The cost of war -- on veterans’ health and taxpayer wallets -- will loom a little larger in the new year when the Department of Veterans Affairs issues a final rule to claim adjudicators to presume three more diseases of Vietnam veterans, including heart disease, were caused by exposure to Agent Orange.

The rule, expected to be published soon, will make almost any veteran who set foot in Vietnam, and is diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, B cell leukemia or ischemic heart disease (known also as coronary artery disease), eligible for disability compensation and VA medical care. The exception would be if credible evidence surfaces of a non-service cause for the ailment.

Katie Roberts, VA press secretary, said no estimates will be available on numbers of veterans impacted or the potential cost to VA until after the rule change takes effect sometime in 2010. But the National Association for Uniformed Services was told by a VA official that up to 185,000 veterans could become eligible for benefits and the projected cost to VA might reach $50 billion, said Win Reither, a retired colonel on NAUS’ executive board.

NAUS also advised members that VA, to avoid aggravating its claims backlog, intends to “accept letters from family physicians supporting claims for Agent Orange-related conditions.” It said thousands of widows whose husbands died of Agent Orange disabilities also will be eligible for retroactive benefits and VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation.

“Costly Agent Orange-Heart Disease Link Looms

The excitement over expansion of benefits for Vietnam veterans, and worry by some within the Obama administration over cost, flows from an announcement last October by VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki. He said three categories would be added to the list of diseases the VA presumes were caused by Agent Orange. Veterans with the presumptive Agent Orange ailments can get disability compensation if they can show they made even a brief visit to Vietnam from 1962 to 1975. With a presumptive illness, claim applicants don’t have to prove, as other claimants do, a direct association between their medical condition and military service.

Shinseki said he based his decision on work of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies. VA contracts with IOM to gather veterans’ health data and investigate links between diseases and toxic herbicide used in Vietnam to destroy vegetation and expose enemy positions.

In a speech last July, Shinseki, former Army chief of staff and a wounded veteran of Vietnam, expressed frustration that “40 years after Agent Orange was last used in Vietnam, this secretary is still adjudicating claims for presumption of service-connected disabilities tied to its toxic effects.” VA and the Defense Department should have conducted conclusive studies earlier on presumptive disabilities from Agent Orange, he suggested.

(Continued Page 2)
Continued from Page 1

“The scientific method and the failure to advocate for the veteran got in the way of our processes,” Shinseki bluntly concluded.

In last October’s announcement he said VA “must do better reviews of illnesses that may be connected to service, and we will. Veterans who endure health problems deserve timely decisions based on solid evidence.”

When a disease is added to VA’s list of ailments tied to Agent Orange, veterans with the disease can become eligible for retroactive disability payments, back to the date original claims were rejected, if after 1985.

Joe Violante, legislative director for Disabled American Veterans, praised Shinseki’s decision. But he said VA faces a “logistical nightmare” in trying to find veterans turned down on earlier on claims. A VA official told Violante, he said, that cost of the search could be part of that nightmare.

Chairman of government affairs for Vietnam Veterans of America until last October was John Miterko. He said he wasn’t surprised that Shinseki added ailments to the Agent Orange presumptive list including heart disease.

“If you look at the Vietnam veteran population, the diseases we’ve contracted and the mortality rate, the only group dying faster rate are the World War II veterans,” Miterko said. “We’re picking up diseases by our ‘60s that we shouldn’t be getting until our late ‘70s, early ‘80s. So his adding other diseases, heart disease in particular, isn’t a surprise.”

Both Shinseki and his predecessor, James Peake, former Army surgeon general, had long military careers and served in Vietnam. “That’s a hell of a bonus for us,” Miterko said. Both of them have shown “much more empathy, much more understanding. They would have seen many of their own peer group suffering from the effects of exposure to Agent Orange.”

Miterko doesn’t believe anyone can estimate how many veterans will benefit from the new presumptive diseases. VA will continue to process claims individually, he said, and likely won’t be accepting Agent Orange as the cause of heart disease for someone “who has smoked for 40 years and is morbidly obese. Common sense is going to have to prevail as well.”

Written by Tom Philpott/December 31, 2009

A Message From the Director:

Good News/Bad News.....................The co-pay for VA prescriptions was set to go up on January 1, 2010. This has been delayed, the VA is going to hold off for six (6) months. So what’s it mean, it will stay at $8.00 for a 30 day supply and not increase to $9.00.........a 12.5 % increase. The increase will take effect as of July 1, 2010.

Yours in Patriotism,

Bob

Upcoming Events:

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

January 18... Martin Luther King Day—Office Closed
February 8...Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m., Arthur E. Gifford, Army, Vietnam
February 15... President’s Day—Office Closed

SPECIAL NOTE: Please watch next month’s newsletter, included will be our Annual Report.
Recently, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) revised a number of their policies that could have significant impact on the lives of Vietnam veterans and their family members. These changes, if not heard about already, are clear examples of why veterans should from time to time check in with their local veterans service agency to make sure that as their health changes or when changes in Veterans Administration policies occur the benefits the veteran is entitled to are applied for and received.

Some recent changes implemented by the VA include a modification to their presumption of whether or not a veteran was exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War. This change applies to Navy veterans who served on certain ships during spans of time when those ships traveled on inland waterways and those servicemen on board would have presumably been exposed to Agent Orange. According to the January 2010 U.S, Department of Veterans Affairs Compensation and Pension Service Bulletin regarding the expansion of the presumption of exposure to certain navy veterans, "If a veteran's service aboard one of these ships can be confirmed through military records during the time frames specified, then exposure to herbicide agents [agent orange] can be presumed without further development."

This change is of great importance as applicable veterans will now have better access to health care and can make disability claims for diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange.

Along the same lines, the VA has also expanded the list of diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange to include B cell leukemia, hairy cell leukemia, Parkinson's disease as well as heart disease. Vietnam veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and diagnosed with these or any of the other diseases linked to the herbicide are eligible for disability compensation and health care benefits.

(continued page 2)
As I mentioned before, changes in VA policies such as these make it extremely important that veterans review their health status and check in with their veteran's services agency to make sure they are receiving the benefits and care they have earned through their service to our nation.

Locally, in Rensselaer County, veterans and their families can rely on their own Office of Veterans Affairs located in the County Office Building at 1600 Seventh Ave. in downtown Troy to find out about services and programs currently available. Our highly qualified staff will gladly walk a veteran or their family member(s) through the VA claims process. Last year alone, the Rensselaer County Veterans Affairs agency assisted more than 14,000 veterans or their dependents to receive services or benefits they were due. Services provided range from the assistance with benefits claims such as those mentioned earlier to transportation services for medical visits. If you are a veteran, or care for one, I urge you to give us a call at (518) 270-2760 so that we can make sure you or the veteran you care for is receiving the care and benefits they are owed.

To help ensure that the needs of our veterans are being met, I recently formed the Veterans Services Coordinating Council to help facilitate communication among all the community organizations that offer veterans services. Along with helping assess the current services available, I expect that this group will prove essential when changes in the needs of the veterans' population arise in helping all of the groups and organizations dedicated to this cause in order to take appropriate measures.

For more information on veterans' services provided by the Rensselaer County Veterans Agency, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. You have served us so well, it is now our turn to help provide the service that you may need!

Kathleen M. Jimino
Rensselaer County Executive
Receiving or Replacing Military Medals and/or Records

Receiving or Replacing Military Medals:

Medals awarded while in active service are issued by the individual military services if requested by veterans or their next of kin. Request for replacement medal, decorations, and awards should be directed to the branch of military in which the veteran served. However, for Air Force (including Army Air Corps) and Army veterans, the National Personnel Records center (NPRC) verifies awards and forwards requests and verification to appropriate services.

Requests for replacement medals should be submitted on Standard Form 180, “Request Pertaining To Military Records,” which may be obtained at your local VA office. When requesting medals, type or clearly print the veteran’s full name, include the veteran’s branch of service, service number or Social Security number and provide the veteran’s exact or approximate dates of military service. The request must contain the signature of the veteran or next of kin if the veteran is deceased. If available, include a copy of the discharge or separation document.

Receiving or Replacing Military Records:

If discharge or separation papers are lost, veterans or the next of kin of deceased veterans may obtain duplicate copies by writing the National Personnel Records Center, Military Personnel Records, 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63132-5100. Specify that a duplicate separation document is needed. The veteran’s full name should be printed or typed so that is can be read clearly, but the request must also contain the signature of the veteran or the signature of the next of kin, if the veteran is deceased. Include branch of service, service number or Social Security number and exact or approximate dates and years of service. Use Standard Form 180, “Request Pertaining To Military Records.”

You may also request a copy of military records via the internet at www.archives.gov. If you choose this method, we strongly suggest that once the records are received by the veteran, that they register a copy with the local Veterans Service Agency.

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 Clinic for most morning medical appointments.

For more details call 270-2760

Troy Flag Day Parade
June 13, 2010 Annual
Rensselaer County Veterans Service Agency is looking for Veterans to march with us in the parade.
If you are interested please call our office for details at (518) 270-2760.
The VA will add Parkinson’s, ischemic heart disease and hairy-cell leukemia to the list of diseases presumed to be caused by Agent Orange exposure.

The new policy will apply to some 2.1 million veterans who set foot in Vietnam during the war, including those who came after the military stopped using Agent Orange in 1970. It will not apply to sailors on deep-water ships, though the department plans to study the effects of Agent Orange on the Navy.

The veterans department already recognizes more than a dozen conditions as being presumptively connected to Agent Orange exposure in Vietnam, including Hodgkin’s disease, prostate cancer and Type 2 diabetes.

But for diseases not on that list, veterans are required to provide evidence directly relating their service in Vietnam to their illness, a requirement that often leads to application rejections and prolonged appeals.

Veterans department officials estimate that about 200,000 veterans might seek benefits under the proposed change in policy. But they said they could not estimate the cost of the change until the policy underwent public review and was published in final form, which could take several months.

This is a victory for groups like Vietnam Veterans of America, which has been pushing the department to add Parkinson’s disease, ischemic heart conditions and hypertension to the list of diseases presumptively linked to Agent Orange.

But the new policy is also likely to prompt debate over how much responsibility the federal government should take in compensating and caring for aging veterans who are exhibiting a growing list of physical and psychological problems.

The most common of the three illnesses, ischemic heart disease, restricts blood flow to the heart, causing irregular heartbeats and deterioration of the heart muscle.

Some doctors and researchers say the expansion of Agent Orange benefits has been based on weak or inconclusive science, given the lack of studies on Vietnam veterans. Those skeptics argue that diseases like prostate cancer or Type-2 diabetes are just as likely the result of aging, lifestyle or genetic predisposition as exposure to Agent Orange.

NOTE from Larry Scott, VA Watchdog dot Org ... According to this report in The New York Times, three new diseases will be added to Agent Orange exposure presumptives for "boots on the ground" Vietnam veterans.

Upcoming Events:

May 10...Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m. Martin Pechenik, US Army, WWII

May 30...City of Rensselaer Memorial Day parade, step-off at 2 p.m.

May 31...Memorial Day—OFFICE CLOSED

May 31...Veterans of Lansingburgh Annual Memorial Day Parade, kick off at 11:00 a.m.

May 31...Nassau Memorial Day Parade, kick off at 2:00 p.m.

June 13...Troy Flag Day Parade, kick off at 1 p.m.

June 14...Honor-a-Deceased Veterans ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m. Seymour Fischer, US Army, WWII
What Is TSGLI?
The Traumatic Injury Protection Under Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (TSGLI) program is a rider to Servicemember's Group Life Insurance (SGLI). The TSGLI rider provides for payment to service members who are severely injured (on or off duty) as the result of a traumatic event and suffer a loss that qualifies for payment under TSGLI.

Who are TSGLI Payments Designed to Help?
TSGLI payments are designed to help traumatically injured service members and their families with financial burdens associated with recovering from a severe injury. TSGLI payments range from $25,000 to $100,000 based on the qualifying loss suffered.

What Are The Eligibility Requirements For Payment Under TSGLI?
To be eligible for payment of TSGLI, you must meet all of the following requirements:
● You must be insured by SGLI when you experience a traumatic event.
● You must incur a scheduled loss and that loss must be a direct result of a traumatic injury.
● You must have suffered the traumatic injury prior to midnight of the day that you separate from the uniformed services.
● You must suffer a scheduled loss within 2 years (730 days) of the traumatic injury.
● You must survive for a period of not less than seven full days from the date of the traumatic injury. (The 7-day period begins on the date and time of the traumatic injury, as measured by Zulu [Greenwich Meridian] time and ends 168 full hours later).

Do you have to be in service to apply for a TSGLI benefit?
No. As long as the service member experienced the traumatic event while in service and covered by SGLI, they can apply for the benefit even if they have since been discharged.

What If The Traumatic Injury Occurred Prior To December 1?
Congress directed that TSGLI would be retroactive to October 7, 2001, for members who incur a qualifying loss as a direct result of injuries incurred on or after October 7, 2001, through and including November 30, 2005, in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). For the purposes of TSGLI only, "incurred in Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom" means that the member must have been deployed outside the United States on orders in support of OEF or OIF or serving in a geographic location that qualified the service member for the Combat Zone Tax Exclusion under the Internal Revenue Service Code.

For more detailed information on the TSGLI benefit, Office of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance by phone at 1-800-419-1473.
The U.S. Department of the Treasury is sending a direct mail letter in the coming weeks to a select group of VA Compensation or Pension check recipients to encourage them to switch from a paper check to the Direct Express® Debit MasterCard® card for their payments. The Direct Express® card is endorsed by VA and is safer, easier and more convenient than receiving a paper check.

THE MAILING

Who will receive the mailer and when?
In May and June 2010, 150,000 VA Compensation or Pension check recipients in Texas, New York, California, Mississippi, Kentucky, Georgia, and West Virginia will receive the mailer, which will include a letter from Treasury's Financial Management Service, a brochure explaining the features and benefits of the card, and a form they can use to sign up for the card by mail. (A postage-paid envelope will also be included.) VA Compensation or Pension beneficiaries can also sign up by phone at (888) 544-6347.

How will a VA Compensation or Pension beneficiary know the mailing is legitimate?
The return address will display the name "Department of the Treasury, U.S. Treasury Processing Center," and the letter inside will be signed by Walt Henderson, Director of Treasury's EFT Strategy Division.

How might VA Compensation or Pension beneficiaries hear about the Direct Express card even if they don't receive the mailing?
If a VA Compensation or Pension beneficiary also receives Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, he/she may have heard about the Direct Express card through check inserts sent by the Treasury Department. Additionally, VA will provide information about the mailing and the Direct Express card to its veteran service organization partners, regional offices and call centers, and on its website.

If a VA Compensation or Pension check recipient does not receive the mailer, can he/she still sign up for the card now?
Yes. The beneficiary can call the U.S. Treasury Processing Center at (888) 544-6347 to switch to the Direct Express card.

THE DIRECT EXPRESS CARD

Why is the Direct Express card better than paper checks?
Paper checks can be delayed, lost and stolen. In fact, in 2009, an estimated $69 million in Treasury-issued checks were fraudulently endorsed. The Direct Express Card provides safer, easier and faster access to money. The benefits are clear:

- **Safe.** No need to carry large amounts of cash and no risk of lost or stolen checks. Money in the card account is FDIC-insured (up to the maximum amount allowed by law).
- **Easy.** Money is automatically posted to the card account on payment day, so there's no need to wait for the mail to arrive.
- **Convenient.** Cardholders can make purchases and pay bills anywhere Debit MasterCard® is accepted. The card can also be used to get cash at retail locations, ATMS and banks and credit unions throughout the world.
- **Recommended.** The Department of Veterans Affairs and Treasury Department encourage VA Compensation and Pension check recipients to sign up for the card.

Are there fees associated with the card?
There are no sign-up fees, monthly fees or overdraft charges. Most services are free. Some fees for optional services may apply. For information on fees and features, call (877) 212-9991 or visit [www.USDirectExpress.com](http://www.USDirectExpress.com).

Are current Direct Express cardholders satisfied with the card?
(Continued on Page 3)
So far, approximately one million people have signed up for the Direct Express card. The vast majority of Direct Express cardholders have expressed satisfaction with the card because it offers convenience, safety and immediate access to their money. According to Treasury Department research, 95 percent of cardholders surveyed said they are satisfied with the card and 86 percent said they are very likely to recommend the card to family or friends who receive a federal benefit payment.

**SIGN-UP INFORMATION**

**How can VA Compensation or Pension beneficiaries sign up for the card?**
VA Compensation or Pension check recipients can switch to the Direct Express card by calling (888) 544-6347. This toll-free phone line is dedicated to helping VA Compensation or Pension beneficiaries sign up for the Direct Express card. Phone sign-up is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time. People who received information in the mail can also fill out and mail back the application in the postage-paid envelope provided. No bank account or credit check is required.

**Can VA beneficiaries sign up for the card online?**
Not yet. VA Compensation or Pension beneficiaries are encouraged to sign up by phone at (888) 544-6347 or by mail if they received the letter. The phone number is dedicated to helping VA Compensation or Pension beneficiaries sign up for the Direct Express card.

**Can a VA Compensation or Pension representative payee sign up for the Direct Express card?**
No. A representative payee for a VA Compensation or Pension benefit recipient may not yet receive payments on the Direct Express card.

**If a VA Compensation or Pension beneficiary also receives Social Security or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) checks, can he/she also sign up to receive those benefits on the card?**
Yes. When a VA Compensation or Pension benefit recipient signs up for the Direct Express card, he/she can also request to receive Social Security payments via the card. Call (888) 544-6347 to do this.

**If someone already receives Social Security or SSI benefits on the Direct Express card, will he/she need to sign up for a separate card?**
No. If the VA Compensation or Pension check recipient is already receiving another federal benefit payment through the Direct Express card, he/she can sign up to receive the VA Compensation or Pension benefit via an existing card. Call (888) 544-6347 to do this.

**Can other VA benefits be paid using the Direct Express card?**
No. Only VA Compensation or Pension benefit payments are available for now.

**Where can people go for more information?**
For more information, people can go to [www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/direct_express.htm](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/direct_express.htm) or visit USDirectExpress.com.

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**Honor-A-Deceased Veteran Ceremony**

Every second Monday of the month, the County honors a deceased veteran in a very moving and respectful ceremony in the County Legislative Chambers. If you have loved one, who was a veteran from Rensselaer County and would like to have them honored, please contact the Rensselaer County Veterans at 270-2760 for an application.

The following criteria applies to the honorees:
- Must be from Rensselaer County (born, raised or resided in);
- Must have been Honorably Discharged and discharge must accompany application;
- May only be honored once;
- Submitted application must be legible and have a family contact (name, address and telephone number);
- List of all medals, campaigns, and battles;
- Include civilian history (all community services and organizations);
- Be as detailed as possible, the entire ceremony is dedicated to this veteran and it is their life story.
A Message From Our Director

"WHY THE AMERICAN FLAG IS FOLDED 13 TIMES"

Author Unknown

Have you ever wondered why the Flag of the United States of America is folded 13 times when it is lowered or when it is folded and handed to the next of kin at the burial of a veteran?

Here is the meaning of each of those folds and what it means:

1. The first fold of our Flag is a symbol of life.
2. The second fold is a symbol of our belief in eternal life.
3. The third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veterans departing our ranks who gave a portion of their lives for the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world.
4. The fourth fold represents our weaker nature, for as American citizens trusting, it is to Him we turn in times of peace as well as in time of war for His divine guidance.
5. The fifth fold is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our Country, in dealing with other countries may she always be right; but it is still our country, right or wrong."
6. The sixth fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.
7. The seventh fold is a tribute to our Armed Forces, for it is through the Armed Forces that we protect our country and our flag against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our Republic.
8. The eighth fold is a tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor mother, for whom it flies on Mother's Day.
9. The ninth fold is a tribute to womanhood; for it has been through their faith, their love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great has been molded.
10. The tenth fold is a tribute to the father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since they were first born.
11. The eleventh fold, in the eyes of a Hebrew citizen represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon, and glorifies in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
12. The twelfth fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit.
13. The thirteenth fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, is a tribute to womanhood; for it has been through their faith, their love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great has been molded.

From the Field to the Classroom

As a record number of veterans are returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan, more and more military personnel are looking for opportunities in furthering their education to enhance their careers and their personal lives.

While many veterans are looking to further their education, a large percentage of these veterans aren’t aware of the benefits their military service has earned them. As a Service members Opportunities Consortium (SOC) institute, Bryant and Stratton College, with locations throughout New York State, not only accepts a wide range of these benefits, but makes it easier for military personnel to access their benefits to gain or further their education.

Programs to assist in admissions, finances, and career opportunities make Bryant and Stratton an ideal college for military personnel and returning veterans. Flexible schedules offering day, night, weekend, and online courses allow veterans to gain their education at their convenience and on-site military coordinators are available to answer questions and assist in any way possible. Campus events specifically for military students show veterans their service is appreciated and Bryant and Stratton College is proud to have them.

As your website states, your mission is to “... ensure veterans receive benefits granted by law for their service to New York and the Nation”. Bryant and Stratton College is taking steps to fulfill this vision, making this a vital story to your readership. Military personnel would be highly interested in an institute that goes above and beyond the mandated G.I. Bill and Yellow Ribbon programs to make it easier for service members to continue their education and careers.

Learn more at visit: http://www.bryantstratton.edu/

Upcoming Events:

July 5...Independence Day observed-OFFICE CLOSED
July 12...Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m. Nicholas Clemente, US Army, Vietnam
July 17... 3rd Annual Homeless Veterans Motorcycle Run at The Saw Mill, 501 South Ave., Schenectady, registration 10a.m, $15 per person
Since the time of the Civil War, veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces have been given some degree of preference in appointments to federal jobs. Veterans’ preference in its present form comes from the Veterans’ preference Act of 1944, as amended, and now codified in Title 5, United States Code. By law, veterans who are disabled or who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces during certain specified time periods or in military campaigns are entitled to preference over others when hiring from competitive lists of eligible candidates, and also in retention during a reduction in force (RIF).

To receive preference, a veteran must have been discharged or released from active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces under honorable conditions (honorable or general discharge). Preference is also provided for certain widows and widowers of deceased veterans who died in service; spouses of service-connected disabled veterans; and mothers of veterans who died under honorable conditions on active duty or have permanent and total service-connected disabilities. For each of these preferences, there are specific criteria that must be met in order to be eligible to receive the veterans’ preference.

Recent changes in Title 5 clarify veterans’ preference eligibility criteria for National Guard and Reserve service members. Veterans eligible for preference include National Guard and Reserve service members who served on active duty as defined by Title 38 at any time in the armed forces for a period of more than 180 consecutive days, any part of which occurred during the period beginning on September 11, 2001, and ending on the date prescribed by Presidential proclamation or by law as the last date of OIF. The National Guard and Reserve service members must have been discharged or released from active duty in the armed forces under honorable conditions.

Another recent change involves veterans who earned the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal for service in OEF. Under Title 5, service on active duty in the armed forces during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized also qualifies for veterans’ preference.

(continued on Page 2)
Veterans Preference for Federal Jobs (cont’d from Page 1)

Any Armed Forces Expeditionary medal or campaign badge qualifies for preference. Medal holders must have served continuously for 24 months or the full period call or ordered to active duty. As of December 2005, veterans who received the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal are entitled to veterans’ preference if otherwise eligible. For additional information, visit the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Web site at http://www.opm.gov/veterans/html/vetguide.asp#2.

Veterans’ preference does not require an agency to use any particular appointment process. Agencies can pick candidates from a number of different special hiring authorities or through a variety of different sources. For example, the agency can reinstate a former federal employee, transfer someone from another agency, reassign someone from within the agency, make a selection under merit promotion procedures or through open, competitive exams, or appoint someone noncompetitively under special authority such as a Veterans Readjustment Appointment or special authority for 30 percent of more disabled veterans. The decision on which hiring authority the agency desires to use rests solely with the agency.

When applying for federal jobs, eligible veterans should claim preference on their application or resume. Veterans should apply for a federal job by contacting the personnel office at the agency in which they wish to work. For more information, visit http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/ for job openings or help creating a federal resume.

Veterans’ Employment Act: When an agency accepts applications from outside its own workforce, the Veterans’ Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 allows preference eligible candidates or veterans to compete for these vacancies under merit promotion procedures. Veterans who are selected are given career or career-conditional appointments. Veterans are those who have been separated under honorable conditions from the U.S. armed forces with three or more years of continuous active service.

JOIN US FOR THE UNCLE SAM PARADE…

September 11th & 12th Troy will celebrate Samuel Wilson’s birthday (9/13/1766). This event includes a graveside ceremony on Saturday at Oakwood Cemetery at 10:00 am. Followed by a brunch at the Veterans of Lansingburgh; tickets can be purchased at the door. On Sunday the festivities begin with a parade at 12:45 p.m. followed by family fun and entertainment in Knickerbacker Park and a fireworks show.

Our veterans office always participates in the parade. It is our desire to have a large representation of Rensselaer County Veterans. If you would like to join our marching contingent, (line-up at noon) you may contact our office for more details.

Upcoming events...

September 1st– 6th...Schaghticoke Fair  COME VISIT OUR BOOTH!  (Office Closed)
September 11... Uncle Sam Gravesite Ceremony at 10:00 a.m. followed by a brunch at the Veterans of Lansingburgh
September 12..... Uncle Sam Parade (see above article)
September 13... Honor-A-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in Legislative Chambers, 8:15am Winston E. Miller, Army Air Forces, WWII
October 2... Capital Region Veteran Stand-Down (see Page 3)
October 11.....Columbus Day observed-OFFICE CLOSED
The second Monday of every month, Rensselaer County honors a deceased veteran in a very moving and respectful ceremony in the County Legislative Chambers.

If you have loved one, who was a veteran from Rensselaer County and would like to have them honored, please contact the Rensselaer County Veterans at 270-2760 for an application.

The following criteria applies to the honorees:
- Must be from Rensselaer County (born, raised or resided in);
- Must have been discharged under honorable conditions and discharge must accompany application;
- May only be honored once;
- Submitted application must be legible and have a family contact (name, address and telephone number);
- List of all medals, campaigns, and battles;
- Include civilian history (all community services and organizations);
- Be as detailed as possible, the entire ceremony is dedicated to this veteran and it is their life story.

If you are interested in going and can not get transportation to the Stand Down, you can contact your local Veterans Service Agency to inquire about transportation at the following county VA numbers:

Albany……………… (518) 477-7713
Columbia…………… (518) 828-9511
Rensselaer………. (518) 270-2760
Saratoga…………. (518) 884-4115
Schenectady….. (518) 377-2423
Washington…….. (518) 746-2470
Saturday only… (518)785-3557

Saturday, October 2, from 8:00 am until 1:00 pm will be the annual Veterans Stand Down for veterans and their families who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

Free help will be available for employment, food, clothing, medical screening, legal assistance, as well as information on programs and services. Day care will be available throughout the day.

This event will take place at the Colonie BPO Elks, 11 Elks Lane, Latham, NY.

We need this lead time in order to get the program “press” ready and would appreciate it if every effort would be made to adhere to this deadline.

Please make your check payable to the Rensselaer County Veterans Fund, 1600 Seventh Avenue, Troy, NY 12180.

If you have any questions you may contact our office at 270-2760.
A Message from our County Executive...

Kathleen M. Jimino

I have always felt that the programs and services provided by Rensselaer County make a profound difference in the lives of our residents. Whether it is those offered through our Veterans Services Agency, the Health Department, Aging, or the many other county agencies that day in and day out work to make Rensselaer County an even better place to live, work, or raise a family.

To help shine a spotlight on some of those services Rensselaer County will once again this year have a number of informational tables and representatives at the Schaghticoke Fair which runs from September 1st through the 6th.

So if you are taking part in some of the family fun the fair offers, I hope you will stop by to visit us in our traditional location in the Hoosic Valley Fire Department building.

Hope to see you soon and a sincere thank you for your service and the hope that your summer was healthy and happy!

Sincerely,
Kathleen M. Jimino

Message from our Director..........................................................

I want to discuss a new program that has started in the Troy City Court under the supervision of Judge Maier.

It is called VetTrak. It is an alternative to incarceration program designed specifically for veterans. New York has recognized that military service and the effect of training and combat experience may result in a difficult transition back to civilian life. In the event that an individual who has served this nation in the Armed Services becomes involved in our criminal justice system, the court can now provide a problem-solving court track as an alternative to incarceration. Successful completion of VetTrak, associated with an existing treatment court program, may result in a reduction in legal charges and increased opportunities for long term success.

Veteran’s eligible for the program must have a pending misdemeanor case in Rensselaer County and have one or more of the following: substance abuse problem, mental health issues and/or traumatic brain injury. The status of his/her discharge from the Armed Services and whether the veteran saw combat will not preclude them from entering the program.

For more information or questions please contact: Bonnie Hazard, Resource Coordinator @270-1602, ext. 324 or Bryan Blanchard, Veteran Community Advocate @ 694-0639.

Yours in Patriotism, Bob

FLY THE FLAG

On Saturday, September 11, 2010, an American flag should be displayed outside every home, apartment, office, and store in the United States. Every individual should make it their duty to display an American flag on this seventh anniversary of one of our country’s worst tragedies.

We do this to honor those who lost their lives on 9/11, their families and loved ones who continue to endure the pain, and those who today are fighting at home and abroad to preserve our cherished freedoms.

In the days, weeks and months following 9/11, our country was bathed in America flags as citizens mourned the incredible losses and stood shoulder-to-shoulder against terrorism. Sadly, those flags have all but disappeared.

Our patriotism pulled us through some tough times and it shouldn’t take another to galvanize us in solidarity. Our flag is the fabric of our country and together we can prevail over terrorism of all kinds.
Veterans Week
November 8th – 12th
A commemoration and celebration of veterans and their families

Featuring:
>> Community resource fair
>> Full-day clinical mental health conference
>> National speakers
>> International arts and films
>> Veterans quilt display
>> Commemorative art and oral history project

And more....

Open to the public

Learn more at sage.edu/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 Clinic for most morning medical appointments.

Call 270-2760
OUR VANS WILL BE OFF THE ROAD DECEMBER 20TH—DECEMBER 24TH

A Message From Our Director......

“Happy Veterans Day”, County Executive Kathleen M. Jimino is honored to sponsor our 12th Annual Free Veterans Day Breakfast and medal presentation at the North Greenbush American Legion Post #1489 on Main Avenue in Wynantskill on November 7th, from 8:30 am to 11:30 am, with a medal presentation at noontime.

Last year there were over 800 veterans and immediate family members served and we expect the same attendance this year. This is just one small way that our county can say Thank You for your service to our country. We have men and women in harms way once more and we all pray for their safe return.

Anyone who has lost, misplaced or never received their military medals, or are looking for a passed loved ones medals, please call our office and we will gladly assist you. When your medals arrive we will notify you of the next medal presentation that we are holding, so that you may be presented with your medals during a formal formation.

Don’t forget your free car wash at Hoffman’s Car Wash on Veterans Day. It is the fifth consecutive year that the Hoffman family has offered this special recognition to our veteran community. Please take a moment to thank them.

Yours in Patriotism,

BOB
**Message from our County Executive….Kathleen M. Jimino:**

I have always known in my heart that the Rensselaer County community truly supported the men and women who have in the past served and those that are currently serving in our nation’s armed forces.

This fact was made overwhelmingly clear by the many people who took the time to pay their respects to and welcome home Staff Sgt. Derek Farley. The outpouring of support was truly amazing and certainly fitting for a man who lost his life performing a heroic task on behalf of us all.

I want to personally thank everyone who helped welcome Staff Sgt. Derek Farley home and provided comfort and support to his family and friends.

Sincerely,

Kathleen M. Jimino

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**Burial and Memorial Benefits:**

**Eligibility…**

Veterans discharged from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable and service members who die while on active duty, as well as spouses and dependent children of veterans and active service members, may be eligible for VA burial and memorial benefits. The veteran does not have to pre-decease a spouse or dependent child to be eligible.

VA national cemetery directors verify eligibility for burial in their cemeteries.

A copy of the veteran’s discharge document that specifies the period(s) of active duty and character of discharge, along with the decedent’s death certificate and proof of relationship to the veteran (for eligible family members) are all that are usually needed to determine eligibility.

Benefits include burial in VA National Cemeteries, Headstones and Markers, Presidential Memorial Certificates, burial flags, reimbursement of burial expenses and military funeral honors.

The funeral director and the next of kin make all arrangements for burial. We are, however, always available to assist where needed. Particulars on each of these benefits may be obtained by contacting our office.

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**Upcoming Events…**

November 2…Election Day—REMEMBER TO VOTE!!! OFFICE CLOSED

November 7…Free Veterans Day Breakfast at the North Greenbush American Legion Post, 8:30 am-11:30 am, noontime Medal Presentation

November 8…Honor-A-Deceased Veteran Ceremony-County Legislative Chambers at 8:15 am, TO BE ANNOUNCED

November 9…Free Veteran Day Dinner at Questar III from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm, please call 273-2264 to reserve your seats

November 11…Veterans Day—OFFICE CLOSED

November 11…Veterans Day Memory Walk in Troy, meeting at Old Troy City Hall near Monument Square, 9 a.m. start time

November 11…Free car wash at Hoffman’s Car Wash for all veterans.

November 25 & 26…HAPPY THANKSGIVING—OFFICE CLOSED
Retroactive Stop Loss Pay (RSLSP)

RETROACTIVE STOP LOSS SPECIAL PAY
Those eligible must submit their claim by Oct. 21, 2010.

The DoD Web site (http://www.defense.gov/stoploss) links to service-specific sites, where you can get more information, or begin the RSLSP claim process.

The 2009 War Supplemental Appropriations Act established **Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay (RSLSP)**, providing $500 for each month/partial month served in stop loss status. Service members, veterans, and beneficiaries of service members whose service was involuntarily extended under Stop Loss between Sept. 11, 2001 and Sept. 30, 2009 are eligible for RSLSP.

To receive this benefit, those who served under stop loss must submit a claim for the special pay (by Oct. 21, 2010). Throughout the year, the services have been reaching out to service members, veterans and their families through direct mail, veteran service organizations, and the media. But there is still money left to be claimed, and the deadline is approaching.

**The average benefit is $3,700.**

**Note on Eligibility**
Effective Dec. 19, 2009, per the Defense Appropriations Act, stop-loss service members who voluntarily re-enlisted or extended their service, and received a bonus for such reenlistment or extension of service, became no longer eligible to receive retroactive stop loss special pay.

The following service-specific sites provide more information and allow you to begin the RSLSP claim process.

- **Army:**
  877-736-5554
  Website: [https://www.stoplosspay.army.mil](https://www.stoplosspay.army.mil)
  E-mail RetroStopLossPay@CONUS.Army.Mil
- **Navy:**
  901-874-4427
  E-mail: NXAG_N132C@navy.mil
- **Marine Corps:**
  877-242-2830
  Website: [https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/stoploss](https://www.manpower.usmc.mil/stoploss)
  E-mail: stoploss@usmc.mil
- **Air Force:**
  800-525-0102
  E-mail (active): afpc.dpsos.stoploss@randolph.af.mil
  E-mail (guard/reserve): arpc.contactcenter@arpc.denver.af.mil

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**Retroactive Stop Loss Pay ....Continued from Page 3**

**General Procedure**

Individuals who meet eligibility criteria may submit an application between 21 October 2009 and 21 October 2010. By law, there is no authorization to make payments on claims that are submitted after 21 October 2010.

Eligible members should print, complete and sign [Department of Defense Form 2944, Claim for Retroactive Stop Loss Payment](mailto:DownloadsCenter@Army.mil).

Next, choose the appropriate method for submitting the claim form and available supporting documents based on your service specifications. This information can be found on your service’s stop loss Web site.

The following documents are examples of authorized source documents but may not be comprehensive, depending on specific status and service.

**Source Documents**

1. DD 214 (8-09), Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty and/or DD 215 (8-09), Correction to DD 214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty.
2. Personnel record or enlistment or reenlistment document recording original expiration of service date.
3. Approved retirement/transfer to the Fleet Reserve memorandum or orders establishing retirement prior to actual date of retirement as stipulated in DD 214 or DD 215.
4. Approved resignation memorandum or transition orders establishing a separation date prior to actual date of separation as stipulated on DD 214 or DD 215.
5. Signed documentation or affidavit from knowledgeable officials from the individual’s chain of command acknowledging separation/deployment, etc.
6. Revocation of retirement or separation orders.

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**Stars for our Troops**

The Ladies Auxiliary of Germania Hall of North Troy are collecting used American Flags to continue what was started by four women from Florida called the Star Project.

From U.S. flags that have worn out their colors and fabric, we are cutting from them the fields of blue, then scissoring off the embroidered stars. Into a plastic bag go a star and an explanation: "I am part of our American flag that has flown over a home in the U.S.A. I can no longer fly. The sun and winds have caused me to become tattered and torn. Please carry me as a reminder that you are not forgotten."

Flags should be approximately 5 feet by 3 feet, so that the stars are about the size of half-dollars. We are requesting help in obtaining these flags, and also people (with scissors) that would be willing to share a couple of hours on the third Sunday of every month to make these packets for our troops - overseas and at home, as well as local veterans.

Flags can be brought to Germania Hall on Friday nights from 5 to 9 PM, or on the third Sunday of the month from 2 to 4 PM. We will have remnants of flags ready to be properly processed at your next flag burning ceremony. We would like help locating soldiers that are going to Iraq and Afghanistan so we can give some to them to share with others. If you have a local contact for organizations that are sending packages overseas so they can add them to the packages.

Please contact me for additional information, people that will participate with us in this project for our troops.

Susan E Wells  
President, Ladies Auxiliary  
518-235-1558  
TroyGermania@aol.com
New York State Veterans,

This is a message from Bill Schaaf, of the Patriot Guard Riders, who escort the remains of Veterans at burials and transfers. There has been a recent change in the law which allows funeral directors to have more leniency in arranging for the burial of unclaimed Vets cremated remains. With the change comes a demand for more volunteers needed to assist in identifying and escorting remains for proper burial.

All across New York State - in the custodial care of funeral directors - there are hundreds, if not thousands - of unclaimed cremated remains. We know that a good percentage of these unclaimed remains are those of veterans.

The reasons cremated remains go unclaimed are complex and not well understood by the public. The rules and regulations that funeral directors operate by are just as complex. These regulations have an impact on what funeral directors can and cannot do with unclaimed remains in their custodial care. The most onerous of these regulations effectively prevented the funeral director from sharing any personal information about the deceased - rules that would prevent a funeral director from working with various Veterans Administration offices to determine whether the remains in their care belonged to those of a veteran - and therefore eligible for burial, with military honors in a veterans cemetery.

VETERANS DAY - November 11, 2010 - A new law in New York State became effective that removes the previous restrictions on funeral directors and allows funeral directors the complete freedom and discretion to work directly with various veterans' organizations. The freedom to share with those organizations, the information necessary to determine the veteran status of any unclaimed cremated remains they may have in their custodial care. The new law allows the funeral director to fully participate in the release of remains to be buried, with honors, that of any veteran the funeral director may have in their care. The new law also provides protections for the funeral director - they can't be sued for participating in this effort.

The Patriot Guard Riders / Veterans Recovery Program can take great pride in being instrumental in bringing about the change in the law. The PGR/VRP worked closely with the New York State Funeral Directors Association. The NYSFDA came to understand the scope of the problem and became enthusiastic supporters of our efforts to enact new law. The NYSFDA crafted the recommended legislation and in a very short time was able to marshal the proposed bill through both the NYS Assembly and Senate. Gov. Patterson signed the new bill in August with an effective date of Veterans Day, 2010.

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The new law finally allows the Veterans Recovery Project to complete it’s Mission Statement - which is as follows:

"The mission of the Veteran Recovery Program (VRP) is to locate, Identify and inter the unclaimed cremated remains of veterans through the joint efforts of private, state and federal organizations: to provide honor and respect to those that served this country, by securing a final resting place for these forgotten heroes."

How do we begin? First - we want to reach out to our Patriot Guard Riders membership for volunteers. Volunteers who can take of their time and energy to reach out to your local funeral directors. To reacquaint the funeral directors with the new law and begin a discussion on how we can work together to bring about the honorable interment of any unclaimed cremated remains of any veteran that they may have in their care. The process begins with those PGR members willing to volunteer, by filling out the questionnaire that follows. I will be looking to volunteers for MOST of the counties of New York. I will also ask for volunteers who can perform Genealogy research on any of the unclaimed veterans that we find. You can list your preference on the questionnaire. If you are selected you will receive additional information about the Veteran Recovery Program and instructions and protocols on how we will proceed. If you should have any questions, e-mail me or call me at 518-542-0608

First Name:
Last Name:
1st Street Addr:
2nd Street Addr:
City:
Zip:
County:
Home Tel:
Cell Tel:
E-mail Address:
Confirm e-mail address:
PGR Member? - Y/N:
Social Networking - Facebook, Myspace:
Some Info about yourself - Why volunteer for VRP:
VRP Volunteer or Genealogy Research:

Thank you so much for your patience and understanding. After a long wait we're ready to hit the ground running and begin to do what is right by our long forgotten veterans.

Bill Schaaf
Patriot Guard Riders – Asst. State Captain New York
Senior Ride Captain - Region 5
V.P. NY Board of Directors
Veteran Recovery Program State Coordinator
billschaaf@aol.com

Courtesy of Joe Vogel - Thanks Joe!

Upcoming Events:

December 7…Pearl Harbor remembered
December 13…Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m. Rolf Gundersen, US Army, WWII & Korea
December 24…Christmas Eve (Christmas Observed)—Office Closed
December 20 – December 24…no van transportation (see front page)
December 27th…Van transportation resumes
December 31…Happy New Year (New Year’s Day observed)– Office Closed
January 10…Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m. John “Jack” Wager, US Navy, WWII
Are you a Veteran or Military Business Owner?
If so, you should check out VAMBOA.org, the Veteran and Military Business Owners Association. This non-profit trade association's goals are to ensure the development, growth and prosperity of Veteran Owned Businesses, Service Disabled Veteran Owned Businesses (SDVOB) and Military Businesses of all sizes. VAMBOA will serve the needs of the veteran and military business communities by uniting veteran and military business owners for collaboration, connections and contracts with both private corporations and government agencies. Join today and take the survey to let them know what issues are important to you. Membership is Free!

You have honorably served our nation. VAMBOA is here to serve you and be your voice.

The Holiday Inn Resort Aruba is saluting U.S. troops and civil servants by extending its exclusive discounts for military and government personnel on all-inclusive resort stays through the end of next year. A Special rate of just $180 per night for double occupancy is now available on bookings made by December 21, 2011 for travel completed by December 23, 2011 (the previous end-date was December 23, 2010).

The Post 9/11 GI Bill covers:

- Tuition & Fees
- Monthly Tax Free Housing Allowance
- Up to $1000 Annual Stipend for books & supplies

Check out more at www.gibill.va.gov/post-911

ThanksUSA Scholarships Available

ThanksUSA is proud to announce that they have awarded 140 $3,000 scholarships this year. They will be awarding another 360 scholarships by the end of the year. Over the past five years, ThanksUSA has awarded over $6 million in scholarships to the families of the wounded and fallen, as well as the spouses and dependents of active-duty troops, from every state and the District of Columbia, representing all branches of the armed services including the National Guard and the Reserves. Please go to ThanksUSA for more information.
**Smart Phone App Helps Track Post-Deployment Emotional Health**

The Department of Defense announced the release of a free smart phone mobile application that will make it easier for service members and veterans to track their emotional health after deployments. The National Center for Telehealth and Technology (T2) developed the T2 Mood Tracker to help users monitor trends of emotions and behaviors. It can be downloaded through [http://www.t2health.org/apps/t2-mood-tracker](http://www.t2health.org/apps/t2-mood-tracker). The application is now available for smart phones using the Android operating system. It is expected to be available for iPhone users early next year. More information about the T2 Mood Tracker is available at [http://www.t2health.org/apps](http://www.t2health.org/apps).

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**Win a Custom $100K Motorcycle & Help Wounded Warriors**

Custom built for Iraq Star by Paul Teutul and American Chopper, this one of a kind motorcycle will be part of a year-long campaign to raise awareness and donations so that Iraq Star can assist our Wounded Warriors. Your minimum $100 donation will get you in the running, and the winning entry will be announced on September 11, 2011. Iraq Star provides reconstructive surgery to American Soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

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**A Message from our Director........**

Wow! It’s the holiday season already! I hope you and yours have a safe and healthy time.

For October 2011 I am looking to put a trip together going back to Vietnam. I know some of you may want to go, so please get a hold of me. Also to all Vietnam Veterans who obtained any war memorabilia of a personal nature from Vietnamese soldiers or their families and are still in possession of that memorabilia today, we are looking to collect the items and possibly return them to the original owner or family, if possible. If you have such items in your possession and are interested in returning them, please contact our office.

We are having a fundraiser for SSgt Derek Farley. For $100.00 you get a chance to win $10,000.00 and other cash prizes. To fund a scholarship named for our own County’s hero. Drawing December 11th Army Navy Game at the Veterans’ of Lansingburgh. Navy will win........

Happy Holidays to all........Bob