

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America



Meeting Notice

16 January, 2019

Elks Lodge 5555 W. Good Hope Rd.

Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.

Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.

Future Meetings: 2019

20 February, 20 March, 17 April

15 May, 19 June, 17 July, 21 August, 18 September

Chapter web page: www.vietnamvetschapter324.com

National web page: www.vva.org

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John is listed in the phone book - good luck finding one

Life Membership for all Veterans

VVA is offering LIFE memberships for \$50. If you have been getting a 1 year membership for \$20 you will need to pay \$50 at your next renew or be dropped from the VVA. If you paid \$50 at your last renewal you will become a LIFE member automatically without any further payment. NEW members will only have the \$50 LIFE membership when they join. (with a DD214 submitted).

VVA and AVVA Membership Applications are available on the back page of this newsletter or on line at the VVA.Org or the AVVA.Org websites in the Forms tab.

SMOKE FREE MILWAUKEE VA

PHASE 3 begins

PHASE

3

JANUARY 1, 2019

The Milwaukee VA Medical
Center will be a non-smoking
facility and campus.

King being ripped off?

Memo shows money from vets nursing homes fund state salaries

By Katelyn Ferral Nov 2, 2018, <https://madison.com/ct/news/local/>

Money the state has made by caring for sick and elderly military veterans has increasingly funded administrative positions at the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, according to a nonpartisan legislative memo.

Over the last 15 years, the state has increased the number of positions funded by the homes, from 814 in 2003-05 to 1,1473 in 2017-19, according to an Oct. 30 memo prepared by the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau for Assembly Minority Leader Gordon Hintz, an Oshkosh Democrat.

Positions at the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs are funded in several ways, including general tax dollars and money the state generates from programs it operates. One state program that funds salaries is the veterans nursing homes. The state owns three homes in King, Union Grove and Chippewa Falls that care for hundreds of elderly and sick veterans. Though owned by the state, Chippewa Falls is run by a private contractor.

Revenue from the state's veterans nursing homes directly fund salaries and also fund the Veterans Trust Fund, an account housed within the agency, created to pay for veterans benefits. The Veterans Trust Fund was originally sustained largely through a mortgage, personal and home improvement loan program for veterans but has faced significant structural deficits since the state closed the program in 2011. Now, the nursing homes are the primary source of its funding, and spent on salaries.

In 2017-18, \$5.9 million from the Veterans Trust Fund was spent on salary and fringe benefits for 74 positions at the agency. The state has also spent Veterans Trust Fund money on technology, office expenses and \$72,000 for travel and training, according to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

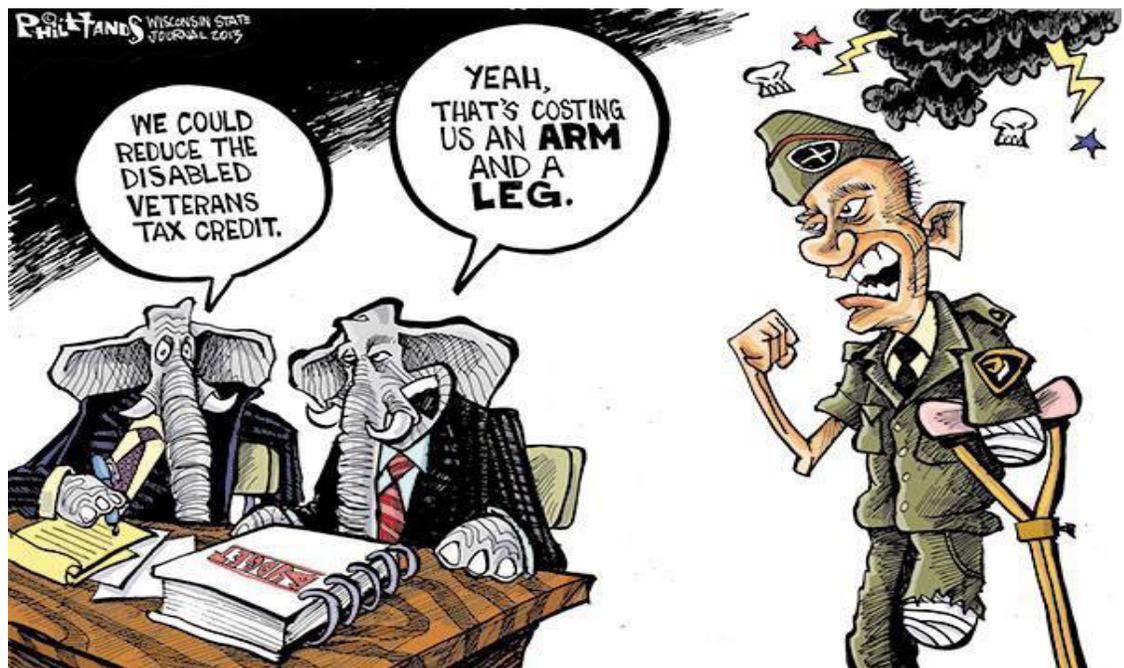
The majority of the positions funded with veterans nursing home money are in the Department of Veterans Affairs secretary's office, which includes several politically appointed positions and in the agency's budget and accounting office. There are 17.5 positions funded with nursing home revenue that work directly with veterans: 5.5 positions in the cemeteries and funerals office and 12 that work in veterans claims services, helping veterans claim their federal benefits.

Tens of millions of dollars have been transferred from the veterans homes over the last decade and the state is set to transfer millions more through 2020-21.

A Legislative Fiscal Bureau memo released in September showed \$12.5 million was transferred from the homes in 2017-18 and \$14.5 million was projected to be transferred in 2018-19. The state plans to transfer \$10.3 million in 2019-20 and \$13.2 million in 2020-21, according to the memo. A 2017 [legislative audit](#) showed \$55 million had been transferred out of the King home from 2003-04 through 2015-16.

The practice of using nursing home revenue to fund other state agency programs has been used by both Democrats and Republicans over the years though it has accelerated under Gov. Scott Walker's administration. Democrats have asked for more legislative oversight over money transfers, while

Continued next page



Nursing Home continued

Republicans and DVA officials have argued it needs the flexibility to transfer money when needed.

Carla Vigue, a spokeswoman for the Department of Veterans Affairs said the homes help fund agency positions because those employees help run them.

“A major responsibility of our agency is the administration of our top-rated veterans homes. While not providing direct care nor working on-site at our campuses, staff at the central office have major responsibilities with regard to the homes, as the LFB report points out. The portion of salaries funded with program revenues reflects each position’s duties related to homes administration,” she said in an email.

“For instance, my position is partially funded by the homes. That is a reflection of the time I spend planning events for the homes, marketing the homes, and gathering and providing information about our homes to reporters, among other homes related work,” Vigue said.

Using money originally intended for veterans nursing homes to fund salaries has garnered critics who say that money, which largely comes from Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements from the

federal government, should remain at the homes.

Winnebago County Executive Mark Harris, a Democrat, has been a longstanding critic of the transfer policy and says the practice will eventually hurt veterans. “The administration’s decision to end the veteran loan programs cut off the interest income to the Veterans Trust Fund. The decision to raid the reserves at King to replace that revenue instead of using general purpose revenue has made the situation worse,” Harris said in an email Friday. “The end result of these policies is that eventually the Veterans Trust Fund and the reserves at King will be exhausted, threatening the well being of Wisconsin’s veterans.”

Proponents of the practice say that money is being well-spent on benefits to help other veterans statewide, but according to figures from the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, the state has decreased at least one key benefit: a grant to help needy veterans with dental, vision and hearing care.

Each year since 2011, the state has allocated \$970,000 for the grant. Of that amount, only \$256,800 was spent on grants in fiscal year 2016-17. That is down from \$488,600 that was spent on the grant in fiscal year 2011-12.

White House planning on deporting VN refugees

Jake Johnson, Common Dreams, December 13, 2018

In what critics described as a “consciously racist” and immensely cruel move that has the fingerprints of White House senior adviser Stephen Miller all over it, the Trump administration is reportedly working to make Vietnam War refugees who have lived in the United States for decades eligible for deportation. First reported by The Atlantic on Wednesday, the White House plan seeks to reinterpret a long-standing agreement with Hanoi that protects from deportation all Vietnamese people who arrived in the US before July 12, 1995 — the date the two nations officially reestablished diplomatic relations after the Vietnam War, in which the US killed millions of people and inflicted damage that lives on to this day.

“In essence, the administration has now decided that Vietnamese immigrants who arrived in the country before the establishment of diplomatic ties between the United States and Vietnam are subject to standard immigration law — meaning they are all eligible for deportation,” The Atlantic noted.

Winnie Wong, progressive organizer and

founder of People for Bernie, offered a succinct translation of the proposed policy change: “Trump wants to deport Vietnamese grannies who have been living here for more than 40 years.”

“Donald Trump’s cruelty knows no bounds,” declared Congressional Progressive Caucus chair Rep. Mark Pocan (D-Wis.). In addition to the sheer Trumpian cruelty of the policy shift, several commentators were quick to note that the plan also bears all the signs of Miller’s pernicious influence.

“Let’s see here. This is 1) Unnecessary 2) Cruel 3) Trolls the Libs 4) Secures the existence of our people and a future for white children,” author Mike Duncan wrote on Twitter. “Yes, we see you Stephen Miller.”

“You don’t need need to be the child of Vietnamese immigrants, like me, to find this shameful,” concluded BuzzFeed reporter Ryan Mac. “Considering the deportation of people who have lived in this country for decades, and who are largely here because of the US’s involvement, is an utter disgrace.”

Veterans Talent Show Coming

The Milwaukee Veterans Affairs Medical Center is seeking veterans in the performing and visual arts for the local creative arts festival in February, with a chance to attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, Oct. 28 to Nov. 3, 2019, in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

While the contest is open to all veterans who get care at VA, many use it as part of their therapy to heal from post-traumatic stress and a variety of other health care concerns.

There are more than 100 categories in performing, visual arts and creative writing. Some of the art categories include: painting, sculpture, photography, ceramics, paint-by-numbers, and leatherwork. Performing arts categories include dance, drama, music and more.

Deadline to enter the visual arts show is Feb. 6. Deadline for performing arts, including all digital music or video files is Feb. 7.

The local visual arts show is Feb. 11 in the third-floor recreation hall with judging at 9 a.m. and a reception open to the public at 11 a.m. The local performing arts shows take place 1 and 6:30 p.m. Feb. 14 in the recreation hall, with different acts for each show. It is open to the public.

The top winners go to the national competition, and many of those first-place winners are selected for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival where the best work is displayed and veterans put on a two-hour stage show.

To sign up or more information, call Shep Crumrine at 414-384-2000, ext. 43997, or e-mail him at: Sheppard.Crumrine@va.gov.

WATCH YOUR WALLET

VA's health care rules to be completely rewritten this year

By: Leo Shane III Military Times, 2019/01/02 <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress>

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump has been promising expanded health care choices for veterans dating back to his election campaign in 2015.

But 2019 could be the year his administration actually makes that happen. Veterans Affairs has been working on expanded community care rules for veterans' medical appointments since last summer, when Congress approved the VA Mission Act. Details of that work are expected to be released in early 2019, and a full set of new regulations is scheduled to be released in early spring.

Among other priorities, the legislation mandated a retooling of the department's policies for veterans seeking private-sector care, a massive undertaking that supporters have hailed as giving more flexibility and freedom to veterans who face long lines at VA hospitals and clinics.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie in December hailed the work as part of "a real transformational period at the department."

But critics have attacked the work as the first step toward privatizing key parts of the VA mission.

Democrats, including House members who will be taking control of the chamber this year, have promised intense oversight into the new outside care rules, to ensure they aren't written to siphon off

needed federal resources to private businesses.

As written, the legislation requires VA to remain a core coordinator of veterans health care plans but also to ensure "the scheduling of medical appointments in a timely manner," "continuity of care and services," and "no lapse in health care services."

The devil will be in the details of VA's implementation plan. Currently, the VA's Choice program — the best known and most used of the community care programs — is restricted to veterans who live more than 40 miles from a VA facility or face a wait of more than 30 days for VA services.

The new programs will likely jettison those rules in favor of a looser set of guidelines, including language for veterans who face "an unusual or excessive burden" getting their care at VA facilities.

Veterans groups have advocated for more flexibility for care options but also warned against abandoning the current Veterans Health Administration, a key safety net for millions of veterans across the country.

A congressional hearing previewing the Mission Act implementation work was scheduled for early December but was postponed due to the death of former President George H.W. Bush. That has only added more mystery and urgency to the drafts under consideration by top VA officials.

VA Prescription Refills Available For On The Road Vets

Vantage Point | October 5, 2018

Imagine you are on a vacation with your family with the sound of waves crashing and warm sun rays peeking through the palm trees around you. Then, an alarm goes off on your phone to remind you to take your medication and when you open the bottle, you realize your prescription is running low. Much to your chagrin, you end up sacrificing money and hours of precious vacation time to find, schedule and visit an emergency room, urgent care center, or pharmacy clinic to obtain a new prescription.

Thanks to OneVA Pharmacy, VA is making prescription refills simpler for traveling Veterans. OneVA Pharmacy is available and implemented at all VA medical centers (VAMC) as of June 2018. By simply registering at a local VAMC that uses OneVA, Veterans can forego the time-consuming and convoluted process formerly required to request a new prescription. “Right now, throughout the entire country, if you have a Veteran living in California and travel to Florida and want to have their prescription, they can do that. They go to the pharmacy and use this product to get the prescription filled,” explained Ms. Angela Chow, an implementation manager with VA’s Office of Information and Technology (OIT).

Before the implementation of OneVA Pharmacy, traveling Veterans who needed a prescription refill were required to either a) visit the emergency room, b) visit the urgent care center, or c) schedule a pharmacy clinic appointment. With OneVA, patients’ pharmacy information is available across VA so pharmacists can access any prescription already on file from any VAMC. Veterans on the road can easily refill their prescriptions—**with the exception of controlled substance prescriptions, such as opioid or narcotic pain relievers and anti-anxiety medications** [emphasis added]. This new process improves efficiency and saves time for both Veterans and pharmacists. By providing streamlined access to Veterans’ active and refillable prescription information and enabling the ability to request prescription refills directly from any VA pharmacy, pharmacists can fulfill window refill requests much more quickly.

The Road to OneVA

VHA and OIT worked jointly to roll out OneVA Pharmacy through several phases starting at the end of 2016, with the final step of implementation finished in June 2018. Since final implementation, pharmacists have filled 7,934 prescriptions and saved countless hours of Veteran and provider time. Despite the successful implementation of OneVA during the first phase of the project, there is still work to be done to make this service even greater for Veterans and pharmacists. Dr. Robert Silverman, PharmD, VHA’s project manager for OneVA Pharmacy shared, “Phase two will allow VA pharmacies to address many of the integrated workflow functions not present in OneVA Pharmacy phase one.”

Phase two of the project will also eliminate the need for a pharmacist to contact another pharmacist to work around scenarios not yet covered by OneVA Pharmacy. A unified VA pharmacy across VA is vital to providing better services to Veterans, improving efficiency, and providing safe care by reducing chances for mistakes, especially for the aging Veteran population. VHA and OIT will continue to partner together to further improve the connection and capabilities between pharmacies so that Veterans receive the high-quality health care services they have earned.

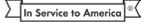
The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) visited our Christmas party. They brought a nice donation to the Chapter.

Thanks for the present, Ladies.





Vietnam Veterans of America #324
PO Box 18631
Milwaukee, WI 53218



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Correction Service Requested
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Sign Up Now With Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 324

Anyone can join! Membership Options:

Life Membership for all veterans \$50:

VVA is only offering LIFE memberships at \$50. If you have been getting a 1 year membership for \$20 you will need to pay \$50 at your next renew or be dropped from the VVA. If you paid \$50 at your last renewal you will become a LIFE member automatically without any further payment. NEW members will only have the \$50 LIFE membership when they join. (with a DD214 submitted).

Anyone Else:

- Associate Member - 1 year \$20 • Associate Member 3 year \$50 • Associate Life Member \$250
- Associate Life Member Installment Plan (\$50 Deposit; \$25 per month for 8 Months)

Please Print

Name _____ Membership # _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____ E-mail _____

I would like to help Chapter 324 by donating \$ _____

Make checks payable to VVA324 and mail with this completed application to:
VVA Chapter 324 - Membership, PO Box 18631, Milwaukee, WI 53218