



Wisconsin Women Veterans News



Volume 1, Edition 3, September 2010

This newsletter is established in the hopes that we will be able to reach out to all our women veterans, active duty, Guard and Reserve members. We will be publishing the newsletter four times a year. If you have a story for the newsletter, please e-mail or mail it to Gundel Metz, SFC, USA (RET).



Contact Gundy at:

WomenVets@dva.state.wi.us

Or mail items to:

Women Veterans Coordinator
WDVA
P O Box 7843
Madison, WI 53707-7843

Check us out on FACEBOOK at

[Women Veterans of Wisconsin](#)



Kenneth B. Black
Secretary

On July 12, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced new, simplified access to health care and benefits for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is important to note that the rule change applies to veterans of all ages and eras.

The new rule eases documentation requirements that previously required written or eyewitness verification of occurrences leading to PTSD. For some veterans, providing this type of evidence was difficult, or even impossible. Now, veterans must simply show that their service put them in places and situations during which events could plausibly have caused the disorder. A VA doctor must also confirm the diagnosis of PTSD. At this time, PTSD for military sexual trauma is not part of the simplified process.

I applaud the VA for leading the way on this important change. The new rule better reflects the reality of the challenges our service members face once they return home, and it makes it easier for service members to connect with vital resources.

At WDVA, we are committed to honoring and assisting those who served our country. We offer benefits and services that supplement those of the VA. From shelter for homeless veterans to hearing aids, from our veteran's homes to the Wisconsin GI Bill, WDVA's mission is to work on behalf of Wisconsin veterans and their families in recognition of their service and sacrifice to our state and nation.

Now, as part of that mission, it is our job to share this important PTSD update with all of the veterans of Wisconsin and direct them toward the resources they deserve. WDVA staff, along with county veteran's service officers, are prepared to answer questions, assist with claims and connect Wisconsin veterans with the benefits and services they have earned.

October 22-24, 2010 will be the fourth Wisconsin Women Veterans Conference. I encourage you to come to the conference and not only take advantage of lectures, but also to take time for camaraderie with other women veterans. No one, but another woman veteran, can fully understand your time in the military.

President Obama Encourages Troops and Veterans to Claim 'Stop Loss' Pay

WASHINGTON DC – Today (SEP 15, 2010), the White House, Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs jointly released a new web video in which President Obama encourages active duty troops and veterans whose service in Iraq or Afghanistan was involuntarily extended or retirement was suspended due to 'stop loss' to apply for the special retroactive pay to which they are entitled. Under legislation President Obama signed into law last year, servicemen and women who served between September 11, 2001 and September 30, 2009 and whose service was extended due to 'stop loss' are eligible for \$500 per month in retroactive pay for each month their service was extended.

"As your Commander in Chief, I'm here to tell you that this is no gimmick or trick," President Obama says in the video. "You worked hard. You earned this money. It doesn't matter whether you were Active or Reserve, whether you're a veteran who experienced 'stop loss' or the survivor of a service member who did-if your service was extended, you're eligible."

While by law, service members who received a bonus for voluntarily reenlisting or extending their service are not eligible, it is strongly recommended that all who may be eligible submit an application before the deadline.

The deadline to apply is October 21, 2010. The tens of thousands of veterans who have already been approved have received an average of nearly \$4,000.

Special retroactive pay for servicemen and women impacted by 'stop loss' is just one of the many ways the Obama Administration is working to serve the men and women who have served our country. Since President Obama took office, the Administration has:

- * Provided one of the largest funding increases in decades to help create a 21st century VA that provides our veterans better health care, better services, and better support, including in rural communities.
- * Eliminated inpatient, outpatient and prescription co-pays for the catastrophically disabled, which today account for a historically large percentage of our veterans coming home from war.
- * Worked to break the back of benefit claims backlog so vets don't have to wait years for the benefits they need, and continues to work to improve and modernize VA's delivery of services.
- * Helped our veterans transition back to civilian life by helping them get jobs and sending them to college through the post-9/11 GI Bill, which has already helped more than 300,000 veterans or their family members pursue their dream of a college education.
- * Provided unprecedented resources to treat the wounds of today's wars -- traumatic brain injury and post traumatic stress disorder - and provided additional resources to help family members and caregivers who put their own lives on hold to care for their loved one.
- * Made it easier for those suffering from PTSD to qualify for VA benefits. A veteran can now establish a claim based on his or her own testimony of events that caused PTSD without the requirement of corroborating evidence -- no matter which war they served in.
- * Eliminated obstacles for about 200,000 Vietnam veterans who may have been exposed to Agent Orange to get the health care and benefits they need.

Women Veteran's Forum Held in Washington DC

Story by Val Conley, First Vice President, National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators

Registration opened on July 8, 2010 for a Women Veterans Forum that was held on July 28, 2010 at WIMSA in Washington DC. Within 20 minutes of the announcement of this forum all 200 available seats were filled. Four State Women Veterans Coordinators – California, Missouri, Oregon and Wisconsin, represented NASWVC membership. Secretary Shinseki welcomed the participants and made the statement, “We are late, and the surge in women veterans has begun and will continue. Time is not on our side.” Secretary Shinseki’s welcome was followed by an impressive array of high caliber women professionals who work in different areas of VHA as well as VBA. Dr. Patty Hayes (Chief Consultant, VA Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group) responded to a participant question about full-time Women’s Program Managers at the VA Medical Centers by saying, “If you know of a Women’s Program Manager who has collateral duties I want to know about it.” Diana Rubens (Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Field Operations, VBA) reported that there are 243,484 women veterans currently receiving compensation for service-connected disabilities, 11,863 in receipt of veterans pension, 21,000 receiving Vocational Rehabilitation benefits and 37,289 in receipt of VA home loans. Dr. Betty Moseley Brown (Associate Director, VA Center for Women Veterans) made the announcement that the next National Summit on Women Veterans will be held in 2011, one year sooner than it would normally be scheduled. A specific date for the Summit has not yet been selected, however, we were assured that we would be notified as to the time and place when a decision was made. An Information Marketplace was set up in one hallway of the Women’s Memorial where many different veteran organizations provided information and answers to a multitude of participant questions. The theme for the day: Knowledge is Power.

WOMEN IN MILITARY SERVICE FOR AMERICA MEMORIAL



THOSE HONORED: All US servicewomen, past, present and future, including living or deceased women veterans; Active Duty, Reserve, Guard and US Public Health Service uniformed women; and women in the Coast Guard Auxiliary and Civil Air Patrol. The Memorial also honors women who served overseas during conflicts, in direct support of the armed forces, in organizations such as the Red Cross, USO and Special Services; and members of the US Public Health Service Cadet Nurse Corps. The Foundation is seeking names, addresses, photos and memorable experiences of women who have served to be included in the Memorial's Register, an interactive computer database available at the Memorial.

Deceased servicewomen from any era or those civilian women who served with other civilian organizations can be registered by family members, friends and organizations.

VA ANNOUNCES STUDY OF VIETNAM-ERA WOMEN VETERANS

On November 18, 2009, Secretary Eric K. Shinseki announced VA's launching of a comprehensive study of women veterans who served in the military during the Vietnam War to explore the effects of their military service upon their mental and physical health. For more information on the study, please contact Dr. Tracey Serpi, by phone at (410) 642-2411, extension 6122, by email at tracey.serpi@va.gov, or visit <https://www.csp.research.va.gov/csp579.cfm>. **Women veterans will be identified by a manual search of rosters and military personnel records of women who were on active duty in Vietnam, the US, and other areas between 7/4/1965 and 3/28/1973 in one of the four military branches of the US Armed Forces or self identification. The first phase of this study, the mail survey, is expected to begin in January 2011.**

Diabetes is No Sweet Treat

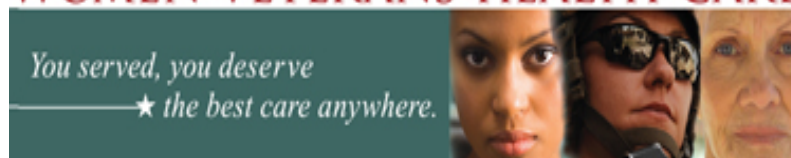
Article by Clelia Taylor, MSW APSW, Women Veterans Program Manager @ Tomah VAMC

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the number of Americans with diabetes has tripled to 23.5 million in the past three decades. More than 10% of women have some form of diabetes—but about half don't know it. Diabetes is one of the most common diagnoses in women veterans treated at VA facilities.

Diabetes is a disease marked by high levels of blood sugar. Over time, having too much sugar in your blood can lead to serious problems, including heart disease, peripheral vascular disease, limb amputation, kidney damage, nerve damage, and blindness. The good news is that treatment and understanding diabetes can greatly reduce the likelihood of complications. People with type 1, or juvenile-onset diabetes, need to frequently test their blood-sugar or glucose levels and adjust their insulin and diet accordingly. The most common form is type 2 diabetes and it is most often associated with older age, obesity, family history of diabetes, physical inactivity, and certain ethnicities. People can often control their diabetes by eating a healthy diet, exercising, losing excess weight, and taking medication.

The VA can help you prevent and fight diabetes. Recent studies show that the Veterans Health Administration scores higher in diabetes care when compared with other health care organizations—13% higher than the national sample. *My HealtheVet* is a free, online program to educate veterans about health care topics, including diabetes, and allows them to track their progress. See your VA health care provider to learn how to prevent diabetes and diabetes-related complications with management programs that keep blood sugar levels close to a normal range through diet and exercise and medication management.

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE



Madison VA Women's Health: (608) 256-1901, ext 11123

Milwaukee VA Women's Health: (414) 384-2000, ext 47177

Tomah VA Women's Health: (608) 372-3971, ext 66375

Iron Mountain VA Women's Health: (906) 774-3300, ext 32388

Minneapolis VA Women's Health: (612) 467-2487

STATE AND FEDERAL VA BENEFITS

If you have a discharge other than dishonorable, you may be eligible for state and federal VA benefits. For most benefits you must also have a certain amount of time on active duty. If you are not sure that you qualify, contact your local County Veterans Service Office (CVSO) to set up an appointment to check on your eligibility for benefits. The phone number is listed in your phone book under county government.

You can also contact WDVA at 1-800-WIS-VETS (947-8387).

Women Veterans Conference

This year Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs will hold its fourth Women Veterans Conference. All the conferences have been held at the Wisconsin Military Academy, Ft. McCoy, WI. Each conference consists of lectures, workshops, and good fellowship. All pictures were taken by Nancy Aycock.

It is not too late to register for this year's Women Veterans Conference.

Go to www.WisVets.com/womenvets and fill out the registration form and mail it in. You can either e-mail it or snail mail it to the address provided.

Conference IV – 22-24 October 2010

Our theme is: **WOMEN VETERANS – AFTER YEARS OF FITTING IN, IT'S TIME TO STAND OUT**



Come and join us for a weekend of fun and camaraderie.

Special Monthly Compensation

Did you know you may be eligible for a special monthly compensation? VA broadened its coverage of special monthly compensation for women veterans who suffered loss of breast tissue related to their military service. The benefit covers those losing 25 percent or more tissue from a single breast or from both breasts in combination. It includes loss by mastectomy or partial mastectomy, or following radiation treatment. In addition to breast tissue loss, special monthly compensation rates also apply when a veteran experiences loss of a reproductive organ or its use. Women veterans with service-connected breast tissue loss who are not receiving the special monthly compensation should contact VA (1-800-827-1000) to find out if they are eligible.

UPCOMING EVENTS

For up-to-date WDVA Events information, please visit our website at www.WisVets.com/Events.

October 2, 2010

- Zablocki VA Medical Center & Oscar J. Johnson VA Medical Center: [3rd Annual OEF/OIF Welcome Home Event](#) to be held in Oshkosh from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

October 5, 2010

- WDVA, UW-Platteville, Grant County CVSO: [On-Campus Veterans Benefits Open House](#) at UW-Platteville from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
- WDVA Wisconsin Veterans Museum: [Cry for the Water Buffalo](#) in Madison

October 6-8 & 10, 2010

- WDVA Wisconsin Veterans Museum: [Talking Spirits XII: Forest Hill Cemetery Tour](#) at Forest Hill Cemetery in Madison

October 13, 2010

- WDVA Wisconsin Veterans Museum: [A Tireless Troublemaker: A. Philip Randolph and the Integration of the Armed Forces](#) in Madison

October 13-16, 2010

- [DAV](#): Fall Conference to be held at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton

October 14-15, 2010

- Board of Veterans Affairs: [Board, Councils, and Committees to meet](#) in Rhinelander

October 15, 2010

- WDVA, WDMA, WDWD, The American Legion: Veterans Job & Benefit Information Fair to be held at the Army National Guard Armory in Superior from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

October 19, 2010

- WDVA Wisconsin Veterans Museum: [The Profession of Arms in Pre-Civil War America](#) in Madison

October 22, 2010

- WDVA Wisconsin Veterans Museum: [The Girls Come Marching Home: Stories of Women Warriors Returning Home from Iraq](#) in Madison

October 28, 2010

- WDVA Wisconsin Veterans Museum: [Americanism and Entitlement: Authorizing Big Government in an Age of Total War](#) in Madison

November 4, 2010

- WDVA Wisconsin Veterans Museum: [Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz](#) in Madison

November 11, 2010 [VETERANS DAY](#)

- WDVA [WVH-King](#): Veterans Day Program in the Marden Multi-Purpose Room at 10:30 a.m.

November 12, 2010

- WDVA Wisconsin Veterans Museum: [Army Aviation in Vietnam](#) in Madison

December 7, 2010

- WDVA [WVH-King](#): Pearl Harbor Day Program in the Marden Multi-Purpose Room at 7:30 a.m.

December 9-10, 2010

- Board of Veterans Affairs: [Board, Councils, and Committees to meet](#) in Union Grove

December 11, 2010

- Region 4 UAW Veterans: [22nd Annual Christmas with the Vets](#) at Zablocki VA Medical Center in Milwaukee

VA PUBLISHES FINAL REGULATION ON “PRESUMPTIVE” ILLNESSES FOR GULF WAR AND IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN VETERANS

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the publication of a final regulation in the *Federal Register* that makes it easier for veterans to obtain Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care and disability compensation for certain diseases associated with service in Southwest Asia (including Iraq) or Afghanistan.

“This is part of historic changes in how VA considers Gulf War Veterans’ illnesses,” said Secretary Shinseki. “By setting up scientifically based presumptions of service connection, we give these deserving veterans a simple way to obtain the medical and compensation benefits they earned in service to our country.”

The final regulation establishes new presumptions of service connection for nine specific infectious diseases associated with military service in Southwest Asia beginning on or after the start of the first Gulf War on Aug. 2, 1990, through the conflict in Iraq and on or after Sept. 19, 2001, in Afghanistan.

The final regulation reflects a determination of a positive association between service in Southwest Asia or Afghanistan and nine diseases and includes information about the long-term health effects potentially associated with these diseases: Brucellosis, *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Coxiella Burnetii* (Q fever), Malaria, *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, Nontyphoid Salmonella, Shigella, Visceral leishmaniasis and West Nile virus.

Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs
30 W. Mifflin Street
P O Box 7843
Madison, WI 53707-7843

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WOMEN VETERANS CONFERENCE

When – October 22 - 24, 2010

Where – Wisconsin Military Academy, Ft. McCoy, WI

Time – 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. on Saturday

8:30 a.m. until Noon on Sunday

Registration – Starts at 4:00 p.m. on Friday

Starts at 7:00 a.m. on Saturday

Reception will be held Friday evening October 22, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

More information will be posted at www.WisVets.com/WomenVets