

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America



Meeting Notice

TO BE ANNOUNCED

Elks Lodge 5555 W. Good Hope Rd.

Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.

Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.

Future Meetings 2020:

20 May, 17 June, 15 July, 19 August

Chapter web page: www.vietnamvetschapter324.com

National web page: www.vva.org

Chapter Officers

President: Pat Ciofani rezmel(at)sbcglobal.net

414-702-7734

Vice Pres: Oliver Williams w.oliver96(at)yahoo.com

414-358-4416

Secretary: Dennis Symanski dski06(at)hotmail.com

414-453-3600

Treasurer: Pat Moore irishpatat(at)sbcglobal.net

414-354-2533 Cell: 414-731-6029

Director: Dennis McCormack dxmccor2(at)msn.com

719-339-9063

Director: David Titter d.titterat(at)sbcglobal.net

414-870-7012

Director: John Morgan asa600(at)aol.com

414-871-9274

Membership: Joe Herbert Joe's a Luddite

414-873-7341

Newsletter: John Zutz john(at)zutz.org

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

**Due to the public health crisis, the April meeting is cancelled
ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD AT A FUTURE MEETING**

To Members of VVA Chapter 324

From Pat Ciofani, Chapter President

Due to the continuing COVID-19 health crisis, I am cancelling the April 15th meeting. As you know, during the April meeting we hold our chapter elections. I received an email from the Secretary of the Wisconsin State Council dated March 17. The email suggested options for holding elections. They are listed below.

Therefore, the April meeting is cancelled. Elections will be postponed for the immediate future. We will regroup after we are through with this public health emergency.

From State Council: Chapter elections

There are several options depending on circumstances in the local area.

1. Hold your meeting and the elections as long as there is a quorum and your local, state and the federal laws allow such a meeting during this public health emergency. Make sure you have a sign-in sheet and can verify attendance and voter eligibility.

2. Cancel the meeting due to a public health emergency and hold the elections at the next meeting. If the election is delayed the current officers will continue to hold office until the election is completed. (Article 3, Section 6, Paragraph B:Each officer shall hold office until his or her successor is elected and has qualified ...). If a current officer does not want to continue in that office until the election can be held, he or she can resign. If the president resigns the VP will take over. The other offices can be filled at the election.

Suspends Rules for Veterans Income Assistance Program

Governor Removes Barriers to Emergency Assistance for Veterans

MADISON - The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) announced today that Governor Tony Evers has suspended several provisions of the Assistance to Needy Veterans Grant (ANVG) program, providing more low-income veterans access to emergency financial aid. The ANVG program provides subsistence payments and other health care grants to low income veterans who experience a loss of income.

“This grant program was designed to help veterans during a time of need,” WDVA Secretary Mary Kolar said. “COVID-19 has hit many people hard economically. With the changes announced today, we anticipate more low-income veterans will be able to access emergency financial aid. We appreciate Governor Evers giving us the flexibility to help as many veterans as possible during this challenging time.”

Current rules contain some requirements that would prevent, hinder, or delay payments to veterans who have experienced a loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A temporary suspension of these provisions will allow WDVA to take the necessary action to assist and protect the health and welfare of Wisconsin’s veterans and their families. The WDVA has requested the following temporary provisions to ease requirements, remove burdens, and reduce limitations on a veteran applying for assistance:

Suspension of the requirement that applications include specific verification forms containing the signatures of a county or tribal veterans service officer or other authorized agent.

Suspension of a rule limiting an applicant’s eligibility if the applicant’s income exceeds 180 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

Suspension of the deadline by which an applicant must submit an application and receive medical care by a health care provider following the loss of income.

Suspension of the requirement that an applicant must provide proof that loss of income occurred due to an economic emergency.

The ANVG program provides financial assistance to veterans who have exhausted other sources of aid.

The grants may be used for specified health care and subsistence needs up to maximum grant limits.

These modifications will ensure that our veterans receive the support they need and deserve during this unprecedented time.

To apply for the Assistance for Needy Veterans Grant online, visit www.MyWisVets.com. Veterans may also apply by contacting their County Veterans Service Office or Tribal Veterans Service office. Veterans may scan and email a completed paper form to the VetsBenefitsGrants@dva.wisconsin.gov. Questions regarding the application process can be sent to VetsBenefitsGrants@dva.wisconsin.gov.

The Best Health System to React to COVID-19

BY SUZANNE GORDON, JASPER CRAVEN MARCH 20, 2020 <https://prospect.org/>

As the coronavirus surges through America, the country’s only national health care system—the Veterans Health Administration (VHA)—is facing a massive test. The agency must simultaneously treat its vulnerable population of nine million patients, while preparing to fulfill its so-called “fourth mission,” which is to help respond to national emergencies and pandemics.

For years, the VHA has been unfairly cast in the press and in Congress as a failing institution, even as its care has consistently outperformed the private sector on key metrics. In recent years, the VHA has developed unique and necessary tools that could play a critically helpful role in containing this public health crisis.

Yet this work could be greatly complicated

by the outright neglect and hostility from the Trump administration and Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie. Together, they have overseen an unprecedented privatization push through the VA MISSION Act of 2018; failed to fully fund the agency; done virtually nothing to fill 44,000 health care vacancies; and refused to install a permanent deputy undersecretary of health.

In late February, when lawmakers asked whether VA needed more resources to fight COVID-19, Wilkie said no, even as his department had yet to lay out a comprehensive plan for addressing the crisis. Now, as the infection rate in the civilian world skyrockets and roughly 50 veteran-patients have tested positive, Wilkie has continued to be tight-lipped

Continued next page

Covid continued

on how he's handling the crisis.

The few public signs of his intentions and competence are not encouraging, but one quiet action is ominous: deleting from the VA website any mention of the department's credo of caring for civilians in times of crisis. Earlier this week, with a dozen VA employees having tested positive for the virus, five public sector unions urged agency leaders to institute better plans and protocols to protect staff, let alone patients in its care.

Despite deep dysfunction at the leadership level, clinical staff across the country are revving into high gear as they continue to work in a system that is more compassionate and comprehensive than the private sector. And while this pandemic will not be easy to contend with, the department has a long track record of responding effectively to emergencies, including in Puerto Rico during and after Hurricane Maria. For a time, the VA hospital was the only functioning facility on the island. The VHA has also recently assisted during the California wildfires, in the wake of volcano eruptions in Hawaii, and after the Pulse Nightclub shooting in Florida.

As a highly coordinated, non-profit, mission-driven system, the VHA can act without the considerations or complications of private sector, fee-for-service systems. Clinicians face no worries about loss of revenue and can therefore quickly shift staff to more pressing needs.

"I feel very lucky to be working in the VA today," one VHA hospital chief of staff told the Prospect. "I'm already on a hair trigger to cancel total knee replacements or other elective surgeries. When I talk to colleagues in the for-profit sector, they are much more reluctant to do this because they will lose money."

Hugh Foy, professor emeritus of surgery at the University of Washington, agreed. "The VA can react more nimbly now because it's not profit driven." Former VA Secretary David Shulkin, who served under presidents Obama and Trump, said he saw tremendous consolidation and contraction in his private sector health care work, all in the name of profit.

"Folks in the department have seriously and professionally embraced this fourth mission," he told the Prospect. "The VA can and does lend an important hand when a national tragedy or crisis plays out."

Because the VHA is a highly coordinated system, agency staff have begun rejiggering its supply chain to get necessary equipment to hospitals in hardest hit areas, and have started setting up command centers to assist with this national emergency. The department is ready to contribute 16,500 acute care beds, 1,000 isolation rooms, 3,000 ventilators, six mobile nutrition units capable of churning out 1,200 meals a day, 12 mobile command units, and a network of nearly 4,000 deployable volunteers known as Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel.

Already, VHA staff have embedded with the Centers for Disease Control and are largely running the country's 65 emergency coordinating centers. The department has also deployed nurses to screen American soldiers coming home; built a website landing page to inform veterans of updates through the crisis; restricted non-essential hospital visits across the country; and instituted strong protective measures at their nursing homes, which are much better staffed and safer than their private sector counterparts.

The VHA has also ramped up remote care to less serious cases through its globally recognized telehealth program. VA telehealth includes a tele-ICU program which could help with the delivery of care to critically-ill patients when doctors and nurses are quarantined. Another benefit is the VA's centralized electronic health records, which ensure that if patients move from one clinic to another, doctors know what they've been tested for, and can continue to build on their care plan. This reduces duplicative testing and redundant evaluations at a moment when time is of the essence and we cannot afford to overburden already taxed health care systems.

On Wednesday, Secretary Wilkie came out of the woodwork to express the department's readiness to help in the crisis, and the White House requested \$13 billion to support VHA care. Wilkie said the department has greatly scaled back routine appointments and developed 2,000 coronavirus tests to assist moving forward. "We are gaming out emergency preparedness scenarios and we stand ready when the president needs us to expand our mission," he said.

As this crisis unfolds over the next weeks and months, we will all learn a lot about the problems and promises of America's health care system and even more about the wisdom of undermining government programs like the VHA, on which we now all depend.

VVA Concerned over Military Toxic Exposures VA's Inactions

Kyle Rempfer, ArmyTimes, February 1, 2020

Toxic exposures remain a prime concern," said Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) National President John Rowan at a hearing 26 FEB before a joint session of the Senate and House Veterans' Affairs Committees. He called upon Congress to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Medicine to empanel distinguished scientists and clinicians in the fields of toxicology and environmental hazards to research the literature, hold public hearings, and produce biennial updates of Veterans and Toxic Exposures.

This publication would succeed and follow the format of the Veterans and Agent Orange Updates mandated by the Agent Orange Act of 1991."

Rowan also expressed the displeasure of Vietnam Veterans of America with the implementation of the Toxic Exposure Research Act, enacted on the last day of the 114th Congress. "Now that it has been determined that it is easible to conduct epidemiological studies on the descendants of veterans who were exposed to toxic substances while in uniform, the VA has the next move," he said. "Thus far, they haven't moved with any sense of urgency." It's now time for Congress to ask the VA Secretary to explain, under oath, "what he will do to get [his department] on track to execute the provisions of the act."

Rowan also noted that VVA is "seeking 'champions' from both sides of the aisle in both Houses of Congress to enact the Toxic Wounds Registries Act of 2020. This legislation would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a master registry that would incorporate real registries that are not just mailing lists" for deployments of troops to Southwest as well as Southeast Asia."

This legislation would authorize the Secretary of the VA to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Medicine to review peer-reviewed scientific research and suggest research on the health effects of the toxic exposures identified in those registries," he said. "It would require those reviews to inform the Secretary's selection of research to be conducted and/or funded by the VA.

It also would establish a presumption of service connection for the purpose of veterans' disability and survivor benefits, for any illness that the Secretary determines warrants such presumption because of a positive association with exposure to a toxin noted in the master registry."



‘Thank you for your service’ overdone: Retired Colonel

Curtis Milam, Philadelphia Inquirer, February 15, 2020

The United States has a patriotism problem — a cult of patriotism. Don’t get me wrong, it’s very nice that people express their appreciation when they learn I served in the Air Force. But enough is enough.

The “thank you for your service” (TYFYS) culture is going to backfire on the military and society. There are many reasons people decide to serve, in uniform or out, but most public servants understand that service is its own reward — and a privilege. The TYFYS culture’s specific emphasis on military service fosters an environment where service members can develop a sense of entitlement, helped by a well-intentioned but overly appreciative public.

Our patriotism problem began in the 1980s as an over-correction to the poor treatment of Vietnam veterans returning from that war. It was supercharged by the performance of our forces in Desert Storm and a later sense of victimhood and vengeance that came with 9/11. Today we see it everywhere in our society, from the ubiquitous returning soldier set piece reunions (including one during this year’s State of the Union) to the corporate version — think NFL and NASCAR, both of whom have tightly woven a particularly strident form of military adulation into their products. Service members have always been used as political props, but what we see today is unprecedented in its pervasiveness.

Politicians running for office these days literally drape themselves in the flag, and candidates who have served feature their service prominently in their campaigns. It is sometimes the first thing out of their mouths, and their campaigns are awash with visuals of the candidate in uniform or standing next to a jet. Take for example Democratic Senate candidate Amy McGrath from Kentucky, whose campaign ads focused on her Marine service. Or Arizona Republican Martha McSally, whose “patriot, warrior, leader” ad hyped her Air Force service with a montage of McSally in uniform and snippet of news coverage related to her service. Even Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg leans in to his military background on the campaign trail.

As if military service automatically makes for a better political leader. There is scant historical evidence for that. Arguably two of our finest leaders, Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Delano Roosevelt — wartime presidents at that — never served a day in uniform. George W. Bush, who did serve in the Texas

Air National Guard, showed terrible judgment on the international stage.

Service to our nation is a privilege, and the military is just one of the many ways to serve. Military service is no more valuable than other forms of service. Our cops, firemen, teachers, career civil servants, and elected leaders — all deserve our gratitude and appreciation.

TYFYS has another insidious effect: It creates an environment where our military can, as a recent U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) report determined, develop an “unhealthy sense of entitlement.” There are troubling signs that a problem is brewing. Recently, our most elite forces, Green Berets and SEALs, have repeatedly been charged with war crimes, drug use, sexual assault and, in the case of a Green Beret in Mali, murder. The USSOCOM report found serious problems with “leadership, discipline, and accountability.”

It’s not a stretch to connect the dots between these findings and an overly adoring public that gives troops a sense of license. Trouble among our elite troops will make the news, but the same problems filter down into line units. And, of course it does not help when the commander-in-chief absolves them of their crimes and publicly lauds them as vindicated heroes.

Finally, perhaps the darkest consequence of this well-meaning but misguided appreciation is that it fuels the fantasies of wannabe warriors, like the Proud Boys or the Three Percenters. Kitted-out in the best assault gear mom’s paycheck can afford, these military imitators cosplay at the state capitol, harassing lawmakers and peaceful protesters. They want so much to be appreciated (and feared). They want to bask in the same glow of public appreciation service members receive. But often they can’t, so they form a “militia” and play soldier with grown-up toys. Except now these man-children are fed a toxic brew of online conspiracy theories, amphetamines, and failure.

Actors with malign intent, foreign and domestic, have weaponized patriotism. The TYFYS culture is complicit — knowingly or not. If you want to thank a service member, please do. But do it once and do it modestly. Our service members deserve your thanks, but no more than the everyday heroes walking among us.



In Service to America

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

Time Valued Material
Correction Service Requested
Forwarding Postage Guaranteed

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