

ADJUTANT'S  
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THE DEPARTMENT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
THE AMERICAN LEGION

**TO MY LEGION FAMILY:**

**MID-WINTER CONFERENCE:**

The Winter Conference was held on January 31<sup>ST</sup>, 2015, at Post 7 in Rochester. First I would like to thank all those of you that participated in this year's conference. The intent of this conference was for education. We decided this last year that the same old report reading from committees was not accomplishing anything and any reports can be posted at a later time if need be. As many of you know we have had some issues at the Post level that have taken some serious turns for some and instead of being reactive to these issues all the time it is my intent to try to be proactive in the face of the many problems we are having around the state. As many of you would agree the best way to deal with many of these problems is to stop them from happening in the first place. As a result we are starting to provide training to our Post leaders in areas of your operations that will cause problems for your Post.

To hit some of the most important areas we invited the State Liquor Commission, Para-Mutual, and an individual with Insurance experience to come and speak on each area. To say the least the reception was very positive. So much so I have decided to try to schedule some of this training for the Department Convention because so many questions were asked and it is important to make sure that our new leadership this year goes into office with an understanding of what they can and cannot do in their Post and how to properly run their operations.

I want to thank those organizations and individuals who came to speak to our leadership on these issues. There will be more I can assure you.

We also held our first announcements for 2015-16 Department Officers. To say the least we are going to need a few more people to step up to the plate. The following are those that have thrown their name into the hat for 2015-16 as a result of announcements at the conference.

Commander – John Graham

National Executive Committeeman – William Roy

Alternate NEC – Kenneth Maynard  
Robert Dionne

4 Vice Commanders – Charlie Arkwell  
Thomas Willey  
Gerard Leduc  
No submission

Treasurer (1 year) – No submission

Judge Advocate – No submission

Historian – George Boddie

Auditor – No submission

These positions will remain open until the Department Convention. Further announcements can be made at upcoming DEC's as well as the last which will be at the Convention.

Congratulations to the following winners of our Winter Raffle for 2015.

\$2500 Winner – Wm R. Giovagnoli

\$1000 Winner – Gordon E. Ashley

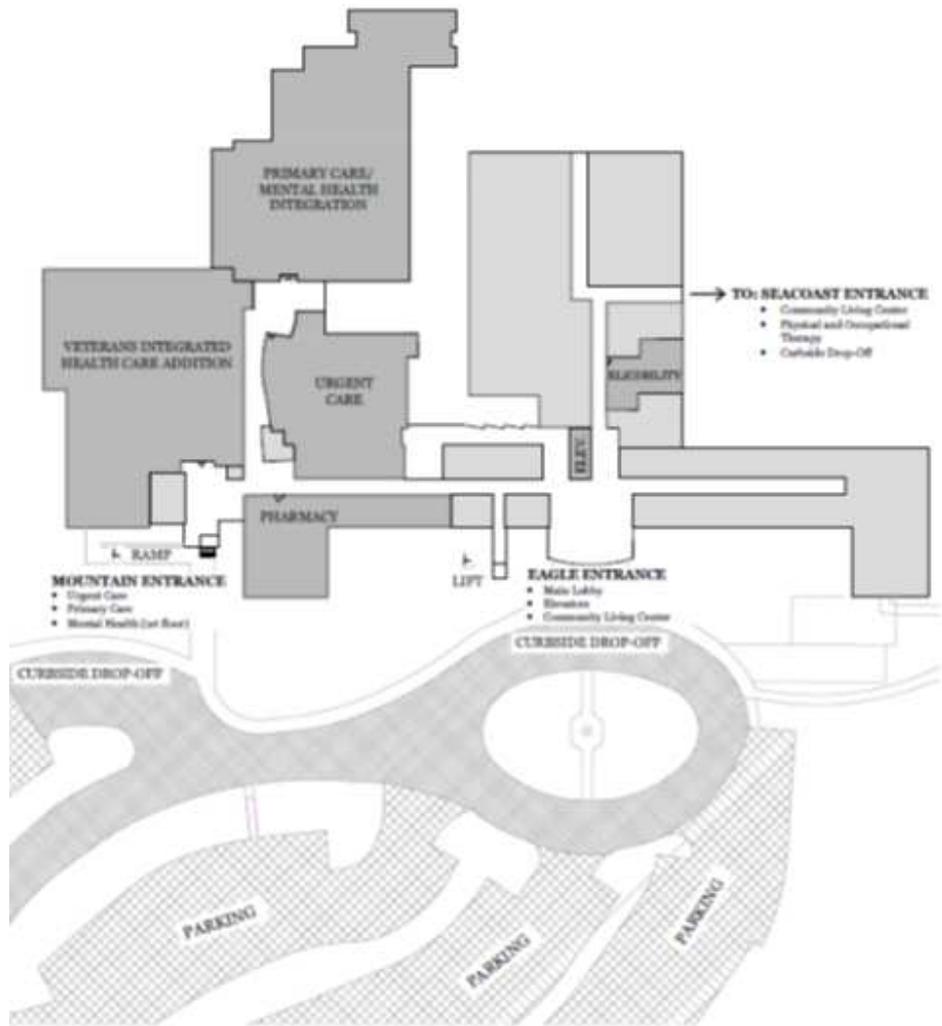
\$500 Winner – Clarence W. Houghton

\$200 Winners – Ronald J. DiPierro  
John F. LaVoie  
Armen H Varjabedian  
James N. Wood Sr.  
James Leland

Thanks to all of you for your support with our annual raffles. This money goes to supporting the yearly Department Budget.

If you did not get your mid-winter package make sure you contact your District Commander or Adjutant who may have them.





If you have questions about this expansion contact Kristin Pressly, Public Affairs Officer at [Kristin.Pressly@va.gov](mailto:Kristin.Pressly@va.gov) or 603-624-4366 ext. 6779. For more information about the Manchester VAMC and the services available to Veterans go to [www.manchester.va.gov](http://www.manchester.va.gov).



Six months after signing a bill granting veterans permission to seek medical care at private clinics, President Obama called for cutting the program in his 2016 budget Monday, with officials saying they think veterans would rather stay inside the VA.

The Choice Card program was Congress's key fix to last year's waiting list scandal, which exposed veterans getting bad care or possibly even dying while stuck on secret waiting lists. The card program allowed those veterans waiting the longest, or who lived furthest away from a Veterans Administration clinic, to get care from a private facility instead.

But Mr. Obama on Monday said he wants to take at least some of the \$10 billion he signed into law in August and divert it back to the VA, hiring more employees within the department.

"Use of the Choice program, even though it's still a new program, has not been as high as anticipated. We are hearing directly from veterans and their representatives that they would prefer to get their care at VA facilities from medical professionals they know and with whom they have relationships," said Helen Tierney, assistant secretary for management and chief financial officer for the VA.

The plan, however, is going nowhere on Capitol Hill, where Republicans said the administration hasn't even given the Choice Card program a chance to get up and running before trying to kill it.

"When a near-unanimous Congress worked with President Obama last year to create the choice program, we made a promise to veterans to give them more freedom in their health care decisions. I will not stand idly by while the president attempts to renege on that promise," Rep. Jeff Miller, Florida Republican and chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, said in a statement.

The administration, despite saying use of the program is low, couldn't say how many veterans are using it, how much of the \$10 billion has been spent already, or how much they plan to reallocate to hire VA employees.

"At this point, we are still studying this and we don't have numbers. As I said, it is still a very new program," Ms. Tierney said. "We are looking to try to better understand usage rates and what veterans are asking us for." She did say 8.6 million veterans have received their cards.

Veterans groups said the president's plan was a retreat away from the bold reforms of last year, and back toward the flawed system that led to the waiting list scandal, which found widespread problems at VA facilities across the country.

Mr. Obama had to fire his VA secretary in the middle of the scandal, and VA officials acknowledged they often put the department's bureaucracy ahead of the needs of veterans.

"With this proposal, President Obama is placing preserving the current VA system over the needs, and preferences, of our veterans," said Concerned Veterans for America CEO Pete Hegseth. "He is undermining the very reforms he signed into law before they are fully implemented, making it quite clear that he has no desire to truly reform the VA." Administration officials said they are not ending the Choice Card program, but want to give the VA flexibility to use the money how the agency wants.

Shaun Donovan, director of the White House Office of Management and Budget, said the administration proposed the change because "this is a new program and we're not sure how many veterans would choose either to remain within the VA system or to seek health care using their Choice Cards." "It was not a cut in that sense," Mr. Donovan said.

The administration's fiscal 2016 budget request for the VA is \$168 billion, including more than \$70 billion in discretionary spending, a 7.8 percent increase over last year's request.

By 2016, the department would have 30,000 more employees than it did in 2014, when the waiting list scandal hit.

The budget supports two of the president's priorities for veterans: ending both the disability claims backlog and veterans homelessness by the end of 2015. It requests resources to hire more VA staff to work through pending claims and promises continued investments in homelessness, including 67,000 vouchers to help homeless populations, including veterans, find suitable homes.

The document also would expand the eligibility for the Montgomery GI bill refund at a cost of \$22 million over the next five years. A commission that reviewed the military and veterans benefits system recommended last week that lawmakers sunset the Montgomery GI bill in favor of the Post-9/11 GI bill, which provides better benefits. Those who worked on the commission will brief senators Tuesday on their findings, though it's unclear how many Congress will accept or if they will influence this year's budget debates.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims has found Secretary of Veterans Affairs Bob McDonald in contempt. In a Nov. 28 ruling, a court panel determined the VA chief should be held accountable for mistakes that led to ignoring an order to restore the 100-percent disability claim for veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) during the past two years.

Even though the court had ordered the VA to make such a determination in a 2012 ruling, the VA countered that errors relating to computer entry of data has thwarted its effort to comply.

The case before the court involved a veteran who had been receiving 100-percent disability compensation for his PTSD claim until the VA lowered his rating by claiming he had not gone to doctor's appointments. The ruling ordered VA to pay the veteran's legal fees, and warned that further inaction on the VA's part could result in fines levied against departmental individuals. ([Klimas](#), Jacqueline (2015) *The Washington Times*)

It is apparent this administration feels it does not have to uphold its promises to the veterans of this country and this state!

### **DATES TO REMEMBER**

- February 14, District 8 Winter Meeting
- February 14, Department Executive Board Meeting, Post 98, Merrimack, 10:00 am
- February 21, Department Oratorical Contest, St. Anslem College,
- February 28, Department LEAD training, Department Headquarters

Some other military dates to remember, thanks Wayne Thomas, Post 5 Commander

- February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1901- Army Nurse Corps established
- February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1962- Military Assistance Command Vietnam established
- February 14<sup>th</sup>, Valentine's Day
- February 16<sup>th</sup>, President's Day
- February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1862- Union Forces capture Ford Donelson
- February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1943- Battle of Kasserine Pass begins
- February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1944- Operation Argument (Big Week) Air Offensive Begins
- February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1932- Purple Heart Medal is revived
- February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1967- Operation Junction City begins
- February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1945- The 11<sup>th</sup> Abn Div liberates Los Banos Internment Camp
- February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1943- Battle of Kasserine Pass ends
- February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1776- Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge

### **WASHINGTON CONFERENCE:**

This is a reminder for those attending the Washington Conference; the dates for the conference are February 22-25, 2015. There is more information still on the department website if you have not made reservations for any reason.



In our community we have just finished with the American Legion Oratorical Contest. This exists to develop deeper knowledge and appreciation for the U.S. Constitution among high school students. Over \$138,000 in scholarships can be awarded each year. Operation Comfort Warriors is another American Legion program dedicated to meeting the needs of wounded, injured or ill military personnel by providing them with comfort items not usually supplied by the government.

The list of all programs the American Legion has created and supports would be too numerous to go into detail today.

The American Legion family is available to sons and daughters of veterans as well as veterans. To find out if you are eligible, call or visit your local American Legion post. Remember there is strength in numbers, and veterans groups do a lot more than most people perceive. (*O'Donnel, Patrick(2015)American Legion magazine*)

**DID YOU KNOW:**

**I was going to take this out this issue but felt important enough for those that may not have seen this yet.**

In accordance with RSA 261:157, if you are veteran and qualify for the American Legion under current eligibility dates and are 70% to 100% permanent or totally disabled you may qualify for a free motor vehicle registration.

Not only do you have to be permanent or totally disabled, you must already have a handicap plate indicating such disability. If you have a handicap plate that is veteran or Purple Heart you may have to pay for the type of plate at the time of your registration being done.

You must have a copy of your disability rating available at the time you register your vehicle with the town or city. If you need a copy of your rating, this can be found by going to the veterans Affairs Office on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor of the Norris Cotton building, 275 Chestnut St. Manchester N.H.

**PLEASE POST ON YOUR POSTS BULLETIN BOARD**