



AFSA Retiree and Veteran Affairs Newsletter

- ELIZABETH DOLE ACT SEEKS TO EXPAND SERVICES FOR DISABLED AND ELDERLY VETERANS

S.3854/H.R.6823 | (Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act)

Lawmakers in both houses of Congress recently introduced bipartisan legislation that improves and expands home and community-based services for disabled and elderly veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs, ensuring they are able to remain in their homes and receive the care they need.

The Elizabeth Dole Act, named in honor of Sen. Elizabeth Dole, also commissions research to comprehensively study the VA's capability to support the mental and emotional health of caregivers.

The legislation specifically:

- Increases the expenditure cap for non-institutional care alternative programs to nursing home care from 65 percent to 100 percent;
- Establishes partnerships to conduct alternative care programs within the community and require VA coordination with other VA programs;
- Expands access to home and community-based alternative care programs to veterans living in U.S. territories and native veterans enrolled in IHS or tribal health programs;
- Requires the creation of a centralized website to disseminate information and resources related to home and community-based programs;
- Creates a pilot program for home health aide services for veterans that reside in communities with a shortage of home health aides; and
- Requires VA to establish a warm handoff process for veterans and caregivers ineligible for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

On the Senate side, the legislation was introduced by Sens. Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Jon Tester (D-MT), who each serve on the chamber's Veterans Affairs Committee. On the House side, the measure was introduced by Reps. Julia Brownley (D-CA) and Jack Bergman (R-MI).

"By expanding home and community-based service, veterans will have the assistance needed to remain members of their communities, to be present in their family lives, to support caregivers, and to age with dignity," said Brownley.

The bill also provides greater access to resources while allowing caregivers and veterans to consider and apply for services they are eligible for more easily.

The bill's backers said the legislation exemplifies Dole's passion for finding enduring solutions for veterans in need of long-term care and their caregivers

"Caregivers help these homebound veterans maintain their independence and stay in their own homes in their own communities for as long as possible," said Moran. "The Elizabeth Dole Act is a concrete step in the right direction and delays the need to send these veterans to long-term institutional care by expanding access to home and community-based programs and increasing coordination efforts."

- VETERANS AND SPOUSES, FIND YOUR NEXT CAREER AT NO COST WITH HIREMILITARY

HireMilitary can help members of the military community translate skills and experience into secure, meaningful career opportunities. HireMilitary's team includes Veterans and military spouses who have successfully transitioned, so they speak the language and know what goes into finding a job after the military.

HireMilitary has a vast network of employers, from small businesses to Fortune 500 global brands, which look to hire Veterans and military spouses. When Veterans and spouses join HireMilitary's free talent pool, they are immediately matched to job opportunities around the country based on skill sets and interests.

Job openings are updated daily and are available to all Veterans and military spouses. It's easy to join the talent pool. Click the link below, fill out a brief form and upload a resume:

<https://tenovallc.pinpointhq.com/register-your-interest/new>.

What to expect next

After submitting the form, HireMilitary's team will provide a link to all current job openings and will continue providing updates as new positions become available. Joining the talent pool makes you a part of the HireMilitary network, where the recruitment team shares job opportunities, knowledge and experience to help members of the military community successfully land their next job.

Additional free job assistance

HireMilitary provides additional free job support services, such as crafting competitive resumes, preparing for interviews, and guiding members on the job search journey. HireMilitary can also facilitate introductions to mentors in any career field and connect Veterans and spouses with no-cost training opportunities for role-specific certifications with corporate partners.

- CONTINUOUS LEARNING FOR VETERANS - BEYOND MST MOBILE APP

Beyond MST is a free, secure private self-help mobile app created specifically to support the health and well-being of survivors of military sexual trauma (MST). The app has over 30 specialized tools and other features to help MST survivors cope with challenges, manage symptoms, improve their quality of life and find hope. Users do not need to create an account or be in treatment to use the app. Any personal information entered in the app is not shared with anyone, including the VA. Get the app and learn more about MST resources here.

<https://mobile.va.gov/app/beyond-mst> At MST We believe You and We believe in You

- TRACK YOUR VA CLAIM OR APPEAL STATUS

Going online is the easiest way to check the status of your VA claim or appeal! Use VA's online tool to review the status of claims, appeals, and decision reviews for education benefits, compensation, health care, and more. Find out how to track your status online.

You can use this tool to check the status of a VA claim or appeal for compensation. Track your:

- Disability compensation (including claims based on special needs like an automobile or clothing allowance)
- Veterans or Survivors Pension benefits
- Special monthly compensation (such as Aid and Attendance)
- Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)
- Burial allowance to help pay for a Veteran's burial and funeral expenses

You can also use this tool to check the status of a claim or appeal for other benefits like these:

- VA health care
- GI Bill or other education benefits
- Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)
- A home loan Certificate of Eligibility (COE)
- A Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) or Special Housing Adaptation (SHA) grant
- Life insurance
- A pre-need determination of eligibility to be buried in a VA national cemetery

Can I use this tool?

To use this tool, you'll need to have one of these free accounts:

- A Premium My HealtheVet account, or
- A Premium DS Logon account (used for eBenefits and milConnect), or
- A verified ID.me account that you can create here on VA.gov
 - o <https://www.va.gov/claim-or-appeal-status/>

RETIREE FORM WIZARD NOW AVAILABLE FOR USE: DD FORM 2894 - DESIGNATION OF BENEFICIARY

We are excited to introduce the Form Wizard for the DD Form 2894 – Designation of Beneficiary. This is the first Form Wizard available for use by retirees. There will be more to follow.

What does the Form Wizard do? It 'takes the form out of the form' by having the retiree answer a series of questions. Once the questions are answered, the wizard automatically places the answers in the correct areas of the form and generates a ready-to-print PDF of the completed form.

Users can save a PDF of the generated form to their own computer. The DD 2894 Form Wizard has electronic signature capability. This electronic signature option allows the retiree to electronically sign the form in place of their handwritten signature. Use of the electronic signature makes the process of completing and submitting the form much easier for retirees.

They can fill it out, sign it, and authenticate it online and then directly upload it online to askDFAS on DFAS.mil instead of having to print out the form, sign it, scan it and then upload it online.

The DD 2894 Form Wizard is available at: <https://www.dfas.mil/RetiredMilitary/forms/>

- GRAY AREA RETIREES: GET CONNECTED AND GET INFORMED

For Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve and Air Force Reserve Gray Area Retirees, there is a new avenue to stay connected and informed between the time they stop drilling and the time they start receiving retired pay.

It's a new kind of myPay account especially for Gray Area Retirees.

If you are a Gray Area Retiree who uses your new myPay account to keep your contact information updated, you will benefit from receiving important information from DFAS and your Branch of Service, such as news about changes in laws or policies that impact your retirement benefits, reminders about applying for retired pay, and your Services' Retiree Newsletter.

Plus, coming soon: with a current email address in your new myPay account, when DFAS receives your completed application for retired pay from your Branch of Service, DFAS will send email status notifications to you. Note: Gray Area Retirees should always work with their Branch of Service to complete their retired pay application.

Who Are Gray Area Retirees?

Gray Area Retirees are members who served in the Guard or Reserves and qualified for retired pay, have retired from their service (stopped drilling), but are not yet at the age where they can start receiving retired pay. The time between their retirement from the service and the date when they are eligible to begin receiving retired pay is the "gray area." The "gray area" applies even if the member is in the Retired Reserve.

A Guard or Reserve member is generally not eligible to start receiving retired pay until they reach age 60. However, some periods of active duty or active service can reduce the age requirement below 60 years of age (Reduced Age Retirement). The earliest age that a Gray Area Retiree can start receiving reduced age retired pay is age 50.

Find Out More - Check out the new, helpful information for military Gray Area Retirees at:

<https://www.dfas.mil/grayarea>

- BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE FROM THE PRIVACY OF YOUR HOME

Accessing healthcare for your mental well-being shouldn't be difficult. The new year offers new ways to care for your health with Doctor on Demand. In addition to offering virtual medical visits, it's now easier than ever to seek care from licensed therapists and psychiatrists.

TRICARE beneficiaries have access to Doctor on Demand's new behavioral health program. Appointments are available within a few days and are offered beyond regular business hours to meet your scheduling needs.

Telemedicine providers and therapists can help with:

- Anxiety

- Depression
- Stress and burnout
- Isolation
- Grief and loss
- Relationship issues
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Postpartum depression

You will be told the cost of your visit up front, so you won't have any surprises afterwards. During the COVID-19 stateside public health emergency, there are zero copays or cost-shares for telemedicine care are available in some areas. This could change at any time. Register for Doctor on Demand or download the app from Apple's app store or Google Play. We offer additional telemedicine behavioral health options, too, through Telemynd and network providers.

- AFSA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION & FAMILY REUNION

You are invited to join us in Las Vegas, Nevada 7-11 August 2022 at Tropicana Convention Center

Tropicana Las Vegas® – a DoubleTree by Hilton is located on the south end of the Las Vegas Strip just minutes from the McCarran International airport, major convention centers and top entertainment stadiums including the T-Mobile Arena. With a unique South Beach vibe, the hotel features rooms, suites and luxury villas, a fresh redesign of the 50,000-square-foot casino, several award-winning restaurants including Robert Irvine's Public House, Glow, a Mandara Spa and fitness center. In addition to the lush Tropicana Pool, there are first-class entertainment acts that include: Legends in Concert, Purple Reign: The Prince Tribute Show, the world-famous Laugh Factory comedy club, featuring Murray the Magician and Rich Little.

Take advantage of our special conference rates

AFSA Members, Exhibitors, sponsors and guests are invited to stay with us at the Tropicana Las Vegas. With rooms starting at \$102 per night. This special rate includes the Resort Charge and is offered three days pre- and three-day post- event for you and your family to enjoy Reunion/Vacation opportunities. Daily Resort Charge includes: Wi-Fi; self-parking; 2 bottles of water per day; 2 for 1 frozen drinks at the Tropicana Pool; 20% off Trips at Zero 1 Off Road Adventures; 20% off Grand Canyon Tours; Glow Spa- \$30 off services over \$140, and 20% off retail products.

- 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.