



RENSSELAER COUNTY VETERANS NEWSLETTER

Rensselaer County
Unified Family Services
Veterans Service Agency
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KATHLEEN M. JIMINO
Joseph W. Cybulski
Commissioner

County Executive
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Director

Economic Stimulus Package

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 Albany-VAMC and Troy Clinic for most morning medical appointments.

For more details call 270-2760



Recently, Congress passed an Economic Stimulus Package that allows select taxpayers to be eligible to receive a payment of \$300 (\$600 on a joint return) if they had at least \$3,000 in qualifying income. To qualify, one must have no tax liability, such as low income workers or those who receive Social Security benefits or Veterans' disability compensation, pension or survivors benefits received from the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2007.

Qualifying income includes Social Security benefits, certain Railroad Retirement benefits, certain veterans' benefits and earned income, such as income from wages, salaries, tips and self-employment. While these people may not be normally required to file a tax return because they do not meet the filing requirement, the IRS emphasizes they must file a 2007 return in order to receive a payment. The IRS has produced

a special form that highlights the specific sections that need to be filled out in order to qualify for a tax rebate. You can access the form at <http://www.irs.gov/pub/newsroom/1040a.pdf>

Recipients of Social Security, certain Railroad retirement benefits, certain veterans' benefits should report their 2007 benefits on Line 14a of Form 1040A or Line 20a of Form 1040. Taxpayers who already have filed but failed to report these benefits can file an amended return by using Form 1040X. The IRS is working with the Social Security Administration and Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that recipients are aware of this issue.

Some people receiving Social Security and veterans' benefits may not realize that they need to file a tax return to get the stimulus payment.

FREE TAX PREP.....

Westside Waterfront Weed-N-Seed Troy has set up a VITA site at the Troy CYO, 237 4th Street. They will be providing free tax return preparation for individuals and families whose taxable income is below \$40,000. They will be providing this free service from Feb. 6th to April 4th on Wednesday's 6-9pm, Thursday 9am-2pm, and Saturdays 9am-2pm. For further information and/or to schedule an appointment, please call 270-4689.

VA Increases Travel Reimbursement for Eligible Veterans

Over a million eligible veterans will see their mileage reimbursement more than double starting February 1, 2008, for travel to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities.

This increase helps veterans—especially those living in rural areas—offset some of the gasoline costs as they travel to receive VA health care. Increasing the mileage reimbursement is one more step by VA help veterans access the health care they deserve.

The 2008 appropriations act provided funding for VA to increase the beneficiary travel mileage reimbursement rate from 11 cents per mile to 28.5 cents per mile, effective February 1, 2008. While increasing the payment, VA, as mandated by law, also equally increased the deductible amounts applied to certain mileage reimbursements. The new deductibles are \$7.77 for a one way trip, \$15.54 for a round trip, with a maximum of \$46.62 per calendar month.

A Message from County Executive Jimino:

I hope you find the information contained in this month's Veterans Newsletter helpful. We in Rensselaer County take a great deal of pride in the programs and services available to help support our Veterans who have through their service defended the freedoms we hold so dear.

To ensure that you are receiving all of the benefits you are entitled to through your service to our nation or the service of your spouse I urge you to check in with our Veterans Service Agency from time to time since programs or your eligibility may change making it very important to keep in touch with us.

Sincerely,
Kathleen M. Jimino
Kathy Jimino

REVISIONS TO COLD WAR VETERANS TAX EXEMPTION CRITERIA

As of February 2008, the Cold War Veterans Tax Exemption criteria has been revised as follows:

- Type of proof that will be accepted— Form DD-214, which you should have received upon separation from the service, it is no longer required to also have the Cold War Recognition Certificate.
- Length of service to qualify— the veteran must show a discharge or release from the US Armed Forces under honorable conditions and that the service was during the Cold War period, it is no longer necessary to have at least one year active duty (exclusive of active duty training).

Expansion of Eligibility for Combat Veterans

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2008 was signed by President Bush on January 28, 2008. This Act extends the period of enhanced health care eligibility provided to a veteran who served in a theater of combat operation after November 11, 1998 (commonly referred to as combat veterans or OEF/OIF veterans as follows:

• **Currently enrolled veterans and new enrollees who were discharged from active duty on or after January 28, 2003** are eligible for the enhanced benefits, for 5 years post discharge.

• **Veterans discharged from active**

duty before January 28, 2003, who apply for enrollment on or after January 28, 2008, are eligible for the enhanced benefit until January 27, 2011.

As before, veterans included in this authority may be enrolled in Priority Group 6, if not eligible for a higher Priority Group placement, and may be charged co-pays for medication and/or treatment of conditions that are clearly unrelated to their combat service (e.g. common cold, broken bone). These veterans, while not required to disclose income, may do so to determine their eligibility for a higher priority status, beneficiary travel benefits and exemption of co-

pays for care unrelated to their military service.

There is no change to VA's policy of continuing enrollment of veterans who enroll with VA under this "Combat Veteran" authority after their enhanced eligibility period ends. At the end of the enhanced eligibility period, VA will reassess the veteran's information and make a new enrollment decision. If the veteran was in Priority Group 6 and no other eligibility factors apply then he/she will continue enrollment in either Priority Group 7 or Priority Group 8 depending on their income level and will be required to make applicable co-pays.

Upcoming Events:



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

March 10...Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m. **John P. Rogers, Army Air Corp. WWII**

April 14...Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m. **William D. Mohan, Army Air Corps, WWII POW**

May 12...Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m. **Ret. BMC-Edward J. Patrick, Jr., Navy, Vietnam**

May 24...East Greenbush Memorial Day Parade, kick off time 10 a.m.

May 26...Memorial Day— **Office Closed**

May 26...Veterans of Lansingburgh 12th Annual Memorial Day Parade, kick off at 11:00 a.m.



