

BULLETIN

January 2019

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

I hope everyone had an outstanding Thanksgiving and Christmas, and a great holiday season! As I write this article, we are in the midst of the partial Federal Government Shutdown. The Shutdown does not impact the operations of the VA, as the VA funds have already been approved for all of the 2019 Fiscal Year. I want to give credit the VFW National Veteran Service staff for a large portion of the following information. A Cost of Living Allowance Increase for 2019 was approved in the amount of 2.8%. This impacts all monetary awards for Military Retired Pay, VA Benefits, and Social Security awards.

In their announcement released on December 19, 2018, the VFW Action Corps reported that H.R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017, was blocked in the U.S. Senate Committee, but after a strong push from Veteran Service Organizations, it was brought to the Senate floor for a vote. During the vote, an objection by one of the Senators effectively doomed any chance of the bill being passed in the 115th Congress. The objections were due to the overall cost of the bill and the request for more sufficient medical evidence. If passed by the Senate and signed into law by the President, this bill would have extended the presumption of exposure to Agent Orange to veterans who served in the Blue Water Navy.

In a new report released by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine entitled Veterans and Agent Orange: Update 11 (2018), over 200 new studies were reviewed by a committee of physicians tasked with determining whether additional diseases are associated with exposure to herbicides during the Vietnam War. The committee found sufficient evidence of association between exposure to herbicides and the development of hypertension and monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS), are precursors to multiple myeloma. This is significant because in the series of Agent Orange Updates, the committee reviewing the scientific literature classified disabilities into four categories; those with a sufficient evidence of an association, limited or suggestive evidence of an association, inadequate or insufficient evidence to determine an association, and limited or suggestive evidence of no association. The 14 disabilities the VA has added to the presumptive list as associated with herbicide exposure are all in the top two categories; sufficient evidence of an association, or limited or suggested evidence of an association. This report is the last report required by the Agent Orange Act of 1991 by the National Academies, an independent body commissioned by Congress to study the effects of exposure to "chemicals of interest" contained in Agent Orange and the other herbicides used during the Vietnam War. The National Academies does not perform primary research studies, but reviews all the scientific literature available to come to their conclusions. As in previous reports, the National Academies urged the VA to conduct further studies on the connection between herbicide exposure and certain disabilities such as myeloproliferative neoplasms, and the generational effects of herbicide exposure on veterans' children. There are two bills pending in Congress the VFW supports. These would extend until 2025 the authority of the National Academies to review the scientific evidence on Agent Orange and the authority of the VA Secretary to add new presumptive conditions based on this evidence, H.R. 6941 and S. 3507. Additionally, the VA is conducting a study called the Vietnam Era Health Retrospective Observational Study, or "VE-HEROes", to study the health and well-being of Vietnam veterans, Blue Water Navy veterans, and veterans who served elsewhere during the Vietnam Era.

The VA Mission Act of 2018 will allow the VA Medical Center Family Caregiver Program to expand to all generations of veterans, not just Post 9/11 veterans. Our office has received numerous inquiries on how and when the expansion will take place. The information we received from the Boise VA Medical Center Caregiver Program is the at the future expansion will occur in two phases, starting with eligible veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975, and further expansion beginning two years after that. Currently, the VA is developing an implementation plan for the Mission Act and encourages all caregivers and veterans to learn about the many resources already available to all caregivers by visiting www.caregiver.va.gov or calling the Caregiver Support Line at (855) 260-3274. **Remember, the VA Caregiver Program is approved/administered through the VA Medical Centers (VHA) and NOT through the VA Regional Office (VBA).

As mentioned in detail in the last bulletin, the VA's Pension Management Centers have changed how Assets/Income are computed and has established a 36-month look-back period to ensure assets were not gifted away in order to become eligible for VA Pension benefits. Along with these changes, the VA has released new standardized forms now required for the submission of veteran's non-service connected pension and survivor pension, to include new care expense statements and a physical examination form for the determination of housebound status or regular need of aid and attendance.

The VA previously established a website called www.vets.gov that allowed veterans and eligible beneficiaries to log onto the site and accomplish many different tasks, including requesting certificates of eligibility for VA Education benefits and requesting veteran ID cards. The VA has shut down this site, and now all the information and functionality can be found on their website, www.va.gov.

From August 15, 2018, through March 31, 2019, veterans enrolled with the Veterans Health Administration have the option of getting their flu shots at any of Walgreens' 8,200 locations nationwide, in addition to their local VA healthcare facility. Walgreens does not require an appointment. Simply go to the Walgreens Pharmacy, show them your Veterans Health Identification Card and another form of identification, and they will provide the flu shot. Once the immunization is administered, the veteran's VHA medical record will be electronically updated.

While watching the college football bowl game in which Army played, I saw a commercial run multiple times informing veterans they can shop online with the Army/Air Force Exchange Service. As a reminder, this benefit went into effect over a year ago and allows all veterans who earned an Honorable Discharge to use the online exchange service. Please remember, this is ONLINE SHOPPING ONLY, so you will not be able to show up at Mountain Home Air Force Base and be granted entry to use the exchange. If you have never tried the online shopping before, go to www.shopmyexchange.com. Once connected to the home page, scroll down and you'll see the banner entitled, "Welcome Home Veterans-Veterans Online Shopping Benefit, Take this First Step." The site will then ask you for some personal information to verify you are an Honorably discharged veteran. Once approved, veterans have full access to all products carried by the AAFES online exchange with no sales tax charged.

Just a reminder that the Idaho State Tax Commissions 100% Service Connected Disabled Veterans Property Tax benefit goes into effect on January 1, 2019. A veteran must have a current letter from the VA (dated January 1, 2019, or later) reflecting the veteran is rated 100% service connected (does not have to be Permanent and Total). The VA benefit letters can be obtained on the www.ebenefits.va.gov website, at the VA Regional Office Public Contact Team, or by contacting your assigned Veteran Service Officer, who can assist in obtaining the letter from the VA. Once the letter is received, it must be taken to the County Tax Assessor's office and submitted with a completed application before April 1, 2019. If approved, the benefit will appear on the December 2019 property tax bill. Please remember that veterans receiving Individual Unemployability DO NOT MEET the requirement of having a 100% Service Connected disability. Our office has had several veterans receiving I.U. call believing it is the same as being rated 100%. As we did not write the law, we have no authority to interpret the law as any other way than written. Anyone who disagrees with the law as written, are invited to contact their local State Senator or Representative. The actual publication can be found on the Tax Commission's website.

I hope everyone enjoys the winter weather and let me know if you have any questions.

VA BENEFITS TO RISE 2.8% FOR 2019 COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT

Congress has passed and President Trump has signed into law a 2.8% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) effective December 1, 2018, for disability compensation, dependency and indemnity compensation, clothing allowance, pension, and certain other related benefits. The percentage is based on the annual the annual Social Security index rate. The COLA will be reflected in checks issued on or about January 1, 2019.

REGISTRATION OPEN FOR THE 2019 NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES

News Release, December 28, 2018

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that veterans interested in registering for the 2019 National Veterans Wheelchair Games can do so online January 7th through April 15th. Presented by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), the world's largest sports event for veterans who use wheelchairs will be held July 11-16, 2019, at Robley Rex VA Medical Center in Louisville, Kentucky.

The event is a sports and rehabilitation competition to engage veterans who use wheelchairs due to spinal cord injuries, amputations, or other neurological conditions. "I encourage every veteran interested in competing at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games to register for this important event," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The games exemplify VA's commitment to supporting veterans as they navigate through recovery and rehabilitation to active, independent lives. Sports and recreation play an important role in this journey, enhancing veterans' positive mental health and physical well-being." Each year, veterans challenge themselves and cheer on their fellow veterans in the excitement-packed games. This year, David Zurfluh, national president of PVA and a service-disabled Air Force veteran, plans to compete alongside hundreds of other veterans at the games.

The National Veterans Wheelchair Games offer 19 different competitive events, including air guns, archery, basketball, bowling, field events, hand cycling, nine-ball, power soccer, quad rugby, slalom, softball, swimming, table tennis, track, trapshooting, and weightlifting. Athletes compete against others with similar athletic ability, competitive experience, or age. For more information about the games, visit www.wheelchairgames.org. Follow VA Adaptive Sports on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram at @Sports4Vets.

On December 20th, the Boise VA Medical Center held the ribbon cutting ceremony for their new parking garage. The new garage added over 220 parking spaces and will relieve the headaches of parking at the medical center.

VA ANNOUNCES NEW VETERANS HEALTH APPLICATION PROGRAMMING INTERFACE

News Release, December 7, 2018

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently launched its first Health Application Programming Interface (API) that will power the next generation of Blue Button features by enabling veterans to interact with their own personal health data within innovative mobile and web-based apps. Introduced on December 4th, at the White House Executive Forum on Healthcare Data Interoperability, Health APIs will power the next generation of Blue Button features by enabling veterans to interact with their own personal health data within innovative mobile and web-based apps.

Sponsored by the White House Office of American Innovation, the forum brought together senior health care leaders from both the public and private sectors. Health APIs will also support new clinician-focused applications, and can also serve as a foundation for data sharing between health systems to support veteran care. "We are excited to announce this advancement in the way we deliver services," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Healthcare data interoperability plays a key role in all four of VA's top priorities, from implementing the MISSION Act and modernizing our electronic health record, to transforming our business systems and delivering better customer service. VA is proud to serve as a leader and example in this field."

Consistent with the VA's Open API Pledge, the Health API conforms to the Argonaut Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) API standards. The VA believes open FHIR-based APIs are an essential component in a modern interoperability strategy, and that government and industry must collaborate to expand available FHIR resources and its use. The VA is committed to leveraging APIs to accelerate creation of transformational digital tools to support veterans as they engage with the VA's core health, benefits, and memorial services. Since launching its Lighthouse API Management Platform last March, the VA has delivered a developer portal, a Benefits Intake API, and a Facilities API.

The VA continues to provide veteran patients easy digital access to their own health care data. Since the launch of the Blue Button product in 2010, more than 2 million veterans have downloaded over 32 million personal health data files from the VA's patient portal. For more information on the Veterans Health API, please visit developer.va.gov.

VA & THE AMERICAN PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION PARTNER TO SUPPORT VETERANS HEALTH News Release. December 28, 2018

The U.S Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it recently established a partnership with the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) to promote and support veterans by providing new physical therapy resources. The partnership coordinates the strengths of both organizations to benefit all veterans and their families, physical therapists (PT), and physical therapist assistants by helping to raise awareness of physical therapy and create new employment and practice opportunities. "Physical therapy is an important resource for improving veterans' health and well-being," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This new agreement allows both organizations to develop additional best practices in treatment of veterans in both the federal and private sector. We look forward to the positive outcomes of this partnership."

The agreement will use VA and APTA resources to promote nonpharmacological treatment options for pain, the VA's suicide prevention efforts, utilization of the VA's Adaptive Sports Grants Program, and physical therapists' participation in the VA's National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events. The VA employs over 3,500 physical therapists and PT assistants, and offers the largest Physical Therapy Residency Program in the nation. APTA represents more than 100,000 physical therapists, PT assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide. Its mission is to advance the profession of physical therapy and improve the health of society. For more information visit www.va.gov or www.apta.org.

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.

POST-9/11 GI BILL HOUSING PAYMENT RATES UPDATE

News Release, November 28, 2018

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced key changes in the processing of GI Bill benefits payments under the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017 (Forever GI Bill). Because of continued information technology difficulties with implementing sections 107 and 501 of the law, both of which change the way monthly housing allowance payments are calculated, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie has directed Under Secretary for Benefits Paul R. Lawrence to take the following actions.

Effective December 1st, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) reset its implementation efforts for sections 107 and 501 of the law to give the department the time, contracting support, and resources necessary to develop the capability to process Spring 2020 enrollments in accordance with the law by December 1, 2019. This includes soliciting bids from contractors for support in the areas of program integration, systems implementation, and software development. During this time, the VBA will pay monthly housing allowance rates for the Post-9/11 GI Bill at the current academic year uncapped Department of Defense (DoD) Basic Housing Allowance (BAH) rates. For many students, this DoD BAH rate will be equal to or higher than their current payment. The VBA will also correct retroactively any underpayments resulting from section 107 and 501 implementation problems. If a student was overpaid due to the change in law or because of the VBA's challenges in implementing the law, the student will not be held liable for the debt. Also, for the current academic year (2018-2019), the VBA will pay housing allowances based on the location of a school's main campus, rather than the physical location of the student. This interim policy will terminate by December 1, 2019, upon implementation of a fully developed IT solution for sections 107 and 501 of the law. Finally, the VBA will define a training site as a "campus" when the following conditions are true: the physical site of the training is either owned or leased by the school, and the school has ownership or control over the student's classroom instruction or the faculty conducting the instruction. This approach reduces the administrative burden for schools and students from the VBA's initial interpretation of the law.

As these changes are implemented, the VBA will remain in continuous contact with veterans, Congress, Veterans Service Organizations, and other stakeholders to ensure everyone is informed and knows what to expect. "Redesigning the way VBA calculates Post 9/11 GI Bill housing rates during a busy academic season was like flying a plane while building it, and that was unfair and frustrating to veterans and taxpayers. That's why we are resetting our implementation of the law for the next year to ensure we get the technology and formula right to put veterans first," said Secretary Wilkie. "In the meantime, beneficiaries receiving Post 9/11 GI Bill housing allowances will be paid at the DoD BAH rate, which in many cases will be equal to or higher than their current payment."

While the VBA's pending education claims inventory was three times higher than normal in early September, that figure is back to normal levels. The VBA strongly encourages schools to begin submitting enrollments immediately for the Spring 2019 term to help the VBA process them in a timely fashion. This will ensure that veteran students receive their housing payments promptly and schools receive tuition and fee payments. The VBA expects to maintain timeliness standards of an average 28 days for a new enrollment and 14 days for a re-enrollment.

If students require assistance with their GI Bill benefit or experience a financial hardship due to a delay in payment, we ask them to contact our Education Call Center at (888) 442-4551 between 8:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday thru Friday. Students may also keep in contact with the VA on our social media sites; Facebook at www.facebook.com/gibillEducation/ or Twitter at VAVetBenefits.

VA ANNOUNCES EXTENSION, EXPANSION OF CONTRACT WITH TRIWEST FOR COMMUNITY CARE News Release, November 21, 2018

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it has reached an agreement with TriWest Health Care Alliance (TriWest) on a one-year extension of its current coverage of the Patient-Centered Community Care (PC3) and Veterans Choice Program (VCP). The department also announced it has reached an agreement with TriWest that will expand TriWest's services to all regions across the country under this program. The expansion of TriWest's role will ensure access to community care where needed until the next generation of community care contracts are awarded and implemented. "TriWest has worked collaboratively with VA from the start of the Veterans Choice Program to address implementation challenges and to improve the program to better serve veterans," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Extending the time and reach of our partnership with TriWest will ensure veterans get the care they need while the department transitions to delivering care under the MISSION Act next year."

Separately, the department has reached an agreement with Health Net Federal Services (HNFS) on the PC3 and VCP closeout plan and associated contract modification. Under this modification, the VA and HNFS will continue to partner to ensure a seamless transition of care and services, so veterans continue to get the care they need. Finally, the VA has extended its current dialysis contracts with multiple partners for six months, until March 31, 2019. The VA will issue a Request for Proposal for the replacement contracts in October 2018, with ultimate contract awards anticipated in spring 2019.

VA'S BENEFITS DELIVERY AT DISCHARGE PROGRAM IMPROVES SERVICE TO VETERANS News Release, November 21, 2018

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program has made significant improvements in disability claim processing over the past year, with most service members who submitted claims through the program receiving decisions within 30 days of discharge. BDD allows service members to file a claim for disability between 90 and 180 days prior to discharge from active duty, which provides time for paperwork review and medical exams prior to leaving. "This is an important program for our service members as they transition to veteran status," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The faster we can connect our veterans with the benefits they deserve, the smoother their transition."

In fiscal year (FY) 2018, the first full year of the revamped program, more than 36,000 service members submitted claims through BDD and about 53% of completed claims received a decision on their claim within 30 days. In the first month of FY 2019, 3,437 claims were completed with 57.7% completed within 30 days. Throughout FY 2018, the program made continuous improvements, which include expanding BDD claim review from two locations, to processing at any regional office; enhanced software partnerships with the Department of Defense to improve record transfers; and additional claim training and performance standards for military service coordinators.

By participating in BDD, service members ensure their disability medical exams become part of their service treatment record and that service connection for their conditions may be established as early as possible. Medical conditions can get worse over time and establishing eligibility at discharge may make it easier to increase disability ratings in the future. For more information on the BDD program, visit www.benefits.va.gov/predischarge/claims-pre-discharge-benefits-delivery-at-discharge.asp.

VA ANNOUNCES MORATORIUM ON DISCHARGES & DECREASES FROM CAREGIVER PROGRAM News Release, December 21, 2018

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it will temporarily suspend discharges and decreases in level of support from its Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers because of continued concerns expressed by veterans, caregivers, and advocates about inconsistent application of eligibility requirements by VA medical centers. "It is essential that we get this right," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This affects one of our most vulnerable veteran populations and we need to make sure we have consistency on how we process and evaluate benefit applications across VA."

The suspension does not impact the current application process. VA medical centers are continuing to accept and approve applications to the family caregivers program based on current eligibility criteria, along with processing appeals and monitoring eligible veterans' well-being at least every 90 days, unless otherwise clinically indicated. Termination of benefits exempted from the suspension include those made at the request of the veteran or caregiver; by the local Caregiver Support Program for cause or noncompliance; or due to death, permanent institutionalization, or long-term hospitalization of a veteran or caregiver. In addition to initiating an internal review, the VA will continue to solicit feedback from external stakeholders. The VA is reviewing policy changes as well as pursuing long-term legislative and regulatory changes.

The VA Caregiver Support Program has aided more than 38,000 family caregivers since 2011. Participating families receive an average monthly stipend ranging from \$660 to \$2,600, based on the level of assistance required by the veteran and the geographic location of the veteran and caregiver. Participating caregivers also receive access to health care if the caregiver does not have insurance, assistance with travel related to care of the veterans, mental health care, and additional service and support. For more information about the VA caregiver program, visit www.caregiver.va.gov.

VA ANNOUNCES FULLY CAPABLE TELE-COUNSELING SERVICE WITHIN ITS VR&E PROGRAM News Release, November 30, 2018

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program (VR&E) announced the ability for veterans nationwide to meet with more than 1,000 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) via "Telecounseling," or virtual communication. Tele-counseling, which is accessible on any device with a webcam and microphone, increases the VA's responsiveness to veterans' needs, reduces travel costs and time for both veterans and VRCs, and improves veterans' access to necessary VR&E services. "We strive to provide veterans with access to personalized, interactive face-to-face care and services regardless of where they live," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "VR&E's Tele-counseling service is another example of how VA continually modernizes in support of veterans' needs."

Tele-counseling allows veterans to meet with VRCs virtually through VA Video Connect without having to download specialized software or obtain unique usernames and passwords. Access to a scheduled counseling session is obtained through a unique link sent directly to the veteran and is valid for that counseling session only. Veterans participating in most VR&E rehabilitation plans of service may use Tele-counseling and are encouraged to speak with their VRCs about it. Participation is voluntary and not required.

VR&E's updated Tele-counseling application was developed through a partnership with Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) VA Telehealth Services. VR&E recently tested the ability to use Tele-counseling during initial evaluation appointments at six regional benefits offices. This test was conducted to identify how using Tele-counseling can reduce time veterans wait for an appointment. Best practices were identified and incorporated into the rollout of the updated Tele-counseling application. Since 2014, over 56,000 veterans have either completed a rehabilitation plan, are employed, or have achieved a greater independence in living through VR&E assistance. The VR&E Program currently has more than 122,000 participants. For more information about VR&E, visit www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab.

VA REALIGNS PROGRAM OFFICES TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY MEETING VETERAN HEALTH CARE NEEDS News Release, November 21, 2018

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) together with representatives from the departments of Labor, Justice, Defense, Homeland Security, the U.S. Navy, and others, signed a joint statement aimed at improving access to free legal services for veterans in need. Federal agencies and the veterans legal services community came together at VA headquarters in Washington D.C. to celebrate the VA's Medical Legal Partnerships and to recognize volunteers who serve at VA-based free legal clinics. Currently, the VA hosts at least 170 free legal clinics in its VA Medical Centers, Community Based Outpatient Clinics, and Vet Centers across the country, by partnering with external legal service providers, such as local bar associations, legal aid organizations, and law school clinics. "Legal assistance stands high on the list of many veterans' important but unmet needs," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Our goal is to make sure our veterans have access to not only health care and disability benefits, but to community legal services that are central to their overall well-being."

Veterans often face stressful legal situations — such as eviction, foreclosure, child support, or driver's license revocations — that can affect their ability to gain or maintain employment and housing, or focus on medical treatment. At the VA-hosted event, the VA and other federal agencies committed to encourage and further the provision of volunteer legal services to veterans. As a prime example of the VA-based legal clinics nationwide, attorneys and paralegals from the VA and 13 other federal agencies have provided pro bono legal assistance on their own time to veterans at the Washington, D.C., VA Medical Center's legal clinic, run by the Veterans Pro Bono Consortium. During the past year, the legal clinic at that facility has served more than 800 veterans. For more information about the VA's coordination of legal services for veterans at VA facilities visit www.va.gov/OGC/LegalServices.asp.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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January 1	New Year's Day
January 21	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February 2	Groundhog Day
,	Army Nurse Corp created, 1901
February 8	Boy Scouts of America founded, 1910
	Valentine's Day
February 18	President's Day – See the history of President's Day at the bottom of this page
March 3	Star Spangled Banner made the U.S. National Anthem, 1931
March 10	Daylight-saving time begins – set clocks ahead one hour
March 12	Girl Scouts of America founded, 1912
	U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY founded, 1802
March 17	St. Patrick's Day
CONVENTION SCI	HEDULES ************************************

### National.....August 23-29, 2019, Indianapolis, IN AMVETS

National.....August 21-25, 2019, Louisville, KY

### **Disabled American Veterans**

National.....August 3-6, 2019, Orlando, FL

Mid-winter ...... January 11-14, 2019, Boise, ID State ...... July 11-14, 2019, Worley, ID

### Marine Corps League

National.....August 4-9, 2019, Billings, MT

### Military Order of the Purple Heart

National.....July 8-12, 2019, Branson, MO

### Veterans of Foreign Wars

Mid-winter .......January 10-13, 2019, Boise, ID State .....June 16-19, 2019, Lewiston, ID National....July 20-24, 2019, Orlando, FL

### Vietnam Veterans of America

National......July 16-20, 2019, Spokane, WA

### THE HISTORY OF VETERANS' DAY

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The original version of the holiday was in commemoration of George Washington's birthday in 1796 (the last full year of his presidency). Washington, according to the calendar that has been used since at least the mid-18th century, was born on February 22, 1732. According to the old style calendar in use back then, however, he was born on February 11th. At least in 1796, many Americans celebrated his birthday on the 22nd, while others marked the occasion on the 11th instead.

By the early 19th century, Washington's Birthday had taken firm root in the American experience as a bona fide national holiday. Its traditions included Birthnight Balls in various regions, speeches and receptions given by prominent public figures, and a lot of revelry in taverns throughout the land. Then along came Abraham Lincoln, another revered president and fellow February baby, born on the 12th of the month. The first formal observance of his birthday took place in 1865, the year after his assassination, when both houses of Congress gathered for a memorial address. While Lincoln's Birthday did not become a federal holiday like George Washington's, it did become a legal holiday in several states.

In 1968, legislation (HR 15951) was enacted that affected several federal holidays. One of these was Washington's Birthday, the observation of which was shifted to the third Monday in February each year, whether or not it fell on the 22nd. This act, which took effect in 1971, was designed to simplify the yearly calendar of holidays and give federal employees some standard three-day weekends in the process.

Apparently, while the holiday in February is still officially known as Washington's Birthday (at least according to the Office of Personnel Management), it has become popularly (and, perhaps in some cases at the state level, legally) known as "President's Day." This has made the third Monday in February a day for honoring both Washington and Lincoln, as well as all the other men who have served as president.

### 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.

