



The Adjutant



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The Department of New Hampshire

TO MY LEGION FAMILY:



WINTER CONFERENCE

I want to thank everyone who participated in the Winter Conference this year. It was a successful conference and we were able to get out a lot of information to many of the Posts. If for some reason your Post did not send a representative to the conference, your District Commander or District representative will have any packets for Posts that did not get picked up, that includes a USB thumb drive that has all our forms on it electronically.

We also held Department Officer announcements for office for the 2018-2019 year. The following are those that announced their intent to run for a particular office.

Department Commander

Emil Ouellette

Department Vice Commanders

Oliver Brooks
Mike Faccioli
Rick Bickerstaff

Treasurer

Bob Dionne

Judge Advocate

Dog Micklon

Historian

George Boddie

Auditor

Vacant

All positions will remain open until the Department Convention. Anyone else intending on running for an office can announce themselves as a candidate at anyone of the DEC's or off the floor at convention in accordance with our Bylaws.

We also held our annual Winter Raffle and the winners are:

\$2500.00 – George Owen

\$1000.00 – Mike Maciejewski

\$500.00 – Peter Sawyer

\$200.00 – 5 winners

Joe Caouette
Michael Miller
Barry Labombardi
Acel Quimby
Robert Koski

Thanks again to everyone who participated in this raffle. As you know these raffles are essential to the support of our operations every year and could not sustain this department without them.

Additionally, you will be seeing some new labels coming in the mail to you. We are using a different vendor this year and I think you will like what you see.

Veterans aren't always getting mental care they urgently need, report finds

(CNN) [Thomas Burke Jr.](#), a Marine who returned from tours in Afghanistan and Iraq to attend Yale Divinity School, has also done three tours in the Veterans Health Administration for mental health care and says he's experienced mixed results.

Burke, 28, served in the infantry. He said his first counselor, in 2011, didn't have much experience with combat veterans and wasn't much help. In 2012, he clicked with his second counselor, who "really cared and took time to get to know me and gave me enough of a baseline to productively go through my academics."

Before becoming a minister and providing mental care of his own, he tried to get back into counseling. But it was a "very negative experience," he said.

"I went in, being vulnerable and laying out my problems, and they were dismissive and condescended to me and treated me like I am some victim and were not getting to the bottom of the problem and essentially said 'thanks for telling us,' " Burke said. "Imagine what damage that can do to veterans who seek help.

"It's hard for me to badmouth the VA, because there are a lot of good people there who are trying to help and do care about vets, but a lot of people I talk with do badmouth them," Burke said.

Many Americans who served in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars need mental health care, but they aren't always getting enough from the Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Health

Administration, according to the results of a congressionally mandated investigation released Wednesday.

About 4 million people have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, the longest sustained US military operations in history. A [disproportionate number](#) have come back with mental health challenges like anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, research shows. The number of suicides for veterans of these wars has reached [a record](#). The VA has not always been able to handle this crushing need for services.

But when veterans get mental health care from the VA, it is of "comparable or superior quality" to the kinds of care available elsewhere.

According to the new [study](#), nearly half of American veterans who need mental health care don't get it. Also, more than half of those who would benefit from care don't know they need it, the research by the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#) found.

The majority of those who could use these services don't know whether they are eligible, don't know how to get the services and don't even know that the VA provides mental health care, according to the report.

That's "one of the things the report pointed out that I found the most distressing," said [Louis Celli](#), national director of the [American Legion's](#) veterans affairs and rehabilitation division, which was not involved in the new report.

Celli said the VA does a "herculean job through social media campaigns and outreach with their partners" to let veterans know about the care it provides. "It's hard to imagine more you could do, short of knocking on everyone's door," but he believes the lack of care is a "failure on the community's part."

One workaround that the American Legion has found successful is enlisting veterans' families to help them get the care they need.

That's what helped Seth Robbins. An Army veteran who was stationed predominantly in Korea, the 40-year-old has gotten his health care through the VA for more than a decade, but he sought help for anxiety only after his wife gave him an ultimatum.

"As soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen, we are taught to 'suck it up and drive on.' We heard that on a regular basis, and it gets into your head," Robbins said.

He also hesitated to seek treatment because he had concerns that were shared by veterans in the report.

For instance, Robbins worried that his rifles would be taken away if he talked about his anxiety. "There's also the stigma or the feeling that something is broken and I'm not the normal one or that they'll lock you up," he said. "But I've got a job and a family to support and a house." The VA has helped him "get to a place where I can manage."

Veterans also find the VA's appointment system "burdensome" and "unsatisfying," the report said. Robbins agrees and says he's lucky his father, a Vietnam veteran, showed him how to navigate the system.

He also feels lucky to have a federal job that gives him the freedom to go to appointments that can take hours out of his day. Other veterans said transportation challenges and the distance to the VA from their homes can be a huge obstacle to getting care, according to the report.

For veterans like Robbins who succeed in getting treatment, the report found that they encounter "tremendous mental health care expertise" and that the system can deliver care in a "truly integrated and strategic manner." But the report added that chronic staffing challenges and confusing procedures and policies continue to be a challenge.

The American Legion's Celli said that along with the new report, he thinks it's important to note that the system has improved amid the extra scrutiny of the agency over the past several years. Robbins, for one, has noticed a change in 15 years -- a "vast improvement."

Celli said that he knows the system isn't perfect but that the American Legion will continue to fight to improve it.

"We are not VA cheerleaders, but we do work with them every day to make sure they do rise to the occasion and take care of veterans," he said. "We've seen the progress, and we hope more veterans will seek out this care." (*Christensen, Jen, February 1, 2018, CNN*)

New Tool Helps Veterans Seeking Discharge Upgrades

The departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs have launched a new online tool to help guide veterans through upgrading their military discharges.

The joint initiative was created in response to criticism of the review process, which had been deemed daunting or difficult to understand by some.

Available at www.vets.gov/discharge-upgrade-instructions, the online tool simplifies and customizes guidance for those seeking to upgrade their discharge, officials said.

"By answering a few short questions, veterans will know which board they need to go to, what form to fill out, any special guidance applicable to their case, where to send their application, and some helpful tips for appealing their discharge," officials said in a release announcing the tool. "Any veterans who believe their discharge was unjust, erroneous, or warrants an upgrade are encouraged to use this tool and then apply for review."

Previously, the review process could be confusing because of numerous guidance documents issued over the years, officials said. The task also was more difficult for veterans who suffer from mental health or other conditions.

The new tool aims to improve the process, officials said, thereby helping veterans who believe they may have been unfairly discharged or received an unfair discharge characterization.

Affected veterans may include those who were discharged under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" or similar policies, as well as those discharged for [post-traumatic stress disorder](#) or [traumatic brain injuries](#).



"We are thrilled to have partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs in developing this wonderful and easily-accessible tool," said Robert Wilkie, a Fayetteville native and undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness. "We support our veterans, whether they served recently or long ago, and we are excited to introduce a tool that will individualize the guidance for those who desire an upgrade or change in their military discharge."

Posts Newsletters

Keep those Post Newsletters coming. I got 3 more Posts sending in their monthly newsletters and would love to have more. They will be posted to the Post Newsletter page on www.legionnh.org.

WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

Again, the 2018 Washington Conference will be held February 25-28, 2018 at the Washington Hilton, 1919 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D.C. For anyone wishing to go to this conference, information can be obtained from me upon request.

Renew – Recruit - Reconnect



Please Post