment of \$2,000.

Non-Service Connected Burial Benefit - If a Veteran is in receipt of a monetary award from the VA (VA Disability Compensation or Non-Service Connected Pension) or passes away at a VA Medical Center or VA Contract Care Facility while enrolled in VA Medical Care, the VA will pay a one-time payment of \$300 and possibly reimburse the person who paid for the funeral, for the cost of transportation of remains from the place of death to the funeral home, as long as the amount is broken out in the itemized funeral bill.

Plot Allowance- The VA will pay a \$749 Plot Allowance for internment costs of the Veteran as long as the Veteran is eligible for receipt of service connected or non-service connected burial benefits. The VA will pay the \$749 Plot Allowance to a State Veteran Cemetery for internment of a Veteran regardless of eligibility of the Service Connected or Non-Service Connected Benefit.

Survivor's Benefits- There are two different Survivor Benefits that a Surviving Spouse/Child under 18 (or unmarried child enrolled in school under the age of 23)/or Adult Helpless Child of the Veteran may be eligible for:

Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC)- DIC is paid to an eligible spouse/dependent if the Veteran passed away from a service connected condition, a previously unclaimed presumptive condition, or from any condition if the Veteran was rated 100% Disabled (or Individual Unemployability) for 10 years or longer. Note- the Spouse had to be married to the Veteran for at least one year prior to the Veteran's death and will lose the DIC award if they remarry before the age of 57. If they do remarry before age 57 and lose the DIC Award and that subsequent marriage ends in divorce or death, the Surviving Spouse may file for DIC again due to the Veteran's passing.

- Basic DIC Rate is **\$1,257.95/Month**
- If the Veteran was rated 100% (or I.U.) for 8+ years and married to the same spouse for at least 8 years, the Spouse will receive an additional \$267.12/month
- If the Surviving Spouse is entitled to the Aid and Attendance Rate (based upon the need of help with the activities of daily living), the spouse will receive an additional **\$311.64/month**.

**** Note**- If the Veteran was a DOD Retiree and paid into the DFAS Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) (6% of the monthly retired pay which allows the Surviving Spouse to receive 55% of the Veteran's Retired Pay at the time of their death) and also qualifies for DIC based upon a service connected cause of death, the current Federal Law does not permit payments of both SBP and DIC. The current Federal Law only allows the payment of the greater amount and possibly the SBP/DIC Offset which is currently \$310/month.

Survivor's Pension- This is the only other type of Survivor Benefit. To be eligible, the Veteran had to have wartime service, had to have at least 90 days of active duty service before 1980 or at least 2 years after 1980, been married to the surviving spouse for at least one year prior to the Veteran's passing, and then meet the financial requirements of having less than \$80k in assets (not to include the spouse's primary residence). Assets include additional houses, excessive property, amounts in checking/savings accounts, IRAs, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, trusts, etc. If below the \$80k threshold, the VA will determine the Pension Rate that the spouse would be eligible for. Once the rate is determined, the surviving spouse's annual income- which includes all sources of income to include Social Security (which will be adjusted by subtracting recurring monthly medical costs) must be below the Maximum Annual Pension Rate for that specific level of Pension. Note- If a surviving Spouse remarries after the death of the Veteran, they will lose the Pension and can never claim it again regardless of what happens to the subsequent marriage.

- Basic Pension Rate- If the surviving spouse can live on their own & take care of themselves, Maximum Annual Pension Rate is **\$8,656.00/year**

- Housebound Rate- If the surviving spouse can live on their own and take care of themselves but are indoors all day and need help to leave their residence, Maximum Annual Pension Rate is **\$10,580.00/year**

- Aid and Attendance Rate- If the Surviving Spouse requires assistance from someone else to take care of activities of daily living (Bathing, dressing, feeding, etc.) then the cost of Home Healthcare, Assisted Living or Skilled Nursing can be counted as recurring monthly medical Expenses. This is the only level that these costs will be counted as medical expenses.

Maximum Annual Pension Rate is **\$13,836.00/year**

The VA will never pay above the Maximum Annual Pension Rate for the level that they qualify for. For example, if a spouse is entitled to pension at the A&A Rate and the cost of assisted living is more than his/her income, the VA will pay \$13,836.00/year or \$1,153.00 per month.

Camp Lejeune Contaminated Water Presumptive Conditions- On January 13, 2017 the VA published a Final Rule in the Federal Register establishing presumptive service connection for eight medical conditions for any veterans, reservists and Guard members who served at Camp Lejeune, N.C. (including Marine Corps Air Station New River, Camp Geiger, Camp Johnson and Stone Bay Rifle Range) for 30 or more days between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987. This presumptive service connection is based on exposure to toxic chemicals present in the water on base during that time period.

The medical conditions are:

- adult leukemia,
- aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes,
- bladder cancer,
- kidney cancer,
- liver cancer,
- multiple myeloma,
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and
- Parkinson's disease.

These conditions were selected as a result of review of scientific studies on the chemicals that were known to have contaminated the water at Camp Lejeune.

Other medical conditions arising in veterans exposed to the contaminated water may be service connected on a direct basis, but veterans will need a medical opinion linking their current condition to their exposures at Camp Lejeune. There are fourteen conditions approved for healthcare treatment purposes (38 CFR 17.400), but only the conditions listed above are for presumptive compensation purposes. The effective date of the regulation will be March 14, 2017, so compensation and DIC may be able to be paid beginning on that date. Earlier claims that were denied must be re-opened in order to be considered under the new presumptive regulation. Dependents and civilians who lived or worked at Camp Lejeune are NOT entitled to any compensation for disabilities arising from toxic exposure at this time.

If a Veteran has passed away from one of these listed conditions regardless of how long ago the death occurred, have the surviving spouse submit a DIC Claim.

President's Proposed Budget as it pertains to Individual Unemployability- My office has been fielding many phone calls concerning the President's Proposed Budget which included a recommendation that Veterans receiving Individual Unemployability Benefits (Veterans who are rated 60-90% Rating service connected but being paid at the 100% rate because they cannot maintain gainful employment due to service connected disabilities) would have their

benefit end when they begin receiving Social Security Retirement age- at which time they would lose the 100% rate and revert back to their actual disability rating vice the 100% rate and the savings would then be used to fund an expanded Choice Program. This was only a proposal and since the release of that proposal, VA Secretary Shulkin provided testimony on June 14, 2017 which said "The budget is a process, and this was part of a menu of opportunities that we had for thinking how we can make the budget process better. As I began to listen to veterans and their concerns and VSOs in particular, it became clear that this would be hurting some veterans and that this would be a takeaway for veterans who can't afford to have those benefits taken away. I'm really concerned about that. So, what I'd like to say is -- is that this is part of a process. We have to be looking at ways to do things better but I am not going to support policies that hurt veterans. And so, I would look forward to working with you and all the members of the Committee on figuring out how we can do this better. We have budget numbers and targets that we have to hit, but we shouldn't be doing things that are going to hurt veterans that can't afford to lose these benefits."

Secretary of the VA announced his intention to expand provisions for urgent mental health care needs to former service members with other-than-honorable (OTH) administrative discharges. This move marks the first time a VA Secretary has implemented an initiative specifically focused on expanding access to assist former OTH service members who are in mental health distress and may be at risk for suicide or other adverse behaviors. This does not mean that Veterans with OTH discharges (or lower) would be permitted to have service connected disabilities if they were previously barred from benefits from the VA but does allow for up to 90 days of emergent mental health treatment at a VA Medical Center.

Possible additional Presumptive Conditions for Exposure to Herbicides/Agent Orange- Later this fall, the Secretary of the VA is going to decide whether additional medical conditions should be added to the list of presumptive conditions due to exposure of Agent Orange/Herbicides from Vietnam. Those conditions are Hypothyroidism, Hypertension (High Blood Pressure) and Parkinson-Like symptoms. The Current Presumptive Conditions for Agent Orange/Herbicide Exposures include: Prostate Cancer, Type II Diabetes, Ischemic Heart Disease/Coronary Artery Disease, Lung Cancer, Parkinson's Disease, Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, Hodgkin's Disease, Chloracne, AL Amyloidosis, All Chronic B-Cell Leukemias, and Multiple Myeloma (not an all-inclusive list).

Again, if a Veteran served in Vietnam and passed away from one of these conditions, the surviving spouse should file a DIC Claim.

Gulf War Presumptive Period Extended for Five Years- Under 38 CFR 3.317, presumptive service connection for disabilities arising from Gulf War Service requires that a Veteran develop the disability within a certain timeframe after his/her service. This "sunset date" was previously December 21, 2016 but the VA has recently published an interim final rule that extends the period to December 31, 2021. These conditions are presumptive to any Veteran who served in the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations (not to include Afghanistan) from August 1991 through current day. The Presumptive conditions for Southwest Asia Include Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibromyalgia and Undiagnosed Illnesses of Southwest Asia (multi clusters of symptoms without a definitive diagnosis).

Note- The VA still has not conceded any presumptive conditions associated with exposures to Burn Pits.

Decision Ready Claims- In an effort to speed up the processing time for VA Disability Claims and certain types of Survivor Benefits, the VA is working towards Decision Ready Claims. Similar to Fully Developed Claims where all private treatment records are submitted with all of the required claims forms, the Decision Ready Claims will also require a completed Disability Benefit Questionnaire (DBQ) for the condition being claimed to be submitted with the claim. There are many different DBQs available for each of the claimed conditions which can be found by searching for forms on the VA.gov website or, if a Veteran Service Officer has access to VetraSpec, there is a link for the DBQs on the "Forms" tab. We have been told that if a Veteran requests that a DBQ be completed by their VA Medical Center Primary Care Provider, they will do so. If the correct DBQ is completed with all of the completed forms, the VA's goal is to have claims for Increase and Dependency Indemnity Compensation Claims completed in 30 days or less. Please note that you cannot find the DBQ for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as those exams must be completed by a VA Psychiatrist or Psychologist or a VA-Contract Provider through one of the VA Contracted Providers.

VA Dental Insurance Program- While the VA signed the VA Dental Insurance Reauthorization Act into law allowing the current VA Dental Insurance Pilot Program (VADIP) to move forward as a permanent benefit, the program is not accepting new patients while the VA determines who will proceed with the contract to manage the program. Once the new contract for managing the program has been awarded, all Veterans enrolled in VA Medical Care are eligible to enroll in this program and if they are rated 100% Permanent and Total with Chapter 35 Ancillary Benefits, then their VA approved dependents are also eligible for enrollment. The Undersecretary of the VA for Healthcare has stated that a contract will be awarded by the end of September 2017 and Veterans can begin enrolling by the end of November. If Veterans are interested in the status of the status of the contract process and when the VA Dental Insurance Program will again start accepting new clients, information can be found at the VA's website: <https://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vadip/index.asp>

Appeals Modernization Act has been approved by the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. Once signed into Law and fully implemented, this will allow a Veteran one of three different lanes in order to have their appeal heard. Lane 1 will allow the Veteran to have his rating decision reviewed by a higher-level rater at the VA Regional Office with no additional evidence to be submitted. Lane 2 will allow the Veteran up to one year to submit new evidence to support the claim for a new decision to be made. Lane 3 will allow the Veteran to submit the claim to the Board of Veterans Appeals for the BVA Law Judge to render a decision within one year. The biggest hold-up is what to do with the approximately 490k legacy appeals that are currently pending which will not be covered by the Appeals Modernization Act unless approval is granted to allow legacy appeals to be moved into the new appeals system.

Dispelling Rumors about Concurrent Receipt- Rumors have circulated around the veteran community recently about a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report regarding potential savings in the federal budget published in December 2016. Since 1982, the CBO has prepared an annual report to Congress of various options for reducing the federal deficit, either by reducing spending or increasing revenue. 115 options were presented across all agencies in the last report. Many of these options presented by CBO are controversial. Concerns arose over the option presented in the CBO report of eliminating concurrent receipt of military

retired pay and VA compensation. While it is good to remain vigilant about continuing to ensure veterans and their families receive needed benefits, please note: **There are no current plans anywhere in Congress to eliminate concurrent receipt.** In fact, there is legislation pending to extend concurrent receipt to retirees with a less than 50% disability rating.

Currently, if a Veteran is a 20+ year Retiree and is rated 40% disabled, the Veteran's Retired pay from DFAS is reduced by the amount paid by the VA. In essence, the Veteran receives the same amount of pay but the portion paid by the VA is tax-exempt.

CRDP- is the Concurrent Receipt paid to a 20+ year Retiree (Reserve or Active Duty) that is rated 50% or higher by the VA. Nothing has to be done on the part of the Veteran that falls into this category unless they are a Retired Reservist as they do not begin receiving retired pay until age 60 (at that time they would inform the VA that they are now receiving Retirement Pay and that they are 50% or higher from the VA).

CRSC (Combat Related Special Compensation)- If a Veteran is medically retired from the Military, concurrent receipt is not automatic. They have to complete an application which will be sent to the Military Service Branch which requests Concurrent Receipt for specific VA service connected conditions that were incurred in combat, training for combat, instrument of war or simulated war. The application must include VA Rating Decisions, medical treatment records, proof of combat injuries, etc....

Education Benefits/Characterization of Discharge- In order for a Veteran to use the Post 9/11 GI Bill or Montgomery GI Bill, they must have an Honorable Discharge. A General Under Honorable Conditions (or less) disqualifies a Veteran from VA Education Benefits under Post 9/11 or Montgomery GI Bills.

The Department of Defense has announced a renewed effort to ensure veterans are aware of the opportunity to have their discharges and military records reviewed. Through enhanced public outreach, engagement with Veterans Service Organizations, Military Service Organizations, and other outside groups, as well as direct outreach to individual veterans, DoD is encouraging all veterans who believe they have experienced an error or injustice to request relief from their service's Board for Correction of Military/Naval Records (BCM/NR) or Discharge Review Board (DRB). All veterans who desire a correction to their service record or who believe their discharge was unjust, erroneous, or warrants an upgrade, are encouraged to apply for review. Some key information to include in requests for discharge upgrades include: 1) It is very important to explain why the veteran's discharge or other record was unjust or erroneous – for example, how it is connected to, or resulted from unjust policies, a physical or mental health condition related to military service, or some other explainable or justifiable circumstance.

2) It is important to provide support, where applicable, for key facts. For example, if a veteran has a relevant medical diagnosis, it would be very helpful to include medical records that reflect that diagnosis.

3) It is helpful, but not always required, to submit copies of the veteran's applicable service records. The more information provided, the better the boards can understand the circumstances of the discharge.

Discharge upgrades can also be granted on the basis of clemency. Veterans who believe their post-service conduct and contributions to society support an upgrade or correction should

describe their post-service activity and provide any appropriate letters or other documentation of support.

Respectfully Submitted
William E. Heyob
Commandant, Department of Idaho
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Announcement: Marine Corps 242nd Birthday

To all Marines, families and guests.

West Virginia Marines and Marine Corps League Detachment 342, Monongalia County, will be celebrating the 242nd year of Marine Corps History and cordially request the honor of your presence.

Date: November 10, 2017

Location: Knights of Columbus, 379 North Parkview Drive, Morgantown, WV 26505

Doors Open: at 6:00 PM

Dinner served at 7:00 PM

Choice of Prime Rib Au Jus (Medium), Chicken Cordon Bleu
or Vegetarian Roasted Pepper Penne

Entertainment: TBA

Tickets: Price to Be Determined

Deadline for reservations: To Be Determined

Reservation forms can be picked up at: To Be Determined

Reservation forms can be mailed to:

website: mcl342.org

For tickets, reservations, and information, call Commandant: Chuck Ghuste 304-692-0334 and leave a message.

VA to Decide on New Agent Orange Ailments by Nov. 1

VA Secretary David J. Shulkin will decide “on or before” Nov. 1 whether to add to the list of medical conditions the Department of Veteran Affairs presumes are associated to Agent Orange or other herbicides sprayed during the Vietnam War, a department spokesman said Tuesday in response to our enquiry.

Any ailments Shulkin might add to VA’s current list of 14 “presumptive diseases” linked to herbicide exposure would make many more thousands of Vietnam War veterans eligible for VA disability compensation and health care.

Ailments under review as possible adds to the presumptive diseases list include bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson-like symptoms without diagnosis of that particular disease. But hypertension (high blood pressure) and stroke also might be embraced, or ignored, as part of the current review.

The process was sparked by the Institute of Medicine’s 10th and final review of medical literature on health effects of herbicide exposure in Vietnam. The 1100-page report concluded in March 2016 that recent scientific research strengthened the association between herbicide exposure and bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson-like symptoms. Specifically, the

institute, or IOM, found “limited or suggestive” evidence of an association to herbicide versus its previous finding of “inadequate or insufficient” evidence of an association.

The IOM report also reaffirmed from earlier reviews “limited or suggestive evidence” of an association between herbicide sprayed in Vietnam and hypertension and also strokes. That same level of evidence was used in 2010 by then-VA Secretary Eric Shinseki to add ischemic heart disease and Parkinson’s disease to the Agent Orange presumptive list. Shinseki had stronger evidence, an IOM finding of “positive association” to herbicide for chronic lymphocytic leukemia, which he also added to the list that year. Shulkin, the current secretary, has authority to use IOM findings to add all five diseases to the presumptive list, or he can choose to look at other studies and scientific evidence to support adding fewer ailments or none at all.

The IOM, renamed the National Academy of Medicine last summer, delivered its Veterans and Agent Orange: Update 2014, to then-VA Secretary Bob McDonald 15 months ago. He immediately ordered a technical work group formed to review IOM findings and original studies it relied on, as well as any new science relevant to Agent Orange ailments. The workgroup’s findings then were reviewed by a smaller strategic workgroup, followed by an internal task force of senior VA leaders.

“The entire VA response packet (with specific recommendations for action) from the IOM Task Force was delivered to the Office of the Secretary for consideration” on February 17, a senior official told us at the time. Shulkin that month was confirmed as VA secretary. The previous 18 months he was VA undersecretary for health and would have been familiar with the Agent Orange packet. So, what has happened since then?

VA officials are lean on those details. A spokesman said VA continues to work “diligently to review the National Academy of Medicine report on potential new presumptions for Agent Orange and prepare the Secretary to make an informed decision. This includes everything from what the science is indicating, necessary regulations and a complete regulatory impact analysis. There is no delay in the decision process. Rather VA is taking appropriate time to ensure we are prepared to provide any benefits and services based on the Secretary’s decision.”

Past VA secretaries had rigid timetables for accepting or rejecting IOM findings. They also had to adhere to certain standards and procedures in determining if more diseases should be presumed service connected, and to explain in writing if they declined to add IOM-identified conditions to the presumptive list.

But Congress allowed those provisions of the Agent Orange law to “sunset” Oct. 1, 2015, six months before IOM delivered its last report. Shulkin therefore is under no “statutory deadline nor required to do anything” with the IOM report, except whatever he promised veterans and Congress, said Bart Stichman, co-director of the National Veterans Legal Services Program, a non-profit that advocates for veterans and had lobbied to the Agent Orange provisions. Many veterans know what’s at stake and have been pressing VA to add more diseases to the presumptive list. Also, thousands of sailors and Marines who served on ships in the territorial waters off Vietnam continue to press VA and the Congress to make Blue Water Navy veterans eligible for Agent Orange benefits.

“I’ve been doing everything I can to bug the hell out of Secretary Shulkin” on the latest IOM study, said Rick Weidman, executive director for policy and government affairs for Vietnam Veterans of America. Shulkin responds, Weidman said, that “he’s trying and it’s a process.” Weidman said he suspects one big hurdle is the White House’s Office of Management and Budget which likely resists saddling VA with sharply higher disability pay obligations for high blood pressure, bladder cancer or stroke contracted by any veteran who stepped foot in Vietnam during the war.

OMB tried to block Shinseki in 2010 from adding three ailments, including heart disease, to the presumptive list. Shinseki went around OMB and appealed directly to then-President Barack Obama who sided with veterans, Weidman said. The Congressional Budget Office calculated that within three years of that decision, ischemic heart disease, Parkinson’s and leukemia accounted for 280,000 additional compensation claims and \$4.5 billion in retroactive disability payments.

Beside resistance from OMB, Weidman said Shulkin is counseled by senior staff who run post-deployment health services and study environmental hazards for VA and yet are skeptical of the science associating herbicide dioxins with higher incidence of various ailments. The Agent Orange “experts” they rely on, Weidman charged, haven’t published “one scientific paper in a reputable peer review journal. The whole crew should be fired and I’ve told the Secretary that.”

But is VA studying more than whether to add Agent Orange ailments? Anthony Principe, VA secretary in President George W. Bush’s first term, argues for more sweeping changes. Like Weidman, Principe served in combat in Vietnam but believes the Agent Orange law went too far, forcing VA secretaries to build out lists of presumptive illnesses based only on suggestive links to their wartime service, and ignoring the impact of unhealthy lifestyles, heredity and aging.

Interviewed Tuesday, Principe said it doesn’t seem fair that an elderly Vietnam veteran can begin receiving more disability compensation for heart disease at 75 or 80 than a young Marine receives who loses a leg fighting in Afghanistan. Principe said he wants “common sense” changes to the Agent Orange law so that, for example, diseases on the presumptive list are deemed service connected only if diagnosed within 30 years of a veteran exiting Vietnam. There’s legal precedent if Shulkin were to propose such a rule, perhaps while adding hypertension to the presumptive list, said lawyer Stichman. In 1994, he recalled, Congress allowed such a “manifestation rule” for Agent Orange-related respiratory cancers. By 2001, however, it rescinded it on complaints by veteran groups that there was no science to support limiting benefits in that way

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VA opens emergency rooms to other-than-honorable discharged Veterans –

As of July 5, veterans with other-than-honorable discharges are able to access VA emergency rooms for urgent mental health care. The move is the culmination of months of review into how to handle the cases of vets who may have been improperly separated from the military due to undiagnosed or untreated problems like post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury or other mental health issues. In March, VA Secretary Shulkin pledged to find more ways to help those veterans, even if their status makes them ineligible for traditional veterans’ benefits. The new initiative mandates that veterans with other-than-honorable paperwork may

receive care for “a mental health emergency” for up to 90 days. That may include inpatient services, residential care or outpatient options. “Suicide prevention is my top clinical priority,” Shulkin said. “We want these former service members to know there is someplace they can turn if they are facing a mental health emergency, whether it means urgent care at a VA emergency department, a Vet Center or through the Veterans Crisis Line.”

Veterans advocates for years have pushed for some type of mental health care for the estimated 300,000 veterans who have been separated from the military with so-called “bad paper” discharges, arguing that many are reputable veterans whose underlying conditions forced them out of the service.

VA studies estimate that nationwide about 20 veterans a day commit suicide. Of those, the majority are not regular users of VA services. VA officials said during veterans’ 90-day emergency treatment, Veterans Health Administration officials and Veterans Benefits Administration staffers will work “to determine if the mental health condition is a result of a service-related injury, making the service member eligible for ongoing coverage for that condition.”



Three Mideast Division National Marines of the Year - “The 3 Amigos” join together at the National Convention banquet in Overland Park, Kansas on August 19, 2017. 2017 National Marine of the Year, Mike McLain, 2016 National MOY Roger Ware and 2009 National MOY Jack Severn - Department of Maryland.



Paymaster Roy Wood of Det. 956 of Elkins received the Department of West Virginia Marine of the Year Award during the 2017 Department Convention at the Town Center Marriott in Charleston.



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY TACOM LIFE CYCLE MANAGEMENT COMMAND
6501 EAST 11 MILE ROAD
WARREN, MICHIGAN 48397-5000
June 2017

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

Army Donations Program Office

Commandant Richard D. Gore, Sr.
Marine Corps League Detachment
National Headquarters
3619 Jefferson Davis Highway
Suite 115
Stafford, VA 22554

Dear Commandant Gore:

This letter is sent to inform you of the upcoming record reconciliation and inventory review campaign the Army Donations Program Office is launching. To ensure asset accountability, our Commanding General has directed a review of all program equipment to ensure appropriate documentation is on file and up-to-date.

Our office, as the executive agent for the Army, has the mission responsibility for operating the Army Ceremonial Rifle and Army Static Display Programs. It is the intent of this office to contact organizations assigned an Army asset and to request a completion of any missing or outdated paperwork, which the organization is required to complete and return within 30 days of receipt. By updating these documents, each organization will comply with the regulatory requirements of the program(s). In cases where an organization is non-responsive, or if a letter is returned undeliverable, this office may request assistance at the District, State or National level.

Army Donations program customers should expect processing delays while this accountability campaign is underway. The timeline for when the program will resume will depend largely upon the timeliness of organizational responses; so your member's quick replies would be mutually beneficial to us all. If feasible, please consider mentioning this inventory campaign to your members during your National Convention.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at (586) 282-1952 or e-mail audrey.j.clarke.civ@mail.mil. The office telephone number is (586) 282-9861; the office e-mail address is usarmy.detroit.tacom.mbx.ilsc-donations@mail.mil. The Army Donations Website (www.tacom.army.mil/ilsc/donations/) also contains program information, downloadable forms, and frequently-asked question information.

Sincerely,

Audrey J. Clarke
Chief, Army Donations Program

US Army letter June 2017 regarding Army Donations inventory of rifles

Pending Calendar

2017 Department of WV Quarterly Meeting - September 9, 2017 hosted by Danny M. Greene Detachment 577 in Logan, WV at the old Henlawson Grade School & Vet Center. Dept. Staff Officer Meeting is 9:30 AM with general business meeting at 10 AM. WV Pack Growl will immediately follow Dept. Meeting.

2017 Modern Day Marine Expo will be Sep 19 - 21, 2017 at MCB, Quantico, VA.

2018 Department of WV Spring Quarterly Meeting will be January 13, 2018 at American Legion Post 16 in Huntington, WV.

2018 MCL Midwinter Staff Conference will be March 1-3, 2018 at the Fredericksburg Hospitality House and Conference Center, 2801 Plank Rd, Fredericksburg, VA 22401. group code: MCLMDWINTER17 Phone: (540) 786-8321 Room rate includes up to 4 breakfast vouchers per occupancy. TBA per night + prevailing tax (currently 11.3%) Please make your room reservation direct to the hotel no later than TBA at 540-786-8321.

2018 Department of West Virginia Convention will be May 4-6, 2018 at The Quality Inn Gallipolis, 577 State Route 7 North, Gallipolis, OH 45769. Phone: (740) 446-0090. MGM Detachment 1180 will be the host detachment. Rooms rate: \$85.00 plus tax Banquet includes choice of: Prime Rib \$25, Chicken \$20. Dinners include salad, 2 vegetables, rolls, beverage, and dessert. Amenities: Group Rate includes free Wi-Fi, free parking, free cable, free in-room coffee, free breakfast for two guests per room (each additional guest in a room pays \$6) Breakfast is 6 a.m. – 10 a.m.

2018 Mideast Division Conference will be June 15-16, 2018 at the Turf Valley Resort, 2700 Turf Valley Road, Ellicott City, MD 21042. Phone: 410-465-1500 or 888-883-8873. Room rate: \$109.00 plus tax Use Group Code: 2944UW. Hosted by Department of Maryland.

2018 MCL National Convention will be August 12-17, 2018 at the Buffalo Hyatt, Two Fountains Plaza, Buffalo, NY 14202. Phone: (844) 612-8010. or 716-856-1234 (Ask for Laci) or Call 888-421-1442 for reservations. Cutoff date is July 9, 2018. Reservations open 0801 21 August 2017. Buffalo.hyatt.com. Room price \$113 for one and \$130 for 2 people plus room tax. Free parking, free breakfast and free Wi-Fi.

2018 MCL National Convention will be August 2019 in Billings, Montana.