

Avery Veterans' Corner

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From the author:

I have enjoyed providing the Veteran's Corner articles for over five years. In 2012, I approached The Avery Journal-Times with the concept of printing a weekly article highlighting veterans benefits. I was aware of many veterans in Avery County that were not aware of all the benefits they had earned. The editor embraced the idea and on July 12, 2012, the first article was published. Since then, more than 200 articles have addressed many of the issues useful to our veterans. I have received numerous comments from vets who say they read the article every week.

My wife and I have moved to Asheville, primarily for health reasons. I will miss my many friends in Avery and Watauga counties.

Fortunately, a friend from our local Disabled American Veterans Chapter has agreed to continue these articles. His name is Jim Sramek and he is a retired Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel. He will continue our tradition of the local DAV Chapter doing all they can to help local veterans. Since Asheville is not that far away, we look forward to our visits back to Avery County. -Mike Halus

Definition of “Veteran” Expanded

The three first bills passed by the House of Representatives on Feb. 17, 2016 — all with unanimous votes — will help active duty members, veterans and their families to have access to services and

benefits, and will also ensure their employment rights are protected. House Bill 1213, sponsored by Rep. Tina Orwall, (D-Des Moines), modifies the definitions of “veteran” and “family” for the Veterans’ Assistance Fund, which provides funding for services and relief for indigent veterans and their families through the County Veterans Assistance Programs.

“The bill corrects some issues around the complexities of the definition of ‘veteran’ and ‘family’ for the Veterans’ Assistance Fund eligibility. Currently, veterans have to look to three different definitions. This measure streamlines the definitions to be more consistent with those in federal law.

“By modifying these definitions, the County Veterans Assistance Programs can actually access a wider array of services and do it more quickly. It is another great way to help the men and women who serve our country, and their families,” said Orwall.

Tuition Free

Any child born or adopted before, during or after the period of time his or her parent were officially declared a POW or MIA after Jan. 1, 1960, may apply for free undergraduate college tuition.

VA Eliminates Verification Report

The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced that it is cutting red tape for veterans by eliminating the need for them to complete an annual Eligibility Verification Report (EVR). VA will implement a new process for confirming eligibility for benefits, and staff that had been responsible for processing the old form will instead focus on eliminating the compensation claims backlog. All beneficiaries

currently receiving VA pension benefits will receive a letter from VA explaining these changes and providing instructions on how to continue to submit their unreimbursed medical expenses.

Concurrent Retirement & Disability Payments

The Concurrent Retirement & Disability Payments (CRDP) is designed to remove the offset of VA and DoD payments. The program provides a 10-year phase-out of the offset to military retired pay from receiving VA disability compensation for members who have a combined disability rating of 50 percent or greater. Members retired under disability provisions must have 20 years of service.

For Internet assistance, go to your local county library.

For questions concerning veteran's benefits and to obtain needed forms call Georgia Henry, Avery County Veterans Service Office, at (828) 733-8211.

Comments and suggestions on the Veterans' Corner or Disabled American Veterans can be emailed to Jim Sramek at averycountyveterans@gmail.com.