

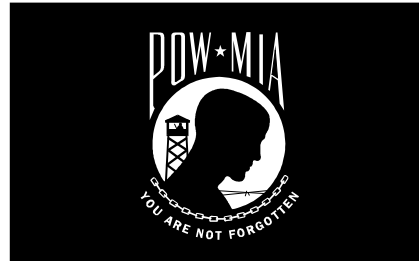


**ADJUTANT'S
NEWSLETTER**
OFFICE PHONE 856-8951
EMAIL:
ADJUTANTNH@LEGIONNH.ORG



**THE DEPARTMENT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
THE AMERICAN LEGION**

TO MY LEGION FAMILY:



2016 FALL CONFERENCE

This year's Fall Conference will be held at Post 81, Contoocook, N.H. This year we will be holding some more training. It is important that at least one Post Officer try to make this conference, not just for the training, but in order to gather any other information that may need to go back to the Post. Additionally the Department Commander has decided to include a short DEC for the purpose of nominating and electing a Department Vice Commander. Below is the current agenda as it stands right now.

0800 – 0900	Coffee/Donuts
0900- 0930	Opening – Remarks DEC- Nomination and Election of Department Vice Commander
0930-1030	Membership – Emil Ouellette Convention – Bob Blais/Deb Davis Judge Advocate – Doug Micklon Oratorical – Ken Maynard Announcements – Adjutant
1030 – 1130	Training (ALL): RESOLUTIONS
1130 -1230	LUNCH
1230 – 1400	Training (ALL) POST REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Note: (Training schedule is subject to change)

DEPARTMENT COMMANDER NOTES

Hello Legionnaires,

National Commander Aide Dirk Levy took many photos during the recent National Commander Charlie Schmidt and National Auxiliary President Mary Davis visit. They are available on a website Mr. Levy downloads them on. The website has many places and Departments the NC has visited. Use the link below and click on the **Department of New Hampshire** folder. Thumbnails will come up and if you click on one you recognize, then browse through the rest using the "next/previous: buttons. You can save a copy by "click and hold" over the photo you want and drag it to your desktop. It will be in jpeg format.

Here is the website:

ImageEvents.com

log-in: legacyforward

Password: catbox97338!

Thank you

Tom Wiley, Department Commander

NEWS OF INTEREST TO VETERANS

HB 430 Signed into Law

Thanks to the efforts of our Post member and State Representative Jim Bélanger, House Bill (HB) 430, allowing towns and cities to adopt a property tax credit which extends the current veterans' property tax credit to all honorably discharged veterans, was signed into law on 2 September 2016.

In a statement by Governor Hassan when she signed the law ““Our veterans have sacrificed bravely in defense of our freedom, and we must always work to ensure that they receive the full support that they deserve when they return from their service, regardless of where they were deployed. By allowing communities to extend the current veterans' property tax credit to all honorably discharged veterans who have served no less than 90 days, House Bill 430 builds on our efforts to ensure that all of our veterans and their families can live independently and contribute to our economic and civic life after their service.”

"I am proud to sign this bipartisan bill into law in order to continue supporting our brave and courageous veterans whose service has made our country safer, and our freedom stronger."

Jim and Post Chaplain Bruce Moran both represented veterans at the ceremonial signing by Governor Hassan. Video clip: http://www.nh1.com/player/?video_id=13869

It is now up to each Town to vote on whether to grant this exemption and for how much. We will be speaking to the Selectmen of each Town to make sure this Warrant Article is presented at the Town meetings in March.

Jim and Post Chaplain Bruce Moran both represented veterans at the ceremonial signing by Governor Hassan. Video clip: http://www.nh1.com/player/?video_id=13869

Thanks to Commander Larking of Post 74 and his Officers for this information.

Veterans denied millions in benefits by VA

By NIKKI WENTLING | STARS AND STRIPES Published: September 30, 2016

WASHINGTON — Roughly \$110 million in payments to thousands of housebound veterans was withheld from them by the Department of Veterans Affairs; according to a new report from VA inspector general's office.

The IG report found approximately 186,000 veterans as of March 2015 were designated as housebound because of illness or injury with errors in payments to about 33,400 of them. Others did receive payments, but they were delayed anywhere from five days to six years.

The report also found some veterans who were not designated as housebound received \$44.3 million in money meant for housebound veterans.

"Staff did not accurately address housebound benefits," the report concluded. "As a result, some veterans did not receive benefits to which they were entitled, while taxpayer funds were wasted paying other veterans who did not meet the eligibility criteria."

The IG report blamed the errors on a faulty electronic system, poor training and management allowing VA staff to "arbitrarily decide these claims."

This is not the first time that VA's technology has been criticized. In its final report released in the summer, the Commission on Care – a board established to propose recommendations for VA reform – called the VA's technology "antiquated" and "disjointed." The commission called for a new system that would, in part, better allow the health care side of VA to communicate with staffers making benefits decisions.

In response to the IG report, the VA's office of the undersecretary for benefits said it was working on technology changes. The office also said it would start an annual review of benefits going to housebound veterans. The first review is scheduled for October.

Meanwhile, Michael Missal, the VA's new inspector general, told a House committee earlier this week that he's working to expand inspections into the VA's benefits programs. The committee met about another IG report that found veterans in prison had received \$104 million in overpayments between 2008 and 2015.

The IG now has three teams dedicated to reviewing the Veterans Benefits Administration, Missal told the committee.

In this latest report, the IG cited one example of a veteran who had one illness or injury rated as 100 percent disabling, plus other disabilities. As of February 2015, the veteran was being underpaid by about \$350 per month. During nine years, the VA had not paid \$36,100 to the veteran. The error was fixed in October 2015.

In another case, a veteran who was temporarily housebound continued receiving extra payments even after he had recovered. He had been overpaid approximately \$154,000 during four and a half years, the report stated. The VA corrected the payments in May.

Besides updating some of its technology and starting an annual review of housebound benefits, the VA said it would require more training. The changes will be put into effect in the remainder of 2016, according to the VA's response.

Congress Won't Let Veterans Access Medical Marijuana After All

The legislation would have allowed Veterans Administration doctors to recommend medical cannabis to their patients.

Congressional leadership removed language from a spending bill that would have allowed Veterans Administration doctors to recommend medical marijuana to patients.

An effort to allow veterans to access medical marijuana in states where it's legal died Wednesday night when Congress passed a spending bill without the provision included.

The Veterans Equal Access Amendment would have nullified a Department of Veterans Affairs standard that keeps its doctors from recommending medical cannabis as treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, pain and other conditions experienced by veterans. Veterans currently seeking medical pot must obtain a doctor's recommendation outside of the VA system and pay the expense out of pocket.

The amendment, authored by Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) and Sens. Steve Daines (R-Mont.) and Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), [passed both chambers of Congress](#) earlier this year as part of a spending package funding the Veterans Affairs department.

But in June, the provision was stripped from the final version of the bill during conference committee. Blumenauer, Daines, Merkley and other supporters of the provision lobbied their colleagues to get the amendment added to the bill again.

“We feel the failure of the Conferees to include either provision is a drastic misfortune for veterans and is contrary to the will of both chambers as demonstrated by the strong bipartisan support for these provisions,” read a [letter](#) sent to congressional leadership.

The amendment was never readded, and the Veterans Affairs spending package passed Wednesday as part of the [continuing resolution](#) to fund the government.

“It’s incredibly frustrating and disappointing that despite broad bipartisan, bicameral support, a handful of out-of-touch lawmakers put politics over the well-being of America’s wounded warriors. Our veterans deserve better,” Blumenauer said in a statement on Thursday. “We will continue to seek every opportunity to make sure they have fair and equal treatment and the ability to consult with, and seek a recommendation from, their personal VA physician about medical marijuana.”

[Medical marijuana](#) is currently legal in 25 states and the District of Columbia, and [several other states](#) will vote in November on whether to legalize cannabis for medical use.

The VA doesn’t condone medical marijuana as a treatment for PTSD or other conditions due to the [lack of studies](#) on the effectiveness of the substance in easing post-traumatic stress. Still, many [veterans have turned](#) to the substance as an alternative to prescription antidepressants or painkillers, and some states specifically list PTSD as a condition for which doctors can recommend cannabis.

The Drug Enforcement Administration announced in August it would open the door to [more research](#) on medical uses for marijuana, which could lead to eventual acceptance by the VA. However, the DEA still classifies all forms of cannabis as Schedule 1, the “most dangerous” category of drugs.

The American Legion, the country’s largest wartime veteran’s organization, came out earlier this month [in support of allowing veterans to access medical marijuana](#), and urged Congress to remove cannabis from the Schedule 1 designation.

EDITORIAL

It is obvious, based on the two stories above that the VA is still out of touch with the needs of the veterans as well as allowing the VA to deny benefits to veterans who rightly deserve them. These stories come out every day and it is unfortunate that it seems like the VA is caught up in the political battle that seems to be going on right now. In as much as the American Legion tries to stay out of the political realm it is hard to not get frustrated with what continues to be a political juggling act where the VA is being used as a pawn to slam one party or the other for not taking care of this countries veterans.

As a veteran who has to use the VA for my own medical care, I find myself also wondering when it will ever end and those of us who use the VA for their medical care will finally get the care that is deserved.

As I travel around the country to conventions, conferences and so forth, I hear the same story.

A prime example of this is the fight to privatize veteran’s care which has been a battle no more so now then when the VA was first discovered to have issues with the care of veterans.

The measure, sponsored by House Veterans’ Affairs Committee ranking member Mark Takano, D-Calif., carries with it no force of law and has little chance of advancing in the Republican-controlled chamber.

Takano -- along with Congressional Progressive Caucus co-chairs Reps. Raúl Grijalva, D-Ariz., and Keith Ellison, D-Minn. -- argues the proposal is needed to “echo the voices of millions of veterans who oppose the privatization of the Veterans Health Administration.” It states that lawmakers should stand against any policy that would jeopardize health care offerings for veterans “by moving essential resources to the private sector.”

On the campaign trail, Democrats insist that’s exactly what Republicans have been trying to do for the last few years. Conservatives -- led by Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump -- have argued for a significant expansion of the use of private-sector doctors for veterans’ medical appointments and treatments, guiding more federal dollars outside VA.

Republicans counter that department health systems are overburdened and unable to meet veterans' needs, and proposals to expand health care choices for veterans in no way represent privatizing the department. The fight has become the primary friction point between Trump's veteran's policies and that of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, who has repeatedly accused the GOP of working to undermine and privatize VA. Takano pushed back on criticism that his resolution is little more than political posturing.

"Perhaps there was a time when warning of VHA privatization was hyperbole, but Republicans on the campaign trail and in Congress are proposing an unprecedented expansion in the role of for-profit providers in veterans care," he said.

"Conservatives are also treating private care as a panacea, ignoring the long wait time, expensive bills, and regular inconvenience that many American consumers endure. Now is the time for Congress to send a clear message to America's veterans: It was our decision to send you to war, and it's our responsibility to care for you when you get home."

In an appearance before the Veterans of Foreign Wars convention in July, Trump promised an overhaul of VA operations and more choices for veterans seeking medical appointments, but also pledged that "the veteran's health system will remain a public system, because it is a public trust."

The American Legion and Disabled American Veterans have endorsed the legislation.

In addition to the partisan fighting over the issue -- a number of Democrats have also supported expanding outside care options for veterans -- Takano's resolution faces a short legislative timeline for consideration.

Congress is scheduled to leave town at the end of the week for an extended pre-election recess, and will return for an already-busy lame-duck session on Nov. 14. (*Leo Shane III, Military Times, September 28, 2016*).

No matter what party you belong to or what candidate you support, the message is clear to me that veterans will continue to suffer through the system. The loss of one veteran as a result of this political wrangling is one veteran too much.



ANNUAL DISTRICT FOUR RAFFLE NH AMERICAN LEGION

501(C) (19) NON-PROFIT

WIN 100, \$5.00 NH SCRATCH TICKETS

TOP PRIZE CAN BE AS HIGH AS \$100,000.00

DONATION \$5.00 EACH OR 3 FOR \$10.00

**PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT DISTRICT FOUR
VETERANS FUND AND OTHER**

CHARITIES

**Drawing Saturday, January 28, 2017, Mid-Winter Conference
at the Roland E Patnode, American Legion Post 7
Rochester NH**

Almpost2@comcast.net



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DESERVES TO LIVE
IN QUALITY HOUSING**

**You're invited to the first Massachusetts MyVA
Community Public Forum on Sustainable Housing**

Join state and local community partners in your area:

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- Learn how to get or keep housing
- Share your experiences
- Explore our extensive resource fair

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Memorial Performing
Art Center

Morton Middle School
1135 North Main Street
Fall River, MA 02720

October 22, 2016
10AM-2PM

Please Post