



The Denton County Veteran



THE RETIRED ENLISTED ASSOCIATION

Serving The Total Force

January 2004

DENTON COUNTY, TEXAS

County Judge Mary Horn, Commissioner Cynthia White, Precinct 1; Commissioner Sandy Jacobs, Precinct 2;

Commissioner Bobbie Mitchell, Precinct 3; Commissioner Jim Carter, Precinct 4

Volume VII Issue I

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UPDATE ON CONCURRENT RECEIPT

The National Defense Authorization Act of 2004 has been signed into law and includes the following Concurrent Receipt Program

Effective January 1, 2004, a 10-year phase-in of full concurrent receipt for all disabled retirees (20 or more years of service) with a VA disability rating of 50 percent or more will begin. For those retirees eligible for concurrent receipt (50%-100% disability rating), there will be a ten-year phase-out of the disability offset. For 2004, qualifying retirees should see their retired pay increase by a flat monthly amount for these ratings:

- \$750 for 100% \$500 for 90%
- \$350 for 80% \$250 for 70%
- \$125 for 60% \$100 for 50%

The remaining retired pay offsets would then be phased out over the following nine years. In 2005, the offsets would be reduced by 10%, 20% for 2006, 30% for 2007, and so on. By 2014, disabled retirees with 50% and higher ratings will be entitled to full concurrent receipt. Keep in mind, the phase-in is heavily front-loaded, and most will be at 95% by 2010.

This deal also expands the current CRSC program, which currently only allows those with 60 percent or higher VA disability ratings to apply, to all disabled retirees including reservists who were previously excluded due to a DoD interpretation. When the DoD implemented CRSC, reservists were required to have 7200 points to be eligible, which excluded many reservists from applying for benefits under the new program. This provision fixes that by extending coverage to reservists with 20 or more years of service.

In an effort to not close the door on the remaining disabled retirees with 10 to 40

percent VA disability ratings that are not determined to be combat-related, the provision establishes a bipartisan commission of 13 members to study disability and death benefits by the end of 15 months after being empanelled. The "Blue Ribbon Commission" will evaluate the appropriateness of the type of benefits, the level of benefits, and the standards under which they are awarded. Congress also expects the commission to report on whether or not the remaining percentages should be covered under concurrent receipt. The commission will be composed of two members chosen by the Speaker of the House, two by the minority leader of the House, two by the majority leader of the Senate, two by the minority leader of the Senate, and five chosen by the President. Of the members chosen by the House and Senate leadership, at least one of the two appointments in each case shall be a veteran who received the Silver Star or a higher combat decoration for gallantry. Of the President's appointments, three of the five must be veterans meeting this criterion.

The following is additional clarifications regarding the Concurrent Receipt:

TERA: Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA) retirees are eligible for CR, but not CRSC.

Chapter 61 Retirees: Chapter 61 retirees (those retired from active duty for medical reasons) who are also eligible for longevity retirement (20 years or more for retirement purposes) will be eligible. Chapter 61 retirees with less than 20 years of service are not eligible for the compromise reached in this legislation.

Application: Disabled retirees eligible for concurrent receipt do not need to apply. DFAS will automatically identify you and increase your retired pay appropriately by adding the payments to your retired pay. If you do not currently receive a retired paycheck, you will begin getting one.

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VA Seeks Volunteers To Inventory Its Cemetery Memorials

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is seeking volunteers to research and photograph monuments in its 120 national cemeteries and 33 soldiers' lots.

“We have a large number of cemetery memorials, large and small, remaining to be inventoried,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. “The efforts of dedicated volunteers will assist VA in maintaining all national cemeteries as national shrines.”

When VA's memorials inventory project began in May 2002, it was estimated that 300 memorials would be found in national cemeteries and soldiers' lots. To date, nearly 800 memorials have been identified with help from over 220 volunteers. Approximately 300 memorials in 20 states remain to be documented and VA will continue to recruit volunteers for the project until all are documented.

VA provides volunteers with project instructions, survey questionnaires and film. Volunteers take measurements and photographs, record inscriptions, make notes on a monument's condition and conduct

historical research. The project has attracted a wide range of people, including students, teachers, scout groups, active and retired military members, scholars, history professionals and enthusiasts. The information obtained from the project will be made available to the public through the Smithsonian Institute's art inventory database.

VA is now in the largest expansion of the national cemetery system since the Civil War. Three national cemeteries have opened since 2000, and five more national cemeteries are now being built.

For additional information about the project or to volunteer, please contact historian

Darlene Richardson at (202) 565-5426 or email nca.memorials@mail.va.gov.



Disabled Veteran License Plate

Two plates are issued to a motor vehicle with a manufacturer's rated carrying capacity of two tons or less owned by Disabled Veterans who are certified by the Veteran Administration to have 50% service related disability; or 40% due to amputation of lower extremity. A fee of \$3 is collected on the first vehicle. The plates are mailed directly to the applicant. An additional set of plates may be issued for a fee of \$15 ***in addition*** to the regular registration fees and other applicable fees. The application(s) is submitted to the Vehicle Titles and Registration Division. The regular registration fee and other applicable fees are submitted to the county tax assessor-collector's office when plates are approved. Of each fee collected, the department shall

credit 50 cents to the applicable county. The surviving spouse of a person who would be eligible for Disabled Veteran specialty license plates is entitled to continue to register one vehicle with the specialty license plate as long as the spouse remains unmarried.

<http://www.dot.state.tx.us/vtr/spplates/specialplate.htm?nbr=52>

See page 6 for additional license plates available to veterans.

Groundbreaking for first Texas State Veterans Cemetery near Killeen & Fort Hood



The groundbreaking for the first Texas State Veterans Cemetery took place on Veterans Day, November 11, 2003. Jerry Patterson, Commissioner of the Texas General Land Office, hosted the event.

Among the attendees were William W. McLemore, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental and International Affairs, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; U.S. Rep. Chet Edwards; U.S. Rep. John Carter; state Sen. Troy Fraser; State Rep. Dianne White Delisi; State Rep. Suzanna Gratia Hupp; State Rep. Sid Miller; Killeen Mayor Maureen Jouett; Lt. Gen. Thomas F. Metz, Commanding General, III Corps and Fort Hood; Brig. Gen. Allen R. Dehnert,

Assistant Adjutant General of Texas (Air); Brig. Gen. Walt Natynczyk, Canadian Forces, Deputy Commanding General, III Corps and Fort Hood; Civilian Aides to the Secretary of the Army T.J. Mills, Bill Shine, and Dan Green; Chaplain (COL) Gregory Schannep, Fort Hood; Col. Ladd Pattillo, USAR (Ret.), Veterans Land Board member; Sandy Edwards, representing U.S. Sen. John Cornyn; Bill Jayne, Undersecretary for Memorial Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; Maj. Gen. (Ret) Stewart C. Meyer; Col. William Parry, Fort Hood Garrison Commander; Col. Bernard L. DeKoning, Commander, Darnall Army Community Hospital, Fort Hood; and Sgt. Major Stewart A. Bigford, Great Plains Regional Dental Command.

UPDATE ON CONCURRENT RECEIPT

(continued from page 1)

Election of CR or CRCS: Retirees eligible for both programs will be able to make an election between the two programs, depending on which one is more advantageous. The election can be changed each year. The procedures for this election have not yet been developed.

Taxes: Concurrent Receipt is the restoration of retired pay, and thus will be subject to the same tax provisions as your current retired pay.

Payment Start Date. Concurrent receipt payments should be effective with January 2004 retired paychecks, paid Feb. 1, 2004. If DFAS is not mechanically prepared to issue checks (a process that should be completed by January at the earliest and June at the latest), then concurrent receipt will be paid retroactive to that date.

Offsets: All offsets to retired pay inclusive of amounts received for Individual Unemployable [TIDU], Dependent Compensation, and added special compensation will be eliminated. Disabled veterans will continue to draw these additional amounts

without any reduction in their earned retired pay by the end of the 10 year phase in period.

SCSD: Special Compensation for Severely Disabled payments will be repealed as of January 1, since the first increment of concurrent receipt will be bigger than SCSD for all recipients. SCSD was paid to retirees with at least 20 years of Regular service who incurred VA disability ratings of 60% or higher within 4 years after retiring. Payments ranged from \$325 for 100% rated down to \$50 for 60% rating.

H.R.2297

<http://www.gop.gov/committeecentral/docs/bills/108/1/bill.asp?bill=hr2297>

Title I – Survivor Benefits

1. Provide that remarriage of the surviving spouse of a veteran after attaining age 57 would not result in termination of dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC), home loan, or education benefits eligibility. The provision would apply retroactively, allowing surviving spouses who have already remarried after age 57 to resume receiving DIC payments but only if they apply for the benefit within one year after this bill is enacted.

2. Expand benefits eligibility to those children with spina bifida who were born to Vietnam-era veterans who served in an area of Korea near the demilitarized zone between September 1, 1967 and August 31, 1971.

3. Permit VA to make payment proceeds from National Service Life Insurance and United States Government Life Insurance policies to alternate beneficiaries should a primary beneficiary not be located.

4. Repeal current law restricting a surviving spouse or dependent children to receiving no more than two years of accrued benefits if the veteran dies while a claim for VA periodic monetary benefits is being processed.

Title II – Benefits for Former Prisoners of War and Filipino Veterans

1. Add cirrhosis of the liver to the list of presumed service-connected disabilities for former prisoners of war, and eliminate the requirement that a POW be held for 30 days or more to qualify for presumptions of service-connection for certain disabilities: psychosis, any of the anxiety states, dysthymic disorder, organic residuals of frostbite, and post-traumatic osteoarthritis.

2. Provide the full amount of compensation and DIC to eligible members of the new Philippine Scouts, as well as the full amount of DIC paid by reason of service in the organized military forces of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, including organized guerrilla units, if the individual to whom the benefit is payable resides in the United States and is either a citizen of the U.S. or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence.

3. Extend eligibility for burial in a national cemetery to new Philippine Scouts, as well as eligibility for VA burial benefits, to those who lawfully reside in the United States.

4. Extend the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to maintain a regional office in Manila, Philippines, through December 31, 2009.

Title III – Education Benefits, Employment Provisions, and Related Matters

1. Expand the Montgomery GI Bill program by authorizing educational assistance for on-job training in certain self-employment training programs.

2. Increase monthly educational benefits for spouses and dependent children of veterans who have permanent and total disabilities or who have died as a result of service-related causes to \$788 for full-time study, \$592 for three-quarter time study, and \$394 for half-time study.

3. Extend the delimiting date for survivors' and dependents' education benefits when the eligible individual is involuntarily ordered to full-time National Guard duty under title 32, United States Code.

4. Round down to the nearest dollar the annual cost-of-living adjustments to educational assistance benefits.

5. Authorize the use of VA education benefits to pay for non-degree/non-credit entrepreneurship courses at approved institutions.

6. Repeal VA's education loan program authorization.

7. Extend the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education through December 31, 2009.

8. Furnish federal agencies discretionary authority to create "sole-source" contracts for disabled veteran-owned small businesses – up to \$5 million for manufacturing contract awards and up to \$3 million for non-manufacturing contract awards.

9. Furnish federal agencies discretionary authority to restrict certain contracts to disabled veteran-owned small businesses if at least two such concerns are qualified to bid on the contract.

10. Mandate that the Department of Labor place staff in veterans' assistance offices at overseas military installations 90 days after date of enactment.

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H.R.2297—continued from page 4

Title IV – Housing Benefits and Related Matters

1. Extend VA's specially adapted housing grant to severely disabled service members prior to separation from active duty service.
2. Increase the specially adapted automobile grant from \$9,000 to \$11,000, and increase the specially adapted housing grants from \$48,000 to \$50,000 for the most severely disabled veterans and from \$9,250 to \$10,000 for less severely disabled veterans.
3. Make permanent the VA home loan program for members of the Selected Reserve.
4. Reinstate the Department of Veterans Affairs' vendee loan program.
5. Adjust the funding fee charged to Selected Reserve home loan applications and make certain increases in home loan fees.
6. Extend for one year the procedures on liquidation sales of defaulted home loans guaranteed by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Title V – Burial Benefits

1. Permit states to receive burial plot allowances for burial of all eligible veterans.
2. Allow a remarried surviving spouse to retain eligibility for burial in a national cemetery based on the prior marriage to a deceased veteran.
3. Make permanent the State Cemetery Grants Program.

Title VI – Exposure to Hazardous Substances

1. Require independent oversight of the Department of Defense radiation dose reconstruction program.
2. Require an independent study on the disposition of the Air Force Health Study on "Operation Ranch Hand" veterans.
3. Authorize funding of medical follow-up

agency of Institute of Medicine of National Academy of Sciences for epidemiological research on members of the Armed Forces and veterans.

Title VII – Other Matters

1. Make clarifying amendments relating to the Veterans' Claims Assistance Act.
2. Clarify the current prohibition on the assignment of veterans' benefits.
3. Extend for six years the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.
4. Authorize a nationwide, five-year contract medical examination pilot program.
5. Expand the list of serious federal criminal offenses a conviction of which would result in a bar to all VA benefits.
6. Extend for two years the requirement to round down to the nearest dollar compensation cost-of-living adjustments.

Denton County Veterans Service Office
306 N. Loop 288, Suite 146
Denton, TX 76209
Monday through Friday
8:00 am—Noon & 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm

- [Airborne Parachutists](#)
- [Armed Forces Reserve](#) [Congressional Medal](#)
- [Desert Storm Veteran](#) [Disabled Veteran](#)
- [Distinguished Flying](#) [Enduring Freedom](#)
- [Former Prisoner of](#) [Gold Star Mother](#)
- [Korea Veteran](#) [Legion of Valor](#)
- [Marine Corps League](#) [Operation Iraqi Free-](#)
- [Pearl Harbor Survivor](#) [Purple Heart Recipient](#)
- [Texas Guard](#) [Texas Wing Civil Air](#)
- [U.S. Air Force](#) [U.S. Army](#)
- [U.S. Coast Guard](#) [U.S. Coast Guard Aux-](#)
- [U.S. Marine Corps](#) [U.S. Navy](#)
- [Vietnam Veteran](#) [World War II Veteran](#)

Additional
license plates
available to a
veteran
and/or military
member

IOM Creates Web Site for Veterans—December 17, 2003

WASHINGTON – The Institute of Medicine (IOM) has created a new Internet Web site with information about a variety of military-related health issues.

"IOM's new Website is one more tool available to veterans, health care practitioners and others interested in the well-being of our veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi.

The Web site, at <http://veterans.iom.edu>, has separate sections for health care issues affecting the last four major military conflicts – World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Gulf War. At each section, visitors can read electronic versions of IOM-produced reports or purchase publications.

Other sections list IOM's completed reports and reports in progress, while another area contains studies about chemical and biological agents suspected of causing health problems for military members.

There is also a section with reports and information about deployment health.

Part of the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine is a nonprofit organization that provides advice on matters of biomedical science.

