

RENSSELAER COUNTY VETERANS NEWSLETTER

Rensselaer County
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County Executive

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Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Financial Relief Actions and Time Limit Extensions

On March 13, 2020, the President declared the COVID-19 pandemic as a national emergency, effective March 1, 2020. While United States Postal Service operations and other mail delivery services continue uninterrupted, in some cases, local travel restrictions and COVID-19-mandated health and safety precautions may impact Veterans' and claimants' abilities to timely file forms, documents, or other responses in connection with VA claims and appeals. VA is also sensitive to claimants who wish to have their claims and appeals processed as quickly as possible, and a system-wide extension would negatively affect those who need timely benefits and healthcare. Therefore, VA is providing options for Veterans and claimants to specifically request extensions on filing dates and requested evidence dates, as well as rescheduling of examinations and hearings. VA is also taking steps to provide Veterans and claimants with financial relief.

Financial Relief Actions

VA is suspending all collection actions on Veteran debts under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department. VA will stop all referrals of delinquent debt to credit reporting agencies and will not take any actions to stop Veterans who are in delinquent status from seeking VA Home Loans. However, collection actions will resume after the termination of the national emergency declaration.

VA is also automatically suspending collection action on all new benefit debts and is offering temporary suspension or extended repayment plans for existing benefit debts, whichever the Veteran prefers. To request a suspension or extended repayment plan, or to request a refund on a debt collection that was suspended, contact the Debt Management Center at 1-800-827-0648.

Claims Filing

Claimants and beneficiaries can continue to submit complete claims for compensation, pension, and survivors' benefits by mail, fax, or online. Claimants not yet ready to submit a complete claim may still indicate their "intent to file" a claim by:

- submitting a completed VA Form 21-0966, Intent to File a Claim for Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and/or DIC (<http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-21-0966-ARE.pdf>),
- contacting the national call center at 1-800-827-1000, or
- initiating an online application for benefits via www.va.gov.

However, if claimants are unable to file claims, submit evidence or attend hearings or VA C&P examinations due to COVID-19, VA has the authority to grant time limit extension requests and postpone final actions on a claim, provided good cause is shown for the delay. VA has determined that delays due to COVID-19 constitute good cause.

(Continued on Page 2)

Van Transportation...

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

For more details call:
270-2760.



VETERANS CRISIS LINE

1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1

****Confidential chat at Veterans CrisisLine.net or text to 838255****
TTY service 1-800-799-4889

Confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, for veterans and their loved ones.

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Time Limit Extensions Based on COVID-19

Effective March 1, 2020, if a claimant or authorized representative requests an extension of a time limit associated with a required action or notes their inability to attend a virtual hearing or tele-C&P examination based on the COVID-19 pandemic, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) will grant these requests under the good cause provisions, provided the time limit would have expired or situation occurred on or after March 1, 2020 and until 60 calendar days from the date the President ends the national state of emergency.

Requesting Time Limit Extensions for Claims/Appeals Filings Based on COVID-19

As there is no specific form requirement for requesting good cause extensions of time limits, VBA will accept COVID-19 pandemic-related extension requests on any form or written documentation.

To request an extension of filing a claim or appeal due to COVID-19, claimants should:

- note the request on their late-filed application, or
- attach the request as a separate document to their late-filed application.

To ensure full consideration of a time limit extension, claimants should simply note in their request that they are requesting an exemption for timely filing because of COVID-19, (or any related reference to COVID-19, coronavirus, the national pandemic, or similar language). No supporting evidence is required.

If the request is submitted after initial submission of a pending claim or appeal, claimants should specify the time limit for which they are seeking an extension to ensure accurate processing. Extensions for legacy appeal and claim filing time limits must be received in writing.

Requesting an Extension for Evidence Submission Based on COVID-19

Claimants who have already filed a claim may continue to submit requests in writing or over the telephone (1-800-827-1000) for extensions related to evidence submissions. A note will be placed in claimants' records stating no final action should be taken until the evidence is submitted or the extension period concludes.

Requesting an Extension for Hearings or Virtual/Tele-C&P Exams Based on COVID-19

VBA will contact claimants who have already filed a claim or appeal and have VBA hearings or C&P examinations to provide options that do not involve in-person communications (such as virtual or telephone options). If alternatives to in-person hearings or examinations are not possible for the claimant, a note will be placed in the record stating no final action should be taken until a hearing or exam is completed.

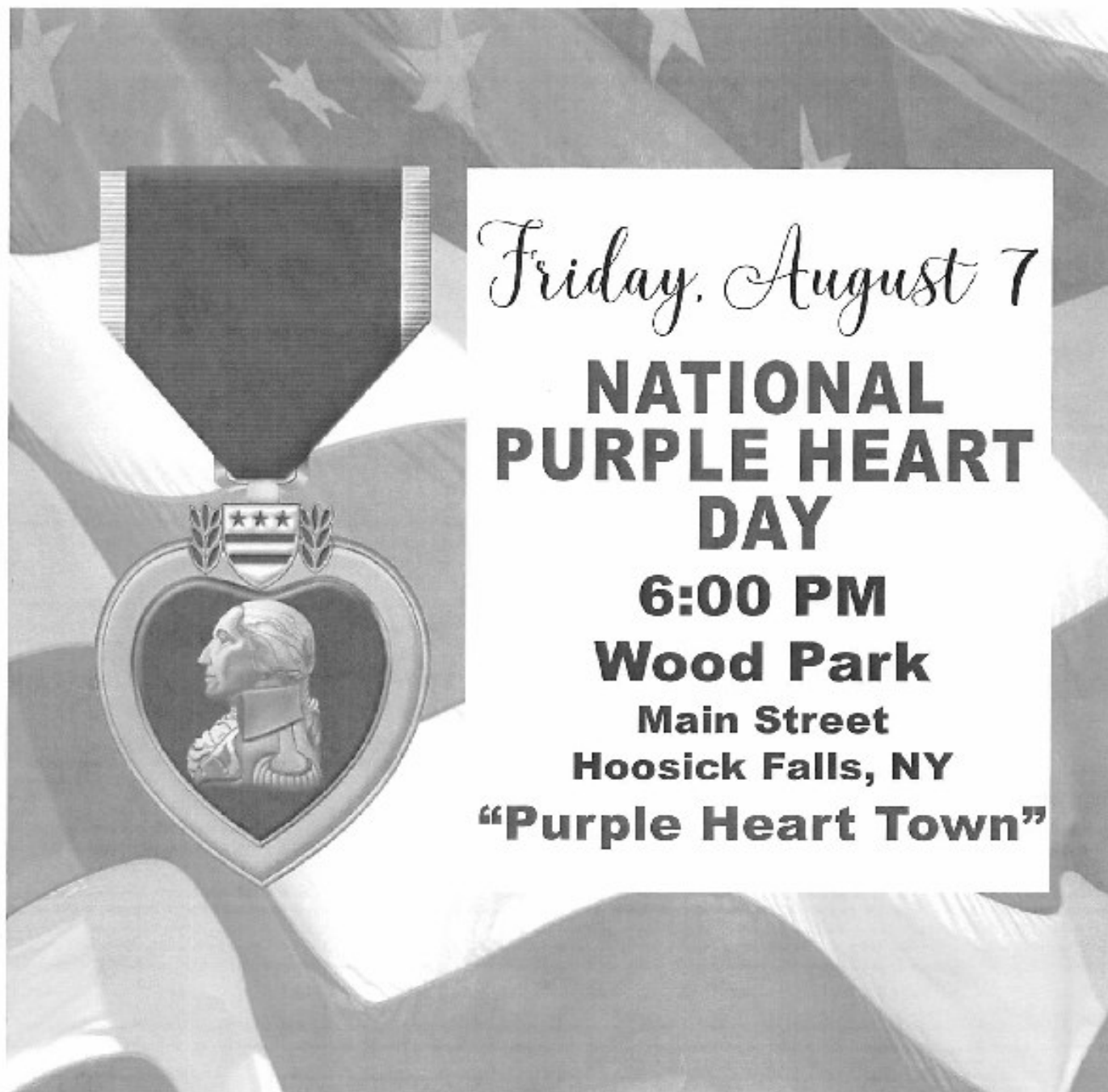


COVID-19 Updates *Changes to the Phlebotomy Services*

For your convenience and to minimize traffic throughout the Facility, effective Tuesday June 2, 2020 The Phlebotomy Lab is moved to the 1st floor.

This area is conveniently located just off the Veteran Entrance in the Emergency Department circle.

Veterans will need to have an appointment for labs, which can be scheduled by calling the clinic of the ordering provider or by calling 518-626-7228. To allow for enhanced Social Distance and safety, We ask Veterans to arrive no more than 15 minutes prior to your appointment time.



A way to honor and recognize the sacrifices of Purple Heart Recipients.

Sponsored by:

American Legion Post 40 & Hoosick Township Historical Society

Please Wear Your Mask and Maintain Social Distancing

A MESSAGE FROM OUR COUNTY EXECUTIVE

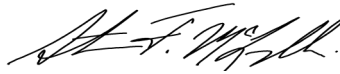
Summer is a time for family and friends. It is also a time when we look back on the founding of our nation with the July 4 holiday, recognizing our country’s independence and role as a beacon of hope and freedom across the world.

We are now seeing some who would challenge that narrative and America’s role as a defender of those oppressed and forced to live under tyranny. As County Executive, I remain a strong believer in America’s promise and our role in providing opportunity and protection for those seeking liberty. We remain the greatest country on Earth and our veterans helped make it great.

Equally important, I recognize the enormous contributions of our veterans and their families. Regardless of the times or the new headlines, our veterans and their families deserve respect and appreciation for all you have done for our country. The service of our veterans can never be forgotten or pushed aside.

Rensselaer County remains ready and committed to serving you and your family when needed. Even with the COVID-19 outbreak, we have maintained strong services for our veterans and will continue to do so. Thank you again and we look forward to seeing you all in the coming months.

Sincerely,



Steven F. McLaughlin
County Executive

Upcoming Events:



Call us at (518) 270-2760 to have your event listed in the newsletter.

August 10th...Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m.,

John R. Reitano-USN, SN1-WWII—Tentatively

September 7th...*LABOR DAY- OFFICE CLOSED*

September 14th...Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m.,

James H. Miner-USA, SP4-Vietnam Era

October 12th...*COLUMBUS DAY—OFFICE CLOSED*

October 13th... Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m.,

Nathan J. Snyder-USA, SPC-Afghanistan

November 3rd....*ELECTION DAY-OFFICE CLOSED*

****Please note that all events are subject to change due to COVID-19 guidelines****