



The E-9ers

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**Army
Navy
Air Force
Marine Corps
Coast Guard**

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Fellow E-9ers:

This has been a fast and eventful year. The E9ers have been busy, and that is the way it should be. I would like to thank Mardy for all the hard work she has done for the group in recent years. It will be hard to find some else that can do an equal job; her shoes will be hard to fill. We have a new president, Bob Lee. Please give him the support that was bestowed on me. I know he will do an outstanding job.

A big thank you from Ann and myself for a very memorable year.

Bill

BILL INTRODUCED TO ASSIST RURAL VETERANS' ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES

Congressman David Wu has introduced the Rural Veterans Services Outreach and Training Act, H.R. 4028, a bill to increase rural veterans' access to needed health care, disability compensation, education, home ownership, and transportation benefits. The bill has been referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

The bill would create a competitive grant program to help increase the number of veteran service officers that are available to assist veterans living in rural areas. A state department of veterans' affairs that receives a grant may distribute any amount of the grant funds to qualified state, county, or local agencies and qualified non-profit veterans service organizations that provide casework services to rural veterans and families. According to Congressman Wu, more than 6 million veterans live in rural areas by 2008 estimates. The health needs of rural veterans are an urgent matter because studies have indicated they tend to generally be in poorer health than their urban and suburban counterparts.

"All veterans have served our country with distinction, and rural veterans deserve equal access to the benefits that all other veterans receive," said Congressman Wu in a press release. "It is patently unfair that some veterans go without the benefits they need, deserve, and have earned, simply because they do not live near a Veterans Affairs Regional Office. Without convenient access to veteran service officers, rural veterans are forced to drive an average of 63 miles to the nearest VA Regional Office for care."

NVOA News Article, Dated December 18, 2009

The E-9ers OFFICERS

The following officers of the E-9ers Association are interested in hearing from you and what suggestions that you may have to improve our group. If you have any thoughts that you would like to share, please give one or more of them a call. They would love to hear from you.

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The E-9ers Association Next Monthly Meeting

January 27, 2010

11:00 a.m.

at

Mr. Panda Restaurant
2852 S. Havana Street
Aurora, CO

'LOST GRAVES' PROMPTS ARLINGTON PROBE

Army Secretary John McHugh has ordered an investigation into allegations of poor record keeping and "lost accountability of some graves" at Arlington National Cemetery, the Defense Department announced November 13. As the final resting place of our nation's heroes, any questions about the integrity or accountability of its operations should be examined in a manner befitting their service and sacrifice," McHugh said in a DOD news release.

The move comes after cemetery workers buried cremated remains in a grave site already in use and then moved the remains, possibly without notifying the next of kin, officials said. "Since then, questions have been raised over whether cemetery officials used proper procedures to correct the mistake, including notifying the next of kin," the news release said.

On the same day, the Army released the results of an investigation that found officials at the cemetery did not properly mark a grave site discovered in 2003 in what was supposed to be a vacant plot. "Between May 2003 and July 2009, there is no evidence that a temporary grave marker or a permanent headstone was prepared or placed at the grave site where a casket was known by cemetery staff members to be interred," the report said.

In July, the cemetery superintendent launched a check of records from 1979 to 2003 to try to identify whose remains were in the unmarked grave, the report said. An ensuing investigation could not determine whose grave was discovered, but it is possible that a husband and wife who died years apart were buried in adjacent grave sites instead of the same plot, Military District of Washington spokesman Col. Dan Baggio said in the news release. The husband and wife's names were redacted from the report.

"Cemetery officials have ordered new grave markers for the site," the news release said. "While exhuming the remains and conducting DNA testing would provide a 100 percent assurance of the cemetery's findings, the family has declined taking such invasive action. The Army is abiding by their wishes." In July, the grave site was marked as an "unknown," but it will now be properly marked, said Army spokesman Gary Tallman.

Stars and Stripes News Article, Dated November 14, 2009

VA PUTS "STAY" ON CLAIMS FOR NEW AGENT ORANGE PRESUMPTIVES

On October 13, 2009, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs announced his decision to establish presumptions of service connection, based upon exposure to herbicides within the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam era, for three new conditions: ischemic heart disease, Parkinson's disease, and B cell leukemias. As required by 38 U.S.C. 1116, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will issue regulations through notice and comment rule-making procedures to establish the new presumptions of service connection for those diseases.

Those regulations will take effect on the date that a final rule is published in the Federal Register. Until that time, VA does not have authority to establish service connection and award benefits based upon the planned new presumptions. On November 20, 2009, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs directed the Board to stay action on all claims for service connection that cannot be granted under current law, but that potentially may be granted based on the planned new presumptions of service connection for ischemic heart disease, Parkinson's disease, and B cell leukemias based upon exposure to herbicides used in the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam era.

The stay was directed in order to avoid the unnecessary diversion of resources and the unnecessary issuance of denials in claims that may be granted when the planned new presumptions are made effective. The stay will remain in effect until the date of completion of the rulemaking proceedings to establish the new presumptions.

The stay does not preclude the Board from adjudicating any claims that may be granted under existing law or from adjudicating any claim that the Board determines will not be affected by the planned new presumptions. Further, the stay does not preclude the Board from deciding cases that would otherwise be behind a stayed case in order of priority on the Board's docket for purposes of 38 U.S.C. § 7107(a).

NVOA News Article, Dated December 3, 2009

NEW PROGRAM HELPS TRICARE BENEFICIARIES BATTLE LUNG DISEASES

Even after quitting, smoking can lead to serious health problems, and one of them is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Tricare is committed to helping beneficiaries quit smoking and stay smoke-free.

Smoking is the leading cause of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and exposure to secondhand smoke is listed among the common causes of COPD. Other causes are long-term exposure to chemical fumes, vapors and dusts, and other lung irritants including air pollution. COPD is the name used to describe a combination of two respiratory diseases: emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Currently there is no cure for COPD, which develops slowly and by the time symptoms show, the lungs are already damaged.

With COPD, less air flows in and out of airways and symptoms can mirror those of other diseases or medical conditions. The symptoms of COPD are:

- An ongoing cough, or a cough that produces large amounts of mucus (often called “smoker’s cough”)
- Shortness of breath, especially with physical activity
- Wheezing (a whistling or squeaky sound while breathing)
- Frequent clearing of the throat
- Chest tightness

Tricare covers the tests necessary to diagnose COPD, including x-rays, arterial blood gas analysis, lung function tests, and exercise tests. Beneficiaries with any of the following risk factors should talk to their primary care manager about a COPD screening:

- Current and ex-smokers
- Those with a family history of emphysema
- Those who have or had a job with exposure to dust, chemicals, fumes, smoke, gases, or vapors

Learn more about COPD by visiting the NHLBI Web site at <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/copd/index.htm>. Tricare’s regional contractors all offer COPD management programs featuring telephonic or mail educational materials and coaching by registered nurses or specialists. The disease management program also offers beneficiaries information on how to get and use other COPD resources in their community. By working with their primary care providers and COPD disease management specialists, and by following their action plan, beneficiaries can learn how to breathe a little easier while living with COPD.

For more information about Health Net’s COPD disease management program, click the COPD link at https://www.hnfs.net/bene/healthyliving/dm_main.htm. Humana’s COPD Disease Management Program information page is located at <http://www.humana-military.com/south/bene/health-wellness/Disease-Management/copd/copd.asp>. TriWest’s COPD program information page is located at http://www.triwest.com/beneficiary/healthy_living/condition/copd.aspx.

Tricare Press Room release, Dated December 18, 2009

AF RECORDS TRANSFERRED TO ARCHIVES

Approximately 177,000 official military personnel files from the Air Force were transferred recently to the National Archives and Records Administration, making the historical documents part of the public record. As Air Force personnel files continue to reach maturity at 62 years, they will be transferred to national archives ownership. The ownership of these records by the National Archives now makes them open to the public. While the Privacy Act no longer applies to archival records, exemptions of the Freedom of Information Act continue to protect the personal privacy of the members and their families and Social Security numbers are redacted before release. For more information and to request copies of records from the National Archives, visit the National Archives’ eVetRecs website at <http://www.vetreco.archives.gov/>.

Military.com News Article, Dated November 30, 2009

TRICARE TO COVER NETWORK PHARMACY FLU SHOTS

No-cost immunizations for H1N1 and seasonal flu, and pneumococcal vaccine, will soon be available to eligible beneficiaries at Tricare retail network pharmacies, the Pentagon said December 10. The change brings Tricare in line with other insurers that have long covered pharmacist-administered vaccinations, according to the National Community Pharmacists Association. Registered pharmacists are authorized to administer vaccines in a retail pharmacy setting in all 50 states, Tricare said.

Although the immunizations are not yet available — Tricare's pharmacy contractor must implement code changes at its roughly 40,000 network pharmacies to avoid inadvertent billing problems — the insurer thinks the benefit will become a reality in one to four weeks, said Bonnie Powell, Tricare's deputy director of communications and customer service. In addition to the no-cost provision — the vaccines are for preventive care — Tricare Prime enrollees will not require a referral. Beneficiaries will be screened at the pharmacy to ensure the vaccine and means of administration are appropriate. Since claims will be submitted electronically, beneficiaries will have no out-of-pocket expenses.

Tricare is considering whether to allow its network pharmacies to administer other Tricare-covered immunizations as well. The NCPA hailed the move. "This is truly a case where everyone wins," said Bruce Roberts, NCPA executive vice president and CEO. "The 9.5 million Tricare-eligible patients gain a convenient new vaccination option. Taxpayers and plan administrators will save money when vaccines are administered at pharmacies instead of costlier doctors' offices or hospitals. And community pharmacists can welcome millions of new patients through their doors."

Military Times News Article, Dated December 10, 2009

EXCHANGES OFFER SHUTTLE PROGRAM

To ensure military Families living and working near smaller locations enjoy the same selection as those at bigger installations, the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) has instituted a "Shuttle Program" that can route items from one exchange to the other. Everything from large appliances to DVDs can be transferred through AAFES' "Shuttle Program." If you do not see what you are looking for, just ask a manager if they can bring it in from another location. The AAFES "Shuttle Program" is a complimentary service, available at all BXs, PXs, Troop Stores, and Shoppettes around the world.

Military.com News Article, Dated November 30, 2009

NEW YEAR'S DAY

AUTHOR: BERNIE HOWE

The New Year has arrived
and resolutions have been made.
The bowl games are now ending
for best ones will now be played.

People are getting ready
to make this year the best.
May everything go better
so no one gets depressed.

May your resolutions be filled
and all your dreams come true.
Let good fortune bless you
in the things that you pursue.

And may you add to your friends
both old and those so new.
And may they always be there
to let you know their love is true.

TRIWEST OFFERS NEW SERVICE

TriWest Healthcare Alliance is offering a new lung health service to West Region Tricare beneficiaries eligible for its Disease Management programs. Beneficiaries suffering from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, can receive extra help for a group of lung diseases that include emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and, in some cases, asthma. Eligibility is determined by Tricare and is based on claims history. Once a beneficiary is identified as eligible to participate in the program, DOD refers the beneficiary to TriWest. Beneficiaries can find additional resources on the TriWest website at <http://www.triwest.com/copd>.

Military.com News Article, Dated November 23, 2009

SENATORS PUSH FOR LEJEUNE WATER STUDY

Four U.S. senators are urging the Navy to fund a \$1.8 million health study of military families who were exposed to contaminated drinking water at Camp Lejeune, NC, between 1957 and 1987. "We have an obligation to the men and women who serve our country and their families to investigate this matter to the full extent," reads a letter to the Navy signed by North Carolina Senators Kay Hagan, a Democrat, and Richard Burr, a Republican, and Florida Senators Bill Nelson, a Democrat, and George LeMieux, a Republican.

In May 1982, scientists found the presence of degreaser trichloroethylene, or TCE, and the dry-cleaning solvent tetrachloroethylene, or PCE, in the drinking water sources that supplied water to Camp Lejeune's Tarawa Terrace and Hadnot Point housing areas. The wells that supplied the water were not shut down until 1985. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, which is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, has requested the Navy commit \$1.8 million on a comprehensive mortality study on the issue, the senators wrote.

The Navy acknowledged it has received the senators' letter, but officials declined comment on the issue until Navy Secretary Ray Mabus has a chance to respond directly to the lawmakers, a Navy spokeswoman said. The Department of the Navy, which includes the Marine Corps, already has spent about \$14 million for health studies over the past several years, said Marine spokesman Capt. Brian Block, and millions more on outreach programs to alert and contact Lejeune residents.

The Corps is trying to reach anywhere from 400,000 to 1 million people who lived and worked on the base between 1957 and 1987, Block said. To date, 150,000 people have been recorded in the notification registry. Registration can be done online at www.usmc.mil/clwater or by contacting a research call center at (877) 261-9782.

The contamination was traced to a commercial dry cleaner near the main gate and a vehicle maintenance shop on the base. PCE, widely used for dry cleaning, is a volatile organic compound determined to be a carcinogen, according to the toxic substances agency. Some studies have associated it with birth defects and childhood cancers. But a National Research Council study released in June found no conclusive link between the toxins in the housing areas' drinking water supply and illnesses. The toxic substances agency recommends additional studies in spite of the NRC's findings.

In 1997, the agency characterized the drinking water pollutants as a "past public health hazard," a position it continues to maintain. In 2004, the agency released results of a health survey of 12,598 children born to women who lived at Camp Lejeune from 1968 to 1985. The survey revealed 103 of the children suffered from childhood cancers or birth defects. The findings do not conclusively link the contaminated water to the defects and illnesses, however. The only conclusion researchers will draw now is that the number of cases warrants further study, Scott Mall, an agency spokesman, has said. Agency officials have proposed mortality and morbidity studies that they say they cannot do without the requested funding.

Stars and Stripes News Article, Dated December 14, 2009

WELCOME ABOARD!

The following new members have recently joined our association. Please welcome them into our elite group of E-9ers and spouses:

Elmer K. Denning CMSgt, USAF (RET) Kathy A. Denning Phillip A. Washington, CSM, USA (RET)

VA LAUNCHES WOMEN VETERANS STUDY

The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched a comprehensive study of women veterans who served in the military during the Vietnam War to explore the effects of their military service upon their mental and physical health. The study, which began last month and lasts more than four years, will contact approximately 10,000 women in a mailed survey, telephone interview, and a review of their medical records. The study will assess the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental and physical health conditions for women Vietnam veterans. The study will be managed by specialists in the VA's Cooperative Studies Program and is projected to cost \$5.6 million.

Military.com News Article, Dated November 30, 2009

VA BUDGET STILL NOT ENOUGH, GROUP SAYS

The biggest veterans budget in history is not big enough, warns the head of Veterans for Common Sense, a group that closely tracks health care issues for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. Paul Sullivan, executive director of the group, said the \$109 billion veterans' budget approved December 10 by the House of Representatives and could come to a final vote soon in the Senate, "may fall short as much as 45 percent" in covering the added costs to the Veterans Affairs Department of treating veterans of the two ongoing operations. VA funding is included in HR 3288, a consolidated appropriations bill covering many federal agencies.

Sullivan's warning is based, in part, on a joint statement from the House and Senate appropriations committees that says the new budget includes money to provide medical care in fiscal 2010 for 419,000 veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The Veterans Health Administration reported last year that it had provided medical care to a combined 480,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans by the end of July, and the number is certain to have risen since then, Sullivan noted.

The VA report also talked about continued increases in the number of new Iraq and Afghanistan veterans seeking care, he said. "In the prior three months, VHA treated about 26,000 new Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, or 8,667 per month or about 289 per day," he said. If the patient load continues to grow at that pace, Sullivan said VA could see as many as 610,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans in fiscal 2010.

While Sullivan was pointing out the flaws, Rep. Chet Edwards, D-Texas, chairman of the House appropriations subcommittee responsible for VA funding, said the approved budget includes a 10 percent increase in veterans health care spending over the 2009 budget and is even slightly more than veterans groups had requested. Non-benefits funding in the bill totals \$53.03 billion, while major veterans groups had asked for \$52.08 billion, Edwards said.

Disabled American Veterans said in a statement that it "congratulates" Congress on the increased funding. Roberto "Bobby" Barrera, DAV's national commander, said the budget is important to all veterans. "As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue, the VA health care system will be stressed to meet the needs of sick and disabled veterans returning home," Barrera said. "They will desperately need excellent health care and the benefits they have earned in the defense of our nation." He said the bill includes funding to renovate surplus VA buildings for use as housing for homeless veterans, increases VA outpatient clinics in rural areas, and includes funding to treat 6.1 million total patients, including Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

Military Times News Article, Dated December 10, 2009

WILL WHITE HOUSE OFFER CONDOLENCES ON SUICIDES?

The White House says it is reviewing a long-standing policy that prevents President Barack Obama from sending a condolence letter to families of service members who have committed suicide. Some families want the policy overturned and are lobbying the White House to do so. Press secretary Robert Gibbs said December 9 during a briefing that the policy is under review. "That review is ongoing," the New York Times quoted him as saying. "Hopefully, we can ... conclude this review shortly." Obama speaks often about signing condolence letters to the families of each U.S. service member killed in action. Gibbs said the president requested the policy review because he cares about servicemembers who take their own lives.

The Times reported that there has been an unwritten policy at the White House at least since the Clinton administration that the president will not send letters of condolence to families of troops who take their own lives, even if the suicide occurs in a combat theater. The Times recently reported that families of military suicides are pressing the White House to dump the policy. Currently the family of a servicemember who commits suicide will receive a flag and letter of condolence from the service branch, according to the Times.

"These families already feel such shame and so alienated from the military and the country, a letter from the president might give them some comfort, some sense that people recognize their sacrifice," Kim Ruocco, director for suicide support for Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, or TAPS, a military support group, told the Times. "What better way to eliminate stigma?"

Military.com News Article, Dated November 11, 2009

AF LAUNCHES COMMUNITY WEBSITE

A new site -- *www.usafservices.com*-- was launched specifically for the Air Force community. The entire Air Force family -- married and single Airmen, spouses, children, Air Force civilians, and retirees -- are invited to log on to *usafservices.com*. The site enables users to add friends, send messages, and update their personal profiles to notify family and friends about themselves. Those enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) may register as users on the site. The site doesn't require the use of a common access card, but users can create a unique account username and a 15 character password.

Military.com News Article, Dated December 14, 2009

DO YOU KNOW YOUR VA BENEFITS?

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched a national survey of veterans, active duty servicemembers, activated National Guard and reserve members, and family members and survivors to learn if they are aware of VA services. The national survey will also collect important health care, benefits, employment, and demographic information that VA will use to inform policy decisions and improve benefits. VA expects approximately 10,000 veterans to complete the full-length survey. The data collection is expected to be finished by the end of February and the final report released by December 2010.

Military.com News Article, Dated December 14, 2009

ARMY ORDERS ARLINGTON PROBE

The Secretary of the Army ordered an investigation into allegations of lost accountability of some graves, poor record keeping, and other issues at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. The order comes after revelations that cemetery workers inadvertently buried cremated remains at a gravesite already in use. The inspector general is also in the midst of a management review of Arlington National Cemetery to make overall recommendations on how better to operate the facility, including possible changes in policy, procedures, and regulations

Military.com News Article, Dated November 23, 2009

VETERANS PUSH FOR WORLD WAR ONE MEMORIAL

A push is underway to designate a national memorial to those who fought in World War I. among those asking for such a memorial is the last remaining American veteran from that war, Frank W. Buckles. Two competing pieces of legislation for a national memorial are now moving through Congress. One would name the existing Liberty Memorial in Kansas City, MO, as a national monument to veterans of the first world war. The other legislation, known as the "Frank Buckles World War I Memorial Act," would rededicate a memorial already in Washington, DC. Proponents of both pieces of legislation were on Capitol Hill recently to provide testimony before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, subcommittee on national parks.

Military.com News Article, Dated December 14, 2009

TRICARE ONLINE COUNSELING

The Tricare Assistance Program (TRIAP) is just one of several ways to get convenient, confidential help through a licensed behavioral health counselor. Services are available to any active-duty servicemember (ADSM) in the U.S., their spouse, and other eligible family members 18 years of age or older. All that is needed is a computer, webcam, and the associated software. TRIAP 'visits' are unlimited and include assessments, short-term counseling, and, if the TRIAP counselor determines more specialized care is necessary, referral to a more comprehensive level of care. For more information and to find the appropriate Tricare region, visit Tricare's TRIAP webpage at <https://www.tricare.mil/TRIAP>.

Military.com News Article, Dated December 7, 2009

2010 CALENDAR



JANUARY

- 1 New Year's Day
- 12 UVC Meeting
- 18 Martin Luther King Day
- 27 Membership Meeting
- 28 Birthday of Modern Coast Guard

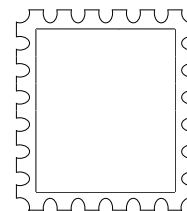
HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

- Jan 1, 2000 (10th) Andrew Greci & Cheryl Six
- Jan 2, 1982 (28th) Christopher & Melinda Sigle
- Jan 11, 2003 (7th) Vince & Joyce Patton
- Jan 12 1969 (41st) Bob and Yolanda Saville
- Jan 12, 1976 (34th) Ralph and Billie Winsor
- Jan 20, 1957 (53rd) David and Elsie Howard
- Jan 27, 2001 (9th) Peter & Claire Denlea
- Jan 29, 1992 (18th) Jim and Phyllis Stewart

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- 2 Diann Oden
- 7 Robert Van Sciver
- 10 Robert Flor
- 10 Robert McCasky
- 11 Frank Forsyth
- 13 Cynthia Rochford
- 14 Reed Lutz
- 17 Phillip Washington
- 19 James Fitzpatrick
- 22 Bijen Pettit
- 22 Lois Fisher
- 24 Ruth Spaar
- 26 Joe Ashby
- 27 "Duke" Ellington
- 29 Ken Christiansen
- 29 Jerald E. Nothstine

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

