



AFSA Retiree and Veteran Affairs Newsletter



- TRAIN FOR A CAREER IN IT

Do you have at least one day of GI Bill entitlement remaining and are seeking a career in the high-tech industry? VA's Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses pilot program, or VET TEC, can help you reach that goal. VET TEC will pay tuition and fees as well as a housing allowance while you earn your certification. Learn more about how the VET TEC program can help you with a career in IT.

- IMPROVING VETERAN APPEALS

VA is committed to helping you through your appeals process. Appeals Modernization provides Veterans with three review lanes from which to choose. Learn how Veterans can appeal a compensation claim decision directly to the Board of Veterans' Appeals.



- SUPPORTING WOMEN VETERANS

Women Veterans have a long and important history of service in the U.S. military. VA is dedicated to providing them with a wide range of benefit services and programs. Learn about the benefits available to you, as well as the services provided at VA's Center for Women Veterans.

- LAWMAKERS PUSH TO EXTEND TAX FILING SEASON UNTIL 15 JULY

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., has proposed giving taxpayers until July 15 to submit their 2019 income tax returns – 90 days from the original April 15 due date.

The Tax Filing Relief for America Act, which Senators Steve Daines, R-Mont., and Angus King, I-Maine, are joining Thune in introducing, aims to have the filing deadline coincide with the new July 15 deadline for taxpayers to pay the IRS taxes owed for 2019. Senators Richard Burr, R-N.C., and Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., are co-sponsors.

Earlier this week, the Treasury Department announced it would give taxpayers more time to pay what they owed, due to coronavirus concerns. But the federal agency decided to stick with the original April 15 due date for filing the returns. The development has caused confusion and consternation for filers and tax professionals.

"Offering taxpayers only relief for federal income tax payments but not the filing of any tax or information returns is not sufficient, nor does it recognize the burdens our citizens are facing across the country," said Edward Karl, vice president of taxation with the American Institute of CPAs, in a statement.

- 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, 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.

VBA benefits and services provided to Veterans, families, and survivors will continue to be delivered throughout the duration of COVID-19 impacts.

- NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

VA is working closely with The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal partners, monitoring an outbreak of Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

VA has activated its emergency management coordination cell (EMCC) and is implementing an aggressive and collaborative public health response to protect and care for Veterans.

**** What to do if you have symptoms****

If you have both:

- * Symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath and
- * Have either recently returned from China or have direct exposure to others diagnosed with 2019-nCoV.

Call before visiting your local VA medical center to seek care. Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.

LEARN MORE <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus/index.asp>

- VA EYES \$16 BILLION-PLUS IN EMERGENCY FUNDS TO HELP WITH CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

Department of Veterans Affairs leaders are preparing to request more than \$16 billion in new funding to help the sprawling medical system respond to the continued coronavirus threat, according to multiple congressional officials involved in the matter.

The emergency funding plan was first reported by CNN. VA officials said there is no formal request before lawmakers at the moment.

"VA is planning for all contingencies but has not finalized any plans or made any requests," said VA Press Secretary Christina Mandreucci.

- THE PENTAGON HAS SENT A NEW LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL ON THE SPACE FORCE TO CONGRESS

The Pentagon has sent proposed legislation to Capitol Hill that would help clarify the role of the Space Force and fill in some details on how the new service will be organized.

But while the proposal was initially anticipated to answer some major questions — like whether the service will have a vice chief or how to incorporate the Guard and Reserve forces — the version sent to Capitol Hill earlier this month kicks most of those issues down the road.

Instead of submitting a single proposal, the Pentagon has split the more controversial policy issues into a separate document currently under consideration by the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Defense News obtained a copy of the legislative proposal submitted to Congress on March 6. In a statement, Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Uriah Orland characterized it as containing technical and conforming amendments necessary "to fully integrate the U.S. Space Force as a separate service" and give it parity with the other branches of the military.

"The Department will continue to work with Congress on possible additional authorities to enable the effective stand up of the Space Force, and we look forward to our continued work with Congress on the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act," he said.

The March 6 proposal outlines a couple new details and clarifications. For one, it gives the president the power to appoint an Air Force general to the role of Chief of Space Operations until December 20, 2023 — giving the military some time to roll its space officer corps into the Space Force. Gen. John "Jay" Raymond currently holds this position and is the sole official member of the Space Force.

The proposal also includes language meant to ensure that the general officer chosen to lead the Space Force maintains a tight relationship with the rest of the services. The proposal mandates that the president may only nominate an officer that has "significant experience on joint duty assignments," including "one full tour of duty in a joint duty assignment ... as a general officer."

In addition, the proposal grants the Air Force secretary, who is also the civilian leader of the Space Force, the authority to divide the service into different organizations and to assign Space Force officers to command the service's installations, activities and personnel.

Much of the proposal's 61 pages are dedicated to broadening existing statutes in U.S. Code Title 10 to include the Space Force. Title 10 lays out the foundational organization and responsibilities of the military services.

In some cases, the language specifies where some of the Air Force's existing infrastructure will also be shared with the Space Force. For example, the inspector general of the Air Force would be renamed the "the Inspector General of the Department of the Air Force." If agreed to by Congress, the position would be open to Space Force officers and that official's duties would also include conducting oversight of the new space service.

The Air Force and Space Force will also share a surgeon general, chief of chaplains, judge advocate general and deputy judge advocate general — a decision that will serve to save money and limit duplication.

The Space Force hasn't decided what it will call its members, and it hasn't chosen whether it will adopt a rank structure that mirrors the Air Force — with a general at the top — or an alternative naming convention. So some of the changes made in the legislative proposal would revise existing statutes to also apply to members of the Space Force.

For example, students going through the Air Force Academy will now be referred to broadly as "cadets," not "Air Force cadets," and professors at the academy will be either Air Force colonels, lieutenant colonels or the equivalent rank in the Space Force.

"The Department is currently engaged in an evaluation of the appropriate grade structure for the Space Force and this proposal allows Space Force members to be treated equally to their counterparts in the other Armed Forces, while maintaining the opportunity for the Department to determine the appropriate grade structure for the Space Force," the department writes in its summary of the proposal.

- VETERANS AND FAMILY MEMBERS AIM HIGHER FOR CONTINUED EDUCATION WITH A NEW AFSA MEMBERSHIP

AFSA has partnered together with Columbia Southern University to provide a sponsored One-Course Scholarship (**Over a \$700 value. Plus Registration Fee-Waiver and Books at No Cost!**) for all military veterans/retirees and family members.

This Is A Continued Educational Opportunity For Those Who Have Borne The Battle!

AFSA is honored to help Military Veterans/Retirees and their Family Members on their journey to reach higher educational goals. Join AFSA now to participate. Membership will be validated before scholarship is awarded. Participants must enroll in the CSU College course within six months of joining the AFSA. Visit our website at www.hqafsa.org/edconnect

- 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.)