



March 2024



Top Left Commanders Reed and Conklin at van dedication at Mami VAAH.  
Top Right: Chapter 1 receives their membership goal ribbon for reaching their membership goal.  
Bottom Left: View of the Florida House during a legislative session.  
Bottom Right: Adjutant Marshall and Assistant Adjutant Ayala manning the DAV table at the Rotunda in the Capitol.



## *DEPARTMENT COMMANDER BRENDA REED*

February has come and gone in a flash! I had the pleasure of touring the Miami VA Medical Center along with DAV Auxiliary Commander Terri Conklin, PSC Rose McGinnis, and John Dunn and his wife. What an impressive facility and staff! We never truly realize how many facilities one VA hospital has under their jurisdiction until we actually visit. It wasn't until I was in St. Thomas that I saw Miami's farthest CBOC and realized how difficult it must be for these hospitals to maintain and staff facilities that aren't even within traveling distance. However, I was assured by my tour guide, an Air Force veteran, that he and others receive excellent care at the St. Thomas CBOC and are flown to Miami when the need arises. I guess that just goes to show that, even when I am on vacation, I am always working to make sure our veterans are receiving the best care possible.

I will be traveling to DC twice in the coming weeks. I have been invited to attend and participate in the roll out of the latest DAV Women Veterans Study- The Journey to Mental Wellness at the Capitol Visitors Center February 27<sup>th</sup>. I am always grateful to be able to participate in these events and to aid DAV in our legislative endeavors.

Our Department Officers and members will also be traveling to DC March 6<sup>th</sup> through the 10<sup>th</sup> for the DAV National Mid Winter Conference where we will be lending our voices and support to our National Commander, Nancy Espinosa, as she gives her testimony on Capitol Hill March 7<sup>th</sup>. We will also be meeting with our Congressional Representatives and Aides to discuss veterans' issues.

As a reminder, if you would like one of the Department Officers to come to your Chapter to install your newly elected and appointed officers, please contact our Department Headquarters as soon as possible. We will do our best to accommodate your requests. Requests are beginning to come in as of this newsletter. Speaking of new officers, don't forget to complete the Chapter Officer's Report and email to both National and Department Headquarters. Please ensure the completed for is legible, as we use the information on the reports to compile the

Department Directory and email address for person authorized to receive mail is where we send most of our communications.

Also don't forget to send in those LVAP hours to Department Adjutant Andy Marshall. We still have Chapters that are not reporting any hours.

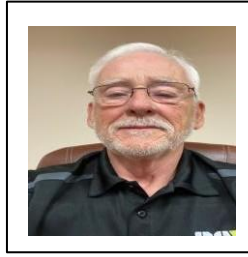
A reminder for those who attended our recent Department Mid-Winter Conference in January, the Department has started a fund titled "Chapter to Chapter Assistance Fund" to assist those chapters who cannot afford to send delegates to the upcoming Department Convention in June. Chapter commanders and/or adjutants are eligible to attend under this program. Of course, Chapter Financial Reports will be reviewed to determine eligibility.

Chapters who wish to take advantage of this initiative should contact Department Adjutant Andy Marshall.

Registration packets to include nominations for Department Awards will be mailed in early March. A reminder that only the delegate list with payment of registration fees and Commander's Ball should be returned to Department Headquarters. The Registration Form is to be signed by both the Chapter Commander & Adjutant and hand-carried to the Department Convention by the chapter delegate.

And as always, don't forget to reach out to a veteran in your area. A moment of your time can make a world of difference.





## *DEPARTMENT SENIOR VICE COMMANDER LAYMOND ROSE*

**Membership Update:** More progress, as of this writing, 10 chapters have now achieved their 2023/2024 membership recruitment goals. Chapters 1 at 100.38%, 13 at 100.00%, 18 at 101.08%, 73 at 100.48%, 82 at 101.56%, 86 at 100.43%, 101 at 100.23 %, 109 at 104.58 %, 113 at 101.34%, and 123 at 101.58%. An additional 9 chapters are within 10 new members of achieving their goals (20, 29, 57, 63, 67, 126, 129, 144 and 158). Overall, the Department is at 97.84%.

**Chapter Visits:** I was only able to visit four chapters in February – Chapters 109, 113, 129 and 133.

**DAV Scholarship Program:** The cutoff date to submit applications for the DAV Scholarship Program for fiscal year 2023/2024 was February 28<sup>th</sup>. If you had a candidate, hopefully they made the deadline. However, now is the perfect time to recruit applicants for next year’s program. Remember, anyone age 21 or younger can be eligible to participate in our scholarship program. They do not have to be related to a member or a veteran. Anyone who is willing to volunteer to serve the needs of a veteran and accumulates a minimum of 100 lifetime volunteer hours may apply. See complete details at [www.dav.org/scholarship](http://www.dav.org/scholarship)

Every chapter should have at least one young person (age 21 or under) volunteering for the chapter so they can apply for this scholarship program (ten scholarships from \$5,000 to \$30,000) If your chapter is not participating in this program, it is a terrible waste of a valuable resource. Volunteerism is critical to successfully serving the needs of the veteran community and the high school age youth are an untapped resource in many locations. Our Scholarship program with a top award of \$30,000 is an outstanding tool to attract this group.

**National Vietnam War Veterans Day:** March 29th is National Vietnam War Veterans Day, a day of tribute to veterans of the Vietnam War. The date is generally viewed as the day in 1973 that the last combat troops were withdrawn from Vietnam.

**Community Impact Day:** Speaking of volunteering, DAV National is launching a new Volunteering Initiative called DAV Community Impact Day. The date is April 6<sup>th</sup>. This event is intended to encourage members, as well as family members, friends, and any other person in the community that cares about veterans to honor the sacrifices of veterans by donating an hour, or more, of their time. It begins with asking everyone to pledge at least an hour of their time by visiting <http://www.DAVCommunityImpactDay.org>

You will be asked to fill in basic contact information, name, address, email, and phone number. Then click the submit button.

Once you have registered, you will receive a response that includes a PDF attachment of a Community Impact Day QuickStart Guide. This simple guide provides an overview of what Community Impact Day is and why it is being launched. Additionally, it discusses how to spread the word and numerous suggestions for activities that the chapters can provide for people to volunteer for. Of course, to attract and keep qualified and reliable volunteers, the chapter must provide specific, and well-defined activities, that include why the activity is needed and who it benefits.



The top membership recruiters from July 1 to present:

Jackie Graham	46 members
Brenda Culbreath	30 members
Liza Perez	29 members
Afua Whiteside	29 members
Emanuel Coley	28 members
Kenneth Gore	28 members
Catherine Mohan	28 members
Gerald Propst	27 members

**Top non-NSO recruiters:**

Rodney DeFlumeri	16 members
William Baker	10 members



## DEPARTMENT JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER CHIP HANSON



This month I am going to pass along information about our National Cemeteries.

All Veterans with an honorable discharge and who have not been convicted of a capital crime or a sex offense are eligible to be interred in any National Cemetery. Also, any person whose only service is active duty for training or inactive duty training in the National Guard or Reserve Component, unless the individual meets the eligibility criteria listed in Section III.1.b. may not be interred in a National Cemetery.

No one can reserve a spot in any National Cemetery. The exception is if both Spouses are Veterans, and one dies the remaining Spouse can reserve the spot next to the deceased.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration maintains 155 national cemeteries in 42 states and Puerto Rico as well as 34 soldiers' lots and monument sites. Please note that there is not a VA national cemetery in every state. You may also want to check the listing of VA grant-funded cemeteries.

Florida has nine National Cemeteries (Barrancas National Cemetery in Pensacola, Bay Pines National Cemetery in St. Petersburg, Cape Canaveral National Cemetery in Mims, Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Jacksonville, Sarasota, South Florida National Cemetery in Lake Worth, St. Augustine and Tallahassee).

Burial benefits available include a gravesite in any of our National Cemeteries with available space, opening, and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a government headstone or marker, a burial flag with Military Honors from their Branch of the Military, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate, at no cost to the family. Some Veterans may also be eligible for Burial Allowance.

Burial benefits available for spouses and dependents buried in a national cemetery include burial with the Veteran, perpetual

care, and the spouse or dependents' name and date of birth and death will be inscribed on the Veteran's headstone, at no cost to the family. Eligible spouses and dependents may be buried, even if they predecease the Veteran.

Cremated remains represent about 75% of interments in National Cemeteries, they receive the same honors as casketed remains. However, with cremated remains, there are 4 separate ways of interment. They can be buried in the same manner as a casket, with the same headstone as a standard casket grave, the cremated remains can also be placed in the columbarium, (a wall with areas for the urns) or the ashes can be placed in the Ossuary (a common grave in a Memorial Garden) and the name placed on the Memorial Wall, finally, If the Family chooses to spread the ashes in a manner that cannot be visited (such as spreading them around in the Ocean or a meadow or other ways the Veteran wanted to interred), the name of the Veteran can be placed on the Memorial Wall. The Ossuary and the Memorial Wall are available in National Cemeteries completed after 2007.



Don't forget to make your hotel reservations for the upcoming Department Convention at the Lake Mary Marriott. Our guest will be National Commander Nancy Espinosa. The theme for the Commander's Ball on Saturday night will be Caribbean.



## DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN REVEREND JIM TAYLOR



### “Caring for” vs “Taking care of”

“Caring for” involves attitudes and motives of compassion and mercy. “Taking care of” may involve effective actions, such as health care, but may not always be out of a pure motive of compassion and mercy. Caring for is also expressed as being concerned about or as concern expressed. As an organization our “caring for” is expressed in our mission statement. Empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. But beyond being a wonderful statement which was written 100 years ago and long forgotten, I see this mission continue every day.

True caring must be expressed. Expressing care, however, requires skills. There was no greater expression of our Florida Department’s commitment to developing skill in order to be prepared to express care than at our Service Officer training at the Mid-Winter Conference this January. The number of individuals at the training was one of if not the largest class we have had. If memory serves, there were 190 people being recertified or getting certified for the first time. We even had our organizational National Adjutant and CEO, Barry Jesinoski, tell us that DAV has the best Service Officer training program of any VSO and that Florida has the best DAV Service Officer training in the country. I have often said, Service Officer work is ministry, and our caring ministry is expressed through giving to fellow veterans.

Where does this passion to express caring for come from in a person’s life? One cannot give that which one does not have. In order to give care regularly, one must receive care. We must be willing to receive care from our loving God, caring family, and members of our organization to be prepared to properly care for others. An excellent source of care for us are our peer groups.

I personally enjoy receiving care through my DAV Chapter, the Tampa Bay Chief Petty Officer Association, the men’s Bible study group, the Military Men’s Fellowship Group, my neighbors, and my family. Each of these restores me and lifts me up to prepare me for expressing care for others throughout my day.

Bottom line, caring is genuine, you cannot pretend because people easily identify a phony when they see one. So, seek to express genuine caring. For caring is acceptance; caring is empathizing; caring is listening; caring is even confronting. Caring involves attending, responding, loving, and risking rejection. In effect, caring has to do with healthy helping relationships.

I would like to invite you to my Chapter’s Grand Opening and Vietnam Veteran Recognition Day on Friday, March 29, 2024, from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. Chapter 4 meets at 6711 Jefferson Street New Port Richey. Please join us for burgers, dogs and chicken sandwiches.

If you or your chapter members can attend, please RSVP to our chapter adjutant [andy@davfla.com](mailto:andy@davfla.com).

We have been working very hard for past several months to get our building ready to reopen and get our Chapter Service Officers back to work.



### LVAP HOURS:

The timely and accurate reporting of LVAP hours will be one of my priority goals this fiscal year. Last year only 21 of our 52 chapters reported LVAP hours to the department monthly as required. It is my belief that every chapter is performing functions for which LVAP hours can be claimed – they simply are not reporting those hours. Consequently, we are significantly under-reporting the activity of the Department of Florida.

Reporting LVAP hours, by every chapter, is very important to the DAV organization. DAV is required to report volunteer hours to Congress, watchdog groups, members, and donors. Reporting 'ALL' of our volunteer hours can strengthen our lobbying capabilities in congress, elevate the favorable opinion of watchdog groups, and reinforce the trust of our members and donors. **The below chart will be updated and appear in this newsletter monthly going forward so that every chapter will know where they stand.**

JULY 2023-JANUARY 2024 LVAP HOURS REPORTED BY CHAPTER											
Chap #	Current Month	YTD	Chap #	Current Month	YTD	Chap #	Current Month	YTD	Chap #	Current Month	YTD
1	590	4,199	23	315.5	510	83		2,395	112		3378
4	469	7,889	29		0	84	12	725	113	848	2,274
5	195	1,056	30	12	1,190	85		351	123	1,254	8,648
6		0	32		1,585	86	1,813	5,415	125		0
7		0	38	1,931	5,094	87		836	126	174	336
11		1,852	42	246	996	90		258	129	148	1,943
12		150	49	429.5	467.5	94	84	212	133		1,805
13	64	64	57	232	945	97	128	253	144	295	781
16	1379	8,410	63		0	98		0	148		0
17		0	67		347	101	6		150	330	4,189
18		9,449	70		0	108	1,266	4,130	158		396
20		0	73		0	109	3358.5	16,426	159		486
22		249	82	5	705	110	49.5	527.5	161		0

**TOTALS 7/1/23-3/3/24 100, 922**



# DEPARTMENT JUDGE ADVOCATE MICHAEL MICHELOTTI



The DAV Department of Florida Convention and Midwinter Conferences are important events for all members of the DAV to come together and discuss matters that are crucial to the success of the organization. They offer a platform for members to participate in key activities such as elections, budget planning, officer training, and various reports, as well as to engage in fellowship with other members from different parts of the state.

First and foremost, the elections held during the convention are vital in determining the leadership of the organization. The people who are elected into office will have a significant role in making important decisions that will affect the future of the Department. Therefore, it is imperative for members to attend and participate in the elections to ensure that the most qualified individuals are chosen to lead the organization.

The Department Finance Committee meetings at the convention and conference are crucial for the financial stability of the Department. Members have the opportunity to review and discuss the budget, make important financial decisions, and ensure that the organization's funds are allocated appropriately. It is also important for members to understand how the budget is being utilized and to have a say in the financial planning process.

The officer training sessions at the Midwinter Conference provide members with the necessary tools and knowledge to effectively carry out their roles within the organization. This training helps to ensure that the officers are well-equipped to handle the responsibilities that come with their positions and are capable of making informed decisions that will benefit their chapters.

Various reports presented at the convention and conference inform members about the progress and challenges faced by the organization. Members gain valuable insight into the achievements and can gain a deeper understanding of the work being done on their behalf.

Lastly, the convention and conference provide an opportunity for members to connect with one another and build camaraderie. Fellowship among members is crucial for maintaining a strong and unified veterans community, and the convention and conference serve as a platform for members to come together, share ideas, and support each other.

In conclusion, the DAV Department Convention and Midwinter Conference are essential events for all members to attend. The elections, budget planning, officer training, various reports, and fellowship opportunities provided during these events are crucial for the success and sustainability of the organization. It is imperative for members to actively participate in these activities to ensure that the DAV remains a strong and effective advocate for veterans' rights and benefits.

Please note the Department is attempting to assist chapters who do not have sufficient funds to send their commanders and/or adjutants to these functions by creating a Chapter to Chapter Assistance Program. Information about this program is contained elsewhere in this newsletter. Take advantage of this financial assistance and send your commander and/or adjutant to these two events.





## Andy Marshall Department Adjutant

### Pending Veterans Legislation Florida

#### SB 0174

Veterans Long Term Care Facilities Admissions: Revising eligibility for residency in the Veteran's Domiciliary Home of Florida to include specified individuals; revising the definition of "resident"; revising the admission eligibility for veterans' nursing homes to include specified individuals, etc.

Actions: 2/1/24 Placed on Senate Calendar on 2<sup>nd</sup> reading

Compare **HB 0724** Veterans' Long-term Care Facilities Admissions

Actions: 02/08/24 Placed on House Calendar on 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

#### HB 0319

Pub. Rec./Military Personnel and their Families: Provides exemption from public records requirements for identification & location information for certain current and former military personnel & their spouses & dependents; provides for future legislative review & repeal of exemption; provides statement of public necessity.

Actions: Placed on House Calendar on 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

Compare **SB 0308** Senate Referred to Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security; Government Oversight and Accountability; Rules on 11/15/23

#### SB 0346

Special Observances: Designating each November as "Veterans Appreciation Month"; authorizing the Governor to issue a proclamation with specified information.

Actions: 02/14/24 Placed on Senate Calendar

Compare **HB 0367** Special Observances

#### HB 0715

Pub. Rec./Problem-solving Court Participant Records: Provides public records exemptions for specified Veterans Treatment Court program records & mental health court program records; provides statement of public necessity.

Actions: 01/23/24 Placed on House Calendar—on 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

#### HB 0727

Tax Exemption for Disabled Ex-servicemembers: Increases the value of a certain tax exemption.

Actions: 01/31/24 Now in State Affairs Committee

Compare **SB 1004**

#### SB 1016

Patriotic Organizations: Defining the term "patriotic organization"; authorizing school districts to allow representatives of patriotic organizations certain opportunities to speak to students, distribute certain materials. And provide certain displays relating to the patriotic organizations; prohibiting a school district from discriminating against certain organizations in the use of a school building or property under certain circumstances.

Actions 01/25/2024 Now in Judiciary Committee.  
Compare SB 1016





## Adjutant's Column Continued

### State Legislation Continued

HB 1351 Compensation for Advising or Assisting in Veterans' Benefits. Prohibits a person from receiving compensation for preparation, presentation, or prosecution of claim or advising or assisting individual with regard to veterans' benefits matter except as authorized by federal law; prohibits person from receiving compensation for referring individual to another person for such services; requires person who receives compensation for such services to be held to certain standards in rules regulating the Florida Bar; provides that violation is deceptive & unfair trade practice.

Actions: 02/08/24 Now in Judiciary Committee.

Compare [SB 1452](#)

#### HB 1435

Medical Marijuana Use Registry ID Cards for Veterans: Provides DOH from charging a fee for issuance, replacement, or renewal of an ID card for a service-disabled veteran under certain circumstances.

Actions: 02/05/24 Now in Healthcare Appropriations Committee

Compare [SB 1514](#)

#### HB 1373

Property Tax Discount for Disabled Veterans: Proposes amendment to State Constitution to revise the requirements for a discount from the amount of ad valorem tax owed on property for certain disabled veterans.

Actions: 01/13/24 Now in Ways & Means Committee

Compare: [SB 1686](#) and Linked to [HB 1375](#)

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announces the appointment of Mr. Chad Adams as the new deputy executive director of the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System, which serves more than 138,000 Veterans and has an operating budget of more than \$1.8 billion at the nation's largest VA health care system. More than 5,800 employees provide services at 26 locations serving a 50-county region in northern Florida and southern Georgia. He will have oversight of finance, quality management, compliance and business integrity, patient safety, systems redesign, human resources, and employee whole health.

### *United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit JEREMY BEAUDETTE, MAYA BEAUDETTE, Claimants-Appellees v. DENIS MCDONOUGH, SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, Respondent-Appellant 2022-1264*

The Beaudette lawsuit was filed claiming that veterans and caregivers who applied for benefits under the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers ("PCAFC" or "Caregiver Program") must be allowed to appeal any PCAFC denial of benefits to the Board of Veterans' Affairs ("BVA" or "Board"). In April 2021, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims agreed with the petitioners, Jeremy and Maya Beaudette, and ruled that the Department of Veterans Affairs ("VA") must permit appeals to the Board. You can read a summary of the Court's decision [here](#), or read the full decision [here](#).

For claimants who appeal adverse Caregiver Program decisions, the Board could decide they are entitled to re-instatement to the program, increased benefits, and/or back pay of benefits previously denied.

The Class includes "all claimants who received an adverse benefits decision under the Caregiver Program, exhausted the administrative review process within the VHA, and have not been afforded the right to appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals."

After the court's decision, VA agreed to let all claimants who received a benefits decision under the Caregiver Program to appeal to the Board, whether or not they exhausted the administrative review process within the VHA. That means that if you ever received a benefits decision under the Caregiver Program, you can now appeal to the Board.



Chapters visited by Department Line Officers and Adjutant since Department Convention: 1, 4, 11, 18, 22, 23 (x2), 32, 57, 63, 70, 82, 84, 86, 87, 90, 97, 101, 109, 110, 113 119, 125, 129, 133, 158

## VA proposes rule to extend presumed areas of exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides, making it easier for exposed Veterans to receive their earned benefits

The Department of Veterans Affairs issued a proposed rule outlining plans to expand the locations and time frames for which VA presumes exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides. If this proposed rule becomes final, VA will implement a new presumption of exposure to locations where herbicides were tested, used, or stored outside of Vietnam. Specifically, this proposed rule would add locations in the United States ([full list of US locations where Agent Orange was tested or stored](#)), [Canada](#), and [India](#) to the existing presumptives for Agent Orange in Vietnam, Cambodia, Johnson Atoll, Guam, American Samoa, Korea, Laos, and Thailand.

A presumption of exposure means that VA automatically assumes that Veterans who served in certain locations were exposed to certain toxins. Presumptives lower the burden of proof required to receive disability benefits, helping Veterans get the benefits they deserve as quickly as possible. This expansion of presumptives will help Veterans who served in the specified locations receive health care and benefits for [certain cancers and chronic conditions](#). To be eligible, a Veteran must have served in the identified location(s) during a specific time period and currently have a condition(s) presumptively associated with herbicide exposure.

“This proposed change would make it easier for Veterans exposed to herbicides who served outside Vietnam to access the benefits they so rightly deserve,” said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “Our goal is to provide every Veteran – of every era – with the VA health care and benefits they deserve, and this is another step in the right direction.”

This proposed rule also codifies provisions in the [PACT Act](#), the [Blue Water Navy Act of 2019](#), and the [National Defense Authorization Act for 2021](#).

## Senate Bill 3490

A bill to prohibit the Secretary of Veterans Affairs from providing health care to, or engaging in claims processing for health care for, any individual unlawfully present in the United States who is not eligible for health care under the laws administered by the Secretary.

2023-12-13 - Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

## Senate Bill 3284

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the limitation on reimbursement for emergency treatment of amounts owed to a third party or for which the veteran is responsible under a health-plan contract.

2023-11-09 - Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

## Senate Bill 3126

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to furnish or replace a headstone, marker, or medallion for the grave of an eligible Medal of Honor recipient regardless of the recipient's dates of service in the Armed Forces, and for other purposes.

2023-10-25 - Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

## Senate Bill 2718

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to improve matters relating to medical examinations for veteran's disability compensation, and for other purposes.

2023-09-05 - Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

## Senate Bill 2648

A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to treat certain individuals who served in Vietnam as a member of the armed forces of the Republic of Korea as a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States for purposes of the provision of health care by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

## US HB7340

To amend title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements to the laws relating to the recognition of agents, attorneys, organizations and their representatives, and other individuals for the purposes of assisting in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims for benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

Actions: Action: 2024-02-13 - Referred to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Pending: [House Veterans' Affairs Committee](#)

**In one of the largest-ever expansions of Veteran health care, all Veterans exposed to toxins and other hazards during military service — at home or abroad — will be eligible for VA health care beginning March 5.**

**WASHINGTON** — Today, VA announced that all Veterans who were exposed to toxins and other hazards while serving in the military — at home or abroad — will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care beginning March 5, 2024. This means that all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11 will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits. Additionally, Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty in the United States will also be eligible to enroll.

As [directed by President Biden](#), this expansion of VA health care eliminates the phased-in approach called for by the PACT Act — meaning that millions of Veterans are becoming eligible for VA health care up to eight years earlier than written into law. This is a critical step forward because Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are proven to have better health outcomes than non-enrolled Veterans, and VA hospitals have dramatically outperformed non-VA hospitals in [overall quality ratings](#) and [patient satisfaction ratings](#). Additionally, VA health care is often [more affordable](#) than non-VA health care for Veterans.

VA encourages all eligible Veterans to visit [VA.gov/PACT](#) or call 1-800-MYVA411 to learn more and apply for VA health care beginning March 5. Since President Biden signed the PACT Act into law on August 10, 2022, more than 500,000 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care.

“Beginning March 5, we’re making millions of Veterans eligible for VA health care years earlier than called for by the PACT Act,” said **VA Under Secretary for Health Shereef Elnahal, M.D.** “With this expansion, VA can care for all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, the Global War on Terror, or any other combat zone after 9/11. We can also care for Veterans who *never* deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty here at home – by working with chemicals, pesticides, lead, asbestos, certain paints, nuclear weapons, x-rays, and more. We want to bring *all* of these Veterans to VA for the care they’ve earned and deserve.”

In addition to expanding access to VA care, this decision makes it quicker and easier for millions of Veterans to enroll. Many Veterans believe they must apply to receive [VA disability compensation benefits](#) to become eligible for VA health care, but this is not correct. With this expansion and other authorities, millions of eligible Veterans can enroll directly in VA care – without any need to first apply for VA benefits.

This expansion of care covers Vietnam Veterans, Gulf War Veterans, Iraq War Veterans, Afghanistan War Veterans, Veterans who deployed in support of contingency operations for the Global War on Terror (Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom’s Sentinel, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, Operation Inherent Resolve, and Resolute Support Mission), and [more](#).

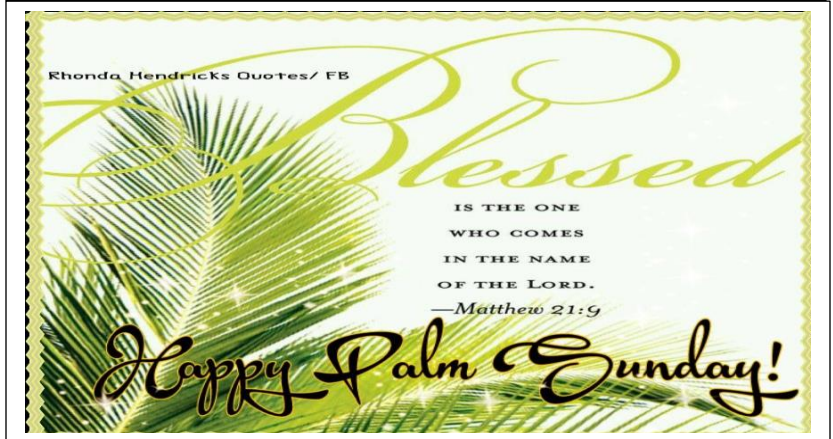
This expansion also covers many Veterans who never deployed as a part of a conflict but were exposed to toxins or hazards while serving in the U.S. Specifically, under this expansion of care, any Veteran who participated in a toxic exposure risk activity (TERA) — at home or abroad – is eligible for VA health care. VA has determined that Veterans who were exposed to one or more of the following hazards or conditions during active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training participated in a TERA: air pollutants (burn pits, sand, dust, particulates, oil well fires, sulfur fires); chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, depleted uranium with embedded shrapnel, contaminated water); occupational hazards (asbestos, industrial solvents, lead, paints including chemical agent resistant coating, firefighting foams); radiation (nuclear weapons handling, maintenance and detonation, radioactive material, calibration and measurement sources, X-rays, radiation from military occupational exposure); warfare agents (nerve agents, chemical and biological weapons); and [more](#). VA will use all available information to determine if Veterans participated in a TERA, including military records and service connection.

For more information about how the PACT Act is helping Veterans and their survivors, visit VA’s [PACT Act Dashboard](#). To apply for care or benefits today, visit [VA.gov/PACT](#) or call 1-800-MYVA411. More information on eligibility can be found at [VA.gov/PACT](#).

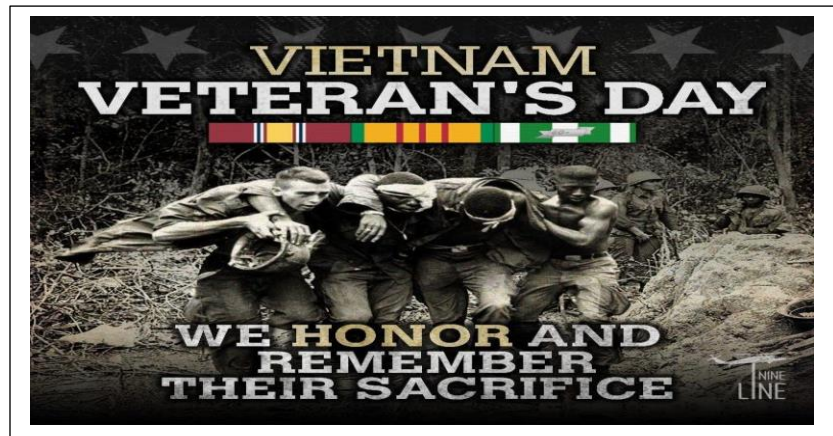
March 17 St. Patrick's Day



March 24 Palm Sunday



March 29 National Vietnam Veteran's Day



March 31 Easter

