

This Veterans Newsletter is compiled and provided by the Seminole County Veteran's Services Office. Its intent is to keep Seminole County Veterans informed about their rights, benefits, and news of interest. It is non-political and, except where noted, all articles are excerpted from outside sources. Local events honoring/supporting Veterans will be included as made available. You are encouraged to provide feedback and recommendations, as this is your Newsletter. Together with my small Team, I hope you find it both valuable and interesting.

Ed Burford, Seminole County Veterans Services Officer

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Limited manning at the Seminole County Veterans Service Office beginning Monday March 23, 2020, Ed sends – The Coronavirus is a severe acute respiratory illness that can spread among humans through respiratory transmission and presents with symptoms similar to those of influenza. A Public Health Emergency has been declared in the State of Florida as has been a "state of emergency for the entire State of Florida", Executive Order Number 20-52, March 9, 2020.

Beginning Monday March 23, 2020, the Seminole County Veterans Services Office will reduce its manning to 50% daily. Walk-ins have already been postponed until after this crisis. We will

attempt to conduct as much business via telephone as possible and when necessary we will make an appointment. We will return calls, but because of this precaution, a return call may not be immediately.

If necessary, you may call the VA direct at 1-800-827-1000 or you can walk-in at the Lake Nona and Lake Baldwin VA Medical Center and Clinic.

We ask for your continued understanding and support. We encourage you to self-isolate and keep your social distance and please do not hoard.

New suicide prevention toolkit for Caregivers. Vantage Point, March 19, 2020, VA recently released its "[VA Suicide Prevention Toolkit for Caregivers](#)," a comprehensive guide aimed at providing caregivers with resources to help them care for not only Veterans, but also themselves. All caregivers should visit VA's Caregiver Support Program (CSP) [website](#) which offers tips, tools, and other information for those that care for Veterans. The site includes online courses, in-person classes, telephone support, and peer support, among other support features. [Read more.](#)

#VetResources, February 26, 2020, Make the connection, Are you going through a tough time? You're not alone – and things can get better. Listen, watch, and learn from hundreds of other Veterans who have shared their stories of recovery. [Read more.](#)

Seminole County Legal Aid Society, Ed Sends - Posted in their website are sample forms for designation of health care surrogate, living will and durable power of attorneys in case someone needs to make those arrangement. For the durable power of attorney, which is for financial, need to trust implicitly the individual you designate, as it is very powerful financial instrument. To access these forms, [Read more.](#)

DFAS Retiree Newsletter, March 19, 2020, Ed Sends - The March 2020 Retiree Newsletter is now available online. It contains helpful information about convenient options for getting your tax documents, using myPay, changing bank accounts, new options for school certifications, tools to make filling out required forms faster and easier, the SBP-DIC Offset Phased Elimination, Army Emergency Relief, the Air Force Assistance Fund and the Armed Forces Retirement Homes. We also have a downloadable PDF version of the newsletter you can share with friends. Be sure to check out the article on using myPay for info on the new text notifications for myPay. To access the newsletter, please copy and paste the link below to your internet browser. You will find a list of topics in the newsletter with a brief description of each article. After copying and pasting the link to your internet browser, click on the link for the article you want to read, and the full text will appear. The bottom link in the list of topics is to the downloadable PDF version of the newsletter. [DFAS Home](#)

In Vietnam-Era Throwback, New Air Force Rescue Helo is the 'Jolly Green II', Military.com, 27 Feb 2020, its official: the U.S. [Air Force](#) will call its new HH-60W combat rescue helicopter the "Jolly Green II." Standing alongside combat-search-and-rescue pilots from past and current conflicts, Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett made the announcement during the opening of the Air Warfare Symposium in Orlando, Florida, Thursday. "Reviving the Jolly Green name

honors our combat search and rescue crews past and present," Barrett said on social media following her speech. "In the hands of our airmen, the HH-60W ensures the rescue community can perform their duties better than ever," she said. [Read more.](#)

Bill Would Restore Disabled Vets With Their ‘Unjustly Denied’ Benefit, MOAA, March 4, 2020, Maj. Richard Star is a combat veteran who has never smoked a day in his life; he also has terminal lung cancer. As such, Star will medically retire early from the Army after a distinguished career as a combat engineer that included critical route clearance and road construction missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Servicemembers who are unable to complete 20 years of service due to service-connected injuries are known as "Chapter 61 retirees." Some retirees who suffered from injuries incurred in combat are eligible for Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) which mitigates to varying degrees some loss in pay due to the offset. The Maj. Richard Star Act, announced in a Capitol Hill press conference on Tuesday, provides total offset relief for those with combat injuries – ensuring they get their full service-earned retirement based on time in service and grade, as well as their disability compensation from the VA for service-connected injuries or illness. [Read more.](#)

More Answers on the SBP-DIC Offset Elimination Process, MOAA, March 4, 2020, I mentioned in my [first article about the Survivor Benefit Plan-Dependency and Indemnity Compensation \(SBP-DIC\) offset elimination](#) that MOAA would provide more details as they emerged. Well, here they are. DoD and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) have provided [a list of answers to frequently asked questions](#) about the process. The Coast Guard pay organization follows the same law and DoD policy. [Read more.](#)

How to Track Down Your Military Records MOAA, March 12, 2020, Whether you are trying to reconstruct lost records, obtain your DD-214, or view records in person, the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) is a valuable well of knowledge for past and present military members, families, and history buffs alike. Many veterans are familiar with the NPRC when it comes to obtaining a copy of [Form DD-214 or other service records](#). These documents hold the key to unlocking a myriad of medical benefits, education benefits, VA loans, and more. Some companies offer services for hire to obtain copies of your DD-214. There is never a need to pay for these documents; they are always free from the NPRC. [Read more.](#)

VA Announcement, March 19, 2020, *Ed Sends* - The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Regional Offices will be closed to the public starting March 19. Regional offices will remain open, but will no longer accept walk-ins for claims assistance, scheduled appointments, and counseling and other in-person services. This decision protects our older Veterans and those with underlying conditions as well as our employees. Veterans can continue to get information about benefits or file a claim for benefits by visiting our website at www.va.gov. Veterans with claims specific or other questions may request information via [Inquiry Routing & Information System \(IRIS\)](#) or telephone at 1-800-827-1000.

This Legislation Would Increase a Critical Benefit for Military Survivors, MOAA, February 21, 2019, Bills in both the House and Senate would increase the base amount of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), the benefit paid to survivors who lose their servicemember-spouse to a service-connected illness or injury. The base amount of DIC -- currently \$1340 a

month, tax-free -- is fixed for all survivors. There can be some adjustments to the amount for special circumstances. DIC increases each year via an inflation-based cost of living adjustment (COLA). The House and Senate bills, both titled the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation Improvement Act, would increase the DIC amount to 55% of the compensation paid to veterans rated 100% disabled by the VA. These 100% disabled veterans now receive \$3,106 a month; a change to 55% of that compensation would result in \$1,708 a month for the survivor. [Read more.](#)

VA nursing homes to stop visitations, new admissions amid coronavirus, except in special cases Fox News, March 10, 2020, Amid the threat of [coronavirus](#), the Department of [Veterans](#) Affairs said it would stop visitations and new admissions at its [134 nursing homes](#) to protect two of its most susceptible patient populations: nursing home residents and spinal-cord injury patients. [Read more.](#)

Veterans: Call before visiting your VA facility VAantage Point, March 18, 2020, Got a fever, cold, cough or flu-like symptoms? Are you worried that you have a viral illness? The last thing you want to do is get out of the house to see the doctor, exposing yourself (and others) to more potential bugs and viruses. VA can make it easier and safer to get back to health with virtual care through My HealtheVet and the VA Video Connect app on your smartphone, tablet or computer. What is virtual care? Virtual care means you can contact your VA provider (and health care team) through [secure messaging](#) or receive treatment by telephone or video. Last year, Veterans had over 20 million virtual engagements with VA. Any Veteran who qualifies to receive VA care and lives in the U.S. is eligible to use virtual care. [Read more.](#)

Lawmakers Scrutinize VA's Plans to Provide Long-Term Care for Aging Baby Boomers Military.com, Week of March 16, 2020, In a hearing this month, lawmakers expressed eagerness to learn about the Department of Veterans Affairs' plan to provide in-home and institutional long-term health care to a coming "silver tsunami" of aging Baby Boomers. However, Teresa Boyd, assistant deputy undersecretary for health at the Veterans Health Administration, told House Veterans Affairs Subcommittee on Health members they would have to wait another couple weeks before the VA's "Elderly Strategic Plan" will be ready for release. [Read more.](#)

Borne the Battle #185: Benefits Breakdown, Burn Pit Registry VAantage Point, March 11, 2020. This week's Benefits Breakdown features Army Veterans Vincent Mitchell and Dr. Eric Shuping. They discussed the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry and how Veterans can sign up. In 2014, Congress required the Department of Defense and VA find a way to record and offer help to service members and Veterans who have health concerns related to airborne hazards and open burn pits. The registry officially began in June 2014. [Read more.](#)

Beware of Scams Connected to the Coronavirus Crisis MOAA, March 18, 2020. In a time of uncertainty, there is a heightened risk of falling victim to scams concocted by those with ill intent. For cybercriminals and scammers, the coronavirus crisis creates an attentive audience who may be willing to accept false information in order to protect themselves from perceived risks. Arm yourself not only against the virus, but against other threats, by learning how to detect them first with tips from the Army Criminal Investigation Command (CID). [Read more.](#)

Veterans can search free resources through Code of Support's PATRIOTlink VAantage Point, March 19, 2020, Code of Support's PATRIOTlink® platform is a free online resource database that includes thousands of programs tailored to the military and Veteran community. Through PATRIOTlink, users can search vetted, direct, cost-free services specific to their needs. PATRIOTlink was recently redesigned to make it even easier to use. Now, users can complete searches by entering less information and they can view events and job opportunities in their area through a news feed feature. [Read more.](#)

Veterans Florida Expo, Veterans Florida, February 27, 2020. There's only one place you network with veteran-friendly employers, watch the top veteran entrepreneurs compete for funding, and take advantage of all that Florida offers veterans and their families. **The Veterans Florida Expo is back June 5-6 in Orlando** and we're bringing new resources, like franchises seeking veteran owners. General attendance is free, so be sure to [register today](#) and stay informed as we announce employers, exhibitors, and special guest speakers. [Read more.](#)

2020 HIRE Vets Medallion Award application now open, Vantage Point, March 5, 2020, HIRE Vets Medallion Award recognizes employers who hire and retain Veterans. The 2020 HIRE Vets Medallion Award application is now open to employers until April 30, 2020. The HIRE Vets Medallion Award is a Labor Department recognition for employers that commit to hiring and retaining Veterans into meaningful, family-sustaining careers. There are many Veteran employment-related awards, lists, and rankings. However, it can be overwhelming for Veterans (and others) to differentiate between the employers committed to providing jobs and the employers committed to providing meaningful, long-term careers. The HIRE Vets Medallion Award is the only federal Veterans' employment award that recognizes and honors employers' commitment to Veteran hiring, retention, and professional development—and it carries the full weight of the federal government. [Read more.](#)

Cover Your Bases: Expert Tips to Avoid Identity Theft, MOAA, March 4, 2020, Resourceful identity thieves necessitate resourceful solutions to combat them. Military personnel are particularly vulnerable to identity theft. According to the Federal Trade Commission, there were more than 10,000 reports by servicemembers of consumer credit card fraud in 2018. Sometimes a loss can be as low-tech as a purse snatching. Lt. Col. Jack Mattson, USMC (Ret), tells of a client of his firm, IDShield. When her purse was stolen, she changed all her passwords and then opted to give power of attorney to an IDShield licensed investigator, who then contacted each account manager. Within two days, says Mattson, "her accounts were back to pre-theft status." But passwords are becoming passé, says famous former con artist Frank Abagnale. The inspiration for *Catch Me If You Can* (2002) is now a security consultant for the FBI and many other organizations. [Read more.](#)

Your Coronavirus Quarantine Guide to Military Movies and Shows on Netflix Military.com, 17 Mar 2020, You're stuck in your house or apartment because the movie theaters are closed, the bars and restaurants are shutting down, and you've been assigned to work from home. How do you fill your days without bugging out? We're here to help. [Read more.](#)

VA to Stop GI Bill Benefits at 5 Colleges Week of March 16, 2020, The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced it will soon suspend new veteran enrollments at five colleges that have engaged in illegal practices, unless they come into compliance with the law. "After careful review and consideration of findings provided by the Federal Trade Commission and State Attorneys General Offices, [Read more.](#)

Lawmakers approve emergency fix to ensure GI Bill benefits continue even as campuses close and classes move online, Task & Purpose, March 19, 2020, Congress has approved an emergency legislative fix to ensure that students going to college on the G.I. Bill will continue to receive their monthly housing stipend, even as college courses transition online in an effort to limit the spread of the coronavirus. [Read more.](#)

The Real Cost of Your Home: Numbers You Need to Know Military.com via Navy Federal Credit Union, March 16, 2020, For many of us, the idea of buying a home brings to mind pictures of fun times with family and friends, decorating and making it your own or maybe just having more space. As you start your search, it will be important to know the true cost of homeownership, so you can pick the right one. [Read more.](#)

Are you a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one?

Did you know that VA offers same day services in Primary Care and Mental Health at 172 VA Medical Centers across the country? [Make the Connection Resource Locator](#)

Contact the [Veterans Crisis Line](#) ([1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255) and press 1, [Chat](#), or Text 838255.)