



# *The Straight Scoop*

**Department Newsletter of the  
Marine Corps League  
Department of West Virginia  
P.O. Box 11828  
Charleston, WV 25339**



**Volume 11, Issue 3, March 2018**

## **Department Officers:**

Commandant: Michael McLain, 304-464-5049  
Sr. Vice Commandant: Scott Kirby, 304-588-0318  
Jr. Vice Commandant: Jerry Bain, 304-675-1905  
Judge Advocate: Richard Sneigle, 304-588-7901  
Jr. Past Commandant: Richard Shank, 304-633-1814  
Legislative: Hershel Williams, 304-743-1026  
Chief of Staff: Roger Ware, 304-636-4365  
Web Sgt: Steven Swenton, 304-277-8872

Adjutant: Patti Leib, 740-591-8611  
Paymaster: Patti Leib, 740-591-8611  
Chaplain: Frank Armentrout, 304-837-4011  
Sgt.-at-Arms: Chuck Ghuste, 304-692-0334  
Asst Sgt-at-Arms: Roy Wood, 304-339-3326  
Service/VAVS: Roger L. Estep, 304-380-7930  
Public Relations: Jean Lamb, 304-595-1482  
Historian: Mike Lynon, 304-419-0982

Department E-mail contact: [mclain@suddenlink.net](mailto:mclain@suddenlink.net) Department Web site:

<http://www.mcleaguedeptofwv.org/>

Department Adjutant/Paymaster: [pattileib024@gmail.com](mailto:pattileib024@gmail.com)

Newsletter Editor: Roger Ware, 181 Weese Street, Elkins, WV 26241 E-mail: [rrware@yahoo.com](mailto:rrware@yahoo.com)

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## **Membership Growth and Retention**

The growth of the Marine Corps League depends not only on recruiting new members but also on retaining current ones. These retention efforts for new members begin once he joins the League. In addition, efforts must be made to retain longstanding members and to keep them enthusiastic about the League. Retention efforts must start immediately after a new member joins. Encourage the new member to get involved by attending your meetings and participating in your activities as soon as possible. Establish a "welcoming committee" of several detachment members to provide the member and his family with information on the detachment provide them with a snapshot page of what activities and events the detachment has conducted and answer questions they may have. Present the new member with a baseball cap or T-shirt emblazoned with the detachment's name. The Jr Vice Commandant should introduce him to other detachment members, help make him feel at home and inform him of the dates and times for detachment meetings and activities. Establish a car pool to bring new (and old) members to meetings. Also, as soon as the new member's application is approved, get new members interested in learning the bylaws and administrative procedures to help their knowledge and involvement in the league grow.

Fabricate a survey form and give to the new member to find out their interests. Giving a new member responsibility and assigning him to program committees helps him feel that he is an important part of the detachment. Use the Member Survey to determine what activities and interests the new member wants to do the survey gives members the opportunity to list their preferences for possible committee assignments and indicate the areas that they find exciting, challenging and promising. There is also space for members to express their thoughts on how to improve existing programs. Ask them to also list new programs they think the detachment should consider.

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Establish a Membership Retention team (MRT) to examine reasons why members become inactive and let their membership lapse. The MRT plans programs to conserve the detachment's membership and anticipate and solve problems that may cause membership delinquency. The Jr Vice Commandant should be the retention chairman and his committee be composed of the paymaster and one member well versed in the detachment bylaws and administrative procedures. After discovering problems, the MRT should work with detachment officers to remedy them.

The paymaster should provide the MRT with a list of members in danger of being delinquent. Contact these members and discuss their reasons for being inactive. Urge them to become active again. The paymaster can also furnish a list of inactive members. Contact former members who still meet membership eligibility requirements and ask them to rejoin.

Keep detachment meetings interesting and relevant. If a member asks himself, "Why am I here?" then something is wrong. Start meetings on time and keep discussions, comments, etc., within proper limits. The commandant should refer any nonessential matters to the appropriate committees. Hold meetings on a night convenient to most members. Allow all members to voice their opinions in an orderly way and try to keep meetings open and relaxed.

Encourage a free exchange of ideas on league programs and business during detachment meetings, but make sure the members remain focused on the issues under discussion. If possible, complete the business portion of the meeting within an hour.

Another way to help retain members is personal follow-up. Let a member know he is missed the first time he fails to attend a meeting or event. Consider sending a postcard letting the member know he was missed. Call him on the telephone or write a personal note at the bottom of the next meeting notice.

Marked decline in meeting attendance and committee involvement among formerly active members is a sign of lost interest. Although these members may have compelling reasons for reducing the amount of time they give, do not give up on them. Handle such members with tact and consideration. Make missing members feel valued and needed by asking them to take on a task that "only they can do," one which their experience truly counts. Ask them to give just a small amount of their time to one particular project. Explain that their contribution is very important. Take time to say thanks. Honor members with a luncheon, ceremony, award or certificate in recognition of their years of involvement and service.

Use monthly meeting minutes and newsletters to keep members up-to-date on important information vital to the successful operation of your detachment. Be in constant communication with all your members and keep them informed.

Look at your current programs and activities to evaluate whether your detachment's resources and members are being fully used. Do members express interest in these programs? Are a majority of the members participating? What type of league image do these programs project to the community? Are these programs meaningful, sincere and diversified enough to appeal to all detachment members?

If your detachment has lost good members, develop a campaign to retrieve those members. Organize a number of active members with good telephone personalities located throughout the geographic area your detachment covers. Give each volunteer a list of lapsed members in his neighborhood, with details of when they joined, what committees each served on and what each did for the league. Add to the list whatever personal data your records contain. This information serves as a good starting point for conversation. Supply these workers with up-to-date information about the detachment including present activities, future plans and membership meeting minutes.

Recruit delinquent members just as you would new prospects. Sell the league to past members. Ask them what they enjoyed most about their participation in the past. Keep questioning on a positive basis. Emphasize the aspects of the league the member is most likely to miss in allowing his membership to lapse.

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## **2018 MCL Department Convention Schedule The Quality Inn, Gallipolis, Ohio May 4-5, 2018**

### **Friday, May 4, 2018**

1300-1600 Professional Development & Leadership Training 1300-1600 MCL & MODD Registration

1200-1300 Lunch on your own

1300-1700 Department Audit Committee\*

1600-1700 Commandant's Council for Detachment Commandants/**Staff Officers Meeting**

1700-1830 Dinner on your own

1700-2230 Hospitality Room opens

1830-1900 MODD Pack Board Meeting – At call of Dept. Commandant, Pack Leader, MODD

1900-2100 MODD Growl of the Pack

## Saturday, May 5, 2018

0600-0930 Breakfast on your own 0800-1000 MCL registration

0800-0815 Flag-raising Ceremony - Dept Sgt-at-Arms

0820-0930 Memorial Services, all hands attending - Dept Chaplain

0930-0945 Department Budget Committee Meeting\*

0930-0945 Department Nominations Committee Meeting\*

1000-1200 MCL Business Meeting

1200-1315 Lunch on your own 1315-1600 MCL Business Meeting

1615-1640 New Officer Installation & Department Officers' Meeting

1800-1900 Formal Reception

1900-2200 Grand Banquet

\* At call of Chairman for Audit, Budget and Nominations Committee



Registration Form  
2018 Dept of WV Co

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### Mideast Division Marine of the Year

Section 300 (h) of the National Administrative Procedures outlines the criteria for selection of the National Marine of the Year. Using these provisions, the following Mideast Division MOY recipients are the committee to select a 2018 Mideast Division Marine of the Year. The Chairman is Roger Ware - Department of West Virginia The other committee members are: Bud Raines - Department of Maryland, Richard Tanner - Department of Delaware, Mike McLain - Department of West Virginia and Jeffrey Jones - Department of North Carolina. The guidelines in Section 300 (h) (2) of the above reference must be followed for each nomination. Please insert "Division" in lieu of "National ", as appropriate. Any regular member from the Mideast Division can be nominated and the Mideast Division MOY will be presented at the 2018 Mideast Division Conference, June 26, 2018 in Ellicott City, MD. Each letter of nomination must be mailed to the above chairman, registered return receipt, post marked not later than May 15, 2018. Mail to Roger Ware, 181 Weese St, Elkins, WV 26241. Telephone: 304- 636-4365. The Marine of the Year Committee will announce the 2018 recipient during the Mideast Division Conference. The above provisions are for 2018 Marine of the Year selection only.

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### Division Marine of the Year Criteria

This award shall be presented to a REGULAR MEMBER of the Marine Corps League who has rendered service(s) and/or performed a deed(s) above and beyond the duties and obligations required of a member of the Marine Corps League, or a meritorious deed(s) so identified as being within the scope of these rules shall be of such substance that the weight will or shall have brought acclaim and prestige to the Marine Corps League; or has enhanced and/or furthered the concepts of the duties of being a citizen of the United States of America; or a deed(s) of courage or valor without regard for his/her own safety

Letters of nomination must originate only at the DETACHMENT LEVEL. No individual nor any subsidiary unit of the Marine Corps League shall submit a letter of nomination. All letters of nomination shall include a letter signed by the Detachment Commandant and Adjutant, stating that the nominee for Division Marine of the Year was approved at a regular meeting of the detachment by a majority vote. (In the event a nominee is the Commandant, the letter of nomination shall be signed by the Senior Vice Commandant and the Adjutant. In the event a nominee is the Detachment Adjutant, the letter of nomination shall be signed by the Detachment Commandant and Senior Vice Commandant).

Each nomination submitted shall be placed in a sealed envelope and addressed to "Chairman, Division Marine of the Year Society". THIS ENVELOPE SHALL THEN BE PLACED IN ANOTHER ENVELOPE and mailed, certified/return receipt requested, to: The Chairman at the address listed on the announcement.

The member must be a member in good standing and have served at least either an elected or appointed position within his detachment and department. List how many years he has been a member. List his positions and what was the significance of each if any. Is he a Detachment or Department Marine of the Year?

The recommendation should summarize what the member has done in his detachment, and or department. It should be brief and only impact areas where the candidate performed that brought credit upon his detachment and not merely list that he performed the duties expected of his position and or attended meetings. What were the results of any activities he participated in that were above the normal expected duties of his position.

List those activities where he was the chairman or committee lead. Examples: Toys for Tots for 15 years and how many toys collected and how many children benefited.

Chairman of numerous fund-raising events that benefited detachment or selected charities. What was the total amount generated. Did he teach flag etiquette or flag folding to children, how many classes and how many kids for how many years.

What civic projects or volunteer did he do to enhance the league. If he did not participate as a league member in an event or activity, do not list it. What did he do as a volunteer outside of his detachment for the league. Was he recognized within his community for a project?

The nomination should be a snapshot of the member's achievements and not just listing his MCL awards. Did he attend his department quarterly meetings or convention, Mideast Division Conference, National Mid-Winter Staff Conference, National Convention?

The Division MOY Committee has developed a point system to aid them in their selection process. Consideration can be giving a point for each event, and a point giving for participation outside his detachment for either serving on department, division or national level and on any committees.

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### **Liver Flukes - 25% Vietnam Vets Test Positive in Small Study**

Nearly one in four Vietnam War combat veterans who participated in a small study at the Northport VA to detect past infestations of the cancer-causing liver fluke parasite tested positive, according to a paper penned by researchers at the VA Medical Center. The pilot study, titled "Screening US Vietnam Veterans for Liver Fluke Exposure 5 Decades After the End of the War," is in the current edition of the periodical *Infectious Diseases in Clinical Practice*. The Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center at Northport conducted the study last spring, after Vietnam combat veteran Jerry Chiano of Valley Stream was diagnosed with bile duct cancer in 2013. Chiano died in November.

Northport examined 97 Vietnam War veterans and selected 50 who met the inclusion criteria of having eaten undercooked freshwater fish while serving in Vietnam. Blood samples collected at Northport were subjected to serological examinations performed by researchers at Seoul National University College of Medicine in South Korea because no facility in the United States is equipped to identify the antigen marker that shows the parasite was once present.

Two members of Congress — Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Rep. Tom Suozzi (D- Glen Cove) — released statements calling for a broader study to determine whether wartime exposure to liver fluke should be considered service-related. "The Northport Medical VA Center's groundbreaking study confirms what many vets have asserted: some of our brave Vietnam veterans were, in fact, exposed to cancer-causing parasites when serving overseas," Schumer said in a release. "I am urging the VA to move forward with developing a treatment, screening and awareness program to help our Vietnam veterans who may be at risk to developing bile duct cancer in the future," Schumer said. Suozzi said the VA should move quickly to address the study's findings. "There must be a lot of anxiety in the Vietnam Veteran's community and we should try to alleviate that anxiety by actually getting firm answers," Suozzi said.

Liver flukes are parasitic worms that spend part of their life cycle in freshwater snails that inhabit rivers throughout parts of the Far East, including Southeast Asia, China and the Korean Peninsula. The snails release larvae that burrow into the flesh of fish and can infest the bile ducts of humans who eat the fish. They can reside symptomless in a victim's body for decades. The adult worm is believed to release an irritant during its quarter-century life span — an irritant that can lead to cancerous lesions in the bile duct decades after the parasitic infestation has died out. In some south Asian villages where raw fish consumption is part of

the culture, more than one in two people harbor liver fluke infestations, according to parasitologists.

Some activists have likened the seriousness of fluke exposure in Vietnam veterans to Agent Orange, a class of dioxin-contaminated herbicides believed to have tainted hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops. The VA pays disability claims to Vietnam veterans who suffer from any of a host of maladies linked to Agent Orange exposure, from heart disease to bladder cancer. Since 2013, the VA has received 240 disability claims related to bile-duct cancers associated with liver fluke, the agency said. It had rejected more than 76 percent of those claims.

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### **VA Benefits Eligibility - Top 10 Reasons Vets Do Not Apply**

1. I don't trust the Government. Many veterans have indicated that they don't trust their Government in matters of confidentiality and privacy, and therefore, have no interest in pursuing benefits. Veterans from the Vietnam era are particularly sensitive regarding their distrust of the Government. Many veterans from that era have indicated that they had a very bad experience while in uniform, and felt as though the Government is not really inclined to assist or help them. One veteran said, "The Government did me wrong while I was in Vietnam, and I am sure they'll do me wrong again."
2. I didn't know I was eligible. Far too many veterans are unaware of their eligibility status. Many veterans assume that since they aren't registered to use VA services, they are automatically ineligible for benefits. One veteran said, "I never retired from the military so I always believed I was ineligible for benefits."
3. I am not eligible. Military discharge status plays in big role in determining if a veteran is potentially eligible for benefits. Honorably discharged veterans are 100% eligible for benefits if they meet the criteria. Veterans with a Bad Conduct Discharge are not eligible for benefits. However, some veterans fall some place between an Honorable Discharge and a Bad Conduct Discharge. For instance, a veteran with a General Discharge is oftentimes eligible for benefits. Best to visit with a Veterans Service Officer to find out if you qualify. One veteran said, "My discharge papers show that I was forced out of the military due to the needs of the Government and my bad foot. I have a General Discharge with medical stipulations. I always thought that made me ineligible for future benefits."
4. I don't want to go through the "red tape." Many veterans are of the belief that pursuing benefits from the VA is a matter of navigating a very complex and confusing system that involves mounds of documentation. While it may be true that there is a lot of paperwork, most, if not all is handled by a competent VSO and not the veteran. The VSO is trained to work with the bureaucracy, not the veteran, and takes much the complexity away from the veteran. One veteran said, "It's just too confusing to get started."
5. I don't know how. While there are many veterans service organizations in existence, many veterans do not understand how those organizations can truly help them apply for benefits. Also, many veterans don't know where to begin. One veteran said, "I always thought a VFW was a bar for veterans, and they sit around and swap war stories. I never knew they had staff on board that could help me apply for benefits."
6. I make too much money. There are many veterans who make over one hundred thousand dollars annually, and are receiving compensation for a service-connected disability. A veterans' disability is independent from their income from other sources, and is not a factor to determine eligibility. There are a few millionaire politicians who are service-connected and receive monthly compensation from a service-connected disability. One veteran said, "I never applied for benefits because I always believed I made too much money to be eligible for compensation."
7. I was denied after the war. Sure, many veterans are denied after first applying for benefits, whether a few months after serving in a war zone or years later. Bottom line, sometimes it takes a few tries to get it right. One veteran said, "I applied for compensation after being diagnosed with PTSD and was quickly denied. I decided it wasn't worth my time to try again."

8. Don't know what to apply for. Some veterans have many post war ailments and aren't sure which ones to submit for service-connected compensation, while other veterans appear healthy, except for a few nagging conditions, and aren't sure if their condition would be considered for compensation. Discussing your issue with a respected and competent VSO is very important. They often know what is potentially eligible for compensation and what is not and most importantly, how to get your benefits package started. One veteran said, "I have so many things wrong with me I don't know where to start. If I submit claims for all of my conditions the VA will reject them all thinking I am not telling the truth."

9. I can't prove my health problems are related to my time in the military. Finding a good VSO is very important in securing disability compensation for a service-connected condition. The VSO will help you connect the dots. Some VSOs are very innovative in helping veterans find the appropriate proof needed for their claims. While other VSOs have great "inside connections" that may be able to locate documents needed to show proof for a veteran. One veteran said, "The VA can't find my medical records so I can't prove I was injured in Vietnam."

10. Other veterans are more deserving. Too many veterans take this stance to keep themselves from attempting to apply for benefits they may be eligible to receive. The forces and influences that kept many soldiers alive by watching each other's back live with them forever. One veteran said, "It took guys in my group one year to convince me that I should apply for compensation. I did, and six months later I was 80% service-connected for PTSD, depression, and diabetes. I never would have put in for benefits if they didn't talk me into it."

### **VA DRC Program - Use to Expedite Disability Claims**

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Thinking of filing another VA disability compensation claim? Make sure you file it through the new Decision Ready Claim (DRC) Program. With DRC, you can get a decision on your claim in 30 days or less. Work with an accredited Veterans Service Organization (VSO) to determine if the DRC Program is right for you and your claim. Your VSO can then help you gather and submit all relevant and required evidence so your claim is ready for VA to make a decision when you submit it. If you plan to file any of the following types of claims, work with your VSO to file them as a DRC:

- Direct Service Connection Claims: Claims for a disability that was caused by or during your service.
- Presumptive Service Connection Claims: Claims for a disability that the VA automatically presumes to be service-connected, based on unique conditions or situations you experienced during your service
- Secondary Service Connection Claims: Claims for a disability that you have as a result of another service-connected disability.
- Increased Disability Claims: Claims for a disability you have a VA rating for that has gotten worse.

Not planning to file a claim soon? Spread the word to your fellow Veterans, Service members and their families about the DRC Program to help them get faster decisions on their claims too. The DRC Program also now accepts Pre-Discharge claims for Service members about to transition to civilian life, and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) claims for surviving spouses. Learn more about the DRC Program, including eligibility requirements, what medical evidence you need to submit, and how to find an accredited VSO at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/drc.asp>

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### **Vet Benefits Publications - Understanding Your Disability Rights**

To learn more about your disability rights and benefits as veterans & dependents copy and paste on the following to download these free documents and handbooks:

1. 2017 Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors
2. VHA Handbook 1601B.05, Beneficiary Travel - Veterans Affairs
3. VHA Handbook 1330 01 Health Care Services for Women Veterans.PDF
4. Trauma Recovery Program (TRP) National Directory
5. 2018 Directory of Federal Medical Facilities
6. 2018 Veterans Healthcare Handbook

7. 2018 United States Military Retired Handbook
  8. 2018 Military Children's' Scholarship Book
  9. 2018 Guard and Reserve Military Handbook
  10. 2018 Getting Uncle Sam to Pay for Your College
  11. 2018 Benefits for Veterans and Dependents
  12. 2018 After the Military
  13. Disability Rights
  14. VARO Fax Cover Sheet
  15. Veterans Exposed to Radiation Eligible for Compensation
  16. Guide to Long Term Services and Supports
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### **Military Death Benefits - Helping Families of the Fallen**

Online fund-raising sites let well-wishers provide financial support for grieving families, both in and out of uniform. But as more requests on behalf of active-duty military dependents show up on these sites, sometimes offering emotional pleas for survivors who are destitute or “left with nothing,” donors should consider what programs are in place to assist these families, and whether online generosity may overlap with existing benefits.

Most civilians, and even some in the military, “are generally unaware of the robust benefits the government provides,” said Jen Harlow, director of casework support services for the nonprofit Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), “and also what organizations like ours provide.”

Among other things, TAPS offers information about benefits and helps connect survivors with those benefits, government and otherwise. It provides grief counseling, staffs a 24-hour help line, and works with other organizations to help fill gaps, such as supplementing a family's finances until monthly payments from various government sources begin. Usually, Harlow said, the person who starts a fund-raising campaign for a survivor on a site such as GoFundMe is a friend or family member. TAPS may reach out to let them know about the nonprofit and to make sure they know about benefits available to the survivors.

If you're considering a donation, you may want to contact the campaign organizer to learn how the money will be used. An example: A campaign seeking money for education costs for children of a fallen service member may have been started by a friend who is unaware of the federal and nonprofit-program offerings that will cover such expenses.

Donors also should consider the costs associated with online giving. Sites have different methods of covering their costs; GoFundMe, for example, takes 2.9 percent plus 30 cents per donation. On a \$100 donation, \$3.20 goes to the administrator. Use these factors to inform your giving, but don't let them dissuade you from acting on your charitable instincts. “If people want to give, that's wonderful, and they should support the military family as much as they can, because people sacrifice so much,” said Bonnie Carroll, president and founder of TAPS.

#### **DEATH BENEFIT BASICS**

Immediate benefits to survivors of those who die on active duty:

SGLI: Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance will pay up to \$400,000 to beneficiaries selected by the service member. Service members who wish to reduce that amount must do so in writing.

Death gratuity: This \$100,000 payment also goes to beneficiaries of the service member's choice. Note: The service member is not obligated to choose those dependent on his income when selecting SGLI or death-gratuity beneficiaries.

CAO: The service member's primary next of kin is assigned a casualty assistance officer, who will provide information about benefits and help family members apply for those benefits, among other need-dependent duties.

Burial benefits: A grave site at a Veterans Affairs Department cemetery, with a headstone or marker; a burial flag; and transportation to the burial site for immediate family members, or the reimbursement of transportation costs.

**Ongoing monthly payments include:**

- **DIC:** Dependency and Indemnity Compensation pays a monthly, nontaxable allowance of \$1,283.11 to the spouse and another \$317.87 per child under 18, along with another \$270 per month for two years if there is at least one child. Rates adjust each year for cost-of-living increases. Some surviving parents may receive DIC, with the amount based on their income.
- **SBP:** The Survivor Benefit Plan pays a monthly benefit equal to 55 percent of the service member's retirement pay had the member been retired at 100 percent disability at time of death. However, the amount of the SBP is offset, dollar for dollar, by the amount of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation the surviving spouse receives.
- **Social Security:** Monthly benefits are paid to the surviving spouse with children, based on the earnings of the service member.

**Education benefits:**

The Fry Scholarship; funded by The Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry. This Scholarship provides Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits (full tuition and fees, a monthly housing allowance, and a stipend for books and supplies) for public school, in-state students who are dependents of fallen service members. Up to 36 months of benefits are paid at the 100 percent level. A surviving spouse is generally eligible for 15 years after the service member's death; a child's eligibility ends on the child's 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

DEA: Children and spouses also may be eligible for the VA-run Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance program, though there are some limitations.

Other Scholarships: Spouses and children may be eligible for a number of scholarship programs funded by charities and other service groups. A good starting point is the Fisher House Foundation's scholarship search tool.

**Other continuing benefits:**

- Tricare health benefits continue at the rates for active-duty dependents for three years; after that, co-pays and cost shares are the same as retirees pay.
- Spouses and children are eligible for Tricare Dental Program benefits for three years and may be eligible for the Tricare Retiree Dental Program afterward.
- Commissary and exchange shopping privileges continue.
- Eligibility for VA-backed home loans continues.

**Walgreens in collaboration with the VA**, is providing no-cost flu shots for VA patients now through March 31, 2018. Sharing this link for your awareness and to share with your community partners:

[https://www.walgreens.com/images/adaptive/pdf/84924\\_VA\\_Flu\\_Voucher\\_2016.pdf](https://www.walgreens.com/images/adaptive/pdf/84924_VA_Flu_Voucher_2016.pdf)

This flu season, VHA has again teamed up with the national retail pharmacy, Walgreens, to provide no-cost quadrivalent flu vaccinations for enrolled Veterans through the VA Retail Immunization Care Coordination Program. This partnership offered greater access to flu vaccines, and as a result, more than 70,000 Veteran patients received flu shots at their local Walgreens last year. We expect even more will this year. The partnership between the VA and Walgreens continues to grow and the current vaccination period runs now through March 31, 2018.

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## VA Claim Fast Tract System - Speeds Up Process

The Agent Orange Fast Track Claims Processing System is dedicated to processing claims for Vietnam Veterans who are claiming service connection for any of the following conditions who served in the Republic of Vietnam or in-land waterways between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975.:

- Ischemic Heart Disease
- Hairy Cell and other B-Cell Leukemias
- Parkinson's Disease
- Diabetes Type II
- Prostate Cancer
- Multiple Myeloma
- Hodgkin's Disease

The Fast Tract system is exclusively a web-based platform whereas, veterans can simply log on to the VA web portal and submit their claims documentation, supporting medical evidence from all sources and any other documentation needed to establish and verify their service-connected claim. VA doctors will have access to the Fast Tract system, that will enable them to take the veteran out of the role as middle man between care providers and the VA.

VA doctors can then fill out the forms and submit them online quickly and easily. VA rating specialists will be able to log on to the system, identify outstanding information on the way to fully developing a claim (FDC) and give a suggested rating at the end of the automated process.

You can apply for VA disability compensation and pension online through eBenefits at [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov) For disability compensation claims, you can also upload all supporting evidence you might have, and make your claim a Fully Developed Claim. To file a claim for VA disability compensation electronically, go to eBenefits, select Apply for Benefits ad then click on Apply for Disability Compensation. You will need to create an eBenefits account to apply for disability compensation online.

To file a claim for VA pension electronically, go to eBenefits, select Apply for Benefits, then select Apply for Veterans Benefits via VONAPP. Once you submit your claim, you can track the status using eBenefits.

The Fully Developed Claim (FDC) Program is the fastest way to get your claim processed and there is no risk to participate! To participate in the FDC Program, if you are making a claim for veteran's disability compensation or related compensation benefits, simply submit your claim in accordance with the "FDC Criteria" shown on VA-Form 21- 526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits. If you are making a claim for veteran's non-service-connected pension benefits, use VA Form 21-527EZ, Application for Pension. If you are making a claim for survivor benefits, use VA Form 21-534EZ, Application for DIC, Death Pension, and/or Accrued Benefits. VA forms are available at [www.va.gov/vaforms](http://www.va.gov/vaforms).

Veterans who find computers challenging may want to consult with their VSO or find help from a computer specialist to help them navigate the Fast Track system. Some veterans have reported that the Fast Tract system seems cumbersome and confusing; utilizing your VSO can save time and frustration.

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*(Does your Detachment have any recent photos and events you'd like included in the Straight Scoop?? We'd sure enjoy sharing them with everyone, so be sure to send in photos, stories, or articles on events conducted by your detachment!)*

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## VA Claim Filing - Ensuring Maximum Entitlement Receipt

After you file your claim, VA will send a letter verifying receipt of your claim and notifying you of the information they need. This will include release forms they will need you to fill out in order to request files from civilian doctors you have seen.

- Be sure to read everything very carefully. Sometimes the dates can be wrong or VA might be asking for the wrong information. In addition, you may have better luck getting documents from doctors than will the VA. When you forward medical release letters to civilian medical providers for their records, be sure to follow up with a phone call to ensure they understand what you are requesting, especially for psychologists. Leave nothing to chance and never expect the VA will figure out how to contact these people for you.
- At the examination for conditions like PTSD, VA has examination criteria online. Google whatever condition to read about the experience of other veterans after their exams. This can help a lot. First, it will help you frame your condition in terms that the VA examiner will use in their analysis of your condition. Second, it will help you think through relevant dates and issues prior to the evaluation. This increases your credibility factor with the examiner.
- Write a one or two-page summary about your condition. Use bullet points with brief explanations of each and every treatment for that particular condition. Be careful to not overwhelm your examiner. Ask if the examiner has viewed your C-File before the exam. If not, you may have a claim for a review if the examiner gives you an adverse finding. If the C-File is not present for the exam, be sure to note the fact. A lack of C-File can bias your exam and be cause for a new one if you do not get the results you think you deserve.
- Be patient. The whole process can take up to one year or longer. So, do not expect the cash to start flowing in quick enough to pay next month's rent.

Note that there are several conditions where the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will propose a reduction in a veteran's service-connected disability rating. It is very important for all veterans to know that a proposal is not yet a decision, therefore, veterans have time to challenge the proposal to reduce their rating and to provide medical evidence as to why a rating should not be reduced at all, or not as much as VA proposes. Many VSOs suggest that veterans not send the "Notice of Disagreement" form [<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0958-ARE.pdf>] to "appeal" the proposal, as a veteran can only formally disagree with a decision or appeal an actual decision.

If a veteran asks for a personal hearing within 30 days of notification of a proposal to reduce their rating, the VA will not reduce the rating until the veteran has a chance to present appropriate evidence. If the VA continues paying at a veterans' current rate until a hearing has taken place (if necessary) and the veteran is not successful in convincing the VA not to reduce their rating, this may create an overpayment that the VA will definitely recoup from the veteran as soon as humanly possible. For certain conditions, when a veteran gets a high rating on a disability, a VA decision letter will oftentimes indicate that "since there is likelihood of improvement, the rating is not considered permanent and is subject to future review."

This means the VA will contact the veteran at some point in the future to re-evaluate the status of his/her disability. Disabilities such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or migraine headaches may improve with medication or sit-down talking therapy of some sort and is therefore, oftentimes, subject to future scrutiny and examination by the VA. It is very important if a veteran is service-connected for a condition the VA says is subject to future review that the veteran continues to see a medical provider to report current symptoms, which will factor into any future evaluation of the particular disability.

Another example of when VA will propose a reduction is when a veteran is service-connected for a cancer. When cancer is present and for a certain time after treatment stops, a veteran will be rated at 100 percent for this disability. However, if the cancer goes into remission and the veteran is no longer undergoing any treatment such as radiation or chemotherapy, the VA will rate the veteran on the residuals of the cancer. For example: if a veteran is service-connected for prostate cancer and was 100 percent during treatment and for a

certain time after the treatment ends and the cancer goes into remission, the VA will propose a reduction to a percentage that reflects the residuals (side effects) the individual has such as urinary leakage, urinary frequency, erectile dysfunction, bowel urgency, the use of absorbent materials, and other factors related to treatment.

It is important to read the letter and understand what percentage is given for residuals (side effects), and that the veteran report to his doctor all residuals so when a veteran receives a proposal for a reduction, the veteran will know whether or not it accurately reflects residual symptoms and if not, have medical evidence to submit to request a higher rating.

Another example of a VA proposed reduction is if the veteran is receiving 100 percent disability under Individual Unemployability (IU), and the veteran does not return the form the VA sends every year asking for verification of employment status. If the veteran ignores the "IU Letter" and does not return the form to the VA, the VA may send the veteran a letter saying they are going to reduce the current rating to the combined rating held before the veteran was awarded 100 percent under I.U.

The same holds true for letters the VA sends randomly to veterans receiving additional compensation for dependents (veterans rated at 30 percent or higher). This letter will ask a veteran to verify there has been no change in their dependent status. If the veteran does not respond, the VA will send a letter saying they are removing the dependent and that the veteran owes the dependent rate portion of their compensation back to the date they last had confirmed dependent information.

It is very important for a veteran to always report any change in dependent status to the VA, such as a divorce, death of a spouse, child who marries, death of a child, etc. Also, and of great importance, the veteran should always make copies of any documents sent to the VA. Many veterans have great success in sending documents to the VA with a certified stamp. That will show proof the VA received or did not receive the veterans' documents.

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### **WWII Marines at Sea - Bravery, Discipline, and Very Long Journeys**

US Marines played a huge part in WWII in the Pacific. Their daring and discipline were the foundation on which many Allied victories were built. Focusing on their actions on land overlooks the other side of a Marine's life. Away from the action and in the build-up to battles, they spent a lot of time on board ships.

*Sea Sickness and Long Journeys:* Many young men joined the Marines at the outbreak of WWII. They chose that unit for the chance to fight the Japanese and serve their country, not out of an attraction to the sea. Many had never even been on a ship. For many, their first journey to war was also their first encounter with sea sickness. The heads, or shipboard toilets, were filled with vomit as men learned the hard way what the sea could do to a land-living man. The situation was made worse by storms and long voyages. The journey across the Pacific from America was a long one. The need to avoid submarines added to its length, as ships took diversionary tactics across the ocean.

*Overcrowded:* The situation was made more uncomfortable by overcrowding. In considering how many men to squeeze into a ship, the needs of the war trumped the comfort of the soldiers. Packed in like sardines, the Marines found everything from eating to sleeping to using the head was harder than it had been back on land. Queues and close quarters were the order of the day – every day.

*Discipline:* Under such circumstances, it was particularly important for military discipline to be maintained and inspections were carried out. Soldiers' bags were also searched when they returned from shore leave. Little details reinforced that it was military life. While crossing the Pacific, Marines were banned from throwing their cigarette butts overboard in case they left clues of their presence for Japanese submarines.

*Time in Port:* Time on shore could be as eye-opening for the Marines as their time on the rolling waves. For many, it was the first time they had been so far away from home. For most, the journey would take them to new places. While in port, they were not allowed to leave the ship all day or every day. Shore leave was granted though, to relieve the pressure of life inside a tin can. The men visited bars, theaters, and cinemas.

They bought newspapers, books, and sweets to keep them entertained during their voyages. It provided a chance for some sightseeing as well. As they mustered in west coast ports such as San Francisco, young men went to see the Golden Gate Bridge, then under guard due to the war. Further afield, they went ashore in Australia and New Zealand. There they encountered cultures subtly different from their own. They chatted up local girls and picked up the slang.

*Tensions on Board:* Relations with the locals were often more positive than relations with the crew of the ships. It is easy to see how tensions arose between the crew of a ship and the Marines crammed into its hold. For the crew, it was their home, one they suddenly had to share with hundreds of others. For them, Marines meant crowding and discomfort. The hostility of the swabbies, as the sailors were referred to, fostered resentment among the Marines. They noticed that swabbies served each other first at the ship's store, leaving them with leftovers. When malfunctions added to their discomfort, conspiracy theories blamed it on the swabbies.

*Crossing the Equator:* For ships that crossed the equator, there was a chance for relief from the tension, in the form of naval tradition. It was common in the Navy for crews to haze men crossing the equator for the first time. A crew member dressed up as Neptune, ruler of the seas, and set his minions to cartoonishly tormenting the new men, to the entertainment of onlookers. Some Marines got to see their lieutenants subjected to this ritual, a moment of entertainment and bonding with the crew. For once, they were on the same side.

*Work Details:* While they were on the ship, the Marines were put to work like any other member of the crew. They cleaned, tidied, and repaired. Among their tasks was chipping away the old paint accruing on many ships, which would have ignited if the ship caught fire. When in a dock, their labors included unloading and loading provisions. Sometimes, they unloaded supplies and equipment and then reloaded them. The order in which things were packed when approaching combat needed to be different than during a peaceful voyage, so they unloaded and reloaded heavy crates of bullets and shells.

*Training:* As they approached the war zone of the western Pacific islands, training began. Live rounds were issued. Gunners practiced loading and firing. The ships' guns were also fired as sailors prepared to face enemy vessels and shore bombardments. When circumstances allowed, Marines practiced beach landings. Weighed down with all their combat equipment, they boarded landing craft and raced to the shore of friendly or uninhabited islands. It provided relief from the monotony, but there was also frustration when things went wrong.

*Lies, Damned Lies, and Orders:* To prevent the Japanese learning of their plans, commanders did not tell the Marines where they were going or when. Training and repacking meant that action was imminent, but there were no details. The announcement of a training exercise could be a cover for upcoming combat. It was a waiting game, but each man knew they were heading to fight.

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## THE GINGHAM DRESS

A lady in a faded gingham dress and her husband, dressed in a homespun threadbare suit, stepped off the train in Boston and walked timidly, without an appointment, into the Harvard University President's outer office.

The secretary could tell in a moment that such backwoods, country hicks had no business at Harvard, & probably didn't even deserve to be in Cambridge.

"We'd like to see the president," the man said softly. "He'll be busy all day," the secretary snapped. "We'll wait," the lady replied. For hours the secretary ignored them, hoping that the couple would finally become discouraged and go away.

They didn't, and the secretary grew frustrated and finally decided to disturb the president, even though it was a chore she always regretted. "Maybe if you see them for a few minutes, they'll leave," she said to him.

He sighed in exasperation and nodded. Someone of his importance obviously didn't have the time to spend with them, and he detested gingham dresses and homespun suits cluttering up his outer office the president, stern faced and with dignity, strutted toward the couple.

The lady told him, "We had a son who attended Harvard for one year. He loved Harvard. He was happy here. But about a year ago, he was accidentally killed. My husband and I would like to erect a memorial to him, somewhere on campus."

The president wasn't touched. He was shocked. "Madam," he said, gruffly, "we can't put up a statue for every person who attended Harvard and died. If we did, this place would look like a cemetery."

"Oh, no," the lady explained quickly. "We don't want to erect a statue We thought we would like to give a building to Harvard."

The president rolled his eyes. He glanced at the gingham dress and homespun suit, then exclaimed, "A building! Do you have any earthly idea how much a building costs? We have over seven and a half million dollars in the physical buildings here at Harvard."

For a moment the lady was silent the president was pleased. Maybe he could get rid of them now.

The lady turned to her husband and said quietly, "Is that all it cost to start a university? Why don't we just start our own? " Her husband nodded. The president's face wilted in confusion and bewilderment.

Mr. and Mrs. Leland Stanford got up and walked away, traveling to Palo Alto, California where they established the university that bears their name, Stanford University, a memorial to a son that Harvard no longer cared about.

You can easily judge the character of others  
by how they treat those who they think can do nothing for them.

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### **Annual Corporate Report**

Every detachment must be incorporated within the state so after annual officer installations are complete, the Detachment must complete and file a Corporation Annual Report prior to 30 June each year and mail to the WV Secretary of State, Business and Licensing Division. If Officers are installed or changed after 1 July, the Detachment must file an Application to Appoint or Change Officers, and/or Office Addresses with the WV Secretary of State. Once the form is completed, a copy should be mailed to the Department Adjutant for record purposes. Every detachment that is incorporated must file an Annual Report for Corporations. The cost is \$25 and is payable to the WV Secretary of State's office. This must be completed before June 30 of each year. This should be done as soon as you have your elections and officers installed. The Secretary of State has mailed out a postcard reminding all corporations that their report is due prior to June 30. If you have not received your renewal form, contact the WV Secretary of State at 1-877- 826-2954 or 1-866-767-8683 and have one sent to your detachment. Companies that do not file their annual reports on time are at risk of being administratively dissolved or revoked and will be assessed a mandatory late fee of \$25 (twenty-five dollars) for non- profit organizations as required by West Virginia Code.

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### **Dues Notification – From Department Adjutant/ Paymaster**

Detachment Commandants and Paymasters:

Please be reminded, when members are getting caught up on their annual dues because of National's change to everyone having one annual renewal date, members are to pay the \$10 for the short period (i.e.: March 2017- August 2017) then the full amount of \$20 for 2018 (September 2017 - August 2018) for the NATIONAL PORTION for the full year. In addition, members are still required to pay \$5 for the Department portion for the delinquent period (FY2017) plus \$5 for the current period (FY2018) to the Department of WV.

Anyone who is delinquent on the National portion, is also delinquent with the Department. A general rule of thumb is, if a member owes dues to National, they also owe dues to the Department. If your Detachment receives a form letter from NHQ stating they need to pay the delinquent portion for the shorter period to get caught up, then they also owe the department portion. National did not mention that in their form letter, but I have confirmation that this is correct.

Once a member is caught up with their 2017 and 2018 dues, this problem will be resolved.

One last reminder, please submit All transmittals (even in response to letters received from National) through me (the Department of WV Paymaster) at:  
PO Box 1224, Athens, OH 45701-1224

If you have questions, please feel free to call me at (740) 591-8611 or email me to [pattileib024@gmail.com](mailto:pattileib024@gmail.com) (do not use the phone number listed on prior copies of the Straight Scoop; I seldom have a chance to retrieve those messages). For a prompt response, please use the phone number and mailing address in this email and on this current publication of the Straight Scoop.

Semper Fi

Patti Leib, Adjutant-Paymaster  
Department of West Virginia - MCL  
(740) 591-8611  
[pattileib024@gmail.com](mailto:pattileib024@gmail.com)

MAIL TO:

PO Box 1224  
Athens, OH 45701-1224

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### Pending Calendar

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.

# Department of West Virginia Marine Corps League Annual Convention May 4-5, 2018

## General Information and Registration Form

Hosted by  
MGM Detachment #1180

The Department of West Virginia Marine Corps League Annual Convention will be held May 5-6, 2018 at the Quality Inn Gallipolis, 577 State Route 7 North, Gallipolis, OH 45631. The room rate is \$85 per night plus tax, king or double room. **Please make your room reservation directly with the hotel no later than April 15, 2018 by calling 1-740-446-0090, or toll free 1-877-424-6423. The hotel Website is [www.choicehotels.com/QualityInn/Gallipolis](http://www.choicehotels.com/QualityInn/Gallipolis).**

Reference "Marine Corps League: Department of WV 2018 Convention"

The Grand Banquet will be held May 6, 2018 in the Hotel Banquet Room. The menu will be a choice of Baked Chicken \$20.00 or Prime Rib \$25.00. **Pre-registration must be received no later than April 15, 2018.** Simply complete this form, make your check payable for the Banquet and Pre-registration to "MGM Detachment #1180" with "2018 Convention" in the memo field, and **mail both this form and your check to:**

**MGM Detachment #1180  
PO Box 235  
Point Pleasant, WV 25550**

Please print and complete the following information as you want it to appear on the individual(s) name tag.

### Attendee

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Detachment \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Guest

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Relation \_\_\_\_\_

\$5 pre-registration each \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Dinner each:

\_\_\_\_\_ Baked Chicken \$20.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Prime Rib \$25.00

Enclosed Check Total = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(2 lines above)

