

# CONNECTION



Connecticut Chapter 120

Greater Hartford

Over 35 Years of Service to Veterans

April 2019

Visit Our Website at [www.vva120.org](http://www.vva120.org)

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VVA Press Release  
March 21, 2019



## VVA to President Trump: Help us Heal our Nation

Statement by VVA National President John Rowan:

On the eve of Vietnam Veterans Day, March 29, we are chagrined by the President's inability to let a fellow Vietnam veteran rest in peace.

Every day we live our founding principle, "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."

We have succeeded in teaching our fellow Americans that warriors don't make policy. They have learned to separate the war from the warrior.

The era of spurning veterans is past. We have made sure of it.

Our experience has taught us how fear and hatred corrode the soul and imprison the spirit.

We have forgiven those who have condemned us for answering our country's call.

We have forgiven those who received educational and medical deferments from serving in the war.

We have forgiven Hollywood for its negative portrayal of veterans.

We are proud of the warmth, respect and honor that our newest veterans receive today.

And we are greatly saddened by the President's inability to let a Vietnam War hero rest in peace.

Mr. Trump, it's time to move on. Help us heal our Nation and honor those who have served and sacrificed.

## Meetings

The Chapter 120 membership meeting and elections will be held on Thursday, April 4, 2019 at 7:00pm in the Machinists Union Hall, 357 Main St., East Hartford.

The Board of Directors will meet on Thursday, April 25 at 7:00pm. Call the Chapter office for any changes in schedule. Chapter members are welcomed to attend.

## Notice

If you have moved or changed your address, PLEASE notify us immediately. Call the Chapter office at (860) 568-9212, mail us at the address on the back of this newsletter or e-mail the Newsletter editor at [ctchapter120@aol.com](mailto:ctchapter120@aol.com).

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## Chapter/State News

### Chapter 120 Elections This Month

Elections for six National Convention delegates and two alternates will be held at the Chapter 120 membership meeting on April 4, 2019. Three members of the Election Committee will also be elected on that date. If you are interested in running for a Delegate to the National Convention to be held in Spokane, WA on July 15 - 20, 2019, you should start planning for your trip and consider expenses necessary to attend the Convention. Connecticut State Council and Chapter 120 have agreed to assist with the majority of expenses (\$1,300 of an approximate total expense of \$1,700). If you are interested in a Delegate position or wish to nominate a Chapter member for that position, please contact the Election Committee (Bill Chiodo, Ken Lewis or Tim Siggia). Election Rules are posted below.

### Connecticut Chapter 120 Election Rules

Revised November 2, 2006

#### Section 1. Annual Elections

- A. The Chapter officers will be elected on even numbered years at the April meeting and will serve a two (2) year term in office. They are the following: President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- B. The Board of Directors will be elected on even numbered years at the April meeting and will serve a two (2) year term of office.
- C. The State Council Delegates will be elected on even numbered years at the April meeting and will serve a two (2) year term of office.
- D. The Delegates to the National Convention will be elected on odd numbered years at the April meeting and will serve a two (2) year term in office.
- E. The three (3) member Election Committee will be elected at the April meeting and will serve a one (1) year term.

#### Section 2. Candidates

- A. Candidates must have been a member for a minimum of fifteen (15) days prior to the election.
- B. Candidates must have on file with the Chapter, or present to the Election Committee their DD-214, or other proof of qualification for membership.
- C. Candidates may be nominated from the floor on the night of the election. Candidates must be present to accept the nomination or have submitted a letter of intent to the Election Committee.
- D. Candidates will be allowed space in the newsletter to campaign but not to defame or slander the other candidates. Space allowable will be at the discretion of the Newsletter Editor.
- E. Candidates will be allowed five (5) minutes to speak at the April meeting if desired.
- F. Candidates may use the membership list for a mailing pursuant to the Chapter rules and Federal laws governing the membership list.

#### Section 3. Voters

- A. To be eligible to vote, you must have been a member for fifteen (15) days prior to the election. This would include new members or reinstated members that are not paid up for the prior year.
- B. Voting members must have on file with the Chapter, or present to the Nominating Committee, their DD-214 or proof of qualification for membership.
- C. Voting members must have paid their dues for the current fiscal year. Membership may be renewed the night of the election, but must be paid prior to casting their vote.

## Birthday Wishes

Birthday wishes go to our members born in April. May you have many more!

<i>Robert Bagge</i>	<i>Arthur Bagnall</i>
<i>Stephen Clark</i>	<i>James J. Gavin</i>
<i>Steven Harris</i>	<i>Walter Korfel</i>
<i>William V. Loder</i>	<i>Peter Mazzadra</i>
<i>Nathaniel Milliner</i>	<i>David R. Motowidlak</i>
<i>William J. Neligon</i>	<i>John J. Orvis</i>
<i>John F. Panciera</i>	<i>Bruce E. Raccio</i>
<i>Gerald A. Sweeney</i>	<i>C. Daniel Thayer, Jr.</i>

*And a special birthday wish to Gary Cutler, oldest son of Chapter member John Cutler. Gary was born when his Dad was in Vietnam.*

**Section 4. Election Procedures**

- A. The voting period will be from the close of nominations until 8:00 PM.
- B. The quorum required to hold the election should be 10 members.
- C. A candidate can request a recount of the ballots for his or her office if the margin between the candidates running for that office is 10% or less based on the number of total votes cast.
- D. The ballots will be kept for one (1) year in a sealed envelope signed by the Election Committee or their appointees.
- E. Results will be announced the night of the election.
- F. If an Election Committee member is running for an elected position, they shall appoint a volunteer vote counter from the floor.
- G. The vote will be taken by a secret paper ballot.

**AGENT ORANGE**

**Agent Orange Exposure Fairness Act: HR566/S332**

Two illnesses believed to be caused by contact with Agent Orange, under VA rating regulations, must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of contact of herbicides.

- 1. Chloracne** – Skin condition, skin rash, looks like acne, appears anywhere on the body anytime, lesions often found behind the ears, armpits, groin region are itchy and get red hot
- 2. Peripheral Neuropathy** – Illness of the nervous system that causes numbness, tingling of hands, feet and legs, weakness of muscles, loss of coordination and loss of reflexes

The Agent Orange Exposure Fairness Act would amend 38 CFR, 3.309 and USC 1116 to eliminate onset dates for the presumptive diseases. Certain limitations were placed on the aforementioned diseases, establishing unreasonable and punitive onset dates resulting in loss of earned disability compensation. Therefore we ask our elected and appointed officials to remedy this wrong and award earned benefits through the Department of Veteran Affairs.

Question: Why were we not asked if we sprayed or came in contact with Agent Orange at time of discharge? We were treated for skin rash in Vietnam but treatment was never entered into our medical files. No blood test was ever given. Why is it that every Vietnam veteran I speak with has the same illness but no record was recorded? Why weren't we given protective gear (masks, gloves, protective suits)?

How could we apply for treatment when we didn't hear about Agent Orange until 1978? Most of us had been discharged by then. How can the government put an end date on an illness?

We NEED your support! Call your house & senate reps to co-sponsor this bill and bring justice to our veterans! Go to congress.gov type in 5332 &/or HR-566 to see the bill.

**Contact:**

Gerry Wright 1SGT (RET) U.S. ARMY  
860-982-3944  
happyhauler@comcast.net

Please contact your congress & senate representatives and ask them to co-sponsor this bill written by Representative Joe Courtney of CT & Gerry Wright.

**Senate Reps:**

Chris Murphy 860.549.8463 or \*202.224.4041  
Richard Blumenthal 860.258.6940 or \*202.224.2823

**House Reps:**

John Larson 860.278.8888 or \*202.225.2265  
Rosa DeLauro 203.562.3718 or \*202.223.3661  
Jahana Hayes 860.223.8412 or \*202.225.4476  
Jim Himes 203.333.6600 or \*202.225.5541  
Joe Courtney 860-886-0139 or \*202.543.2239

\* Ask to speak to the military liaison then ask for a follow up phone call.

*Extracted from The Hartford Courant*

**Greater Middletown Military Museum to open in April**



It was the discovery of an old American flag that flew over city hall during World War II that prompted a group of local veterans to embark on a 15-year journey to preserve the history of Middletown's military servicemen and women.

Now, after years of planning and months of sorting through tens of thousands of donated items, the Greater Middletown Military Museum is preparing for opening day on April 13.

In the brand new museum building, which sits atop a hill overlooking the Connecticut Trees of Honor monument in Veteran's Memorial Park, are thousands of artifacts illustrating American military history. Uniforms from World War I and World War II, boxes of letters from soldiers, helmets, sabers, rifles and model planes abound. Outside the museum, a 6,000-pound restored U.S. Army Huey helicopter used in Vietnam sits on a pedestal.

"We're not just collecting pieces -- we're collecting stories," curator Ken McClellan said.

Visitors can come to the museum and learn about military history through the items on display and the large collection of books and documents. The museum's collection spans from the French and Indian War through the Iraq War.

Some of the museum's more unique items include reproductions, made by Vinal Technical High School, of cooking utensils used by prisoners of war in Germany and replicas of nose art from military planes.

The museum particularly highlights Middletown's contributions to military history. The city was the home of several weapons manufacturers during the War of 1812 and the Civil War.

"Middletown has a long history of supporting the military," McClellan said.

Middletown was also once home to several notable names in U.S. military history, including Major Gen. Maurice Rose, the highest ranking Jewish officer during World II. Rose was born in Middletown and was killed in action in Germany toward the end of the war. Going further back to the Civil War, Middletown resident Gen. Joseph Mansfield served in the union army and was killed at the Battle of Antietam. His house still stands on Main Street.

But the information available on Middletown's servicemen and women isn't exclusive to big names in military history. The museum's board hopes that their library, digital documents and photographs will help residents find family members who served in the armed forces.

The million dollar museum campus was funded by the city and the state. The project is not backed by a veterans' group and anyone is welcome to visit and get involved.

To celebrate the museum's opening, there will be a ribbon-cutting at 2 p.m. April 13 at the museum, followed by an open house. A commemorative dinner at the Sons of Italy hall will begin at 6 p.m. that night. For tickets to the dinner call 860-788-7215 or visit [www.gmvmm.com](http://www.gmvmm.com).

### VVA Membership Change

On October 20, 2018, VVA's National Board of Directors passed a motion to have one class of membership: Life membership. All active and pending three-year members have been converted to life members. This change was reflected on the October 2018 membership roster. After October 31, 2018, all dues payments received for one-year membership will be refunded along with instructions for renewing as a life member. Active one-year members will remain active until their current term expires and are invited to renew as life members thereafter. The link to the new membership application is <https://vva.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/APPLICATION-FOR-MEMBERSHIP.pdf>.

### POW/MIA News



From DPAA Year in Review

### DPAA Accounts for 203 Missing Personnel in Fiscal Year 2018

In Fiscal Year 2018, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency accounted for 203 formerly missing persons from past conflicts, the highest yearly total reached by the agency or its predecessor

organizations. Also, the agency individually identified the remains of three additional personnel, who were previously accounted for as part of group burials.

"Providing the families of the missing those long-sought answers with which they can at least achieve some solace is a profound manifestation of our nation's steadfast commitment to them and their loved ones," said DPAA Director Kelly McKeague. "Because it's a sacred obligation, if not moral imperative, our over 600 military and civilian professionals earnestly contribute their talents, dedication, and passion to the noble mission with which we are entrusted."

Broken down by conflict, 10 were accounted for from the Vietnam War, 37 from the Korean War, and 156 from World War II.

"Science and technology have expanded exponentially in recent years, enabling identifications that even five years ago seemed impossible," said Rear Admiral Jon Kreitz, DPAA's Deputy Director for Operations. "We also attribute the increasing yearly trend to DPAA's expanded use of partnerships, a more precise management of disinterments, and improvements in our robust field operations."

DPAA's partnerships are strong and extensive. First, the government officials and people in each of the countries the agency operates in provide invaluable assistance and respect to the mission. Collaborative support from the four Service Casualty Offices; the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory; U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, the U.S. European Command and the Defense Intelligence Agency – Stony Beach; the Department of Veterans Affairs and the American Battle Monuments Commission cemeteries are also vital. DPAA's partnering with non-Federal entities continues to expand agency capacity and capabilities. Additionally, agency efforts benefit from partnerships with family groups and veterans service organizations.

Today, DPAA is focused on the research, investigation, recovery, and identification of the approximately 34,000 (out of approximately 83,000 missing DoD personnel) believed to be recoverable, who were lost in conflicts from World War II to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

At The Capitol



**VA Bills ready for floor action**

As of March 22, five VA Committee bills have made their way for a vote on the floor:

**House Bill No. 7061.** AN ACT CONCERNING THE OFFERING OF CERTAIN MOTOR VEHICLES FROM THE STATE MOTOR POOL TO VETERANS' CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS. To allow surplus vehicles from the state motor pool to be provided to veterans' charitable organizations for donation to certain disabled combat veterans

with a demonstrated need for financial assistance.

**House Bill No. 7063.** AN ACT CONCERNING LEASING OF MILITARY DEPARTMENT FACILITIES. To authorize the Adjutant General to lease military facilities to members of the armed forces of the state for ceremonies to recognize significant military career events.

**House Bill No. 7064.** AN ACT CONCERNING MUNICIPAL VETERANS' REPRESENTATIVES. To change "veterans' service contact person" to "municipal veterans' representative" and to permit volunteers to serve as such representatives.

**Senate Bill No. 800.** AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE MEDAL OF MERIT FOR CIVILIANS. To establish a medal of merit for civilians.

**Senate Bill No. 802.** AN ACT PROVIDING FOR DISCOUNTED FISHING LICENSES FOR CERTAIN VETERANS. To reduce by fifty per cent the fees charged to certain disabled veterans for sport fishing licenses, permits, tags or stamps.

On The Hill



**Ranking Member Roe Introduces Bipartisan Legislation to Expand Vet Center Eligibility**

Rep. Phil Roe, M.D. (R-Tenn.) Ranking Member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs introduced H.R. 1812, The Vet Center Eligibility Expansion Act, on March 18. The bill is cosponsored by Rep. Mike Levin (D-Cali.), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, and supported by the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS).

"It is imperative that we do all we can to reduce the number of suicides among those who served our country," said Roe. "By allowing members of the National Guard, Reserve, and Coast Guard who are not currently eligible to access care at Vet Centers, we can rest assured that all those who serve in response to an emergency at the national, state, or local level are able to access the counseling, services, and support that they need and come one step closer to eliminating suicide among these brave men and women."

"We must do more to address the epidemic of suicide among veterans in this country, and we can start by ensuring all service members have the mental health support they need when they return to civilian life," said Levin.

"Currently, National Guard, Coast Guard, and reserve service members are exempt from receiving readjustment counseling services at VA Medical Centers, but they often face emotionally challenging deployments to natural disasters or civil disorders that require counseling. This bipartisan legislation is an important step in closing the mental health care gap for those service members, and I will continue to work with my colleagues on ways to address tragic rates of suicide among our nation's heroes."

"We applaud Congressmen Phil Roe and Mike Levin for seeking to expand Vet Center access to National Guard and Reserve members who might be considering suicide as a final option," said Sergeant Major (Retired) Frank Yoakum, Executive Director, EANGUS. "This expanded eligibility is a great step toward reaching our Members who have served their State and country and are in need of someone to talk to as they consider one of life's biggest decisions."

Background: This bill would expand the eligibility to receive counseling from VA Vet Centers to members of the National Guard and Reserves or Coast Guard who served during emergency situations in the wake of a national emergency, major disaster, civil disorder, or drug interdiction operation.

**Tester, Boozman, Brown Work to Stop Veterans from Being Punished for VA's Miscalculations**

U.S. Senators Jon Tester (D-Mont.), John Boozman (R-Ark.), and Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) introduced legislation on March 20 to prevent the VA from charging veterans for its own accounting mistakes.

The VA annually sends as many as 200,000 overpayment notices totaling thousands of dollars to veterans and their families, sending them into crippling debt and withholding future benefits payments until the debt is paid. These overpayments are often a result of the VA's own accounting errors, but the VA puts veterans and their families on the hook for repaying the debt.

Tester, Boozman, and Brown introduced the Veterans Debt Fairness Act to reduce these overpayment errors and require the VA to hold itself, and not veterans, accountable for its mistakes.

Their bill requires the VA to shoulder the debt burden of overpayments if the VA was responsible for the debt.

VA benefit overpayment notices have been steadily increasing, sometimes for a payment period dating back as far as five years. Many of these debt overpayments are at no fault of the veteran or their dependents, but rather VA accounting errors and record mismanagement. Currently, the VA can send out debt repayment notices to veterans requesting the full amount due within 30 days while freezing all benefit payments until the debt is repaid.

The Veterans Debt Fairness Act requires the VA to update its computer systems so veterans can update their own information regarding their beneficiaries, eliminating a key cause of overpayments. Under their bill, the VA would be required to offer electronic notification of debt notices, including information on how to file appeals and hardship waivers. Debt collection would have to adhere to a 5-year backlog time limit and no more than 25% withholding of benefit payments.

The Senators introduced similar legislation last year. Provisions of that bill were signed into law as a part of Tester’s Veterans Benefits and Transition Act, forcing the VA to allow veterans to make changes to their personal information themselves. The backlog of these information requests were a main contributor to VA overpayments.

Cosponsors of the Veterans Debt Fairness Act include Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), and Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.).

**Veterans Affairs News**



*From Stars & Stripes*

**Veterans groups appeal to Trump over benefits for Blue Water Navy veterans**

Ten national veterans’ organizations pleaded with

President Donald Trump on Tuesday March 12, 2019, asking him to direct the Justice Department not to appeal a recent federal court decision that could extend benefits to thousands of Vietnam War veterans.

The Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ruled 9-2 in January that “Blue Water” Navy veterans, those who served aboard ships offshore during the war, are eligible for benefits to treat illnesses linked to exposure to the chemical herbicide Agent Orange.

The Justice Department and Department of Veterans Affairs have until the end of the month to seek a review of the case from the U.S. Supreme Court. VA General Counsel James Byrne said last month that the agency hadn’t decided whether it would appeal but officials were “taking it under advisement.”

“On behalf of the undersigned veterans’ service organizations and our millions of members, we urge you to direct the Justice Department NOT to appeal the U.S. Appeals Court for the Federal Circuit decision,” the veterans’ organizations wrote in a letter to the president.

The court ruled in favor of Alfred Procopio, Jr., 73, who served on the USS Intrepid during the Vietnam War. Procopio is one of tens of thousands of veterans who served aboard aircraft carriers, destroyers and other ships and were deemed ineligible for the same disability benefits as those veterans who served on the ground and inland waterways.

The decision came 10 years after the VA denied Procopio’s disability claims for diabetes and prostate cancer.

At issue was interpretation of the current law, which allows easier access to disability benefits for veterans who “served in the Republic of Vietnam” and suffer from one of a list of illnesses linked to the Agent Orange. The herbicide has been found to cause respiratory cancers, Parkinson’s disease and heart disease, as well as other conditions.

The court determined territorial seas should be included in the definition of “Republic of Vietnam” – a point the government disputed.

For Procopio and other Blue Water Navy veterans, the decision could result in thousands of dollars of disability benefits each month. John Wells, one of the attorneys on the case, estimated 50,000 to 70,000 veterans could become eligible for benefits.

The ruling followed a failed effort in Congress last year to approve the benefits.

The House voted unanimously in favor of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act last year, but the legislation stalled in the Senate after Wilkie voiced his opposition, citing high costs and insufficient scientific evidence linking Blue Water Navy veterans to Agent Orange.

The House and Senate reintroduced the legislation at the start of the new congressional session this year.

The top lawmakers on the veterans’ affairs committees – Sens. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., Jon Tester, D-Mont., and Reps. Mark Takano, D-Calif., and Phil Roe, R-Tenn. – said in February that they would attempt again to pass the legislation.

The 10 veterans groups argued Tuesday that the court decision authorizes the VA to make the benefits available now, without having to wait for legislation.

“We call on you to direct [Wilkie] to immediately begin implementing this decision so that justice is finally provided to the men and women who served in Vietnam, suffered from the devastating long-term health effects of Agent Orange exposure, but who today are denied the benefits and health care they have earned,” they wrote.

The letter was signed by Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, The American Legion, Paralyzed Veterans of America, AMVETS, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Fleet Reserve Association, Association of the United States Navy, Vietnam Veterans of America and Military Officers Association of America.

“Mr. President, a veteran is someone who at one point in their life wrote a blank check made payable to the United States of America, for an amount up to and including their life,” the groups concluded. “We ask that you and our grateful nation take another step towards meeting that commitment.”

## VA strengthens care and benefits for Veterans with \$220 billion budget



President Donald J. Trump is proposing a total of \$220.2 billion in his fiscal year (FY) 2020 budget for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), a 9.6 percent increase above fiscal 2019.

“The budget request will ensure the nation’s Veterans receive high-quality health care and timely access to

benefits and services,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “The budget supports the most significant transformation of VA since its inception, positioning the department as the premier provider for Veterans’ services and benefits. This is a significant increase in VA funding and demonstrates the administration’s commitment to supporting our Veterans.”

### Budget highlights

The FY 2020 budget includes \$97 billion (an increase of \$6.8 billion, or 7.5 percent) in discretionary funding, including resources for health care, benefit administration, and national cemeteries, as well as \$123.2 billion (an increase of \$12.3 billion or 11.1 percent) in mandatory funding above 2019 for benefit programs inclusive of Compensation and Pensions, Readjustment Benefits, Housing and Insurance. This budget provides robust funding for the secretary’s top priorities.

**MISSION Act:** \$8.9 billion for implementation of the Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 (MISSION Act) to provide greater choice on where Veterans receive their care, maintain care for current Choice Program users, provide a new urgent care benefit and expand the Caregivers program.

**Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM):** \$1.6 billion (\$496 million above FY 2019) to create and implement a single longitudinal electronic health record for military service members from their active duty to Veteran status, and ensure interoperability with the Department of Defense. The increase will support ongoing activities at the three initial deployment

sites and the deployment to further sites, as well as additional site assessments.

**Transforming Business Systems:** Funds the continued deployment of a modern integrated financial and acquisition management system (\$184.9 million) and implementation of the Defense Medical Logistics Standard Support (\$36.7 million).

**Improving Customer Service:** \$8.1 million to maintain VA’s trajectory of improving its customer service. The results of a recent customer-experience feedback survey of Veterans regarding their trust of the department’s health care outpatient services showed “trust scores” for outpatient services increased from 84.7 percent in June 2017 to 87.9 percent in January 2019.

**Preventing Veteran Suicide:** \$9.4 billion (\$426 million above 2019) for mental health services, which includes \$222 million for suicide-prevention outreach, a \$15.6 million increase over 2019.

**Women’s Health:** \$547 million (\$42 million above 2019) for gender-specific women’s health care. This increase will help meet VA’s goals of developing Designated Women’s Health Primary Care Providers at every site where women access VA care, and improve the availability and quality of services to women Veterans.

**Capital Investments:** \$1.6 billion for major and minor construction, including \$410 million for the construction of a new hospital in Louisville, Kentucky, and \$150 million for the Manhattan, New York, medical center.

### From the Service Rep’s Desk



## VA Individual Unemployability: Understanding New Verification Process

The VA recently began sending out letters to veterans in receipt of a total disability rating (100 percent) based on individual

unemployability (IU) that detail the department’s new process for verification of employment status. The letters include some confusing language that the VA is working to clear up. Previously, the VA sent VA Form 21-4140 (Employment Questionnaire) annually, asking veterans to report employment status in order to make a determination on continued IU eligibility. If a response was not received within 30 days, the VA would begin the process of discontinuation. If a response was received, the VA would determine action based on the information provided by the veteran.

Under the new process, the VA will use a data wage match with the Social Security Administration (SSA) to identify veterans in receipt of IU who also have earned wages above the poverty threshold, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, for the previous calendar year. However, this passage in the letter has created some confusion:

“Military Pay or Workers' Compensation: Your payment may be affected by the following, which you must bring to our attention: Receipt of armed forces service retirement pay, unless your retirement pay has already been reduced because of award of disability compensation.”

The form the VA requires for eligibility verification only requires the veteran to fill out the Employment Certification Section (II) or the Unemployment Certification Section (III). If employed, you must provide Employer Name/Address, Type of Work, Hours per Week, Dates of Employment, Time Lost from Illness and Highest Gross Earnings per Month for each employer during the past 12 months. The catch here is that the VA is really only interested in “earned income.” Military retired pay and Social Security benefits are not considered “earned income” and are not required to be reported on the questionnaire. The VA is in the process of rewriting the IU Eligibility letter, and thankfully the draft copy no longer includes the confusing language on receipt of armed forces service retirement pay.

**50 Years Ago**

**April 10 - SECRETARY OF DEFENSE LAIRD PLANS VIETNAMIZATION.** President Nixon tasks Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird and the Department of Defense with the overall planning and implementation of Vietnamization, the proposal to turn over the conduct of the war to the South Vietnamese. On June 23, 1969, Secretary Laird and the Joint Chiefs of Staff present the President with a plan to Vietnamize the war.

**April 30 - U.S. TROOP STRENGTH IN VIETNAM PEAKS AT 543,482.** U.S. troop strength reaches a peak at 543,482. By 31 December 1969, 143,400 forces are withdrawn.

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**Newsletter articles/ stories/photos**  
Any articles, stories and/or photos submitted for the newsletter must be received by the "cut off" date for any given month. Photos must be accompanied by text which describes the event, names, dates and any other pertinent facts so our readers understand the story behind the photo(s). The newsletter editor will announce the "cut off" dates at each Chapter meeting. The "cut off" date for our May 2019 newsletter is 19 April 2019. Due to space availability, the editor reserves the right to include or not include photos for a given month.

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