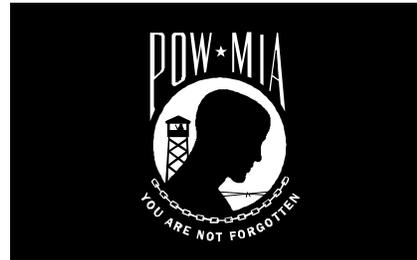


**ADJUTANT'S  
NEWSLETTER**  
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**THE DEPARTMENT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
THE AMERICAN LEGION**

**TO MY LEGION FAMILY:**



# DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this edition of my newsletter to a long time friend and comrade who served with me for close to 20 years in the military and was also a brother in arms in Law Enforcement:

## MSGT PETER CORMIER

MSgt Cormier died suddenly and was a member of the North Hampton Police Department and a retired member of the 157<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Squadron, NHANG. You will be missed.

Also, a special dedication to all our brothers and sisters who have paid the ultimate sacrifice as well to those that have served this great country whether in the military or in public service.

Next DEC will be **14 November, 2015 at Post 43 in Manchester, coffee @ 9:00 am and the meeting will start @ 10:00 am.** If you would like to be the Department Treasurer we will be excepting nominations to fill out current term till our next Department Convention.

## American Legion Membership Dues Increase

I want to address this subject again because I feel it is important and I want to make sure that all our Posts have been notified and our members are aware. So I am running this section again in this month's news letter.

The national organization of the American Legion through resolution has passed a five dollar increase to membership dues. This increase will take effect by the 80% deadline on January 17, 2016. Any dues not received for the 2016 membership year will be subject to the five dollar increase on that date. Dues received by your members prior to this date will not be subject to this increase.

The per capita will increase from 21.50 to 26.50 on that date (JAN 17, 2016) for each member that will need to come to department. It is highly recommended that each post consider increasing your dues to cover this increase and or to at the very least inform each of your members of this increase and when it takes effect.

It is also advised to encourage each member to pay their 2016 dues prior to this date.

We will be discussing this increase further as time goes on and sending out reminders in various publications as a reminder of this dues increase.

We understand the hardships this may cause some of members. The American Legion is still the best veteran service organization in this country and this increase is needed to maintain the programs of the American Legion and cover the costs of dwindling membership and overhead.

There is an incentive to this where Department Commander John Graham will take all Post Commanders and their Membership Chairs and one guest to dinner if their Post reaches 100% by News Year Eve, December 31, 2015.

## 2015 FALL CONFERENCE

This year's Fall Conference will be on **Saturday, October 31, 2015**, the location will be at Laconia, Post 1 as it was last year. Do not let the fact that this is Halloween scare you away from coming to this conference. I promise you will be home before dark and the zombie hoard will not be moving until after 5 pm.

Last year we put together several training sessions for our Post and District leaders and hope to do so again this year as well. We do not have the break out space available to us as we did last year, so we will be including subjects this year that will benefit all in this year's training. The tentative agenda is below.

**FALL CONFERENCE 2015**  
**AGENDA**

- 0800 – 0900      Coffee/Donuts
- 09:00- 10:00    Opening - Remarks  
                      Membership – Tom Willey  
                      Convention – Bob Blais/Deb Davis  
                      Oratorical – Ken Maynard  
                      Announcements – Adjutant
- 10:00 – 11:30    Training (ALL): TBA
- 1130 -12:00      LUNCH
- 12:00 – 2:00     Training (ALL) TBA
- 2:00                Closing/Remarks

Note: (Training is schedule is subject to change)





- 8<sup>th</sup>- 1862 Battle of Perryville
- 8<sup>th</sup>- 1918 Lost Battalion (rescued)
- 10<sup>th</sup>-1779 Siege of Savannah ends
- 10<sup>th</sup>-1951 Battle of Heartbreak Ridge
- 11<sup>th</sup>-1776 Battle of Valcour Island
- 12<sup>th</sup>- **Columbus Day**  
2000 Al-Qaida bombed the USS Cole in Aden Yemen
- 12<sup>th</sup>-1968 Operation MacArthur Begins
- 13<sup>th</sup>-1812 Battle of Queenston Heights  
1775 U.S. Navy's Birthday
- 15<sup>th</sup>- 1964 People's Republic of China detonated its first Nuclear Weapon
- 17<sup>th</sup>-1777 British surrendered at Saratoga
- 19<sup>th</sup>-1781 British Surrender at Yorktown  
1864 Battle of Cedar Creek  
1944 U.S. Forces land Leyete Island  
1978 Women's Army Corps disestablished
- 21<sup>st</sup>- 1962 President Kennedy ordered Naval Quarantine of Cuba after intelligence Discovered offensive missile sites on Island
- 23<sup>rd</sup>- 1965 Operation Silver Bayonet Begins  
1983 Terrorists destroyed the Marine Compound in Beirut killing 254
- 25<sup>th</sup>- 1983 U.S. Forces Invade Grenada (Operation Urgent Fury)
- 26<sup>th</sup>- 1918 First Combat employment of Native American (Choctaw) Code Talkers
- 28<sup>th</sup>- 1776 Battle of White Plains  
1861 Lincoln approved establishment of Military Telegraph Department
- 31<sup>st</sup>- **Halloween**  
1980 Elizabeth Friedman died (While working for the Coast Guard and the Bureau of Foreign Control during the Prohibition era, she solved over 12,000 rum-runners' Messages).



**THE VA**

**MEDICAL**

**EXPERIENCE**

This month I want to address a problem that affects many veterans and me on a personal level. It is a problem that continues to become more and more of a issue for our fellow veterans who are currently dealing with the VA medical system.

*“It is my mission – and the mission of the employees of the VA – to be the most customer-friendly organization in government. This is a different concept in government. It is one I am bringing from the private sector. For the best customer service organizations in the world, size doesn’t matter. What matters is the culture of how you deal with customers. What we are trying to do as part of the MyVA transformation is to put the customer first. In fact, our very first strategy is to give the veteran a better experience. To do that we are learning from the private sector, we are learning from Disney, we are learning from Ritz-Carlton, we are learning from Starbucks. We also know what’s going on (with complaints). So we are training people in good customer service.” (Quote: VA Secretary Robert McDonald, July 24, 2015) - See more at: <http://www.legion.org/veteransbenefits/229324/va-secretary-assesses-challenges-progress#sthash.AOemfyLB.dpuf>*

My answer to this is something that maybe some of my readers may not like so I will reserve comment on exactly how I feel about this response to an interview the American Legion had with Secretary McDonald just recently. I will say this however when is this suppose to happen because as with some of our veterans we are not seeing it. The system as I see it continues to be clouded over with bureaucratic red tape, continued customer service issues, poor and almost non-existent access to emergency health care for some, politic wrangling, and a drug culture within the VA system that not only is a band-aid to other medical options and care but is becoming a serious problem for veterans who are finding themselves becoming drug dependent addicts. I am not afraid to say it because I am one of them.

I am constantly getting calls from some of our members about the problems they are

having with getting proper care in the VA and the problems they are facing with their medication and having to wait for appointments and dealing with the newly instituted *VA Choice Program*. I can say this because I receive all the reports from the Inspector General inspections of VA facilities throughout the country. These reports also confirm the very issues I just mentioned with the majority of our facilities in this country.

The veterans of this country are asking for help and are not getting it and I find myself in their shoes all too much because I also face the same problems.

Recently I received a call from a member who pointed out a problem he was having with getting his pain medication. I instantly related with this veteran. He advised me he has been on the same pain medication for almost a decade and had run out of his prescription a couple days early and was not due to get his script sent to him for another 5 days. He also told me that his prescription is only filled for a 29 day period which does not cover those additional months that have 30 or 31 days in them and causes him to run out before his script is due to be renewed. He has found that his body goes into immediate withdrawals and becomes extremely ill. When he called the VA for help or the possibility for an earlier script he was told there was no way to get his script early and would need to wait until he gets it in the mail, which is another matter in itself. Although he only gets a 29 day dose he is still required to take the medication every day, 3 times a day regardless of how many days there are in the month. You say how do I relate to this, I also have a pain prescription that I am required to take 4 times a day and only receive enough for a 30 day period causing me to either short myself a dose or two through the month to make up for the loss or also get sick from withdrawal systems. I have addressed this with the VA pharmacy on numerous occasions and you would think the VA pharmacy would track the months patients are short for extended months but it seems they do not. All I get for an answer is they are mandated to prescribe medication a certain way and could not do anything. This may be true so then why prescribe a veteran medication that he cannot take every day as prescribed on the prescription as written. I still have not received an answer on this issue.

A second experience that I witnessed just recently in a CBOC (Community Based Outpatient Clinic) that I am assigned too, a walk-in veteran came in to the CBOC and went to the front window and stated to the attending PRN, or RN that he was experiencing severe dizziness. Having some experience in the medical field over the years I thought maybe this could be related to some type of cardiac episode, or possible stroke, high blood pressure, or any number of other serious medical conditions causing this person to have severe dizziness. I said to myself this veteran should get to see a doctor right away but that was not to be the case. Instead he was told that his primary care physician is located at the Manchester and he would have to go to Manchester to see the doctor there, or go to urgent care. I just want to note that this particular CBOC I was at is located about an hour away from the Manchester facility and the last thing this veteran should be doing is driving to Manchester in his condition. The other advice he was told he could call the triage nurse on the phone in the waiting area and give his

symptoms to her and they may authorize an emergency room visit for him, which is not guarantee it will be paid for, or he would have to make the long trip to urgent care after all. I could hear the nurse on the other end and to say the least was not the most pleasurable to deal with and customer service was much to be desired. Additionally this veteran was sweating profusely and did not appear to be well.

I find it deplorable that a veteran walks into a VA Medical Facility because of what appears to be a emergency medical issue and is brushed off because the CBOC is; one, not equipped to handle emergency medical situations, although there is medical staff present; or two, VA policy dictates that the individual must either go to urgent care or be authorized to go to a nearby emergency room, which again may or may not be paid for; or three, drive to urgent care with no guarantee the individual will not have a more serious medical issue on the way and cause a accident killing himself or others while in route. These are just some of the outcomes that could happen. You say over dramatized. I tell you it is not. I asked the question of immediate medical service and was told that the only way a CBOC staff would care for a veteran would be if the individual had a medical episode that caused the veteran to become unconscious in the facility, i.e. heart attack, stroke, or some other issue. The concern here seems to be more with liability versus the care for this sick veteran and I am sure this is not the first time this has happened throughout the country.

A third experience recently which I found disturbing and one I have received calls on and experienced in depth just recently is dealing with the new *Veterans Choice Program*. Not only is this program broke before it was even enacted but totally does not solve the issue of veterans seeing a doctor in need inside the window of 30 days as the program is suppose to do.

In a nut shell the program lacks experienced call personal and people who understand a veterans special needs when called to set up or request authorization to see an outside physician due to the long waiting list for a particular physician in a VA medical facility.

Perfect example is my recent experience with Veterans Choice when I was referred to a by a special care doctor by my primary care doctor. The wait time to see one in Manchester was outside the 30 day window and limited in specialist. When I called the Veterans Choice call center, not only did I get a individual on the phone that was not very pleasant to deal with and acted like it was a inconvenience to take my call, but one that spoke broken English and was not fluent at all. This caused me some discomfort in that I had a hard time understanding what she was asking or telling me and I am in my early 50's, but to a older veteran who may have serious hearing issues, talking to a person like this would be impossible to do.

Second, although they found a specialist for me a little closer then Manchester, I still had to bypass two major areas that have the same type of specialist available and are in

the Choice program.

Not to make this story too long but so you get the special effect I am trying to reflect, I went to my first appointment date to this specialist set up by Choice. When I arrived not only did they cancel my appointment on me without notification to me, but also never received records from my primary care or Veterans Choice on my condition. There was never any call or communication to let me know my appointment had been cancelled, the reasons for it, or what to do next. With that said the receptionist at this specialist was very understanding and told me this was not the first issue they have had with Veterans Choice and they have already considered pulling from the program. I immediately thought to myself how many other doctors and specialists around the country are considering the same thing.

Needless to say I scheduled for another appointment about 3 weeks down the road way out the 45 to 90 day window for being seen under the guidelines of this program. Once that day came again, I went back to this specialist which again did not receive the records required for me to be seen by this physician and I had to take the initiative on my own and went to my assigned CBOC where I proceeded to express my displeasure with Veterans Choice and why my records were never transmitted to this physician that I was suppose to see originally 30 days ago almost. Additionally this physician received a letter from Veterans Choice telling them they had no medical records on me and could not send any. I was also told by the staff at the CBOC that choice is responsible for sending those records and they are not suppose to. Since my medical records are equal to about a 1500 page novel I knew that the Choice program is defiantly broke and they are just compounding to the issues that veterans are having in getting in to see physicians in a timely matter by brushing them off and sending these ridiculous letters to Choice participating specialists like the one they sent on my behalf and being a total lie.

Thanks to the added efforts of the staff at my CBOC my records were faxed to the physician's office I needed to see and in turn I saw this doctor. He determined that yes I have a certain condition and needed additional lab work, x-rays, and a cardiogram. Well I will not keep you in suspense but only tell you that the original authorization for me to see this specialists does not cover additional ordered medical work and now I have to wait a additional 20 to 30 days to get a authorization for each and every lab, x-ray, and cardiogram order so that I may be treated by this specialists.

My fellow veterans and comrades, is this how we want our veterans treated day in and day out by a system that is supposed to be there to take care of those individuals who placed it on the line and took care of us by serving this great nation. Well the answer if you have not guessed is a resounding NO! It is not the way we want our veterans to be treated. In my opinion and overwhelming experience the VA system is still broke and no amount of sugar coating by Secretary MacDonald and his Under Secretary, Allison Hickey. Who by the way and according to *The American Legion*, refused to step down from her position even after the Inspector General determined she used her position to

benefit from an overly-generous relocation policy. Which by the way, paved the way for her to allow others under her direct authority to receive between \$130,000 and \$280,000 in benefits from the VA's current relocation policy in relocation costs.

*“It’s disturbing to read terms like, criminal referrals, and, coerced, in an official report about an agency that was created to serve veterans. It is time for Under Secretary Hickey to finally do the right things and resign.”* (National Commander Dale Barnett, Sept 29, 2015).

Do not get me wrong, I believe the VA has made some strides to correct some of these issues, and thank goodness New Hampshire has fared well in some of the inspections it has gone under in reference to the wait times and treatment of veterans in the VA system in N.H. However, there is still a lot of work to do and I believe there is a need for further disclosure of past practices and how these issues will be corrected. I refuse to see my fellow veterans treated in a manner that I have throughout my experiences with the VA system.

As for the Veterans Choice program you know what I say they can do with a program that quite honestly does not work and will probably not be funded again anyway going into the next fiscal year. If the VA does not find a permanent solution to the amount of time and the kind of treatment some veterans receive we will continue to see veterans pass away from the lack and quality of treatment they richly deserve for serving this country.

The American Legion will continue to monitor the VA's attempts to revise and fix its programs and the way medical treatment is being used to treat our veterans. This does not even touch the issues still plaguing the Department of Veterans Affairs continuing practices for backlogged benefit packages submitted for veterans who need disability claims as soon as possible. I guess that will have to be another issue to address down the road.

Thanks to the members of this Department for your understanding and guidance to the problems and issues our veterans face every day in this state. I salute you!