



Office of Veterans Advocacy

BULLETIN

April 2023

STATE OF IDAHO

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**To be connected with a VA suicide prevention and mental health professional,
call the toll-free National Suicide Prevention hotline and indicate you are a veteran.
(800) 273-8255**

ALL EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES ARE ADMINISTERED IN A NONDISCRIMINATORY
MANNER IN CONFORMANCE WITH FEDERAL AND STATE EEO AND CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS



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**If you’ve not already done so, please volunteer to receive the bulletin via email
by emailing Jennel Binsky at
jennel.binsky@veterans.idaho.gov**



FROM BILL'S DESK

By now, everyone should be completely sick of the snow and enjoying the spring temperatures. I know our friends in the mountains are still getting sporadic snow, but this should be over soon! I would like to thank the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, National Veterans Service for most of the updates I am providing.

Within our team of Veteran Service Officers, our latest change is that Robertta Matulis (Pocatello Office) has made the decision to return back to her previous job within the Pocatello Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). We thank Robertta for the time that she spent with us and wish her the best of luck. We have found her replacement and Paul Burgin will be our newest team member. Paul is a Navy veteran, currently works with the Idaho Department of Transportation, and will be joining our Team in Pocatello on May 15th. Welcome Aboard, Paul!

The State's 4th State Veterans Home in Post Falls is accepting residents at this time, as well as looking for anyone wanting to join their team in the way of employment opportunities. Speaking of employment opportunities (besides all four State Veterans Homes), the Boise VA Regional Office continues to hire for various positions. During our last brief, they are looking to hire 20 more full time employees so if anyone is interested, log onto USAJobs.com and apply.

For whatever reason, I keep receiving phone calls from veterans/spouses worried they have to be rated 100% service connected in order to receive Survivor Benefits when the veteran passes. This is completely false. If a veteran passes from a service-connected condition, even if it is only rated 0% service connected (for example, traumatic brain injury or hypertension) and the Death Certificate lists one of those conditions as the cause of death or contributing cause of death, the surviving spouse will receive Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC). Currently, the base rate for DIC is \$1,562.74/month. Remember, the spouse had to be married to the veteran for a minimum of one year prior to the veteran passing to receive DIC or a survivor's pension. The surviving spouse would also be eligible to receive the service-connected burial benefit of \$2,000, which is the absolute highest the VA will pay for a burial benefit.

Since I am discussing burial benefits, if a veteran is receiving a monetary benefit from the VA (10% or higher, or receiving a nonservice-connected pension) and passes from a nonservice-connected condition (or passes away at a VA Medical Facility), the VA will only pay the nonservice-connected burial benefit of \$300. If a veteran was not receiving a monetary benefit from the VA at the time of passing, did not pass at a VA Medical Facility, and did not pass from a presumptive condition they might have been eligible but never applied for, then the VA will not pay anything towards a burial benefit.

If a veteran is interred at a state or national veterans cemetery, there is NO charge for the internment. If a veteran is eligible to receive the nonservice-connected burial benefit of \$300 and is interred at a private cemetery, the family is also eligible to receive the current VA plot allowance rate of \$893. The VA does not pay the plot allowance rate if the veteran was eligible for the \$2,000 service-connected burial allowance or if interred in a state or national veterans cemetery.

The State of Idaho is still working on the details in order to provide non-veteran status guardsmen and reservists interment at either of our State Veterans Cemeteries in Boise or Blackfoot. More details will be released later in the year on what the potential cost will be. This will not permit a non-veteran guardsman or reservist to be buried at the Snake River National Cemetery.

I have spent the better part of the last two newsletters discussing the "PACT Act." Currently, the VA has approximately 283,000 PACT Act claims pending nationally out of the total amount of 801,000 claims being worked. The VA has already paid out of \$730 million in retroactive benefits associated with the PACT Act.

Our Office has been receiving many phone calls concerning the PACT Act, so I want to point out this is the PACT Act, NOT the Burn Pit Act. The term "burn pits" seems to have taken over the entire Pact Act due to poor advertising. The only thing this legislation did for Vietnam veterans was expand the areas associated with herbicide exposure, to include Thailand, Guam, American Samoa, Cambodia, and Laos, and expand the current herbicide presumptive conditions so they now include Hypertension (high blood pressure) and Monoclonal Gammopathy of Undetermined Significance (MGUS) which is a precursor to Multiple Myeloma.

Toxic exposures due to airborne particulate matter to include burn pits are for veterans who served in Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, The United Arab Emirates (UAE), or the airspace above any of these locations On or after August 2, 1990; or Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Uzbekistan, Yemen, or the airspace above any of these locations On or after September 11, 2001. I fully understand that Vietnam veterans were exposed to various types of smoke and burn pits, but that is not how the law is written.

The effective date for any of these presumptive conditions is the date the law was signed into effect, August 10, 2022, or the date of claim if submitted after the law was signed. The ONLY time the VA will grant an earlier effective date is if a surviving spouse filed a DIC claim following the veteran's passing, but was denied because at the time, those conditions were not considered presumptive. If the surviving spouse did not file a DIC claim following the veteran's passing, they will not be entitled to effective date earlier than August 10, 2022.

Just in case anyone hears anything related to the 2023 Congressional Budget Office's (CBO) recommendation for reducing the deficit, the CBO is required to submit biennial reports to Congress on recommendations to reduce the national deficit. This year's CBO report recommended the government eliminate VA disability compensation based on veteran's

means/household income, terminating Individual Unemployability for veterans reaching 67 years old, eliminating VA Disability Compensation by excluding veterans with low disability ratings, increasing VA prescription costs, and eliminating VHA Priority Groups 7-8. **No Member of Congress has proposed any legislation nor has any indicated interest in pursuing any of these options.**

The VA's Insurance Program is preparing to roll out a new benefit called the Veterans Affairs Life Insurance (VALife). This program will replace the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance or Supplemental S-DVI and no new application for the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance will be accepted after December 31, 2022. Those insured under S-DVI can keep their current coverage or switch to VALife. Veterans who are insured under S-DVI and elect to transfer their coverage to VALife can be insured under both programs during the initial two-year period after enrollment in VALife, if they apply between January 1, 2023, and December 31, 2025. Veterans who convert from S-DVI to VALife after December 31, 2025, cannot keep S-DVI during the VALife waiting period. So what is VALife?

- Veterans who have a service connected disability rating (0-100%) and are age 80 and under are eligible
- Service-disabled Veterans who are 81 or older may qualify
- Eliminated deadlines to apply (prior program had a strict-two year window)
- Coverage is available up to \$40,000 in \$10,000 increments
- Offers a Cash Value component after 2 years
- Can be an Investment Opportunity for Veterans
- Once locked, rates will never increase

Important Reminder! VALife opened for enrollment on January 1, 2023. Once enrolled, there is a two-year waiting period for coverage to begin.

The 2023 Idaho Women Veteran's Conference will be held at the Warhawk Museum in Nampa, Idaho on Sunday, June 11th. There are plans for remote participation in the Pocatello area and in Northern Idaho. For further information, please e-mail Kelly McCartney at kelly.mccartney@veterans.idaho.gov.

The 2023 Idaho County and Post Service Officer Training will be conducted at the Riverside Hotel in Boise (Garden City) from 16-18 August. More information will be released soon. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact our offices and enjoy the Spring Weather and Activities.

VA LOWERS INTEREST RATES, MAKING HOUSING MORE AFFORDABLE FOR NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS

Press Release, March 1, 2023

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced it has lowered the interest rate for VA Native American Direct Loans (NADL) from 6% to 2.5%, making access to housing loans more affordable for Native American veterans. Through the VA Native American Direct Loan program, the VA provides direct loans to Native American veterans — and to veterans who are married to Native American non-veterans — to help buy, build, or improve a home on trust land. These loans give Native American veterans the opportunity to obtain housing with no down payments, limited closing costs, and no monthly mortgage-insurance costs.

By law, the VA is only authorized to provide direct loans through the NADL program —meaning the VA can only provide this decreased interest rate to Native American veterans or to veterans who marry Native American non-veterans. However, the VA is able to help all eligible veterans obtain housing through VA-backed loans.

Veterans who close their NADL loans on or after March 13th will automatically receive the 2.5% interest rate for the life of the loan. Veterans who currently have an NADL loan with an interest rate of 3.5% or higher will be able to refinance the loan to take advantage of the lower rate. “Native American veterans are now able to more affordably buy, build, and improve homes on trust land,” said Executive Director of VA Loan Guaranty Service John Bell III. “We at VA are laser-focused on serving Native American veterans as well as they’ve served our country, and that’s what this decreased interest rate is all about.”

The 2.5% interest rate is effective as of March 13th and will be available for no more than 24 months. This rate reduction is a part of the VA’s comprehensive efforts to deliver valuable benefits to Native American veterans. The VA also continues to work toward publication of a final rule in the Federal Register that would waive certain copayments for eligible American Indian and Alaska Native veterans. Under the proposed rule, the VA would reimburse eligible veterans for certain copayments paid on or after January 5, 2022.

Native American veterans who are interested in the NADL program can contact an NADL coordinator by emailing NADL@va.gov or by calling 888-349-7541.

VA INCREASES MAXIMUM LIFE INSURANCE COVERAGE BY \$100,000

Press Release, March 1, 2023

Beginning March 1st, the VA is increasing the maximum amount of life insurance coverage available to veterans and service members from \$400,000 to \$500,000 for Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) and Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI). This increase in coverage reflects the current cost of living and helps ensure that the families of veterans and service members will have the financial support they deserve after their loved ones pass away.

Veterans who are under age 60 and currently enrolled in VGLI will be able to purchase additional coverage in \$25,000 increments up to \$500,000. All active duty, guard, and reserve service members eligible for SGLI will automatically receive the increased coverage on March 1st. "All veterans and service members deserve to know that when they pass away, their families will be taken care of," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "This increase in coverage will help our country keep that promise, ensuring that the families of these heroes will get the financial support they need."

The VA currently serves nearly 6 million veterans, service members, and their families with more than \$1.2 trillion of insurance. Life insurance options include SGLI, which eligible service members are automatically signed up for while serving; VGLI, which veterans can transition to from SGLI or apply for within 1 year and 120 days of leaving the service; VA Life, a new option that provides up to \$40,000 of whole life insurance for all veterans, age 80 or under, with service-connected disabilities rated from 0-100%; and more.

Under this increase, the SGLI premium rate will remain the same, meaning that service members will receive maximum coverage for \$30 per month, plus \$1 for Traumatic Injury Protection (TSGLI) coverage. Service members who separate from service with SGLI coverage at the new higher amount can convert their coverage to VGLI. Service members who do not wish to keep the increased SGLI coverage amount can elect a reduced coverage amount or decline coverage online through the SGLI Online Enrollment System (SOES) on milConnect. If coverage is reduced or declined by March 31st, service members will not be charged for the increased coverage amount.

This increase in life insurance is a part of the Supporting Families of the Fallen Act. For more information about life insurance options, you can the VA's life insurance portal at www.va.gov/life-insurance/options-eligibility.

VA REACHES \$1 BILLION IN GRANTS AWARDED TO VETERANS CEMETERIES

Press Release, March 28, 2023

In March, the VA's National Cemetery Administration awarded its billionth dollar to states, U.S. territories, and tribes for the establishment, expansion, improvement, and maintenance of state, territorial, and tribal veterans cemeteries. The milestone was reached with a grant of \$1,860,775 to the state of North Dakota for the expansion of the North Dakota Veterans Cemetery in Mandan. These grants are awarded through the Veterans Cemetery Grant Program. Since beginning in 1978, the program has provided 475 grants to 122 state, territorial, and tribal veterans cemeteries — leading to more than more than 800,000 total interments for veterans. In fiscal year 2022, these cemeteries and VA national cemeteries conducted nearly 200,000 interments combined.

Veterans interred in state, territorial, or tribal veterans cemeteries receive the same burial and memorial benefits provided to veterans in VA national cemeteries, at no cost. This includes a gravesite, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care, a government headstone or marker, a burial flag, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate. "Veterans deserve lasting resting places that honor their service to our nation – whether that's in a VA national cemetery, a private cemetery or one of the state, territorial, or tribal cemeteries that VA supports," said Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Matt Quinn. "I truly believe there is no better example of partnership between the federal government and the state, territories, and tribes than the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program. We are proud to work together to honor our nation's heroes."

Between grant-funded cemeteries and the VA's national cemeteries, the department is now providing 94% of veterans who live in the U.S. with the option of burial in a VA or VA-funded cemetery within 75 miles of their homes. Veterans interred in most VA-grant funded cemeteries are also memorialized on the Veterans Legacy Memorial site. This allows family, friends, and others to preserve their veteran's legacy by posting tributes, uploading images, and sharing their veteran's achievements, biographical information, and historical documents.

In 2022, the National Cemetery Administration once again led all organizations, public or private, in the American Customer Satisfaction Index — receiving a score of 97 based on index's surveys of veterans and their families. This is the highest score ever achieved by any organization rated by the index and is the seventh consecutive time the administration has ranked first overall in customer satisfaction.

CAMP LEJEUNE WATER CONTAMINATION

KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



I'm a Veteran who believes I was exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, what can VA do for me?

Since 2012, Veterans who served on active duty in the Armed Forces at Camp Lejeune for 30 days or more between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, have been eligible for hospital care and medical services for any of 15 illnesses or conditions identified in the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012, as amended (codified at 38 U.S.C. § 1710(e)(1)(F)). Veterans are also eligible to enroll in VA health care for other services they may require.

Veterans, Reservists, and National Guard members who served at least 30 days at Camp Lejeune between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, and later developed one of the following eight diseases: Adult leukemia, aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, liver cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and Parkinson's disease, are eligible for disability compensation benefits.

For more specifics about VA benefits related to Camp Lejeune contaminated water, to include how to file a claim, visit www.VA.gov/CampLejeune or call 1-800-MyVA411.

LEARN MORE

www.VA.gov/CampLejeune

LET'S TALK



Speak to a VA benefits specialist by calling

1-800-MyVA411
(1-800-698-2411)

LET'S MEET



Schedule a virtual or in-person appointment
vets.force.com/VAVERA



What impact does the PACT Act have on Veterans and families who were exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune?

On August 10, 2022, the President signed into law the Honoring our PACT Act (Public Law 117-168). Section 804 of this law is the Camp Lejeune Justice Act of 2022 ("CLJA"), which allows new lawsuits for individuals exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune.

Whether Veterans and family members decide to seek relief under the CLJA is entirely their decision and will not influence VA's decision to provide them benefits or health care based upon their exposure; it also will not affect the amount of benefits or health care VA can provide them.

It is important to know, however, that if a Veteran or family member is awarded relief by the court in a lawsuit brought under the CLJA, the award must be offset by the amount of any disability award, payment, or benefit VA provided to the Veteran, family member, or their legal representative relating to exposure to water at Camp Lejeune. This would reduce the amount of the award Veterans or family members receive from the court, but it would not affect their VA benefits.



I'm seeing a lot of commercials about benefits I may be entitled to based on my time at Camp Lejeune. Are these ads connected to VA?

Lawyers, firms, and others have engaged in extensive advertising offering to represent Veterans in CLJA actions. These entities are not connected with VA benefits or services. Be aware that these entities may charge you a fee for legal representation.



Will seeking relief under the CLJA impact my VA benefits or health care?

Your VA compensation benefits or health care services will not be impacted if you file a lawsuit. If you are awarded relief from a CLJA lawsuit, your VA benefits will not be reduced, and your eligibility for other VA benefits or services will not be affected.



Will my court awarded relief (from filing a lawsuit) be impacted by VA benefits and services I already receive?

Yes, potentially. If you already receive VA benefits or services (disability pay or health care services) for conditions related to the contaminated water at Camp Lejeune, the court awarded relief will be offset by the amount of any disability award, payment, or other benefit VA provided to you related to your exposure at Camp Lejeune.



What if I file for VA disability AFTER I receive an award from my lawsuit brought under CLJA, will VA reduce my benefits as a result?

No. Any action you take or award you receive under the CLJA will not influence VA's decision to provide you benefits or health care based upon your exposure or the amount of compensation you receive from VA.

CAMP LEJEUNE WATER CONTAMINATION

KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



How can I find the status of my CLJA case?

The Department of Justice established a phone number and email address for anyone with questions regarding the status of cases filed in Federal court under the CLJA. The phone number is (202) 353-4426, and the email is camplejeune.pactact@usdoj.gov.



I've heard scammers are taking advantage of CLJA to commit fraud. How can I avoid these fraudsters?

Lawsuits under the CLJA are not related to VA benefits claims, and a lawsuit is not required to receive VA compensation benefits related to Camp Lejeune presumptive conditions. Veterans should be cautious of companies that advertise that VA benefits cannot be obtained without their help. VA and Veterans Service Organizations do not charge fees for assisting claimants in filing disability compensation claims. Check out organizations that provide free assistance with claims for VA benefits at www.VA.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp. To report suspected fraudulent activity involving VA benefit claims, please contact vaighotline@va.gov or call (800) 488-8244.



My spouse served in the U.S. Marine Corps, and we lived on Camp Lejeune during the impacted times. He has since passed away. What are my options under the CLJA?

Under the CLJA, anyone who resided, worked, or was otherwise exposed (including in utero exposure) to water at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, may bring an action in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina to obtain appropriate relief for harm that was caused by exposure to the water at Camp Lejeune.

Claims under the CLJA must be filed initially with the Department of the Navy. Information on filing CLJA claims for personal injury or wrongful death can be found at: www.jag.navy.mil/organization/code_15_Camp_Lejeune_Claims.htm



I am a family member of a Veteran, and I believe I was exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune – what are my options?

In addition to filing a claim under the CLJA, VA may be able to provide you with benefits and health care for certain conditions. VA will provide payment or reimbursement for hospital care and medical services provided to a Camp Lejeune family member by a non-VA provider in certain situations. Contact VA to discuss your options.



Will VA treat my Camp Lejeune contaminated water related health care conditions without a lawsuit or disability claim?

Yes, you do not need court awarded relief or a VA compensation benefits decision for VA to provide health care services needed to treat related illnesses if you meet eligibility requirements established in law. Contact VA immediately to understand the resources available to you.



LEARN MORE www.VA.gov/CampLejeune



LET'S MEET

Schedule a virtual or in-person appointment
vets.force.com/VAVERA



LET'S TALK

Speak to a VA benefits specialist by calling
1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411)

VA WAIVES COPAYMENTS FOR ELIGIBLE NATIVE AMERICAN/ALASKA NATIVE VETERANS

Press Release, April 3, 2023

On April 3rd, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that eligible American Indian and Alaska Native veterans are no longer required to make copayments for health care and urgent care received through the VA. The Biden-Harris administration and the VA are proud to implement this rule, which is estimated to impact approximately 25,000 American Indian and Alaska Native veterans. Under this new policy, the VA will reimburse copayments paid on or after January 5, 2022, and waive future copayments for eligible American Indian and Alaska Native veterans.

Beginning April 4th, veterans can submit documentation to qualify for the copayment exemption. Eligible veterans include any veteran who meets the definitions of “Indian” or “urban Indian” under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act – including veterans who are members of an American Indian Tribe, certain veterans who are descendants of tribe members, Alaska Native veterans, and more. “American Indian and Alaska Native veterans deserve access to world-class health care for their courageous service to our nation,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “By eliminating copays, we are making VA health care more affordable and accessible — which will lead to better health outcomes for these heroes.”

To receive this financial relief, eligible veterans should mail a completed VA Tribal Documentation Form (VA Form 10-334), and a copy of official tribal documentation demonstrating they meet the definitions of “Indian” or “urban Indian” to VHA Tribal Documentation, P.O. Box 5100, Janesville, WI 53547. For more information on copayment waivers for Native American and Alaska Native veterans, visit va.gov.

VA RELAXES MASKING REQUIREMENTS AT MEDICAL FACILITIES

Press Release, March 22, 2023

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced it has relaxed the masking requirement at VA medical facilities. This update ensures the safety of veterans while accommodating individual masking preferences and aligning with CDC guidelines.

Moving forward, the VA will base its masking guidelines on the VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels (low, medium, and high) and healthcare facilities’ conditions. When health protection levels are high, masking will remain required. However, when health protection levels are low or medium, medical center leadership will conduct a facility risk assessment to determine if it is appropriate for masking to be optional in certain areas at their facility. Previously, masking had been required at all times in VA medical facilities, regardless of health protection levels. “This new policy will ensure the safety of veterans and VA health care providers, while accommodating individual masking preferences,” said Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Shereef Elnahal. “We’re trying to be as open as possible to veteran and clinician and staff preferences alike, while aligning with CDC guidelines.”

Regardless of health protection level or healthcare facility conditions, masking will still be required in high-risk areas such as chemotherapy units, acute inpatient medical/surgical units, intensive care units, post-transplant units, dialysis units, etc. Masking will also be required at all times for individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or other viral respiratory infections.

VETERANS CAN NOW ACCESS THEIR DISABILITY BENEFIT DECISIONS ONLINE

Press Release, February 23, 2023

Veterans can now access their disability benefit claim decision notice letters electronically on VA.gov, empowering them to quickly and easily see their disability decisions. Before this option was available, veterans had to wait for a paper copy of their decision notice to be mailed to them. While previous iterations of VA.gov allowed veterans to access benefits summary letters, they could not access the full copy of these decision notification letters from their electronic claims folders.

This service became available to veterans on VA.gov on January 17th. Since launching, nearly 280,000 decision notice letters have been downloaded. “Veterans now have access to their benefits decisions anytime, anyplace – right at their fingertips,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “VA disability benefits can also open the door to other federal and state benefits, so quick and easy access to a decision means quicker access to the additional benefits veterans deserve.”

The new electronic option is also expected to reduce calls to the National Call Centers, freeing up call center respondents to answer other questions and requests from veterans and their families. To access their decision letters, veterans can log in to VA.gov and check the status of their claim.



WOMEN VETERANS CONFERENCE

Claiming Our Footprint on Idaho History

11 JUNE 2023

At the Warhawk Air Museum Nampa, ID
10:00am - 3:30pm

REGISTER ONLINE

Register is \$10 and includes lunch. Event schedule and community resource participants information can be found online at:



IDWOMENVETERANSCONFERENCE.AFROGS.ORG

LIVE STREAM LOCATIONS

with on-sight local resources and support

Northern Idaho
V.F.W Post 889
406 N 4th St.
Coeur d'Alene, ID 83814

Eastern Idaho
Bannock Veterans
Memorial Building
300 N Johnson Ave,
Pocatello, ID 83204



ORGANIZED BY THE IDAHO DIVISION OF VETERANS SERVICES

COUNTY, POST, CHAPTER, & DETACHMENT SERVICE OFFICERS - SAVE THE DATE!

Remember to mark your calendars for the Idaho Division of Veterans Service's annual Service Officer Training Conference for 2023. It is scheduled for August 16-18, 2023. It will again be held at the Riverside Hotel in Boise. If you are a County, Post, Chapter, or Detachment Service Officer in Idaho, look for your official invitation in mid May. If the end of May rolls around and you have not received an invitation, please contact Conference Coordinator, Jennel Binsky at jennel.binsky@veterans.idaho.gov. Please remember we provide mileage and per diem to only one attendee per county, post, chapter, or detachment, so if your Service Officer is unable to attend, any member may attend in their place.

GO GREEN AND GET THE BULLETIN VIA EMAIL

In our continual effort to reduce costs and lessen our "ecological footprint," the Office of Veterans Advocacy is again asking for your help. In order to reduce printing and mailing costs, as well as the amount of paper used, we are asking you to volunteer to receive the bulletin via email.

The bulletin will arrive in your in-box every quarter as a Word document, which will allow to you forward or print and disseminate as many copies as you like. In addition to receiving the quarterly bulletin, you will also receive our annual Veterans Resource Directory via email.

If you can help us with our goal of reducing costs and the saving paper, please email Jennel Binsky at jennel.binsky@veterans.idaho.gov. Thanks for your help with this most worthwhile endeavor! And don't forget you can always view and print the Bulletin and Resource Directory by visiting our website at www.veterans.idaho.gov.

HISTORY OF THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

On March 3, 1931, U.S. President Herbert Hoover signed an act that officially made "The Star Spangled Banner" the national anthem for the United States. Before this time, the United States had been without any national anthem.

The words of "The Star Spangled Banner" were first written on September 14, 1814, by Francis Scott Key as a poem titled, "The Defense of Fort McHenry." Key, a lawyer and an amateur poet, was being detained on a British warship during the British naval bombardment of Baltimore's Fort McHenry during the War of 1812. When the bombardment subsided and Key witnessed that Fort McHenry was still flying its huge American flag, he began writing his poem. (Historical Note: This flag was truly huge! It measured 42 by 30 feet!) Key recommended that his poem be sung as a song to the popular British tune, "To Anacreon in Heaven." It soon became known as "The Star Spangled Banner."

"The Star Spangled Banner" was published in a number of newspapers at the time, but by the Civil War it had become one of the most popular patriotic songs of the United States. By the late 19th century, "The Star Spangled Banner" had become the official song of the U.S. military, but it wasn't until 1931 that the United States officially made "The Star Spangled Banner" the official national anthem of the country.

Interestingly, it was Robert L. Ripley of "Ripley's Believe It or Not!" that spurred the interest of the American people to demand "The Star Spangled Banner" to become the official national anthem. On November 3, 1929, Ripley ran a panel in his syndicated cartoon stating that "Believe It or Not, America has no national anthem." Americans were shocked and wrote five million letters to Congress demanding Congress proclaim a national anthem.

DATES TO REMEMBER

 April 6.....United States enters WWI, 1917
 April 9.....Easter
 April 23.....United States Army Reserve 98th birthday
 May 14.....Mother's Day
 Women's Auxiliary Army Corps founded, 1942
 May 20.....Armed Forces Day
 May 29.....Memorial Day – *See the history of Memorial Day at the bottom of this page*
 June 6.....D-Day – Invasion of Europe, 1944
 June 14.....United States Army birthday
 Flag Day
 June 18.....Father's Day
 June 20.....Army Air Corps is created, 1941

CONVENTION SCHEDULES – ALL DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

American Legion

StateJuly 13-16, 2023, Jackpot, NV
National.....August 25-31, 2023, Charlotte, NC

AMVETS

National.....August 22-27, 2023, Pittsburgh, PA

Disabled American Veterans

National.....August 5-8, 2023, Atlantic City, NJ

Marine Corps League

National.....August 14-18, 2023, Oklahoma City, OK

Military Order of the Purple Heart

National.....August 8-14, 2023, Baton Rouge, LA

Veterans of Foreign Wars

StateJune 8-11, 2023, Boise, ID
National.....July 22-27, 2023, Phoenix, AZ

Vietnam Veterans of America

National..... August 8-12, 2023, Orlando, FL

THE HISTORY OF MEMORIAL DAY

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day to remember those who have died in our nation's service. After the Civil war many people in the North and South decorated graves of fallen soldiers with flowers.

In the Spring of 1866, Henry C. Welles, a druggist in the village of Waterloo, NY, suggested that the patriots who had died in the Civil War should be honored by decorating their graves. General John B. Murray, Seneca County Clerk, embraced the idea and a committee was formed to plan a day devoted to honoring the dead. Townspeople made wreaths, crosses and bouquets for each veteran's grave. The village was decorated with flags at half mast. On May 5 of that year, a processional was held to the town's cemeteries, led by veterans. The town observed this day of remembrance on May 5 of the following year as well.

Decoration Day was officially proclaimed on May 5, 1868 by General John Logan in his General Order No. 11, and was first observed officially on May 30, 1868. The South did not observe Decoration Day, preferring to honor their dead on separate days until after World War I. In 1882, the name was changed to Memorial Day, and soldiers who had died in other wars were also honored.

In 1971, Memorial Day was declared a national holiday to be held on the last Monday in May. Today, Memorial Day marks the unofficial beginning of the summer season in the United States. It is still a time to remember those who have passed on, whether in war or otherwise. It also is a time for families to get together for picnics, ball games, and other early summer activities.

DAV VAN CONTACTS TO AND FROM VA MEDICAL CENTERS

BOISE & SURROUNDING AREA TO BOISE VAMC

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

For the schedule or an appointment, call Jim Rossette at the Boise VA Medical Center (208) 422-1000 ext. 7555.

LEWISTON & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

For the schedule or an appointment, call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

LIBBY & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

For the schedule or an appointment, Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

COEUR D'ALENE & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

For the schedule or an appointment, Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

SANDPOINT & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

For the schedule or an appointment, call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

LEWISTON TO WALLA WALLA VAMC

Thursdays: Walla Walla VA Medical Center Van. 8:00 a.m. departure from the CBOC at 1630 23rd Avenue, Building 2.

Arrives at Walla Walla at 10:00 a.m. Departs Walla Walla at 1:30 p.m. Arrives Lewiston at 3:30 p.m.

If your appointment runs past the departure time of 1:30, there is no alternative for returning to Lewiston.

POCATELLO, IDAHO FALLS, & SURROUNDING ARE TO SALT LAKE CITY VAMC

All appointments for rides should be made 72 hours in advance.

For the schedule or an appointment, call the VTS/DAV Transportation Office at (800) 613-4012 ext. 2003 or 1027.

