



RENSSELAER COUNTY VETERANS NEWSLETTER

Rensselaer County
Unified Family Services
Veterans Service Agency
1600 Seventh Avenue
Troy, NY 12180
Phone: (518) 270-2760
FAX: (518) 270-2956
www.rensco.com

Van Transportation...

- * Don't drive and need to get to the Albany VA Medical Center ?
- * We offer complimentary van transportation to and from the VAMC for *most morning* medical appointments.

For more
details call:
270-2760.



VETERANS CRISIS LINE

1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1

****Confidential chat at
Veterans CrisisLine.net
or text to 838255****
TTY service 1-800-799-4889

Confidential support 24
hours a day, 7 days a week,
365 days a year, for veterans
and their loved ones.

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KATHLEEN M. JIMINO
County Executive

PETER K. GOEBEL
Director

Updates in the Veterans Affairs Community

4 Ways the Proposed VA Budget Would Affect Disabled Veterans

In May 2017, the Department of Veterans Affairs proposed a budget for Fiscal Year 2018. If the VA's proposed budget passes without any changes, it will mark the first time that the VA requested less money for the mandatory portion of the compensation program. In essence, the Veterans' Benefits Administration (VBA) is proposing substantial cuts to veterans' compensation benefits, which would further burden some of the most disabled veterans in the country.

Here's how the proposed budget would affect disabled veterans:

1) VA would round down the Cost of Living Adjustment for Service-Connected Compensation and [Dependency and Indemnity Compensation](#). VA estimates that this will result in \$2.7 billion in savings over ten years.

2) VA would eliminate [Individual Unemployability](#) benefits for almost all veterans once they reach the minimum retirement age for Social Security purposes. These veterans would then only receive their [schedular rating](#). VA estimates that this will result in a \$40.8 billion in savings over ten years.

By eliminating Individual Unemployability, VA will actually be eliminating more than just the monthly compensation benefits for these veterans and their families. For example, any dependents of the disabled veteran who rely on CHAMPVA for healthcare coverage will lose their coverage. Likewise, they will lose access to Dependents Educational Assistance. The affected veteran would lose access to VA dental care. Depending on the state in which the veteran resides, he or she will also lose access to valuable state benefits, such as property tax exemptions and in-state educational benefits for qualifying dependents.

3) VA would no longer have to seek private medical records under its Duty to Assist if the veteran is requesting an increased rating. In these cases, the veteran would be required to acquire and submit the private records on their own.

4) VA proposes limiting the definition of "herbicide agent" to TCDD when it presently recognizes the following as herbicide agents: (1) 2,4-D; (2) 2,4,5-T; (3) TCDD; (4) picloram; and (5) cacodylic acid.

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MANDATORY VS. DISCRETIONARY BUDGET

In a separate provision, VA seeks congressional permission to use money from the mandatory Compensation and Pension fund for discretionary issues such as contracting medical professionals for compensation and pension exams, general operating expenses for VBA and Information Technology projects. All of these programs already have a line item in the budget. VA maintains there would be no cost associated with this proposal. But the problem here is that VBA would have free range to spend as much as they want to on these discretionary programs. And if they run out of money, disabled veterans lose.

House of Representatives Passes Overhaul of VA Appeals Process

On May 22, 2017, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed a bill that would transform the appeals process for benefits claims at the Department of Veterans Affairs. The bill, if passed in the Senate and signed into law, would restructure the Veterans' Benefits Administration (VBA) to allow veterans to choose different appeal "tracks."

New York State Blind Annuity Program

The Blind Annuity Program benefit is for legally blind wartime Veterans, or surviving un-remarried spouses of legally blind wartime Veterans, who live and are domiciled in New York State. Blindness need not be a service-connected disability.

Eligibility: A qualifying Veteran must be a New York State resident and domiciliary who is determined to be legally blind (20/200 vision in the better eye with best correction, or has 20- degree limitation of field of vision), and who served on active duty during specific wartime periods or received an expeditionary medal for certain conflicts. Generally, the Veteran must have served at least 90 days active duty for other than training purposes. However, fewer than 90 days active duty is acceptable if the Veteran was discharged for a service-connected disability.

To demonstrate New York State residency, a Veteran or un-remarried surviving spouse of a Veteran must submit a **copy** (no original needed) of **one** authoritative document showing proof of residency in New York.

Acceptable documents include: a New York State driver's license or non-driver ID card; a voter registration notification card; a current utility bill (such as water, electricity, trash collection, cable TV, etc.) listing the applicant's name and address; a proof of your current mortgage; a residential lease issued within one year of the current date; a property tax or school tax bill or receipt for the current year; an assisted-living facility or nursing home statement; a federal or New York State income tax W-2 form; a federal or New York State income tax or earning statement; or any other official document showing your current status as a New York State resident.

If a Veteran met all the criteria for the Blind Annuity benefit, but never actually received the benefit during his or her lifetime, the un-remarried surviving spouse of that Veteran may still be eligible to receive the benefit.

HEROES @ HOME



Saturday, September 23

**Sullivan Jones VFW
Poestenkill, NY**

to Grafton VFW and Fire Hall

Join the Ruckmarch ~ 24.8 or 9.8 miles
march with or without a ruck sack

Welcome the marchers back during
our BBQ from 4 to 6 pm

LONG ROUTE ~ \$40.00 ~ 24.8 miles

Check-in at 7:15 am at Sullivan-Jones VFW, 80 Main St. in Poestenkill
Follow Rte 351 to Rte 2 towards Grafton.
Turn around at Grafton VFW and Fire Hall, 431 Rte 85 in Grafton
Return to Poestenkill. Fee includes BBQ at the VFW.

SHORT ROUTE ~ \$25.00 ~ 9.8 miles

Check-in at 12:15 at Sullivan-Jones VFW, 80 Main St. in Poestenkill
Follow Rte 351 to Rte 2; turn around at Rte 351/Rte 2 intersection
Return to Poestenkill. Fee includes BBQ at the VFW.



**An
Empowerment Exchange Program**

heroesathomeblog.wordpress.com

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A Message From the Veterans Service Agency Director

A special thank you to everyone who honored and recognized our departed service members at the numerous ceremonies and parades throughout Rensselaer County. It was another memorable weekend despite the weather.

As summer comes to upstate New York, let us not forget that there are many deceased Veterans for our Rensselaer County Honor-A-Deceased Veteran Committee to honor. Please submit:

- Honor-A-Deceased Veteran Application; and
- Veteran's DD-214, Report/Notice of Separation or Report of Casualty; and
- Obituary.

For the committee to schedule a ceremony in the Rensselaer County Legislative Chambers on the second Monday of each month, except for the second Tuesday on October. Please join us as we honor a special Veteran each month.

The great Schaghticoke Fair will be here before we know it. Make plans to join us and be sure to schedule a visit to the Vet Hall in the Freihoffers Building, to view some of the mementos of our Rensselaer County Veterans throughout all of our Nations Wars. Thanks for all of your service to our Veterans!

Sincerely,

Peter K. Goebel

Upcoming Events:



Call us at (518) 270-2760 to have your event listed in the newsletter.

August 14th...Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m.,

Patrick K. Russell, USA, T/4-WWII & Maurice J. Russell, USA, Pvt.-Vietnam

August 30th-September 4th...Schaghticoke Fair-come see us at our table

September 4th—LABOR DAY- OFFICE CLOSED

September 11th...Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m.,

Gerlad J. O'Brien, USN, CEP3-KWE

September 23rd... Heroes at Home Patriot Ruckmarch at Sullivan Jones VFW Post, Poestenkill, NY

October 9th...COLUMBUS DAY—OFFICE CLOSED

October 10th... Honor-a-Deceased Veteran Ceremony in the Legislative Chambers, 8:15 a.m.,

Elton G. Cook, Sr., USA, PFC-WWII

October 14th... 2017 Capital Region Stand-Down at the Colonie BPO Elks #2192, 11 Elks Lane, Latham from 7am-1pm