

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

In Service to America



Meeting Notice

21 October, 2020

Elks Lodge 5555 W. Good Hope Rd.

Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.

Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.

Future Meetings 2020:

18 November, 16 December

Chapter web page: www.vietnamvetschapter324.com

National web page: www.vva.org

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Newsletter: John Zutz [john\(at\)zutz.org](mailto:john(at)zutz.org)

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

Taken From the September Minutes

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family of Joe Herbert who passed away August 19th. Joe was a long time member and was instrumental in keeping our chapter alive during some difficult times in its early years.

He was currently our membership chairman. His smiling face will be missed by all who knew him.

RIP Brother!



VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
Milwaukee Chapter 324
September 16, 2020

Meeting Called to Order at 7:00 pm

Attendance : John Morgan, Pat Moore, Pat Ciofani, Dennis Szymanski

Minutes of February 19, 2020 meeting approved
Treasurer's Report – Pat Moore - \$2700.68 in our checking account

VVA Membership Update – Pat Moore will take over as membership chairman

NEW BUSINESS

Officer Elections – Elections have been postponed until April

Louisiana State Council – Voted to give \$100.00 to Louisiana State Council to assist those affected by recent hurricane

Americanism Breakfast – Bob Rugg to receive award from chapter

Adjournment – 7:30 pm

Caregivers of older veterans can apply for VA financial assistance

Leo Shane III, Military Times, Oct. 1 2020

After an extra year wait, caregivers of veterans who served during the Vietnam War or earlier can now apply for support benefits for the first time.

Veterans Affairs officials announced the expected change in the Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Thursday afternoon after leaders officially notified Congress that the department's information technology systems were ready for the new applications.

The move could give thousands of dollars in stipends each month to caregivers who for years have assisted elderly and infirm veterans without any financial assistance. Prior to today, only caregivers of veterans injured after Sept. 11, 2001, were eligible for the program.

“Caregivers provide stability and security to our most vulnerable veterans, allowing them to stay in their homes with their loved ones for as long as possible,” VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said in a statement. “Through this expansion, VA is able to give more family caregivers access to essential resources so we can support them as they care for veterans of earlier eras.”

Advocates have pushed for the change for years, arguing that the current program excludes too many caregivers providing valuable and life-changing assistance to disabled veterans.

Congress mandated the change in the Mission Act, signed into law in June 2018, but VA officials delayed the start date by a year because of

concerns about processing the expected influx of new applications.

About 20,000 veterans were participating in the VA program at the start of this summer. Officials have estimated the expansion could grant monthly stipends to more than 41,000 new veteran families in coming years, and cost about \$3 billion over the next five years.

Under the expansion rules, caregivers of veterans injured on military duty before May 7, 1975, will be eligible to receive the stipends after their applications are approved. Veterans in the remaining group — those injured in the line of duty between May 7, 1975, and Sept. 11, 2001 — will have to wait until October 2022 to apply for the benefit.

Only veterans with a service-connected disability rating of 70 percent or higher are eligible for the program, but their disability can be the result of an in-service injury, or a connected illness or disease.

In anticipation of the program's growth, VA officials have grown their Caregiver Support Program staff to about 1,100 personnel, and expect to hire about 700 more staff in the next six months.

In a statement, the department said the changes will “ensure veterans and caregivers receive timely, accurate assessments and eligibility determinations, as well as an improved customer experience.”

More information on applying for the program is available on the VA's web site.

A Letter From the Secretary WDVA

Dear Veterans,

I write to you today to implore you to help me motivate your membership and others to do all they can to keep themselves healthy and to help protect all the essential workers that we have working in our state including those at our Veterans Homes at Chippewa Falls, King, and Union Grove.

We have reached a crisis situation here in Wisconsin.

Last month, we had 29 residents and 25 staff at our Wisconsin Veterans Home at Union Grove contract the coronavirus. Sadly, ten passed away. At our Veterans Home at King, we currently have nine residents and eight staff with COVID-19. An additional 16 staff are out and quarantining as they await test results. Sadly, one resident at King died due to complications of COVID-19. And, at our Home in Chippewa Falls, we have seen our first cases of COVID-19 just this week. One resident and two staff have tested positive for this terrible virus.

These are our nation's heroes and our incredible, dedicated health care workers. They all have family and friends who are undoubtedly worried, sad, and upset. One of the great things about working on our campuses is that we get to know each other's stories and we become like family. Right now, our family is hurting.

Wisconsin continues to set record high numbers of COVID-19 positive cases. While initially rural areas were not affected by the virus, now EVERY county in the state is experiencing HIGH levels of COVID-19 activity.

A report examining metro areas with at least 50,000 people nationwide with the greatest number of new cases, relative to their population, in the last two weeks has found that six Wisconsin cities are in the top twenty nationally. If you look at those cities, four – Oshkosh, Green Bay, Appleton, and Stevens Point - are in close proximity to King. In addition, they list the metro areas where new cases are rising the fastest, on a population-adjusted basis. Green Bay, Oshkosh, Wausau, and Racine are all listed in the top ten nationally! Those areas cover King and Union Grove.

Our workers have to live their lives when they leave the workplace. They need to stop at the gas station and grocery store, their kids are in day care and sometimes school, and they have their own medical and other appointments. We need everyone to do their

part so they can stay protected when they are out in the community. This is a highly contagious virus that can have terrible consequences for many people. It can also be sneaky, as some will not experience symptoms yet can be unknowingly spreading the virus. Others get very, very ill.

While I am able to report to you what is happening at our Homes, this is not just about protecting the veterans and staff there. In fact, we both have responsibility for the membership that you lead and the veterans across this state for whom I am an advocate. The data and information we have about where COVID-19 is prevalent and spreading quickly coincides directly with the information we have about where veterans live. Of particular concern is that a significant number of aging veterans who are at higher risk of getting complications from COVID-19 live up north and in rural areas where hospital care is often far from home.

This is why it is so important that we continue to stay home as much as possible, wear a mask when out and maintain at least six feet from others, and wash our hands frequently. These are known ways we can do our part to prevent the spread of this deadly virus.

I hope you will help me spread this message. We need everyone to understand that COVID-19 is affecting and hurting real people...people who like you and me who took an oath to serve our country, stand up for it, and fight if necessary. Today, I ask you to join me in this fight. These are our brothers and sisters and this is our battlefield. We need to have their backs.

In service,

Mary

Mary M. Kolar

Captain, U.S. Navy (Ret)

Secretary

Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Tests Hundreds of Veterans With Convalescent Plasma

Richard Sisk, Military.com, 3 Sep 2020

The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced plans for randomized testing of 700 veterans on the effectiveness of convalescent plasma in treating COVID-19, amid an open feud between public health agencies on its therapeutic value.

“This trial will go a long way toward helping in the fight against COVID-19,” VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said. In the test, focused on veterans who are sick with the virus, and hospitalized as VA medical centers around the country, some will get convalescent plasma and some will receive a placebo for comparison.

The randomized test, announced Aug. 28, is part of an effort to begin providing data on the long-term effectiveness of convalescent plasma.

VA went public with its plan days before the National Institutes of Health stated Tuesday that evidence was lacking to prove whether the treatment worked, or might cause harm.

A report by an NIH panel of more than three dozen experts charged that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) went ahead with approval of emergency use authorization (EUA) for convalescent plasma without doing the randomized testing needed to justify its use.

“Convalescent plasma should not be considered standard of care for the treatment of patients with COVID-19,” the panel said in a report posted on the NIH website. “There are insufficient data to recommend either for or against the use of convalescent plasma for the treatment of COVID-19.”

The FDA had previously allowed the use of convalescent plasma as an “investigational treatment” for COVID-19. More than 72,000 patients thus far have received it, according to the Department of Health and Human Services.

The VA has allowed the use of convalescent plasma for seriously ill patients in some instances, and there have been anecdotal reports of quick recoveries by patients who were on ventilators.

In addition, the U.S. military in May announced a program to begin testing troops for

COVID-19 antibodies, then asking them for voluntary blood donations.

At a May 29 virtual Pentagon town hall meeting, Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley said that troops might be asked to “stick your arm out” to draw blood for use as a novel coronavirus therapy. He said the military is “doing some antibody testing right now, and we’re expanding that.”

“We’ll be doing antibody testing for critical Tier One units, such as those who go into subs or the nuclear triad or some of our quick-reaction forces. So the short answer is, yes, for the antibody testing,” Milley said.

The FDA approved emergency use of convalescent plasma a day after President Donald Trump sent out an Aug. 22 tweet suggesting that “deep state” influence at the FDA might be holding up approval of vaccines and therapeutics.

At a White House news conference with Trump the same day, FDA Commissioner Dr. Stephen Hahn announced the emergency use authorization of convalescent plasma and cited statistics from preliminary studies suggesting that 35 out of

100 seriously ill patients would recover.

Trump called the FDA’s action “historic,” and described the treatment as “a powerful therapy” made possible “by marshaling the full power of the federal government.”

Critics immediately charged that Hahn had grossly exaggerated the survival rate statistics from a Mayo Clinic preliminary study, and Hahn backtracked the next day.

“I have been criticized for remarks I made Sunday night about the benefits of convalescent plasma. The criticism is entirely justified,” Hahn said in a Twitter post.

Both Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and Dr. Stephen Collins, director of NIH, had warned before the FDA approved emergency use of convalescent plasma that the anecdotal evidence of its effectiveness needed to be verified by solid data from random testing.



Pentagon Used PPE Funding To Stockpile Military Equipment Instead

By Zoë Richards, September 22, 2020

<https://talkingpointsmemo.com/news/pentagon-used-congress-funding-for-ppe-to-stockpile-military-equipment-instead>

Investigation into a \$1 billion fund allotted by Congress to the Pentagon in March to bolster the country's supplies of medical equipment reveals that the funds have been mostly diverted to defense contractors and used to manufacture military equipment like jet engine parts, body armor and dress uniforms.

The Washington Post reported the finding which demonstrates how a taxpayer-based effort to combat COVID-19 was redirected to stockpiling military supplies.

Passed earlier this year, the Cares Act distributed funds to the Pentagon to “prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.” But per the Post, in a matter of weeks, the Defense Department began reshaping how that money would be used — diverging from the original intent of Congress for the funds.

The payments were made despite warnings from health officials as recently as last week that suggested there continue to be major funding gaps in responding to the pandemic. CDC director Robert Redfield, testified to the Senate last week that states desperately need \$6 billion to distribute vaccines to Americans early next year.

The funds could also be used to fill what continues to be a severe shortage of N95 masks at some hospitals for their fight against the virus. But in the months after the stimulus package was passed, the Pentagon made other plans for the money.

According to the Post's report, the Pentagon

instead decided to give defense contractors hundreds of millions of dollars from the fund, mostly for projects that have little to do with the coronavirus response. Defense Department lawyers quickly determined that the funds could be used for defense production, a conclusion that Congress later disputed.

Rolls-Royce and ArcelorMittal among other firms were awarded \$183 million to maintain the shipbuilding industry; tens of millions of dollars were awarded for satellite, drone and space surveillance technology; \$80 million were given to a Kansas aircraft parts business which suffered a blow following the slowing of air travel amid the coronavirus and the Boeing 737 Max grounding. A domestic manufacturer for Army dress uniform fabric also received \$2 million, the Post found.

DOD officials contended to the Post that they have sought to balance boosting American medical production with supporting the defense industry, whose health they say is critical to national security.

But the Post's review of a House Committee on Appropriations report shows that the use of emergency funding to boost defense contractors goes against the committee's intent to promote the manufacturing of personal protective equipment.

“The Committee's expectation was that the Department would address the need for PPE industrial capacity rather than execute the funding for the DIB (defense industrial base),” the committee wrote in its report on the 2021 defense bill.

Per the Post, Pentagon officials have defended their decisions, saying that they have been transparent with both Democrats and Republicans in Congress on their plans for the funds.

From the Editor

In the September issue of this newsletter I published an editorial cartoon depicting the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier with “Loser” spray painted on it's face.

I noted that I try to keep politics out of the paper, but our President had gone too far.

I got three replies: one calling it an off color, irresponsible narrative; one calling me a fucking idiot; and a third demanding to be removed from the mailing list (as did the first two).

I stand by my original position. Our Commander in Chief called all veterans suckers, and

he has called Ex-POW John McCain a loser.

My objection isn't political, it's personal.

I don't care what your political affiliation may be, he was talking about you, he was talking about me.

There are times I feel as if I was a sucker, and there's little doubt that we were losers.

But I'll be damned if I'll take any shit from a pretty boy who used money and privilege to avoid service.

If there is any objection I'll be happy to hand the editor job to whoever would like to take my place.

John Zutz



Vietnam Veterans of America #324
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