

# Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218

*In Service to America*



## Meeting Notice

Christmas Party, Dec. 20

### Future Meetings: 2018

17 January, 21 February, 21 March, 18 April, 16 May,  
20 June, 18 July, 15 August, 19 September, 17 October,  
21 November, 19 December

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

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

### Chapter Officers

**President:** Pat Ciofani [rezmel@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rezmel@sbcglobal.net)  
414-702-7734

**Vice Pres:** Oliver Williams [w.oliver96@yahoo.com](mailto:w.oliver96@yahoo.com)  
414-358-4416

**Secretary:** Dennis Symanski [dski06@hotmail.com](mailto:dski06@hotmail.com)  
414-453-3600

**Treasuer:** Pat Moore [irishpatat@sbcglobal.net](mailto:irishpatat@sbcglobal.net)  
414-354-2533 Cell: 414-731-6029

**Director:** Joe Murray  
414-306-3037

**Director:** David Titter [d.titterat@sbcglobal.net](mailto:d.titterat@sbcglobal.net)  
414-870-7012

**Director:** John Morgan [asa600@aol.com](mailto:asa600@aol.com)  
414-871-9274

**Membership:** Joe Herbert Joe's a Luddite  
414-873-7341

**Newsletter:** John Zutz [john@zutz.org](mailto:john@zutz.org)

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

*All members are invited to bring their families to*

## The VVA Chapter 324

### *Christmas Dinner*

**6 p.m., Wednesday, December 20**

**At the Elks Lodge**

**5555 W. Good Hope Rd.**

Chicken, Pizza, and more provided



RSVP to Pat Moore 414-354-2533 414-731-6029  
[irishpat@sbcglobal.net](mailto:irishpat@sbcglobal.net)

**VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA**  
**Milwaukee Chapter 324**  
**November 15, 2017**

**Meeting called to Order at 7:00 pm by  
President Pat Ciofani**

**A Moment of Silence** was observed for our brothers and sisters no longer with us, for all POW/MIA's and their families and for all serving our country

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Attendance** – Dennis Szymanski, Pat Moore, John Zutz, Jeff Landowski, Janice Dahlke, John Morgan, David Titter, Pat Ciofani, Joe Herbert

**Minutes of the October 18, 2017 meeting reviewed and accepted**

**Treasurer's Report – Pat Moore** - \$3274.41 balance in our checking account

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**VVA Membership Update – Joe Herbert**  
– Membership holding steady

**Allied Veterans Meeting Update – Pat Ciofani**

**Volunteering at the VA – Pat Ciofani**

**Fund Raising-** Pat Ciofani will follow through with UWM representative to see about donating to help needy veteran students

**Website** – Contact Pat Moore to post items of interest

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Chapter Christmas Party – December 20<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm** - Moved and passed to spend up to \$700 for party

**Americanism Awards Breakfast** – Joe Murray and Chuck Theusch were our honorees

**Veterans Day Parade** – Thanks to those that participated

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Christmas With The Vets** – Moved and passed to donate \$100 to event at the VA

**Candy Cane Lane** – Usually 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday in December – Check for exact date

**Adjournment – 7:30 pm**

**Stay Down Here Where You Belong**

By Irving Berlin (1914)

[1st verse:]

Down below

Down Below

Sat the devil talking to his son

Who wanted to go

Up above

Up above

He cried, "It's getting too warm for me down here and so

I'm going up on Earth where I can have a little fun

The Devil simply shook his head and answered his son

[Refrain:]

Stay down here where you belong

The folks who live above you don't know right from wrong

To please their kings they've all gone out to war

And not a one of them knows what he's fighting for

'Way up above they say that I'm a Devil and I'm bad

Kings up there are bigger devils than your dad

They're breaking the hearts of mothers

Making butchers out of brothers

You'll find more hell up there than there is down below

[2nd verse:]

"Kings up there

They don't care

For the mothers who must stay at home

Their sorrows to bear

Stay at home

Don't you roam

Although it's warm down below, you'll find it's warmer up there

If e'er you went up there, my son, I know you'd be surprised

You'd find a lot of people are not civilized"

# How to Schedule VA Appointments Online

Alan Greilsamer and Treva Lutes, Veterans Health, November 14, 2017

You can now manage your primary care and certain specialty care VA appointments online at participating VA facilities. You will need a Premium My HealtheVet Account to use online scheduling. If you do not have a Premium account, please visit My HealtheVet or contact the My HealtheVet Coordinator at your nearest VA facility. U.S. Army Veteran G. Paul Moffett, who helped test online scheduling at the VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System in Murfreesboro, TN, says it's about giving Veterans greater control over scheduling their care. "Rather than making a phone call and playing go fish, now I can [go online and] pick the date that best fits my schedule," he says. "You can use it anytime, anywhere – on whatever Internet- access device you have. I'm excited about it. It's great stuff."

Currently, online scheduling is available at more than 100 VA facilities and their associated Community Based Outpatient Clinics. VA plans to add more appointment types in the future and is working to make online scheduling available at nearly all VA facilities next year. You check to see if your VA facility offers online scheduling at <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/web/myhealthvet/keeping-up-with-all-your-va-appointments>.

If you are eligible to use online scheduling, you will see a "Schedule a VA Appointment" option when you log in to your My HealtheVet Premium Account. To make an appointment online, you need to be registered as a patient in My HealtheVet and have a Premium Account. To schedule a primary care appointment, you must have had a primary care appointment at that facility within the last two years. Contact your facility for information about available

specialty care appointments. At <https://www.vets.gov/facilities> you can locate their contact info. With the online scheduling tool you can:

- Self-schedule primary care appointments at participating VA facilities where you have had a primary care appointment in the past two years.
- Request help scheduling primary care appointments at participating VA facilities.
- Self-schedule or request help scheduling specialty appointments, such as outpatient mental health, optometry and audiology.
- View or cancel appointments and requests.
- Track the status of appointment requests.
- Send messages about appointments.
- Get notifications about appointments.

If your VAMC does not currently participate in online scheduling, know that VA is working to expand access to additional medical centers. If you need to make an appointment immediately, call the VA facility where you want to receive care. Remember, you can find your VA health facility's phone number. at <https://www.vets.gov/facilities>. To summarize, to use VA Online Scheduling today, you will need to:

- Be a current VA patient
- Have a Premium My HealtheVet Account
- Check if your VA facility offers online scheduling at this time
- Have had a primary care appointment at your participating facility within the last two years ...and that's it! If you need help with online scheduling, dial 1-877-470-5947. For TTY assistance, dial 711.

The Help Desk is open weekdays from 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. CT.

## My Army Service Made Me Believe in Universal Health Care

BY DOMINIC TAO, NOV. 29, 2017

[https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/11/my-army-service-made-me-believe-in-universal-health-care/546974/?utm\\_source=atfb](https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/11/my-army-service-made-me-believe-in-universal-health-care/546974/?utm_source=atfb)

In July, I experienced a flash of panic that only one of America's 28 million uninsured citizens can truly understand. Life—and my right ankle—took a tough turn. I had broken my leg running in a charity mud race in St. Petersburg, Florida, and for the first time since I'd left the Army the summer before, I didn't know what to do when I needed to see a doctor. As a soldier, I had health-care providers available at

all times to treat my every medical need, at no direct cost to me. As a civilian, I felt out in the cold.

As the pop of my fibula snapping was still fresh in my ears, my body still caked in mud, I sat in the grass under the event's medical tent. Leg swollen, with an ice pack melting in the 92-degree heat, I furiously used my phone to consult Google about what

**Continued next page**

## Health Care Continued

to do next—and how much it would cost.

Query: “cost of ER visit” Google: “\$1,233”

Query: “cost of broken leg” Google: “... typically costs up to \$2,500 or more ...”

And as my military training had conditioned me to do, I investigated the worst-case scenario.

Query: “cost of ankle surgery” Google: “... between \$9,719 and \$17,634 ...”

But one final search changed my prospects that day—and my perspective on the health-care debate in the United States.

Query: “cost of VA hospital visit” I was taken aback: The results suggested I’d pay little to nothing. For me—an honorably discharged veteran of the war in Afghanistan with no disabilities—the total out-of-pocket cost for multiple X-rays, visits to orthopedic specialists, medications, and a knee scooter was just \$8 through the Veterans Health Administration medical system.

Prior to that day, I had no idea how deeply my own government, and by extension my fellow Americans, cared for my well-being—that by virtue of my five years of military service, I was given the benefit of affordable health care even after I had stopped wearing a uniform. The vague, hour-long health-benefits briefing I sat through when I left the Army did little to explain how the system actually worked.

My service had introduced me, unwittingly, to a lifetime of socialized medicine: care that is paid for with public money and provided by the government. According to the latest available data, 9.4 million people are covered by TRICARE, the membership-restricted, public health-care program for uniformed service members and their families. A further 6 million veterans use Veterans Health Administration services each year, with up to 15 million more eligible.

After my July revelation, I felt a deeper connection to my country. But I also felt very guilty. Before I learned the extent of the services available for most veterans at low or no cost, I was just another uninsured American anxious about a broken bone and the financial disaster that can come with it. While U.S. troops deserve compensation for their unique national service—for the long separations they endure; the long hours they work; and, sometimes, imminent threats to their lives—a thought has stayed with me: Do service members’ sacrifices mean they should be some of the only Americans to have guaranteed care?

There are teachers who work in dangerous neighborhoods to make sure disadvantaged children get an education. There are small-business owners who risk everything—including going without health insurance—to pursue the kind of entrepreneurial dreams that make the country an economic powerhouse. There are wage earners, artists, and single parents who may never get a job with health benefits, but who nonetheless work hard and contribute to the fabric of America.

It makes little sense to me, then, that my service should entitle me to any more or less medical care from my government than any other citizen receives.

In fact, as congressional Republicans have tried, and failed, to repeal and replace Obamacare, I’ve considered whether the alternative floated by Democrats like Bernie Sanders may be better for Americans—and America.

That plan—a single-payer, “Medicare for all” option in which taxpayers contribute to a national health-insurance program—remains something of a third rail in Washington, and it’s opposed by more than a third of the U.S. population. The opposition is, in part, rooted in the economy: It’d necessitate raising taxes or adding significantly to the deficit. And there’s philosophical opposition, too. Some Americans simply don’t think they should have to pay more to ensure coverage for their fellow citizens, while others are wary of how foreign the system would be. Before I enlisted, it never occurred to me that universal health care, let alone socialized medicine in any form, was a desirable option in the United States. Government health care in any form seemed oppressive to me, a limit on my freedom. But I found that, in many ways, the opposite was true. While any type of universal health-care system would have economic consequences, the associated gains—no longer worrying about coverage loss after a job change, for example, or feeling stressed about finding in-network doctors—for me outweigh that burden.

As a 2016 RAND Corporation study suggested, the U.S. government is capable of providing medical care that’s on par or better than many private alternatives. While it is something of a sport both within the military and among veterans to complain about the care they receive—and the system has seen its fair share of problems and failures—surveys show that in recent years, they are happier with their care than civilians with private providers.

## NJ VA Clinic Was Remiss in Vet's Death

Wayne Parry, AP|, November 16, 2017

A Gulf War veteran who set himself on fire outside a Veterans Affairs clinic and later died went nearly a year without a mental health appointment or medication, one of several serious problems government investigators found with the clinic in a report released 16 NOV. The Veterans Affairs Department's inspector general found Charles Ingram III went almost a year without seeing a counselor or taking medications for his mental health problems before his death in March 2016. He requested an appointment to see his psychologist at the Northfield clinic and was given an appointment date more than three months later. He had lost his job and was on the verge of a divorce. The report found the clinic did not provide appropriate supervision and oversight in the 11 months before his death.

U.S. Sen Cory Booker, a New Jersey Democrat, said the report "makes clear that important policies and procedures weren't followed in the lead-up to Charles Ingram's death last year. Ingram's death was a tragedy that shook us to the core and reminded us of what's at stake when it comes to providing care for veterans suffering from mental health issues." Booker, fellow Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez and Republican U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo all acknowledged improvements have been made at the clinic since then, including new leadership in the Delaware office that oversaw the New Jersey clinic and the hiring of additional staff.

VA spokesman David Cowgill said the report highlighted "unacceptable problems" that the agency is addressing by replacing the clinic's director; establishing same-day services for urgent mental health cases; hiring additional staff; and prioritizing suicide prevention efforts. Ingram's mother and sister declined to comment on the report. According to the report, Ingram walked into the clinic in 2015 asking for an appointment with his psychologist, who assessed him in the waiting room, determined he was not in

distress and sent him to the front desk to make an appointment. A date was set more than three months hence.

While he was waiting, the report said, Ingram was experiencing stress including the loss of a job and the deterioration of his marriage. He killed himself shortly before the appointment date by setting himself on fire outside the clinic, which was closed at the time. "We found that staff failed to follow up on clinic cancellations, patient no-shows, and appointments for approved care in the community, leaving the patient without follow up appointments and refills for prescribed medications," the report read. "We found that clinical staff failed to acknowledge and document the lack of appointments for this patient and failed to reach out to the patient to re-engage him in therapy as required."

They also found that clinic staff failed to make appointments for his care in non-VA community facilities, even though such care had been authorized. "We were unable to determine whether addressing these issues during the course of treatment would have resulted in a different outcome for the patient," the report concluded. "However, addressing these issues now will help facilitate a more patient-centered environment, especially for veterans with complex (mental health) and psychosocial issues such as the patient discussed in this report.

**For many, the biggest battles are  
after they come home...**



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**PO Box 18631**  
**Milwaukee, WI 53218**

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Anyone can join! Membership Options:

Vietnam Veterans (A copy of your DD214 must be included):

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

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