



AFSA Retiree and Veteran Affairs Newsletter



- MEMORIAL DAY HISTORY

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who have died in service of the United States of America. It's difficult to prove the origins of this day as over two dozen towns and cities lay claim to be the birthplace. In May 1966, President Lyndon Johnson stepped in and officially declared Waterloo N.Y. the birthplace of Memorial Day.

Regardless of the location of origins or the exact date, one thing is crystal clear – Memorial Day was borne out of the Civil War (which ended in 1865) and a desire to honor our dead. On the 5th of May in 1868, General John Logan who was the national commander of the Grand Army of the republic, officially proclaimed it in his General Order No. 11.

Part of the history of Memorial Day will show that in the Order, the General proclaimed, “The 30th of May, 1868, is designated for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land.” Because the day wasn't the anniversary of any particular battle, the General called it, “The Date of Decoration Day.”

On the first Decoration Day, 5,000 participants decorated the graves of 20,000 Union and Confederate soldiers buried at Arlington Cemetery while General James Garfield made a historic speech.

New York was the first state to officially recognize the holiday in 1873. It was recognized by all northern states by 1890. Differently, the South refused to acknowledge the day and honored their dead on separate days. This went on until after World War I when the holiday changed from honoring just those who died fighting in the Civil War to honoring Americans who died fighting in any war. With the Congressional passage of the National Holiday Act of 1971 (P.L. 90 – 363), it is now observed on the last Monday in May.

Memorial day history couldn't be complete without the birth of the “National Moment of Remembrance”, which was a resolution passed on Dec 2000 which asks that at 3 p.m. local time, for all Americans “To voluntarily and informally observe in their own way a Moment of remembrance and respect, pausing from whatever they are doing for a moment of silence or listening to ‘Taps.’”

- YOUR EDUCATION BENEFITS ARE IMPROVING AND EXPANDING!

The spring term is almost over! What are your plans for the summer? Whether you plan on catching some backyard sunshine or just taking some time to catch your breath, the summer break is the perfect time to begin planning for the upcoming fall semester. And just in time, we have a list of ways that VA is improving your VA education experience and expanding your GI Bill benefits.

As a part of their earned benefits, active duty men and women can also transfer all or part of their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to their spouse and/or dependent children. This is called Transfer of Entitlement (TOE). Those wishing to transfer entitlement to a dependent must be sure to do this while still on active duty.

The option to transfer education assistance to dependent family members provides them with the financial means to pay for their education and training. However, until recently, this benefit was not available to all dependent children. With the recent passing of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020, commonly referred to as Isakson and Roe, beginning January 6, 2021, service members can transfer all or part of their Post-9/11 GI Bill entitlement to their ward or foster child. This new law changes how VA administers education benefits, and more importantly, is a major step in recognizing the diversity of the Nation’s military families and their unique needs.

According to the Department of Defense, more than five million people are part of today’s military family. The men and women who serve in our Nation’s armed forces are a diverse group. So, too, are their families, to include spouses, children and other family members who represent varying demographics, experiences and needs. With the implementation of Isakson and Roe, VA is able to address the needs of more families and ensure that the GI Bill’s purpose is further realized.

Now, even more military dependents can receive help paying for tuition, books and housing using Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits. Eligible dependents, who are pursuing a degree or certification in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) field, can maximize their benefits through the Edith Nourse Rogers STEM Scholarship. To help pay for higher out-of-state, private or graduate tuition that the Post-9/11 GI Bill doesn’t cover, the Yellow Ribbon Program provides additional assistance. In addition to education and training, GI Bill benefits can provide other assistance to eligible students, such as help with paying for certain test fees and help with deciding on the right school or program, using the GI Bill Comparison Tool.

The spring months provide the Nation with an opportunity to celebrate those who serve and their families. As we celebrate service members and their families during Month of the Military Child in April and Military Appreciation Month in May, this is also an opportunity to celebrate the uniqueness of military families. In continued celebration of our Nation’s military families, VA will continue to do its part to acknowledge the differences that make them unique, while ensuring that their unique needs are also met.

Are you ready to begin your education journey, but need help getting started? Check out the GI Bill Comparison tool to learn about programs and even compare benefits by school.

<https://www.va.gov/gi-bill-comparison-tool/>

- THE VETERAN RAPID RETRAINING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Veteran application for the Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP) is now available on VA Website: <https://www.benefits.va.gov> When they receive a complete application for VRRAP, they will make an eligibility determination, and notify you directly of our decision. If you are found eligible, you may seek training from an approved VRRAP educational institution that includes IT certifications, welding and health care. Participating educational institutions may have their own admissions criteria, we encourage you to contact them directly to find out more.

To learn more about the program and for updates, visit our Facebook page. You may also contact the Education Call Center at 888-442-4551 between 7 a.m. - 6 p.m. Central Time, Monday-Friday to speak with a representative.

- GET YOUR CARE BACK ON TRACK!

A recent Center for Disease Control (CDC) survey showed more than 40% of American adults have deferred or canceled medical appointments due to concerns over COVID-19. Delaying or avoiding important medical care such as routine exams and screenings can result in a host of negative health outcomes.

You have several options when it comes to getting care during the pandemic. Doctor's offices are now safer than ever with COVID sanitation policies and guidance, should you choose to go in person or if you wish to avoid an in-person visit, telemedicine may be right for you. Through interactive audio/video technology, you can see a provider in a convenient, private setting in your own home.

Find a provider that is right for you: <http://hgb.xert.net/d.cfm?m=204259.3952.0.850275>

- DISCOVER YOUR VA BENEFITS

Are you transitioning or planning to transition out of active-duty service? VA's Military Life Cycle (MLC) modules are available to help you plan for the future. These brief 30- to 45-minute online courses can be completed at your own pace and cover topics including your available VA benefits and other resources to help you adjust to civilian life. Learn more about MLC and download our resource guides.

<https://benefits.va.gov/transition/military-life-cycle.asp>.

- FIND YOUR NEXT JOB WITH HELP FROM AN AMERICAN CORPORATE PARTNERS MENTOR

National nonprofit American Corporate Partners (ACP) works with post-9/11 Veterans to help them find meaningful employment after military service. In ACP's most recent study of participants in its one year mentorship program, the average starting salary for Veterans who utilized ACP was more than \$86,000, and importantly, more than 86% of Veterans are still at their same company one year later. The program not only helps Veterans find great jobs, but the right jobs for them.

ACP's roster of mentors is unmatched – senior executives from hundreds of America's top companies provide volunteer mentors to ACP. All industries and career paths are represented and Veterans are able to explore career opportunities, learn about job search tips and tricks, gain resume and interviewing skills, and get connected directly to employers who are hiring.

ACP has 20,000 success stories of Veterans who have had their transitions positively impacted by participating in the program. One recent success is U.S. Army Veteran Didier Muvandimwe, who enlisted in 2016 as a power generation engineer specialist and recently transitioned back into civilian life. With the help of his ACP mentor, Didier secured a position in Bank of America's Veteran Associate Program, a rotational program that will give him exposure to on-the-job training and networking opportunities with senior leaders at the bank.

Ready to take the next step?

Getting started with ACP is easy: visit <https://www.acp-usa.org/> and fill out a brief application. Answer questions that include background, interests, military experience, and mentoring preferences such as gender or former service preferences.

What to expect after applying?

ACP will reach out within 24 hours and schedule a 15-minute phone call to ask a few more clarifying questions in order to match Veterans with the right mentor. More than 20,000 Veterans have completed ACP's program, with a 98% satisfaction rate. All post-9/11 Veterans who have served at least 180 days of active duty since 9/11 are eligible.

- AFSA CHAPLAIN FACEBOOK PAGE

Have a question, need an AFSA prayer, need a prayer for you or your family, need some advice or advocacy, then visit and like the AFSA Chaplain Facebook Page at: <https://www.facebook.com/AFSAInspiration>

- BLUE WATER NAVY - NEHMER

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it will readjudicate claims for Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

This review is part of the Veterans Benefits Administration's implementation of the November 5, 2020, U.S. District Court of the Northern District of California decision to readjudicate previously denied claims as applied in Nehmer vs. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Veterans who were previously denied service connection for an herbicide related presumptive condition due to lack of in-country Vietnam service will automatically have their claims readjudicated.

Readjudication means VA will review the evidence of record and provide replacement decisions in the cases of Veterans who were previously denied service connection for one or more herbicide related conditions on the basis that military service was not performed on the landmass of the Republic of Vietnam or on its inland waterways. This review will also apply to eligible survivors of deceased Vietnam era Veterans. VA is dedicated to ensuring all Veterans receive the benefits they have earned.

VA ensures that we have the proper resources in place to meet the needs of the Veteran community. Eligible survivors of deceased Veterans may also benefit from the policy and may be eligible for benefits based on the Veterans' service

- 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? Contact the Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255 and press 1, Chat, or Text 838255.)

- CAREER SUCCESS AFTER SERVICE WITH HEROES LINKED

Heroes Linked is a nonprofit program, completely free, and completely online. It's a national program that is web based, so it can be accessed from any web connected device, like a cell phone, tablet, laptop or desktop.

Heroes Linked connects Advisees (those serving, Veterans, their spouses and Gold Star families) with a national network of volunteer Advisors – many of whom are Veterans. They are professionals and experienced in their respective industries.

Through Heroes Linked, Advisees can request, schedule and have both voice and video calls with Advisors to discuss a variety of topics, like using the GI Bill to how to be a competitive applicant, to understanding corporate culture, to how best to network, how to interview, how to launch a business, how to get promoted, or even resume review.

Heroes Linked is available any time of day, from any web connected device. Advisees can sign up within minutes and immediately begin to use the platform without restriction. Advisees can sign up on the website, at <https://my.heroeslinked.org/>

Heroes Linked is available regardless of dates of service or discharge status. In addition to Advisors, the online platform also features considerable opportunities for career success.

- AFSA PROFESSIONAL AIRMEN'S CONFERENCE & INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Get ready for Orlando -- in July? Mark your calendars now... as we'd really love to see you in person! We are certainly hopeful that we are going to be able to gather and meet in person this coming July. The dates are 24-29 July 2021! Please start making your plans now to attend and we'll see you there!



- AFSA MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

AFSA MEMBERSHIP is open to all: UNIFORMED SERVICES: Active Duty, Guard, Reserve, Retired and Veteran Military Members (Joint Services Enlisted and Commissioned Officers), Public Health Services (PHS), and National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) personnel; FAMILY MEMBERS of Uniformed Service Members, and ASSOCIATE MEMBERS: DoD Civilians, Civil Air Patrol, JROTC, Mission Partners/Sponsors and all Military Supporters. Visit: WWW.HQAFSA.org for more information and to join.