



Rensselaer County
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 Veterans Service Agency
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Rensselaer County Veterans Newsletter

KATHLEEN M. JIMINO
 County Executive

Volume 6, Issue 1
 Jan./Feb. 2011

Robert M. Reiter, Director

New Program Speeds Approval for Vietnam Veterans

Van Transportation...

- * **Don't drive** and need to get to the VA Medical Center or the Troy VA Clinic!?
- * We offer complimentary van transportation to and from the VAMC and the Troy VA CBOC for **most morning** medical appointments.

For more details call
 270-2760.



WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has decided more than 28,000 claims in the first six weeks of processing disability compensation applications from Vietnam Veterans with diseases related to exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange.

“With new technology and ongoing improvements, we are quickly removing roadblocks to processing benefits,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “We are also conducting significant outreach to Vietnam Veterans to encourage them to submit their completed application for this long-awaited benefit.”

VA published a final regulation on Aug. 31 that makes Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam and who have been diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, ischemic heart disease, or a B-cell (or hairy-cell) leukemia eligible for health care and disability compensation benefits. With the expiration of the required 60-day congressional review on Oct. 30, VA is now able to process these claims.

Vietnam Veterans covered under the new policy are encouraged to file their claims through a new VA Web portal at www.fasttrack.va.gov. Vietnam Veterans are the first users of this convenient automated claims processing system.

If treated for these diseases outside of VA’s health system, it is important for Veterans to gather medical evidence from their non-VA physicians. VA has made it easy for physicians to supply the clinical findings needed to approve the claim through the new Web portal. These medical forms are also available at www.vba.va.gov/disabilityexams.

The portal guides Veterans through Web-based menus to capture information and medical evidence required for faster claims decisions. While the new system currently is limited to these three disabilities, usage will expand soon to include claims for other conditions.

COLA TIED TO SOCIAL SECURITY AND CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

WASHINGTON – The Social Security Administration has announced that no cost-of-living adjustments will be made to Social Security benefits in 2011 because the consumer price index has not risen since 2008 when the last Social Security increase occurred.

Like recipients of Social Security and other federal benefits, Veterans, their families and survivors will also not see a cost-of-living adjustment in 2011 to their compensation and pension benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Under federal law, the cost-of-living adjustments to VA’s compensation and pension rates are the same percentage as for Social Security benefits.

VA provides compensation and pension benefits to about four million Veterans and beneficiaries. For more information about VA benefits, go to www.va.gov or call 1-800-827-1000.

A Message from County Executive Jimino:

Happy winter!!! And as we all dig out from yet another one of what seem to be an endless line of winter storms I want to highlight the importance of checking in with our Veterans Service Agency from time to time to ensure you are receiving all of the benefits you are eligible for due to your service to our nation.

The article published in this month's newsletter discussing newly expanded benefits available to those exposed to Agent Orange is a clear example of how important a task it can be to check if any changes or updates to eligibility could impact the benefits you or a loved one receives. Please allow us to help you get you full benefits as a small token of our appreciation of you have done for us!

Sincerely,



Kathy Jimino

A Message from the Director:

WARNING TO VETERANS: Forwarded by Kevin Secor, VSO Liaison, Office of the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

An organization called Veterans Affairs Services (VAS) is providing benefit and general information on VA and gathering personal information on veterans. This organization is not affiliated with VA in any way.

[Websites with the name "vaservices" immediately after the "www" ARE NOT part of the Department of Veterans Affairs, the US Government agency. Do not go to them or if approached or called, do not offer them any information concerning yourself or data on other veterans. Keep in mind that the real VA website ends in .gov. Also, be aware that the Department of Veterans Affairs does not randomly call veterans, nor does it ask veterans for information which it does not already have, like Social Security Numbers. In particular, if you have not dealt with the VA previously and in person and all of a sudden you receive a call from someone saying they are with the VA or something similar sounding, hang up the phone. Also, do not respond to emails which suggest that they are from the VA. The VA never conducts official business nor asks for personal information by email.

VAS may be gaining access to military personnel through their close resemblance to the VA name and seal. Our Legal Counsel has requested that we coordinate with DoD to inform military installations, particularly mobilization sites, of this group and their lack of affiliation or endorsement by VA to provide any services. In addition, GC requests that if you have any examples of VAS acts that violate chapter 59 of Title 38 United States Code, such as VAS employees assisting veterans in the preparation and presentation of claims for benefits, please pass any additional information to Mr. Daugherty at the address below.

Michael G. Daugherty
Staff Attorney
Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of General Counsel (02262)
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

*Yours in Patriotism,
BOB*

Upcoming Events:



*Call us by the 15th of the month and we
will list your event.*

February 14...Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m., **Samuel R. Dinova, Army, WWII**

February 21... President's Day—**Office Closed**

March 14...Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m., **John M. Hall, Navy, WWII**

April 11...Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m., **Wayne B. Hotailing, Coast Guard, Vietnam Era**