



**YINGLING-RIDGLEY POST 7472  
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS  
OF THE UNITED STATES  
DISTRICT SEVEN, 4225 VFW LANE  
ELLCOTT CITY, MARYLAND  
21043. <http://vfw7472.org/>.**





## MARCH-APRIL 2021

**YINGLING-RIDGLEY POST 7472**  
**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF**  
**THE UNITED STATES**  
DISTRICT 7, 4225 VFW Lane  
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043  
(410) 465-4240 [www.vfw7472.org](http://www.vfw7472.org)



### YINGLING-RIDGLEY VFW POST 7472

#### OFFICERS FOR 2020-2021

Commander ..... William A. Milner, Jr.  
Senior-Vice Commander ..... Lawrence J. Buehler  
Junior-Vice Commander ..... William B. Braid  
Quartermaster ..... Gilbert M. Sherman  
Adjutant ..... Christian J. Buehler  
Judge Advocate ..... Leonard Lee  
Surgeon ..... Shelby L. Rogers  
Chaplain ..... Howard A. Clark  
  
1 Year Trustee ..... Robert A. Berlett, Sr.  
2 Year Trustee ..... Robert Kimmerle  
3 Year Trustee ..... Michael Zanski  
Service Officer ..... Albert A. Hernandez  
Officer Of The Day ..... Jay M. Thorpe  
Guard..... Joseph G. Dunigan

### POST CANTEN HOURS OF OPERATION

#### OPEN

Monday - Wednesday 1600 hours

Thursday - Sunday 1200 hours

#### CLOSE

2000 hours or before

2000 hours or before

**REMEMBER:** The speed limit driving through the adjoining neighborhood is 25 mph; 09 mph in our parking lot and on Post property. The Canteen is closed on most holidays, Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Hours-of-Operation are subject to change. If you plan to arrive at the Post after 1800 hours; especially in cases of inclement weather (prior to, during and afterwards), please call the Canteen to confirm our Hours-of-Operation, 410-465-4240. The bartender on duty has prior approval to close the Canteen early if situations like those above warrant such actions.

#### IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

**OFFICERS MEETING:** 1st Thursday of each month, 1900 Hours.

**MEMBERSHIP MEETING:** 2nd Thursday of each month, 1900 Hours

**SUBMISSION DATE FOR NEWSLETTER PUBLICATION:** UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED, THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF NEWSWORTHY ITEMS FOR PUBLICATION IN THE POST NEWSLETTER IS THE 3rd SATURDAY OF THE MONTH PRECEDING THE MONTH THAT THE NEWSLETTER IS DUE FOR PUBLICATION

**COMMANDER'S MESSAGE — VFW POST 7472  
MARCH-APRIL 2021**

**Greetings Comrades,**

**In less than a month, we will be observing an anniversary that none of us would have ever thought would have happened to us, "The Closing of America." Everyone would have celebrated a birthday, anniversary and other holidays that we hold dear to our hearts. We have been separated from our friends and family members but in the end America will survive. Vaccinations are being administered for COVID-19 and I encourage all to get vaccinated.**

**I want to thank all of my fellow Officers for their help in keeping our Post as active as we could; and it was not easy at times as we had to make decisions that were not popular with some.**

**During our next meeting, in March, we will hold nominations for next year's Officers. If you want to run for a position or nominate someone else, please do so; as all positions are open until we have "Elections" in April**

**Hope to see you at our next meeting.**

**Yours in Service,**

**Bill Milner, Commander, Post 7472**

## QUEEN OF HEARTS

**T**he Queen Of Hearts game is still alive and well at Post 7472. This is a Post Fund Raiser for our Veterans Relief Fund. Drawings take place at the Post each Monday at 1700 hours. Our most recent jackpot reached a total of \$4,575. Our last drawing yielded a Queen of Hearts winner. You do not have to be present, when each drawing takes place to win, but you should come to the Post to play; or you can have one of your Post Comrades purchase a ticket in your name. The rules for playing the game are listed at the Post. Be on the lookout for more details regarding updates and/or any changes, e.g., ticket prices, drawing dates, payouts, prize amounts, etc. To learn the name of the winner, see page eleven.

### **POST CHAPLAIN'S CORNER**

***Notify the CHAPLAIN OR THE COMMANDER if you know of the death, illness or any distressful condition of any Post Comrade or family member, who is either at home, in the hospital or other medical treatment facility. The Post Chaplain may be contacted by calling the Post at 410-465-4240 and leave a message. He/She will return your call.***

#### ***SICK CALL***

***RAY TRAHAN — Ray is a Post 7472 Life Member and is a resident in the Lorien Nursing and Rehabilitation Center at 7615 Washington Blvd, Elkridge, MD 21075. He welcomes visitors and loves Reeses Peanut Butter Cups. Please call the Center at (410) 579-2626 before visiting to ascertain the visiting procedures.***

#### ***TAPS***

***NONE KNOWN AT THIS TIME***



## **Post Surgeon's Message**

**Comrades, it looks like the COVID-19 pandemic will be with us for a while longer and no one can tell us how long that will be. Just as the scientists and doctors predicted, it is not going to just go away and will get worse when the weather gets colder and we are inside closed spaces more.**

**REMEMBER: Social distancing, face mask wearing and hand washing; and general all around cleanliness are some of the most important measures we can take to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Also: It's important to keep this in mind not only when thinking about, physically, how far you need to be from others, but also when thinking about which activities are safe. "There is not a 'safe' and 'not safe,' " but by establishing which activities and environments are safest.**

**If you have been watching all the various news outlets, you are also aware that this is a very tenacious virus that is trying to survive just as much as we are trying to eradicate it. It seems to be mutating on an hourly basis. The main three variants of this novel virus, so far, are the United Kingdom, the South African and the Brazilian mutant strains and, according to the CDC, they seem to spread more easily and quickly than other variants. As much I can understand is that all viruses mutate to survive against all the vaccines and mitigation measures that are thrown at it. This could lead to more cases of COVID-19. Also, this may lead to an increase in the number of cases; and will put more strain on our "stretched to the limits" health care resources, which will almost certainly lead to more hospitalizations, and potentially more deaths.**

**It has been said by many of the doctors and scientists that most of the U.S. will be under its grip (my words) by the summer. In addition to the mitigation measures mentioned above, another very potent defense against this virus is being administered the anti viral vaccinations. I have received both (Pfizer) vaccinations, but I realize that I must still practice the COVID-19 preventive measures that are still in place. I will continue to wear my mask and continue to adhere to the safe practices that have been put in place by the CDC, NIH and other medical authorities until we are told to do otherwise.**

**I realize that it is an inconvenience to wear the mask or be constantly social distancing from others (although a minor one for me.) For a lot of us, those measures seem to be a major inconvenience, bordering on being classified as borderline claustrophobia, but it also has saved a lot of lives. It is the patriotic thing to do. The death figures now (as of this writing) is 495,015 with a total of 27,950,547 infected. By the time you read this newsletter, those numbers will be much higher and our death total will have reached over 500,000. These figures are dynamic and are changing by the second. Those statistics for the state of Maryland, as well as the rest of the country, are trending downward, so keep up the great work and I look forward to seeing you at a meeting, Zoom or otherwise, soon.**

**Shelby L. Rogers, Post Surgeon**

## State Tax Information for Military Members and Retirees

### 11 Jan 2021, Military.com | By [Jim Absher](#)

**You may know that military allowances like Basic Allowance for Housing are tax-free. You may also know that most VA benefits are also tax-free. Did you know that many states do not charge income tax on active duty or retired military pay? Many others tax only a portion of these payments. To see what type of tax breaks your state offers for military members, retirees and survivors, check out our list, reduced to the four states that border our locality. For the complete list, go to [military.com](http://military.com).**

### Maryland

- **Military income:** If your total income is less than \$30,000 you can deduct up to \$15,000 of military pay if stationed OCONUS.
- **Retired pay:** The first \$5,000 is tax-free. That amount increases to \$15,000 for those 55 or older.
- **Survivor Benefit Plan:** Same as retired pay.

### Virginia

- **Military income:** Up to \$15,000 of military basic pay received during the taxable year may be exempted from Virginia income tax. For every \$1.00 of income over \$15,000, the maximum subtraction is reduced by \$1.00. For example, if your basic pay is \$16,000, you are entitled to deduct only \$14,000. You are not eligible for the subtraction if your military basic pay is \$30,000 or more. For VA National Guard, up to 39 calendar days of service or \$3,000 (whichever is less) may be deducted from your income when filing. This deduction is only available for O-3 and below.
- **Retired pay:** Follows federal tax rules.
- **Survivor Benefit Plan:** Follows federal tax rules.

### West Virginia

- **Military income:** Tax-free if stationed out-of-state.
- **Retired pay:** Tax-free.
- **Survivor Benefit Plan:** Tax-free.

### Pennsylvania

- **Military income:** Tax-free if stationed out-of-state.
- **Retired pay:** Tax-free.
- **Survivor Benefit Plan:** Tax-free.

### District of Columbia

- **Military income:** Follows federal tax rules.
- **Retired pay:** Follows federal tax rules.
- **Survivor Benefit Plan:** Follows federal tax rules.

## **CALENDAR OF POST EVENTS: MARCH-APRIL 2021**

**UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTIFIED, ALL MONTHLY OFFICER AND MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS WILL BE HELD AT THE POST HOME AT 1900 HOURS ON THE 1st & 2nd THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH**

- 1. 04 Mar (Thu): Howard County Veterans Commission Meeting, 9830 Patuxent Woods Drive, Columbia, MD. 1900 hours.**
- 2. 04 Mar (Thu): Post Officers Meeting, 1900 hours.**
- 3. 06 Mar (Sat): Lance Corporal James Higgins Bridge Dedication in Frederick, VFW Post 3285, Frederick, MD, 1400 hours.**
- 4. 11 Mar (Thu): Post Monthly Meeting, 1900 hours. Unless changed, THIS WILL BE A ZOOM AND FACE-TO-FACE MEETING.**
- 5. 13 Mar (Sat): District Seven Meeting, VFW Post 8806, 5801 Conover Road, Taney Town, MD, 1000 hours.**
- 6. 01 Apr (Thu): (Thu): Howard County Veterans Commission Meeting, 9830 Patuxent Woods Drive, Columbia, MD. 1900 hours.**
- 7. 01 Apr (Thu): Post Officers Meeting, 1900 hours.**
- 8. 08 Apr (Thu): Post Monthly Meeting, 1900 hours. Unless changed, THIS WILL BE A ZOOM AND FACE-TO-FACE MEETING.**
- 9. 10 Apr (Thu): District Seven Meeting, VFW Post 467, 519 Poole Road, Westminster, MD., 1000 hours.**
- 10. 14 Apr (Wed): Finance and Investment Committee Meeting, 1300 hours.**

## **NEWS FROM THE POST SERVICE OFFICER**

*Our Post Service Officer, Comrade Al Hernandez was instrumental in securing a donation to the MCVET organization in Baltimore, Maryland in the amount of \$1,000 from the Owl Cyber Defense Solutions, LLC of Columbia, Maryland. This money will be added to the amount of money that the Post already provides to the MCVET on a monthly basis.*

*Comrade Hernandez, in the name of the Post, also donated 15 face masks, worth \$195.00, containing the Auxiliary logo to the Post 7472 Auxiliary. Because of a mistake committed by the VFW Store, he was instrumental in securing an additional discount of \$50.00 off the regular purchase price of a different set of 15 face masks with the regular VFW logo. He will award these masks to deserving Post Comrades for a "job well done" and also he will give one to each new future Post Member/Comrade who signs up as a Life Member.*



**“This flag which we honor and under which we serve, is the emblem of our power, our thoughts and purpose as a nation. It has no other character than that which we give it from generation to generation. The choices are ours. It floats in majestic silhouettes that execute whether in peace or through silence, it speaks of the past, of women who went before us, and of the lence above the those choices, in war. And yet, speaks to us -- the men and fore us, and of the upon us”.**

**President  
Woodrow Wilson,**



**1917**

## ***PROPER FLAG DISPOSAL***

***If you, or anyone that you know, have old flags that are in need of disposal, we have an old mailbox at the Post that is there for the sole purpose of receiving those flags that have outlived their usefulness. Just deposit it into the mailbox that is sitting on our front porch; and that is all there is to it. If the mailbox is full and is overflowing, just come inside the Post and give it to the bartender on duty. If you are unable to drop off the flag(s) yourself, just call the Post Canteen at 410-465-4240 and someone will come to you, within a reasonable distance, and pick up the flag(s) for disposal.***

**LISTED BELOW ARE FIVE LOCAL BUSINESSES WITH SPECIAL TIES TO POST 7472. THEY ARE:**

- 1. WARFIELD'S BARBER STYLING.** This barber shop is located at 4882 Montgomery Road, Ellicott City, MD 21043, PHONE NUMBER 410-750-6205. They are open Mon-Fri 0900 - 1900 hours; Sat 0830 - 1730 hours; Sun 1030 - 1600 hours. They cut the hair of men, women and children; and they are "Howard County's First Choice" and is open 7 days a week. **ALL VFW, AUXILIARY MEMBERS. AND MARINE CORPS LEAGUE MEMBERS WHO PRESENT THEIR I.D. CARDS WILL RECEIVE A \$1.00 DISCOUNT OFF HAIRCUTS.**
- 2. KELLY'S LIQUORS - FINE WINE, SPIRITS AND MICRO BREWS. THEY SPECIALIZE IN CATERING, WEDDINGS AND PARTIES.** They are located at 4882 Montgomery Road, Ellicott City, MD 21043. Phone Numbers are: 410-750-0330/0331. Fax 443-325-0562. Cell 443-677-5091. **ALL VFW, AUXILIARY MEMBERS. AND MARINE CORPS LEAGUE MEMBERS WHO PRESENT THEIR I.D. CARDS WILL RECEIVE A 10 PERCENT DISCOUNT OFF ALL WINE PURCHASES.**
- 3. KENDALL HARDWARE STORE, 12260 Clarksville Pike, Clarksville, MD 21029. 410-531-2111.** **ALL VFW, AUXILIARY MEMBERS, MARINE CORPS LEAGUE MEMBERS and AMERICAN LEGION MEMBERS WHO PRESENT THEIR I.D. CARDS WILL RECEIVE A 10 PERCENT DISCOUNT OFF ALL PURCHASES.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ANY OF THE ABOVE: Contact Post 7472 Service Officer, Al Hernandez, U.S.M.C. (410) 465-1801: [al.hernandez127@gmail.com](mailto:al.hernandez127@gmail.com)**

- 4. VETERANS' REAL ESTATE ADVANTAGE PROGRAM:** The Bob & Ronna Group Berkshire Hathaway Home Services PenFed Realty Veteran Owned and Operated. As a dynamic and energetic married couple, Bob & Ronna (in addition to their entire Real Estate Group) work full-time establishing clients for life by providing superior service and extensive knowledge in the Maryland Real Estate market. Bob graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland and recognized a need for better opportunities to Veterans in Real Estate. In response, The Bob & Ronna Group created a unique program that not only helps raise money for the USO-Metro and Howard County Veterans' Organizations (American Legion Posts 156 and 300, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7472, and the Marine Corps League Detachment 1084), but also provides Veterans and their family members with Cash-Back and other benefits at settlement when you buy or sell with The Bob & Ronna Group. For every Real Estate transaction in our Veterans' Real Estate Advantage Program, The Bob & Ronna Group will proudly donate to the above organizations. Our cash-back credit **EXCEEDS** the amounts offered by the USAA and NFCU Real Estate Programs! Learn more about The Bob & Ronna Group's great service and how much you could save by visiting our website: [www.bobandronna.com/veterans/](http://www.bobandronna.com/veterans/) or call us at (410) 465-4440.

(See page eleven)

## **IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS, ADDRESSES & WEB SITES FOR VETS**

1. **National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), 1 Archive Drive, St. Louis, MO 63132-5100** or you may visit the website at: <http://www.archives.gov/veterans>. If you are an Army Veteran or the next-of-kin (un-remarried widow, eldest child, parent, eldest sibling, eldest grand-child) of an Army Veteran, you may request a set of authorized medals and decorations by sending a written request along with a copy of the veteran's DD Form 214 (or other discharge if available) and death certificate (if applicable) to the address above. If you are a veteran and you have never received a set of your medals, your request will be processed free-of-charge. If this is a replacement set, there will be a nominal fee. If you are the primary next-of-kin, only one request for medals will be honored. After the NPRC processes your request, they will send you a list of the medals you are authorized. You can check on the status of your request, as well as view some general information about medals and decorations at: [www.veteranmedals.army.mil](http://www.veteranmedals.army.mil). The Veteran Medals Unit is located on the U.S. Naval Support Activity Philadelphia at U.S. Army Clothing and Heraldry, Product Support Integration Directorate, Veteran Medals Unit, Building 6B, North Room 328, 700 Robbins Avenue, P.O. Box 57997, Philadelphia, PA 19111, 877-827-9026, OP #4 or go to the website listed above.
2. **Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Office (National Call Center): 800-827-1000.**
3. **Department of Veterans Affairs Voc. Rehab. Office, Baltimore, MD: 410-230-4500.**
4. **To reach the nearest VA Regional Office to your desired location, contact: VA Home Loan Guaranty, Atlanta Regional Office Loan Center, U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, 1700 Clairmont Road, Decatur, GA. 30033 or call 888-768-2132. Hours of operations 0800 to 1630 hours EST.**
5. **To reach the nearest VA Regional Office for the District of Columbia, KY, MD, VA, & W.VA. Write to The Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Loan Center, 210 Franklin Road S.W., Roanoke, VA 24011 or call: 800-933-5499.**
6. **Department of Veterans Affairs, Health Care Enrollment Center: 877-222-8387.**
7. **Department of Veterans Affairs, Gulf War Era Benefits (Direct Deposit): 800-749-8387.**
8. **VA Benefit Payment Option, (Direct Deposit) 877-838-2778.**
9. **Arlington National Cemetery: the final resting place of many who gave their lives in service to the country. Two US, Hours: Open, 8:00 am - 7:00 pm, Website: <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil> Phone: (877) 907-8585, Address: Memorial Dr, Fort Myer, VA 22211.**
10. **American Battle Monuments Commission: 703-696-6897.**
11. **Memorial Headstones or Marker status: 800-697-6947.**
12. **Military Headstone Honors (Maryland National Guard): 410-576-6133.**
13. **Maryland Center for Veterans Education & Training (MCVETS), 301 N. High St., Baltimore, MD 21202: 410-576-9626, Fax - 410-576-9628.**
14. **[www.va.gov/vaforms](http://www.va.gov/vaforms).**
15. **[www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility).**
16. **[www.va.gov/directory](http://www.va.gov/directory) (for a current telephone list of VA facilities) Or: call the VA Health Benefits Service Center (HBSC) at 1-877-222-VETS to get the telephone number of your local health care facility.**
17. **<http://www.va.gov/health/aca/>.**
18. **Below is the link for the online copy of *The Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents & Survivors handbook for 2018*. This is the latest edition and has many pages of new information. The book can be found at the website at [https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits\\_book.asp](https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.asp)**



**LAW OFFICES OF**

**Skeen & Kauffman, L.L.P., Stephen P. Kauffman, Attorney/CPA  
9256 Bendix Road, Unit 102, Columbia, Maryland 21045  
(410) 625-2228 (voice)  
(410) 382-9606 (mobile)  
(410) 625-2292 (facsimile)**

**I am the co-founder of the law firm, Skeen & Kauffman and an accounting firm, Kauffman Kim; both of which are located right here in Howard County. While our primary focus is helping small-to-medium-sized businesses with tax, business and litigation challenges, we and our affiliates also offer a wide range of reasonably-priced professional services of interest to individuals and families; such as tax return preparations, simple wills; including durable powers of attorney and advanced medical directives, bankruptcies and family law.**

**Most importantly, we strongly support our Veterans and first responders, and offer free initial consultations and twenty percent discounts for these American heroes.**

**All of your VFW Post 7472 Comrades and Auxiliary members; as well as other Veteran Service Organizations that are affiliated with your Post, are free to contact me anytime at (410) 382-9606 or better yet, via e-mail to [skauffman@skaufflaw.com](mailto:skauffman@skaufflaw.com) or by telephone.**

**Sincerely, Stephen P. Kauffman**

**NOTICE — NOTICE — NOTICE**

**The Queen Of Hearts drawing was held on 21 Dec 2020 and was finally won by Comrade and Post member, Mike Poysa. His prize, 60% of the total of \$4,575 was \$2,757. The remainder of the total goes into the Post 7472 Veterans' Relief Fund, which is used to pay for the needs of Veterans. A new game is already in action, so come on in and play a really fun game. REMEMBER: It only costs a dollar a ticket and all proceeds realized from our Queen Of Hearts game will be used to pay for the needs of Veterans by way of our Veterans Relief Fund.**

## **Tips for Preparing Your 2020 Taxes, 25 Jan 2021, Military.com**

### **By Ryan Guina**

The 2020 tax season will be different for many. The two stimulus payments many individuals received may impact how and when you will be able to file your tax return. And the IRS has delayed the start of the tax filing season until Feb. 12 this year, about two weeks later than the normal start of the tax season. Let's look at tips to get you started with your tax return.

### **Tax Forms You Need**

You will need copies of all of your tax forms prior to filing your taxes. In most cases, this will include those showing your income, tax deductions, health insurance verification forms, etc. Most of these forms are available starting in mid-January. Here is the [military tax form release schedule](#) for payments issued through the Defense Finance Accounting Service, or DFAS.

- Retiree 1099R -- Dec. 15, 2020
- Annuitant 1099R -- Dec. 19, 2020
- Navy Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) W-2 -- Jan. 5, 2021
- Army Non-Appropriated Fund Employee W-2 -- Jan. 7, 2021
- Reserve Army, Navy, Air Force W-2 -- Jan. 8, 2021
- Marine Corps Active/Reserve W-2 -- Jan. 13, 2021
- Federal Civilian Employee 1095 forms -- Jan. 14, 2021
- Federal Civilian Employee W-2 (DoD/Non-DoD) -- Jan. 20, 2021
- Savings Deposit Program (SDP) 1099INT -- Jan. 23, 2021
- Army Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) W-2 -- Jan. 25, 2021
- Active Army, Navy, Air Force W-2 -- Jan. 25, 2021
- Military/Military Retiree 1095 forms -- Jan. 31, 2021
- Travel/Vendor/Misc. W-2 -- Jan. 31, 2021

### **Some other common forms needed to file your tax returns might include:**

- W-2 (wages from your employer)
- Form 1095 (health insurance verification forms)
- Form 1098 (mortgage interest)
- Form 1099 Consolidated (a combination of interest and dividends)
- Form 1099-DIV (dividends earned from investments)
- Form 1099-INT (interest earned)
- Form 1099-G (unemployment income; issued by the state that provided unemployment benefits)
- 1099-MISC (miscellaneous income)
- 1099-NEC (non-employee compensation. (This is a new form used for contract and freelance work.)

(See TAXES 2020 on next page)

**(TAXES 2020 from preceding page)**

- **Other forms as needed.** (Each situation is unique, so please consult with a tax professional or your tax software for more information regarding required forms.)

**You should also gather copies of receipts for charitable contributions. Under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, taxpayers are able to receive the standard deduction, as well as deduct up to \$300 in charitable contributions without having to itemize deductions.**

## **Did You Miss Out on a Stimulus Payment When You Should Have Received One?**

**Many individuals received stimulus checks in 2020 and early 2021. These payments were based on the individual's or couple's 2018 or 2019 tax returns. In some cases, the taxpayers' income changed in 2020, making them eligible for a stimulus payment. Some individuals may have also had a baby or adopted a child during the year, which may make them eligible for an additional payment. If your situation changed, you may be able to request a stimulus payment when you file your taxes this year. Your [tax software program](#) or a tax professional should guide you through the process.**

**And there is some good news: If your income situation changed and you earned too much to qualify for the stimulus payment, the IRS will not claw back that money if you have already received it.**

**Related:**

## **File Your Tax Return as Soon as Possible**

**The IRS delayed the start of the tax year due to the complexities of the recent changes to the tax code. Expect there to be a slightly longer turnaround time for many tax returns to be processed. That also means there could be delays in tax refunds if you are owed one this year. Filing early will help ensure that your return is processed more quickly, and any refunds will be processed faster as well.**

**Finally, tax-related identity theft is a growing crime. Some criminals file false tax returns using unsuspecting victims' information. These criminals claim a false tax refund and make off with the money, leaving the victims to hash things out with the IRS. Cleaning up the resulting mess could take weeks or months. Meanwhile, the victims are left out in the cold, awaiting their tax refund.**



## VA's Complicated Vaccine Priority System Causes Disparities, Confusion

9 Feb 2021, [military.com](https://www.military.com), By Patricia Kime

The [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) may be out ahead of many states and federal entities in vaccine administration, but the complexity of deciding who is eligible for the vaccine and when has still left many confused and frustrated. So far, the VA has administered [1.26 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine](#); 305,197 veterans and employees had received both doses as of Monday. To decide who has priority for the limited vaccine supply, the VA uses an algorithm to sift through its data-bases and prioritize veterans. But it also considers other factors, such as local availability of vaccine doses, clinical resources and requirements at each hospital or clinic, and the number of COVID-19 infections in an area. VA officials say the approach has allowed the department to vaccinate a large number of individuals in a relatively short period of time. Some veterans, however, say they don't understand why they haven't been contacted, despite being what they believe is considered "high risk."

"My husband, a Vietnam vet, has not been contacted to get the vaccine. ... He is 77 with health issues," said a veteran's [spouse](#) in the Dallas-Fort Worth area who asked that her name not be used because she wanted to keep her husband's identity private. He eventually got an appointment through the City of Dallas, not the N. Texas VA Health System, she said. "He had to wait in a car in line for four hours in Dallas to get his vaccine. It was grueling," she added. Others cited similar problems in other parts of the country. "I am a combat Vietnam veteran volunteer and 68 years old," said Dave Moore of Columbia, South Carolina. "I am 100 percent VA disabled with two underlying conditions...

The Columbia VA has no clue." The VA is using a software program called the COVID-19 Vaccine Out-reach for Veterans that analyzes information from Veterans Health Administration Support Center databases to determine which patients are considered to be in high-risk groups. The tool uses patient identifiers to weigh medical conditions, age and gender; it also indicates current treatments like chemotherapy or dialysis and other risk factors for severe COVID-19 such as smoking or obesity. The system then provides a list of prioritized patients to local VA medical centers. But those medical centers have their own set of conditions to consider when assessing priority, according to VA spokesman Randy Noller.

"VA issued guidance on December 30, 2020, encouraging local flexibility in order to maximize COVID-19 vaccine access and efficiency and limit potential vaccine waste, and this guidance included flexibility to overlap phases and broaden vaccination," he said. Individual VA health systems deal with factors that include vaccine hesitancy, logistical challenges and their own lists of patients prioritized by risk factors and locale. At the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Anchorage, Alaska, for example, any veteran who is 60 or older is being offered the vaccine. And in Havre, Montana -- a remote location where VA providers flew in with the vaccine for a one-day clinic Jan. 21 -- 239 veterans of varying ages were able to get inoculated. "Montana is a very large state -- 147,000 square miles. So we have a huge area to cover. We're also a mountain state, so winter travel can be challenging between snow and small county roads. That's part of why we're so thrilled to get the vaccine out across the state," said Montana VA Health

(See COVID-19 on next page)

(COVID-19 from preceding page)

Care System Director Judy Hayman. According to Noller, the VA largely is finishing efforts to vaccinate those categorized as 1a -- including health workers, first responders and those living in residential community settings -- and moving into Phase 1b; or veterans age 75 and older. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, patients aged 65 to 74 are considered Phase 1c, as are those ages 16 to 64 with serious health conditions. But again, priority also can be determined at the local level. As early as November, clinicians at some VA health facilities began drafting lists of patients at high risk for severe cases of COVID.

Vietnam veteran Wes Bickel, 73, receives his care at VA Long Beach Health-care System in California; he got a text Saturday saying he had been identified as part of a priority group to get the vaccine. Bickel, who has a heart condition related to Agent Orange exposure, had gotten his first dose the day before through his county, ending several weeks of frustration with the VA. "Some of my cohorts snuck in line and already received their second shots. ... I feel fortunate that I have options and had registered with the county and not relied on just the VA," Bickel told [military.com](https://www.military.com). VA Long Beach has had such a strong response from area residents -- including non-veterans -- wanting the vaccine that the facility's phone system went down under the strain of calls last week. "We know the process to get vaccines has been frustrating even under the best of circumstances, and not being able to reach us only adds to that. Please bear with us as we all navigate the COVID-19 pandemic," officials wrote Friday in a notice to veterans. The VA is "using every avenue to vaccinate as many veterans and employees as quickly as possible," according to Noller, and the process should go more smoothly once more vaccines are available. "We've built a system ready to accommodate much larger quantities as the manufacturers move forward. I'm incredibly pleased," said Dr. Richard Stone, the VA acting under secretary for health. Even as the VA's vaccine effort ramps up, officials are telling veterans that if they have the opportunity to register for the vaccine elsewhere, they should do so. "We want to encourage Veterans to get the COVID vaccine as soon as it becomes available to them," said Dr. Sophia Califano, the VA's deputy chief consultant for preventive medicine, in a release. "We believe this is the best path forward and the best way to protect you and your family."

Moore, the veteran who was not contacted by the Columbia VA, said Wednesday that after contacting the office of South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster about his situation, he was given a phone number at the VA to call to request an appointment. When he called, he was told that it had been an oversight that he had not been contacted and he made an appointment for the next day. David Omura, director of the Columbia VA Health Care System, told [military.com](https://www.military.com) that the facility has administered more than 6,000 vaccines to staff members and veterans and "takes veterans' concerns seriously and addresses them immediately." "In this case, we were able to quickly assist this veteran ... and have since followed up with him to ensure that he continues to receive quality care and the services he needs," Omura said. He added that the facility is following CDC and VA COVID-19 vaccine guidelines and has recently expanded scheduling to include additional categories.

## **My HealtheVet**

**The Department of Veterans Affairs [My HealtheVet website](#) is designed to allow veterans enrolled in VA health care to check their health records, make and/or cancel appointments; or refill prescriptions from a computer or tablet. Veterans can send secure e-mails back and forth to their doctors about available treatments without having to go in for an appointment or wait for a phone call. The VA hopes to expand the program and other benefits under one specific app for Android or iPhones. For more veterans benefits info and updates, visit the [Military Advantage blog](#).**

### **Maryland Center for Veterans Education and Training (MCVET)**

**Comrades, Post 7472 is a repository to handle usable and serviceable clothing to be donated to the homeless Veterans who are overcoming homelessness and undergoing job training at the MCVET Organization located in Baltimore. Many times, he/she will show up with only the clothes they are wearing. If you have men's or women's clothing or shoes to donate, just bring them to the Post and give them to the bartender on duty. Please do not donate overly used, ripped, torn or dirty items of clothing.**

**Due to the advent of COVID-19 collections have slowed, but we are still in business. Our homeless veterans need us, now, more than ever. After a suitable number of articles have been donated, they will be taken to the MCVET Organization and donated in the name of the VFW and Post 7472.**



## **COVID-19 Death Rate at VA Nursing Homes Is 13 Times Lower Than National Average, 10 Feb 2021, Military.com | By [Patricia Kime](#)**



**Eugene W. Bullett is the first Lebanon VA Medical Center patient to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, at Lebanon VA Medical Center, Dec. 21, 2020. Bullett is a resident of the facility's Community Living Center (VA Nursing Home). (Doug Wagner/Department of Veterans Affairs)**

If you're in a nursing home operated by the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#), data shows you're about half as likely to contract COVID-19 as you are in a non-VA senior living facility, and 13 times less likely to die from the disease. In the past year, 1,679 residents of VA nursing homes, which it calls community living centers or CLCs, contracted COVID-19, and 143 died "within 30 days after a positive test," according to the department. With more than 30,000 American veterans living in these facilities, that translates to an infection rate of 5.47 per 100 people and a death rate of less than .5%. Roughly one-third of the 1.4 million Americans living in a nursing home tested positive for COVID-19 in 2020, and the death rate was 6.5%, [according to data published by AARP](#). VA officials attribute the lower infection and death rates to implementing infection prevention and control measures as soon as the virus began spreading. The VA limited new admissions, quarantined veterans returning to their homes from medical care, restricted visitors and tested residents and staff regularly, VA officials said. Late last year, then-VA Secretary Robert Wilkie described the decision to lock down nursing homes as one of the "hard choices" of the pandemic. VA nursing home patients are among the most fragile Americans, with the majority of residents being World War II veterans. "At this very tough time in their lives, we cut them off from families and friends but we did it in order to protect them," Wilkie said in an interview with [www.military.com](#). He added that as a result of the low number

(See COVID-19 DEATH RATE on next page)

**(COVID-19 DEATH RATE from preceding page)**

of cases and deaths, VA was sharing "lessons learned ... with the rest of the country, particularly on the nursing home front." The Government Accountability Office reported last week that 95% of the VA's 134 nursing homes [had at least one issue with infection control in the five years preceding the pandemic.](#)

According to the GAO, 365 infection prevention and control deficiencies were found at VA nursing homes from 2015 through 2019 -- including staff not washing their hands properly, not using gowns and gloves as recommended or failing to clean reusable medical items correctly. "Many of these practices can be critical to preventing the spread of infectious diseases, including COVID-19," GAO analysts wrote in the report. The review was conducted at the request of Democratic Sens. Jon Tester of Montana, and Edward Markey and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts. It follows media reports on the quality of care at VA nursing homes and scrutiny of an internal ratings system based on quality metrics tracked by the VA but not provided to veterans or families. In one egregious case, [a veteran died in 2019 at the VA's Eagles' Nest Community Living Center](#) in Georgia, days after his daughter found him covered with more than 100 ant bites. An investigation found that staff was aware of the fire ant infestation and other veterans had been bitten. The VA moved the facility's 34 residents elsewhere last spring and closed the facility in December. It plans to build a new home in Atlanta.

According to the GAO, 62% of the VA's community living centers inspected had infection control issues in consecutive years and an additional 19% had them in multiple nonconsecutive years. Roughly one-third had deficiencies in at least three consecutive years. The GAO also found that VA inspectors classified all of the deficiencies as "not severe," meaning the inspector determined that residents were not harmed, even though at least one case involved poor hygiene among staff working with residents with active cases of Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA, a bacteria that can cause pneumonia and bloodstream infections. The GAO sent the report to the senators and the VA but made no recommendations. VA Spokesman Randy Noller said the department took corrective measures as a result of infection control deficiencies identified during unannounced surveys between 2015 and 2019.

According to AARP, the rate of COVID-19 infections among U.S. nursing home staff members was 9.3 per 100 people in December. The VA did not provide the break-out for employees who work at its community living centers, making it difficult to calculate the comparable rate. As of Monday, 1,272 Veterans Health Administration employees were COVID-positive. Since the beginning of the outbreak, 18,725 VA employees have tested positive, and 125 have died. Noller said the VA will continue to "enforce ongoing vigilant safeguards to protect the highly vulnerable community living center veterans."

The department has published a plan for facilities to follow in resuming in-person services and allowing visitation, which will vary by facility, he added. Veterans living in VA community settings were in the first tier of those offered the COVID-19 vaccine by the department.

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**8 February 2021:  
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