

# Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America



## Meeting Notice

16 September, 2020

Elks Lodge 5555 W. Good Hope Rd.

Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.

Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.

Future Meetings 2020:  
16 September, 21 October, 18 November

Chapter web page: [www.vietnamvetschapter324.com](http://www.vietnamvetschapter324.com)  
National web page: [www.vva.org](http://www.vva.org)

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### Department to expand housing capacity by 35% and add female housing

## Wisconsin Homeless Veteran Program Receives Federal Support

WDVA Press Release

MADISON – The Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) has been awarded a grant from the US Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) to continue to operate and expand Wisconsin's successful Veterans Housing and Recovery Program (VHRP), which provides temporary housing, training, and supportive services to military Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in order to help them obtain permanent housing.

For more than 25 years, VHRP – through its community partnerships and extensive referral network – has helped homeless veterans in Wisconsin receive the job training, education, counseling and rehabilitative services they need to obtain steady employment, affordable housing and the skills to sustain a productive lifestyle. As part of the VHRP program, three transitional Veterans Housing Centers located in Chippewa Falls, Union Grove, and Green Bay provide housing and services to 78 Veterans in need.

“It is so important that we support the well-being of our state's vulnerable Veterans,” WDVA Secretary Mary Kolar said. “I'm pleased the VHRP

will continue to assist at-risk Veterans – men and women – navigate the pathway to stable housing by providing the tools and support to help put homelessness behind them.”

Under the Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program, the USDVA agrees to make a per diem payment to the State for each day a Veteran participates in the VHRP. With announcement of this grant, WDVA will expand services at both the Chippewa Falls and Union Grove locations, adding an additional 18 beds at Chippewa Falls and an additional 10 at Union Grove, allowing housing and other assistance to be provided to at least an additional 28 veterans during this grant cycle. The Union Grove location will also include housing and services for female Veterans.

The grants, awarded by the US Department of Veterans Affairs, are part of the Grant Per Diem program which provides funding to community organizations that provide transitional housing and supportive services for homeless Veterans, with the goal of “helping homeless Veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and income and obtain greater self-determination.”

# Caregiver Stipends to Expand To Vietnam Vets & Older Generations

Leo Shane III, Military Times, July 31, 2020

Veterans Affairs officials are planning to expand caregiver's stipends to additional families starting this October, one year after advocates had originally hoped for the financial assistance to be put in place. About 20,000 veterans — all of whom left the service after Sept. 11, 2001 — are currently participating in the VA caregiver program. The payouts provide thousands of dollars a month in compensation to spouses, parents and other partners of severely injured veterans who otherwise would require expensive institutionalization.

Under new regulations released 31 JUL, department officials said caregivers of veterans injured on military duty before May 7, 1975, would be eligible for the monthly payouts as early as 1 OCT, although when the bulk of payouts would occur remains unclear.

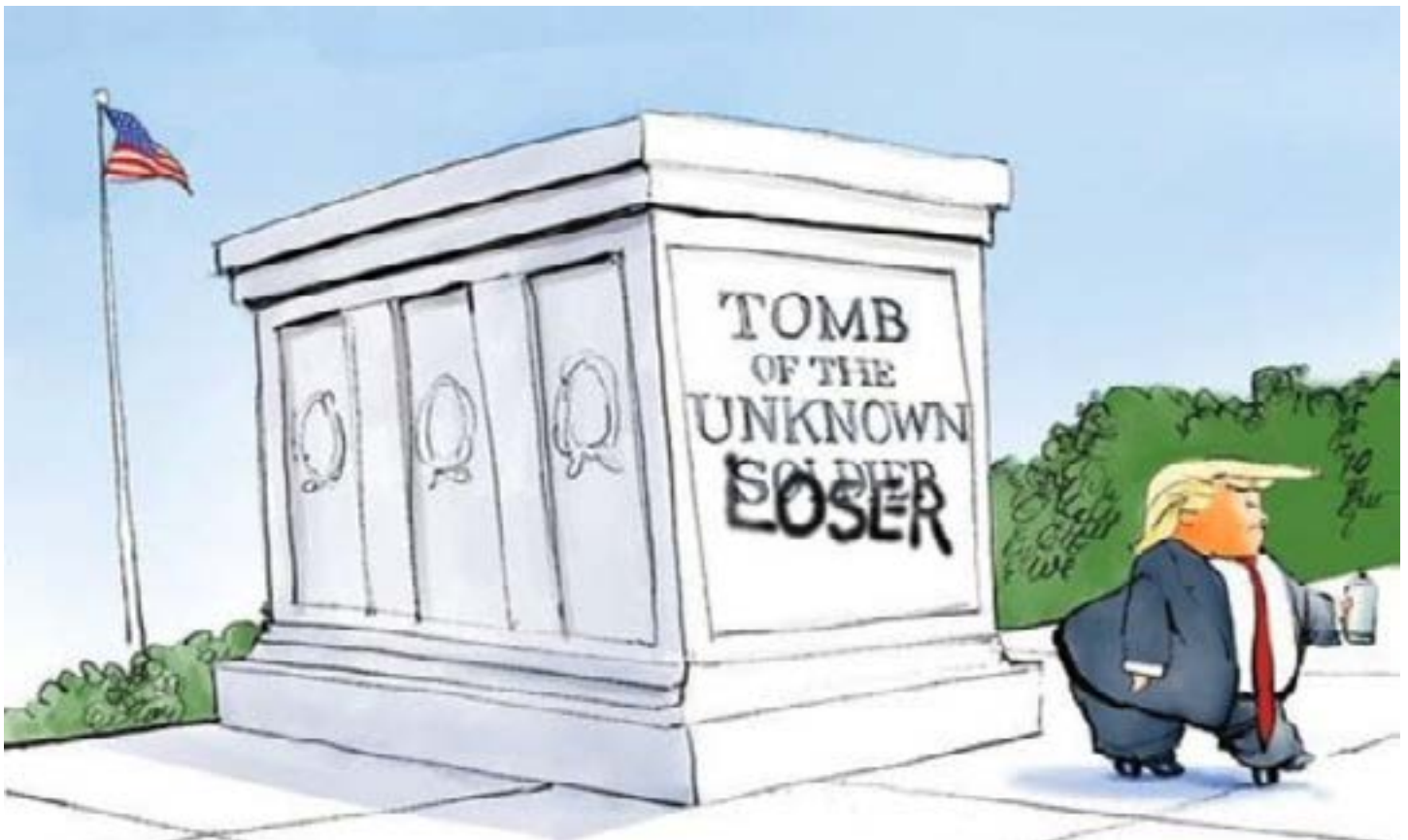
Caregivers of veterans injured between 1975 and 2001 would have to wait two more years to enter the stipend program, under rules previously established by Congress. That leaves those families

with a wait until at least October 2022 to enter the program while recognizing the complexity of adding up to 41,000 new families to the program in coming years.

The expansion is expected to cost about \$3 billion over the next five years, according to previous VA calculations. The expansion was mandated under the VA Mission Act passed by Congress and signed into law by President Donald Trump in summer 2019.

But the caregiver provisions were a major issue for veterans advocates at the time of passage, because of concerns that many elderly veterans had been unfairly excluded from the program. The program was due to be expanded in fall 2019, but delays in mandated technology upgrades pushed back the initiative by a year.

Under the final regulation, the revised Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 70 percent or higher, regardless whether their condition resulted from an injury, illness or disease.



*Ed Note: I've tried to keep politics out of this newsletter, but this time our President has gone too far. I'm not going to tell you who to vote for, or why, however, if this cartoon offends you, it damn well ought to.*

## **20,000 Claims Improperly Denied During COVID-19 pandemic.**

A.J. Lagoe / Steve Eckert, NBC KARE-11, July 20, 2020

An internal Department of Veterans Affairs memo obtained by Minnesota's Minneapolis KARE 11 TV News shines new light on the number of veterans who may have been wrongly denied benefits for missing appointments the VA itself had already cancelled due to the COVID-19 crisis.

At first, the VA claimed KARE 11 had identified an isolated example of the problem, but the memo indicates thousands of veterans may have been impacted. "VBA (Veterans Benefits Administration) has identified approximately 20,000 denied claims with one or more cancelled examinations, potentially indicating premature or improper denial" states the June 19th memorandum addressed to all Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Regional Offices. The effort to identify improper benefits denials was launched by the federal agency after members of Congress began demanding action in the wake of a KARE 11 investigation.

An angry and frustrated Harry Payne said, "That's a total lie!" after receiving a benefits denial letter in May from the VA claiming he failed to show up for a required exam. Payne, of Kempner, Texas, is one of thousands of veterans who had disability claims pending with the Department of Veterans Affairs when the COVID-19 pandemic struck the nation in force in March. He had been scheduled for an in-person Compensation and Pension (C&P) exam with a VA medical contractor in late April. However, before his scheduled appointment, a prior KARE 11 investigation exposed how veterans were being told to report to exams – even to exams in New York City – as the coronavirus crisis worsened. Veterans said they should not be forced to choose between the risk of exposure to the coronavirus and having their benefits claims denied or drastically reduced.

On April 3rd, VA ordered that in-person benefits exams be cancelled due to health risks during the coronavirus crisis. Veterans were promised on the VA website that, "We won't deny a claim solely for failure to report for an exam at this time." But that's exactly what happened to Harry Payne. "The VA sent me a letter saying my claim was denied," Payne said when he reached out to KARE 11 Investigates asking for help. "And then you read the reason why, and I get even madder because it's a flat out lie!" Records show he was scheduled for a C&P exam on April 21st by VA contractor QTC. However, after VA put a stop to

in-person exams on April 3rd, Payne says he received a phone call from QTC informing him his appointment was cancelled. He thought his claim was just on hold until it was safe to do the exam. He was wrong.

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) sent him a letter informing him his PTSD claim had been denied. The letter conceded he has PTSD caused by his service, but stated he was denied because, "We received notification from QTC Medical Services, Inc. that you declined to participate in the examination process for your claim." "I in no way refused to cooperate," exclaimed Payne. He was concerned the denial would force him to go through a lengthy appeals process. Once KARE 11 began asking questions, both VBA and QTC made things right for Mr. Payne. At the time, KARE 11 was told Payne's case was "an anomaly," an "isolated case," and the VA staff involved with issuing his benefits denial were "being retrained."

It was not an anomaly. Veterans from across the country began reaching out to KARE 11 with similar denials for not showing up to exams that VA itself cancelled. Members of both bodies of Congress expressed dismay over the wrongful denials KARE 11 exposed.

Veterans advocates tied the obvious errors to the VA's decision to abruptly end a decades-old practice of giving veterans service representatives 48 hours to review benefits decisions for accuracy before they become final and are sent to veterans.

Within weeks of the VA ending the 48-hour review period, KARE 11 began hearing from veterans around the country claiming they'd been unfairly denied benefits. A few days after his interview with KARE 11, Manchin and a group of Democratic Senators introduced legislation to restore the 48-hour review process. Under the legislation, VSOs, as well as attorneys and claims agents, would be permitted to review benefits decisions before they are final. That legislation is still pending.

The VA itself launched a review of all benefits claims denied during the COVID pandemic based on a veteran allegedly missing their exam. Days later, the internal VA memo was sent to the Regional VBA offices outlining the approximately 20,000 claims VBA had identified as being potentially denied improperly. Those claims are all now being reexamined.

## Stamp Sales Have raised \$717,000+ for Funding PTSD Research

Abbie Bennett, ConnectingVets.com, June 26, 2020

The Healing PTSD stamp, issued by the United States Postal Service last year, is having a big impact on the mental health of veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs announced on 26 JUN that the VA National Center for PTSD will be able to fund additional research due to the sale of more than 7 million of the stamps from December of 2019 to May of this year.

The USPS's new fundraising stamp is dedicated to healing PTS. According to a release, stamps sales have raised more than \$717,000, which has now been disbursed to the VA.

“Thanks to the millions of Americans who purchased the Healing PTSD stamp, VA will continue



to study, create awareness, educate and develop policies which better the lives of veterans with PTSD,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “The stamp not only raises awareness about PTSD but will provide funding for needed research and education about trauma and PTSD treatment.”

Trump says he’s ‘marshaling every resource’ to prevent veteran suicide in new plan. June was national Post Traumatic Stress Month and anyone who has seen or gone through a traumatic event, such as war, sexual assault or a serious accident, can develop PTSD. As a result, they may experience problems sleeping, trouble concentrating, recurrent dreams about the trauma, intense reactions to reminders of the trauma, disturbances in relationships and/or isolation. For more information about PTSD, refer to <https://www.ptsd.va.gov>

## Flu Shots - These 2 Shots Could Reduce Your Risk of Dementia

Chris Kissell, MoneyTalksNews, August 3, 2020

Getting a flu shot is always wise, but especially so this year. The vaccine helps protect against influenza, which can be dangerous and even deadly. Getting more people vaccinated against flu should mean fewer patients in hospitals, which is crucial during a time when the coronavirus pandemic continues to rage. Now, another reason has emerged to get the flu shot: Doing so may reduce your risk of being diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.

Three separate studies presented at the Alzheimer’s Association International Conference in late July all point in that direction. According to these studies:

- Getting at least one flu vaccination drops the risk of Alzheimer’s by 17%. Additional, frequent vaccinations drop the risk by another 13%.
- Being vaccinated for pneumonia when you are between ages 65 and 75 lowers Alzheimer’s risk by up to 40%. However, the impact here depends on an individual’s genetic makeup.

These vaccinations also can protect people who already have dementia, because those with dementia have a six-fold higher risk of dying after contracting an infection such as influenza or pneumonia. The Alzheimer’s Association notes that earlier, smaller studies also had found links between vaccinations and reduced risk of cognitive decline.

But the research presented at this year’s conference involved larger studies.

One study — out of the McGovern Medical School at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston — involved an analysis of a large dataset of American health records. It found that people who consistently got their annual flu shot had an almost 6% reduced risk of Alzheimer’s disease when they were between the ages of 75 and 84. Being vaccinated at an earlier age — for example, getting one’s first flu shot at age 60 rather than age 70 — lowered the risk of developing Alzheimer’s even more, the researchers note. Another study — out of the Duke University Social Science Research Institute — found that people who had pneumonia vaccination between the ages of 65 and 75 reduced their risk of developing Alzheimer’s by between 25% and 30%, after adjusting for a known genetic risk factor for Alzheimer’s and other characteristics. This reduction was as high as 40% among the people who do not have the gene associated with Alzheimer’s risk.

The Alzheimer’s Association adds: “Total number of vaccinations against pneumonia and the flu between ages 65 and 75 was also associated with a lower risk of Alzheimer’s; however, the effect was not evident for the flu shot alone.”



# Blood Test finds Alzheimer Disease 20 Years before Symptoms Appear

Chris Kissell, MoneyTalksNews, July 30, 2020

As we grow older, many of us worry about developing dementia. Now, a new blood test may detect if you are at risk for the disease 20 years before symptoms appear. On 28 JUL, researchers at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference unveiled the results of a study, published in the medical journal JAMA, that found a blood test can identify Alzheimer's disease — the most common form of dementia — in people with a rare genetic mutation, and do so two decades before cognitive issues develop. Currently, memory and thinking tests often are used to diagnose Alzheimer's. But blood testing offers more accuracy and is less expensive than other methods, such as spinal taps and brain scans, USA Today notes.

The blood test looks for an abnormal version of the tau protein found in brain cells — p-tau217 — which “seems to be the most specific to Alzheimer's and the earliest to show measurable changes,” says the Alzheimer's Association. It adds: Changes in brain proteins amyloid and tau, and their formation into clumps known as plaques and tangles, respectively, are defining physical features of Alzheimer's disease in the brain. Buildup of tau tangles is thought to correlate closely with cognitive decline. In these newly reported

results, blood/plasma levels of p-tau 217, one of the forms of tau found in tangles, also seem to correlate closely with buildup of amyloid.”

The association notes that the new testing technologies can help experts better identify the right people for clinical trials, which could spur the development of drugs to treat dementia. Maria C. Carrillo, the Alzheimer's Association chief science officer, says the possibility of being able to detect and treat Alzheimer's early in the disease progression could be “game-changing for individuals, families and our health care system.” However, Carrillo also cautions that the findings are “early results,” and it is not known how long it will be before the blood tests are available for clinical use. The next step is to test the new findings in long-term, large-scale studies, she says.

Dementia is a devastating disease. While there is no surefire way to prevent it — and no way to cure it — there are steps you can take to lower your risk of being diagnosed with dementia. For example, research has shown that following the Mediterranean diet can cut your risk of cognitive impairment by more than one-third.





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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)

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

Make checks payable to VVA324 and mail with this completed application to:  
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