

Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - 240552 - Milwaukee WI. 53224.

In Service to America



Meeting Notice

15 November, 2023

5555 W. Good Hope Rd.
Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.
Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.

20 December, 2023

Future Meetings
2024

Jan 17, Feb 21, Mar 20, Apr 17, May 15

Chapter web page: www.vietnamvetschapter324.com

National web page: www.vva.org

Chapter Officers

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

Vice Pres: Treasurer: Pat Moore [irishpatat\(at\)sbcglobal.net](mailto:irishpatat(at)sbcglobal.net)
414-354-2533 Cell: 414-731-6029

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

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

Director: Bob Rugg
414-323-4852

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

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



**VVA324 Members, Family, and Friends
are invited to**

**Our 2023 Christmas Party
6p.m., 20 December**

**At the Elks Club
5555 W. Good Hope Rd.**

Dinner Will Be Provided

Contact Pat Moore to reserve your spot

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
Milwaukee Chapter 324
November 15, 2023

Meeting called to Order at 7:00 pm by President Pat Ciofani
Minutes of October 18, 2023 meeting reviewed and accepted
Treasurer's Report – Pat Moore - \$5373.86 balance in our checking account

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Allied Veterans Meeting Report – Pat Ciofani
Website – Contact Pat Moore to post items of interest to the chapter

NEW BUSINESS

Chapter Christmas Party – December 20th – 6pm – Contact Pat Moore if you plan to attend
VA Christmas With the Vets – Moved and passed to donate \$200
Daughters of the American Revolution – Moved and passed to donate \$200 to the Milwaukee Chapter

Adjournment – 7:30



The United States certainly gets into a lot of wars. Journalist and cartoonist Ted Rall once spoke with a British reporter who came up with an amusing idea for keeping the U.S. out of wars. The British reporter said, "If the average American cannot identify three cities in a country, the U.S. should not invade it." According to Mr. Rall, "Given that the average American doesn't know their state capital, much less three cities in, say, Canada, this would transform us into a pacifist society overnight."

After Calling Out Agency Wrongdoing

Majority of VA Whistleblowers Report Retaliation

By Patricia Kime, Military.com, 4 May 2023

The Department of Veterans Affairs continues to struggle to protect whistleblowers in its ranks, with two-thirds of whistleblowers reporting allegations of retaliation from 2018 to 2022, the Government Accountability Office has found.

Overall, allegations of retaliation against all federal whistleblowers declined from 2018 to 2022, but cases at the VA involving retaliation rose during the time frame, according to a GAO briefing to members of Congress in February that was released Wednesday.

The watchdog agency found that VA cases alleging whistleblower retaliation or other prohibited practices make up more than a third of the workload of the Office of Special Counsel, an independent agency that investigates and prosecutes personnel impropriety across the federal government.

The VA has a history of failing employees who report wrongdoing, including firing a clinical psychologist in 2019 the day before she was set to testify before Congress about the department's treatment of whistleblowers.

Dr. Katherine Mitchell, a VA doctor who exposed the 2014 scandal at the Phoenix VA Medical Center over appointment wait times, was allowed to return to work but then faced retaliation.

Jeff Dettbarn, a VA employee who blew the whistle in 2017 on diagnostic exams being canceled at the VA Medical Center in Iowa City, Iowa, without a doctor's order, and testified in Congress, was returned to the same job without any protection and saw his responsibilities removed and salary lowered.

In 2019, the VA's own Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, created in 2017 to address the department's handling of whistleblowers, came under fire itself for reprisals against employees who said the office wasn't holding top executives accountable.

Members of Congress have pledged to rein in mistreatment of whistleblowers at VA, holding hearings and requesting that the GAO monitor cases that involve allegations of retaliation.

During a hearing last year, Rep. Chris Pappas, D-N.H., noted that while the VA's Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection made

15 recommendations for actions to be taken against employees who retaliated, two-thirds of those were not implemented and only one was fully in place.

"This is just completely unacceptable," Pappas said during a June hearing of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee panel on oversight and investigations. "VA must also do better making whistleblowers whole after they suffer retaliation."

As part of its interim report to Congress, GAO found that such cases take longer to adjudicate than normal personnel complaints, by an average of 11 days. But the percentage of cases that have closed with a favorable action for the complainant tripled from 2018 to 2022, rising from 3% to 10%.

However, most of the whistleblower retaliation cases reviewed by OSC during the time frame, 59%, were closed as a result of insufficient evidence.

A VA spokesman said Friday that the number of cases of whistleblower retaliation reviewed by the Office of Special Counsel has declined by 42% in the past five years but the department still has work to do.

"Any retaliation for whistleblowers is unacceptable, and we continue to place a heavy focus on whistleblower rights and protections training for managers, supervisors, and employees – including communicating the remedies for employees who believe they have experienced retaliation," VA Press Secretary Terrence Hayes said in an email.

"We will not rest until we ensure that every whistleblower is respected, protected, and empowered at VA, every time," Hayes added.

VA officials acknowledged during the hearing last year that turmoil at the VA Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection, or OAWP, has eroded the trust that it is supposed to engender in employees who report wrongdoing.

Maryanne Donaghy, assistant secretary for accountability and whistleblower protection, said, however, that the department has made strides in reforming the office, with a goal to ensure that whistleblowers are heard and protected.

"Simply put, the OAWP of 2019 is not the same office as the OAWP of 2022. And driven by a dedicated staff, OAWP will continue to improve," Donaghy said.

Pentagon Fails Its Financial Audit for the Sixth Straight Year

By Roxana Tiron and Tony Capaccio, Bloomberg News, 16 Nov 2023

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Defense

Department failed for the sixth consecutive year to score a clean financial audit, a goal routinely achieved annually by businesses that have a fraction of its \$3.8 trillion in assets and \$4 trillion in liabilities.

Pentagon officials nonetheless claimed significant progress in tracking its assets and correcting hundreds of deficiencies in its accounts.

The failure “is not a surprise,” Pentagon Comptroller Michael McCord told reporters at the Pentagon. “It certainly is not something that we say, ‘it doesn’t matter.’”

About 1,600 auditors and 700 site visits were needed to review the Defense Department’s business processes and activities. The Defense Department spent \$187 million on the audit, a small slice of its \$853 billion budget.

The Pentagon’s inspector general’s office has been overseeing the audit work, and the watchdog will issue its own findings.

“Auditing the Department’s \$3.8 trillion in assets and \$4.0 trillion in liabilities is a massive undertaking,” McCord said in a news release. But he said “the improvements and changes we are making every day as a result of these audits positively affect” every military member and civilian employee.

Lawmakers have been pressing the Pentagon to produce a “clean” audit by 2027. But the Pentagon sought to put part of the blame on unreliable budgeting by lawmakers, saying that “Congress can further help by stabilizing the budget process and avoiding continuing resolutions and government shutdowns.” McCord said this would be the 14th year with the Pentagon funded by continuing resolutions. The most current stopgap proposal would provide funding for the Pentagon until Feb. 2.

Of the 29 Defense Department components undergoing stand-alone financial statement audits, seven received a clean audit opinion, and one received a qualified opinion. The results of the financial statement audits of the Marine Corps, the Defense Information Systems Agency Working Capital Fund, and the Pentagon’s Office of Inspector General are still pending, while the rest of the agencies all received disclaimers — financial audits that weren’t clean.

“Failure” in audit lexicon means the review of the 29 defense units resulted in a “disclaimer of opinion.” Disclaimers are issued when auditors can’t

form an opinion about the adequacy of the financial records based on a paucity of reliable data, not necessarily that there was a misuse or poor use of fund.

One indication of progress is that no new Pentagon-wide material weaknesses were reported this time, the department said.

The agencies that received a clean audit are: the Military Retirement Fund, the Defense Commissary Agency, the Defense Contract Audit Agency, the DFAS Working Capital Fund, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers – Civil Works, the National Reconnaissance Office and the Defense Health Agency – Contract Resource Management.

The Defense Department identified and reviewed \$621 million in payments subject to improper payment testing, which resulted in an estimated proper payment rate of 99.76% and \$1.4 million in improper and unknown payments.

The department measures audit progress across five areas: workforce modernization, business operations, quality decision-making, reliable networks, and enhanced public confidence. For example, the Air Force has deployed 65 bots saving approximately 429,000 labor hours and improving the ability to audit its business processes. Auditors for the Army tested its construction-in-progress monitoring control and found no unresolved transactions in the clearing account.

The Navy reviewed \$17 billion of unliquidated obligations, validating that 97% of the balances met audit requirements and uncovering an available \$330 million, according to a news release.

Mommy? Does Barbie
come with Ken?

No dear, she comes
with G.I. Joe. She
just fakes it with
Ken.



Home Depot Delivers

Appliances Available Tax-Free and Discounted From Exchanges

By Amanda Miller , Military.com, 23 May 2023

Home Depot has begun taking over military exchange store sales of major appliances.

Customers of shopmyexchange.com can now get Home Depot's selection of major appliances tax-free plus a 1% discount. The Army and Air Force Exchange Service, known as AAFES, announced May 18 that sales had begun, and Home Depot officials confirmed the 1% discount to Military.com.

The appliances are available through the site's Home Depot-branded section.

In the exchanges' physical stores, Home Depot showrooms will first appear at Fort Moore, Georgia; Fort Cavazos, Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph and Dyess Air Force Base, Texas; and Fort Sill, Oklahoma. The showrooms will ultimately roll out to 60 AAFES exchanges in the continental U.S., Hawaii and Puerto Rico.

Navy Exchange stores are also expected to shift sourcing and delivery of major appliances to Home Depot this year. The extent of the showrooms will vary according to the size of the exchange, but Home Depot's "entire assortment" will be for sale on the website, AAFES spokesperson Chris Ward told Military.com.

Home Depot's popular 10% military and veteran discount on most products does not extend to major appliances. The selection now available to exchange shoppers includes washers, dryers, refrigerators, freezers, built-in microwaves, ranges, cooktops, ovens and hoods. Home Depot itself will fulfill the orders and handle delivery.

The appliances will be available exclusively for delivery -- with the delivery cost calculated according to Home Depot's usual method based on size, weight and other factors, Ward said. Exchange shoppers will not be able to pick up their appliances at a Home Depot store.

AAFES' announcement characterized the new development as a "collaborative effort" between Home Depot and the exchange service meant to improve the quality of life of service members, veterans and their families.

The deal means exchange shoppers will have more major appliances to choose from, AAFES Director and CEO Tom Shull said in the announcement.

Customers will access the new discount program through the exchanges' stores or websites, not directly from a Home Depot store or Home Depot's website. The deal is available to veterans and their families, active-duty troops and their families, and all other authorized exchange shoppers.

Ward said most exchange stores will continue selling their existing inventory of major appliances until they sell out, at which time they'll transition to a Home Depot showroom. AAFES aims to have the 60 showrooms in place by October.

The military exchanges opened to more than half a million new shoppers in 2021 when the Defense Department extended shopping privileges to about 600,000 civilian employees.

Senior Discounts

Not every restaurant offers senior discounts. Here are some of the better ones we've found (note: some of these are subject to individual restaurant participation.)

Burger King: 10% discount. Occasional drink specials.

McDonalds: Discounts on coffee and drinks.

Wendy's: A free drink (some locations offer 10%)

White Castle: 10% off for 55 and over.

Sonic: 10% discount.

Subway: 10% discount.

Applebees: 10% discount.

IHOP: Special senior menu, with a 10% discount.

Denny's: Special senior menu with discounted prices.

Golden Corral: ages 60 and over get a discount.

Outback Steakhouse: 10% discount.

Walmart: does not offer ongoing senior discounts, but they frequently offer a lot of promotions on their website.

Amazon: Medicaid cardholders can get an Amazon Prime membership at a rate of \$5.99 a month, as opposed to the full price of \$12.99 per month.

For a neighborhood hardware store, you can't do better than Ace Hardware. Friendly service and a great selection are reasons enough to shop there. But an even better reason for seniors is most locations offer a 10% senior discount on most items. Be sure to ask for it!



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



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Sign Up Now With Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 324

Anyone can join! Membership Options:

Veterans:

Life Membership for all veterans \$50 (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, **P O Box 240552, Milwaukee WI. 53224**