



AFSA Retiree and Veteran Affairs Newsletter

- WHITE RIBBON VA

White Ribbon VA is a national call to action to eliminate sexual harassment, sexual assault, and domestic violence across the Department of Veterans Affairs by promoting a positive change in culture so that the actions outlined in the pledge become the organizational norm. White Ribbon VA is an awareness movement where All—regardless of their gender—can participate.

Background: White Ribbon VA was inspired by the White Ribbon organization which is the world’s largest movement of men and boys working to end violence against women and girls, and to promote gender equity and healthy relationships. Since its inception in Toronto in 1991, the White Ribbon Campaign has spread to over 60 countries around the world, including college campuses, military bases and stations, and within a number of states across the country.

White Ribbon USA and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) are partnering with the VA to promote White Ribbon VA under the Stand Up to Stop Harassment Now Campaign. White Ribbon USA, NASW, and VA have the shared goal of taking an active stand in ending sexual harassment, sexual assault, and domestic violence.

We invite you to join us in making a pledge to stop violence against others and to symbolically wear the white ribbon.

White Ribbon VA Pledge: I, (your name), pledge to never commit, excuse or stay silent about sexual harassment, sexual assault or domestic violence against others. Document your commitment by accessing this webpage: <https://www.whiteribbonusa.org/whiteribbon-va-pledge>

- Annual Statewide PTSD Summit

June is known as PTSD Awareness Month, and you are invited to participate in the 2021 Annual Arizona Statewide PTSD Summit on June 29 from 9:00 a.m. to noon. The summit will focus on the mental health and wellbeing of those in the military and Veteran community through virtual breakout sessions focused on PTSD.

Learn about various elements of trauma and PTSD support through interactive breakout sessions led by Veteran community specialists in the following topic areas:

What Veterans & Family Members Need to Know; Impact of Trauma on Intimacy; Explaining PTSD to Children; Growth Following Trauma; Traumatic Brain Injury; Panel Discussion; Moral Injury and more!

There is no cost to attend, but space is limited so register today! 2021 Annual Statewide PTSD Summit Tickets, Tue, Jun 29, 2021 at 9:00 AM | Eventbrite Questions? events@arizonacoalition.org

Need support or connection to resources? Call the Be Connected Support Line @ 1-866-4AZ-VETS (429-8387) or the Veteran Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255, press 1. Visit the National Center for PTSD website: <https://ptsd.va.gov/> to learn more about PTSD and some of the treatment options VA offers to Veterans.

- VETERANS CAN HIKE, BIKE & PADDLE ACROSS AMERICA WITH HELP FROM WARRIOR EXPEDITIONS

Warrior Expeditions is a Veteran nonprofit outdoor therapy program. They help Veterans transition from their wartime experiences through long distance outdoor expeditions, said Executive Director Sean Gobin. It outfits Veterans with some of the most highly rated equipment, clothing and supplies available from the outdoor retail industry. The gear and skills training then helps Veterans successfully complete the expedition.

The group also shadows Veterans during the first leg of their journey to answer questions and troubleshoot issues. Warrior Expeditions coordinates support in the forms of transportation, lodging and food from community supporters located along the trail.

It offers hikes, bikes and paddles throughout the U.S. Ralston is one of the Veterans taking advantage of the program. To learn more visit: <https://warriorexpeditions.org/>

- THREE AGENT ORANGE PRESUMPTIVES ADDED

VA will begin implementing provisions of the William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (Public Law 116-283), adding three conditions to the list of those presumptively associated with exposure to herbicide agents, more commonly known as Agent Orange. Those conditions are bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism.

“Many of our Nation’s Veterans have waited a long time for these benefits,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough. “VA will not make them wait any longer. This is absolutely the right thing to do for Veterans and their families.”

VA will apply the provisions of court orders related to *Nehmer v. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*, which may result in an earlier date for entitlement to benefits for Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Vietnam War era Veterans and their survivors who previously filed and were denied benefits for one of these three new presumptive conditions will have their cases automatically reviewed without the need to refile a claim. VA will send letters to impacted Veterans and survivors

- PARTICULATE MATTER EXPOSURES (Airborne Hazards and Burn Pit Exposures)

The Secretary recently concluded the first iteration of a newly formed internal VA process to review scientific evidence to support rulemaking, resulting in the recommendation to consider creation of new presumptions of service connection for respiratory conditions based on VA’s evaluation of a National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine report and other evidence. VA’s review supports initiation of rulemaking to address

the role that particulate matter pollution plays in generating chronic respiratory conditions, which may include asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis for Veterans who served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Persian Gulf War and/or after September 19, 2001, or in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan during the Persian Gulf War.

“VA is establishing a holistic approach to determining toxic exposure presumption going forward. We are moving out smartly in initiating action to consider these and other potential new presumptions, grounded in science and in keeping with my authority as Secretary of VA,” said Secretary McDonough.

VA is initiating rulemaking to consider adding respiratory conditions, which may include asthma, sinusitis and rhinitis, to the list of chronic disabilities based on an association with military service in Southwest Asia, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan during the covered periods of conflict. VA will conduct broad outreach efforts to reach impacted Veterans and it encourages them to participate in the rulemaking process.

For more information, visit our website at <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/index.asp>

- HOW TO GET A VIRTUAL APPEAL HEARING

The Board of Veterans’ Appeals (BVA) has held over 13,000 virtual tele-hearings. These virtual tele-hearings allow the Board to hold hearings for Veterans safely and efficiently from wherever the Veteran chooses. Best of all, the technology allows the Board to be more efficient and more productive, increasing the number of yearly hearings it can hold.

What is a hearing? When a Veteran disagrees with a decision that VA made on their compensation claim, the Veteran has three options when asking for another look at the decision. One of those options is called an appeal, which is sent to BVA (the Board). At the Board, the Veteran has the choice to request a hearing with a Veterans Law Judge (Judge). The Veteran, their representative and the Judge all meet to discuss the Veteran’s appeal.

The Judge is there to help, asking the Veteran questions to better understand the appeal. After the hearing, the appeal is held for about 90 days or more before the Judge reviews the appeal and issues a decision.

Requesting a hearing does take the Board longer to decide the appeal. That’s because a lot of Veterans ask for hearings (more than 85,000 are waiting). Virtual tele-hearings allow the Board to hold more hearings. More hearings enable the Board to get more Veterans a faster decision.

What’s different about a virtual hearing? Virtual tele-hearings allow the Veteran and representative to use their cellphone, computer, or tablet to have a hearing with a Veterans Law Judge. It’s just like a virtual doctor appointment. The Veteran can do this from their home, from a car, or from any location with Wi-Fi.

How does it work? If the Veteran chooses a virtual tele-hearing, the Board will send the Veteran or person assisting the Veteran an email with connection details. This email will connect the Veteran to a hearing with the Judge. The Board has people standing by to help if there are any technical difficulties before or during the hearing. A Veteran’s family member or caregiver can also attend and assist.

Is it the same as other Board hearings? Yes, except the Board gets to the Veteran’s place in line much quicker! Currently, the Board has approximately 25 Judges available every day to hold hearings. Once the hearing is held, the Veteran’s appeal will move forward in the decision process.

How do you get one? Call your representative and tell them to call the Board and ask for a virtual tele-hearing, or send the Board an email requesting a virtual hearing at BVAVirtualHearing@VA.gov

- G.I. JOBS IS CONNECTING THE MILITARY COMMUNITY TO CIVILIAN OPPORTUNITIES

What We Do: Most service members transitioning out of the military have been in uniform since you were 18. Now, you're 22 or 42, brimming with talent, but lacking the necessary resources and knowledge to take the next step in the civilian world. And that's where we come in. Our job board for veterans is a great place to find top companies looking to hire veterans.

Since 2001, G.I. Jobs® has been the premier brand in military recruitment, offering articles, tips and online tools to help military transitioners explore different career and post-secondary education options. We give you specific, how-to advice on everything from choosing a college to writing a resume and interviewing. A great place to find transition-related content is our military transition resource center.

We Are Your One-Stop Resource Shop: T

- The Veterans Resource Center is for transitioning service members and veterans looking for advice and guidance to make a successful transition into the civilian workforce.
- We've built our Industry Insights Center to ensure you have all the right answers you're looking for in order to set the tone for a great post-military transition. We've made sure we have everything you need, and then some.
- The Education Resource Center is for transitioning service members and veterans looking for advice and guidance in order to get their education started with an institution who has their back.
- Entrepreneurship Resources. Got an ingenious business plan and a creative idea for a niche product or service? You sound like a future vetpreneur! We have all the resources you need!

Want more information visit our website at: <https://www.gijobs.com/>

- ADVANCED CARE PLANNING WORKSHOP

Do you know what happens in a medical situation where you become too ill to communicate your desires? Would you like to ease the burden on loved ones if this happens?

The VA Health Care System offers an Advanced Care Planning Online Workshop that helps Veterans and their families understand and know the benefits of planning for future health care decisions, if you become too ill to make or communicate healthcare choices for yourself. The workshop also helps you understand how to fill out an advanced directive that matches your preferences, so you are always in control of your healthcare.

The workshop is offered on VA Video Connect every Tuesday from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. or Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. The workshop is open to all Veterans and a guest of their choice. To register or for more information, please call, 520-792-1450 extension 1-2520.

- 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>

- 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.)

- 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.

- 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 INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION - JULY 24 -29 | Mark Your Calendars Now!