

**WEBINAR:** December 3, 2019 2 p.m. EST

# Patronage Expansion of Commissary, Exchange, and MWR Privileges for SCD Vets, Patron Webinar

Presenter: Berry Patrick, Associate Director Business Policy

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# Purpose

- BLUF: DoD, in coordination with the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA, and Department of Homeland Security, Coast Guard, and the Defense Logistics Agency, DLA, will implement and deliver this benefit to the new patron groups on time.
- To provide information to the military installation leadership, installation access control personnel, and the commissary, exchange, and MWR workforce on the plan to implement Section 621 of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018, codified at Section 1065 of Title 10, United States Code, that expands patronage for commissary, exchange, and revenue-generating morale, welfare, and recreation, MWR, facilities on January 1, 2020.

# Background and Requirements

- Pursuant to the Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018:
  - Extend commissary and MWR facility privileges Purple Heart recipients, Medal of Honor recipients, former prisoners of war, veterans with service-connected disabilities, SCD, and eligible caregivers for veterans, effective 1 Jan 2020
  - Impose a user fee on individuals who are eligible solely under this act when they use a credit or debit card in commissaries that results in an increase in expenses borne by the Department of Treasury \*
  - Deposit with the Treasury commissary credit/debit card user fees collected

Note: \*The credit/debit card user fee is not charged for purchases made with the Military Star Card, EBT cards, or cash

# New User Groups, 1 of 2

## New user groups eligible solely under this act:

- Veterans who were awarded the Purple Heart
- Veterans who are former prisoners of war
- Veterans with SCDs with VA certified ratings 0-90 percent
- Caregivers or family caregivers of veterans
  - Enrolled as the primary family caregiver in the VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers
  - Eligibility limited to caregiver's active appointment period, one year; renewable

## New User Groups, 2 of 2

### New user groups eligible solely under this act:

- Family members of these new patron groups are not eligible
- Access to facilities located in foreign overseas locations subject to limitations of host nation Status of Forces Agreements, SOFA, and/or other international agreements

NOTE: Veterans who are Medal of Honor recipients and veterans with 100 percent service-connected disability ratings are already authorized shopping privileges and broader DoD benefits through current DoD policy.

# Authorized Facility Access

Authorized access to all:

- DoD Defense Commissary Agency commissaries
- U.S. Military, and U.S. Coast Guard exchange facilities
- MWR facilities access is limited to Category C retail/revenue generating activities on U.S. military, Defense Logistics Agency, and Coast Guard installations, such as golf courses, marinas, bowling centers, clubs and food and beverage facilities, etc. MWR programs and facilities supported primarily with appropriated funds are not authorized for access, such as gyms and fitness centers, libraries, child care centers, etc.

# Identification Credentials, 1 of 13

- Before new veterans or caregivers eligible for DoD installation and shopping privilege access solely under the Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018 must obtain the appropriate credentials from the VA
- The credential identified for SCD veteran access to resale and MWR facilities is the VA issued Veterans Health Identification Card, VHIC



## Identification Credentials, 2 of 13

- Eligible veterans who are eligible to obtain a VHIC must obtain a VHIC marked “SERVICE CONNECTED,” “PURPLE HEART” or “FORMER POW” from the VA.
- To check VA health care enrollment eligibility and to enroll, visit a local VA medical facility; call 877-222-VETS, 8387, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m., Eastern Time; or apply online at [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll)
- Eligible SCD Veterans who are not currently eligible to obtain a VHIC will initially only have on-line shopping access while the DoD and VA are working on a credential for this special SCD veterans group to obtain access to these on-installation privileges.

## Identification Credentials, 3 of 13

The DoD will accept the following VA documentation to differentiate and verify eligible veteran and caregiver patrons in accordance with Section 1065 of Title 10, U.S.C.:

- VHIC
- Primary Family Caregiver Letter issued by VA
  - Letters to be issued by VA annually in December to those still enrolled in the caregiver program and are in good standing
  - Letters will expire annually on December 31
- Electronic Verification for Access to Online Benefits

# Identification Credentials, 4 of 13

## VHIC



**Note:** All VHICs will show “VA Healthcare Enrollee”. Only Veterans that qualify for the special categories: Service Connected, Medal of Honor, Purple Heart, Former POW, will have that category printed on their card. There could be multiple special categories on a VHIC. See the list of eligible categories located directly below the photo of the SCD veteran.

# Identification Credentials, 5 of 13

## Old VHIC cards



Front

Back

- **Note:** There a small number of the old version of the VHIC still in the possession of veterans eligible under the NDAA 621/10 U.S.C. 1065. If presented, this card is authorized for access to the commissaries, exchanges, and MWR facilities.
- Since it is in the old bar code configuration, it may not scan correctly in the DeCA commissary point of sale system and should be visually verified to see it shows the qualifying information on the front of the card; for example, Service Connected, Prisoner of War, Purple Heart, etc.

# Identification Credentials, 6 of 13

Veterans Identification Card, VIC – *is NOT authorized for use under this patronage expansion.*

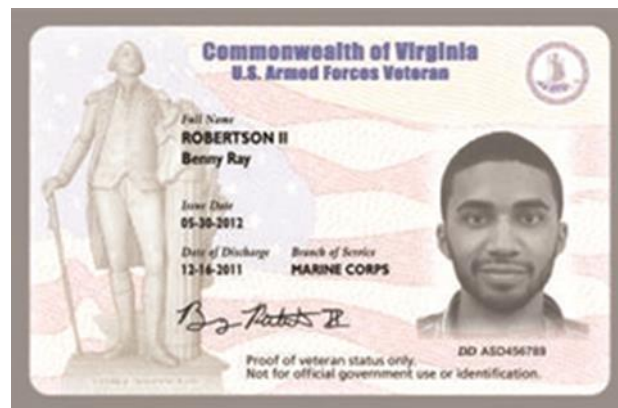


A sample copy of the front of the new Veterans ID card. After a lengthy delay, the new cards have been mailed out to thousands of veterans in recent weeks. (Courtesy of the Department of Veterans Affairs)

- **Note:** This card serves as proof of service in the Armed Forces of the United States and does not reflect entitlement to any VA or DoD benefits under the 10 U.S.C. Section 1065 patronage expansion and *is not valid* for access to commissary, exchange, and MWR facilities. Only the VHIC will be accepted

# Identification Credentials, 7 of 13

- State and local issued veteran's cards like the examples below are **not** valid IDs for the purposes of gaining installation access or access to exchange, commissary, and/or MWR privileges



## Identification Credentials, 8 of 13

- Veterans eligible for DoD, Coast Guard, and Defense Logistics Agency installation and privilege access through previously established DoD and Coast Guard policy, Medal of Honor recipients and veterans with VA-documented service-connected disability ratings of 100 percent, are currently authorized under separate policy to obtain a DoD identification card at the local installation ID card office to facilitate installation and privilege access.

# Identification Credentials, 9 of 13

## Caregivers of Veterans

- Eligible caregivers will be issued a letter from the VA that indicates they are the primary family caregiver for a veteran enrolled in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers
- Letters will be mailed by the VA to caregivers in December 2019
- Letters will expire on 31 December annually and must be reissued by the VA
- For installation access and at point of sale, caregivers will need to show an acceptable credential; for example, a REAL ID-compliant driver's license, U.S. passport, and their primary family caregiver letter.



# Identification Credentials, 10 of 13

## How will new users get access to installations

To access the installation, Veterans eligible solely under the Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018, who are eligible to obtain a VHIC will present their VHIC at installation access points

Upon the first visit to the installation, eligible veterans must present their VHIC at the visitor control center

# Identification Credentials, 11 of 13

Acceptable form of identification for installation access that must be paired with the VHIC or caregiver/veteran memos, are outlined in DoD Manual, DoDM, 5200.08 Volume 3 and include:

- Acceptable credentials may include:
  - VHIC
  - DoD common access card, CAC
  - DoD uniformed services identification card
  - REAL ID-compliant driver's license issued by a state, territory, possession, or the District of Columbia
  - REAL ID-compliant non-driver's identification card issued by a state, territory, possession, or the District of Columbia

# Identification Credentials, 12 of 13

- Acceptable credentials may include:
  - Enhanced driver's license issued by a state, territory, possession, or the District of Columbia
  - U.S. passport or passport card
  - Foreign passport bearing an unexpired immigrant or non-immigrant visa or entry stamp
  - Federal personal identity verification card
  - Transportation Worker Identification Card

Depending on the type of installation and the acceptable credential presented, veterans and caregivers may be enrolled for recurring access, which would allow them to proceed to the gate for entry upon subsequent visits

# Identification Credentials, 13 of 13

- Real ID Compliant driver's license compared to Standard driver's license ID

## The REAL ID vs. Standard ID



- Note:** Real ID compliant driver's licenses have a star at the top right corner of the card

## Background Checks Required

- As with all other individuals seeking access to DoD installations, all eligible veterans and caregivers must pass a basic on-the-spot background check prior to enrolling, and an automated check each time they enter the installation
- Veterans and caregivers with felony convictions, felony arrest warrants, or other types of derogatory information related to criminal history or terrorism will not be permitted entry to the installation

## Credit/Debit Card User Fees

- New patron groups must pay user fee when using a credit or debit card in commissaries to offset Treasury costs
- The user fee will be set as a flat rate for each card type, credit or debit, based on the average Treasury estimated card transaction costs
- Fees will be reviewed annually and adjusted as needed
- Purchases made with Military Star Card, electronic benefit transfer, EBT, cards, or cash are not subject to credit/debit card user fee
- No user fee reimbursement on customer return of merchandise
- All credit/debit card user fee amounts collected will be deposited in the General Fund of the Treasury

# Data Collection and Impact Assessment

- Collected veteran data from VA National Center for Veterans Analysis, VA Office of the Actuary, DoD Office of the Actuary, U.S. Census Bureau, Defense Manpower Data Center, Defense Commissary Agency, and Military Service exchanges
- Performed comprehensive impact assessment to identify potential high-volume locations based on veteran density and general cost of living
- Determined general low to moderate impact on installations and the VA
  - Higher impact in locations with a high veteran density, e.g., San Antonio, TX, San Diego, CA, Norfolk, VA
  - Higher impact in locations with high cost of living, e.g., Hawaii, Alaska

# Conditions Impacting Patronage

- Time, distance, and effort to access installations; farther means lower usage
- Time and distance from VA medical facilities; farther means less likely to obtain VHIC that would facilitate installation and shopping access
- Time and distance projections have been provided to the military services and installations for planning purposes, see the example data map on the next slide
- Personal mobility/transportation; less mobile means lower usage
- Personal financial circumstance; higher income means lower usage rate
- Local economic conditions; high cost of living areas means higher usage
- Off-installation and online shopping competition
- Shopping habits and brand loyalty
- Family members are not eligible, so the primary shopper in the family may not shop



# Potential Challenges and Concerns

- Longer lines and wait times at visitor centers to register credentials
- Longer lines/wait times at front gates for installations with heavy usage
- Complaints from active duty and families during peak times when capacity issues arise for parking, product availability, check-out
- Commissary credit/debit card user fee could result in complaints from new patrons to whom this fee applies, unfair that it only applies to them
- Data integration coding may not be complete by January 1; would require manual processing of commissary credit/debit card user fees until complete
- No ability to revoke privileges for caregivers if their primary caregiver status is revoked before the appointment period on VA memo expires

## How to Get More Information

- These new patron groups can obtain additional information at the web link at <https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Factsheets/expanding-access-fact-sheet.pdf>
- Refer new patron groups to check VA health care enrollment eligibility and to enroll, by visiting a local VA medical facility; call 1-877-222-VETS, 8387, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m., Eastern Time; or apply online at [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enrol](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enrol)

## Conclusion

Requirements, procedures, and coordination will be in place for implementation on January 1, 2020



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