

# NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office  
St. Petersburg, FL

July 2004



The "News and Notes for Florida Veterans" is published monthly by the Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, Florida, to provide information on VA benefit programs to veterans and dependents in Florida. The material presented does not have the effect of laws or regulations. Please send questions or comments on this newsletter to Veterans Service Center, ATTN: "News and Notes," PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. We do not have the resources to maintain a mailing list for distribution to individuals; however this newsletter is available on the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office web site at [www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete](http://www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete).

**FALLEN SOLDIER MEMORIAL** Just days before the Memorial Day weekend dedication of the World War II Memorial in Washington, the St. Petersburg, FL, VA Regional Office and the Tampa Bay community dedicated the Fallen Soldier Memorial in the lobby of the VA Regional Office building. The glass-encased sculpture of a soldier's rifle, boots, helmet and dog tags is dedicated to Florida's fallen soldiers of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Fifty family members of fallen soldiers and 300 VA employees attended the dedication ceremonies presided over by VA Regional Office Director Sandy Bowron. Each family member was escorted by a VA employee and introduced as the roll call of Florida's 45 fallen soldiers was read. Mr. Bowron said the Fallen Soldier Memorial is a lasting reminder of the ultimate sacrifice paid by veterans in the name of freedom, and he thanked the VA employees who worked to create the memorial. Along side the memorial is a perpetual plaque listing the names of the Florida fallen soldiers as well as a memorial book providing each soldier's name, photo and story.

**GI BILL 60TH ANNIVERSARY** June 22 was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GI Bill signed into law June 22, 1944, by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The original GI Bill offered a broad range of benefits, including education and home loan guaranty programs still administered today by VA. Millions of World War II veterans used education and home loan programs and transformed a nation of renters into homeowners while building a solid middle class of college and technically trained professionals. About 21 million veterans, service members and family members have received more than \$77 billion in GI Bill benefits for education and training since 1944.

The current Montgomery GI Bill offers benefits not only to veterans, but to active duty service members and members of the National Guard and Reserves, as well. The St. Petersburg Regional Office has an outbased Education Section with four employees working with the Atlanta Regional Processing Center. The Florida office currently has 25,000 veterans enrolled in education programs and 450 certified schools in the state of Florida.

The GI Bill's home loan guaranty program has been used by 17.5 million people for loans totaling \$830 billion. Last

year, VA issued the third-highest annual number of loan guaranties in the last 50 years. The St. Petersburg Regional Loan Center administers home loans in the states of Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi. Last year, the Regional Loan Center issued 52,000 loan guaranties for a home value of \$6.2 billion.

**ANNUAL CLOTHING ALLOWANCE** Clothing allowance is paid to a veteran who has a service connected disability or a disability that requires he or she wear or use a prosthetic or orthopedic device that wears out or tears clothing. The clothing allowance is also paid if the veteran uses, for a service-connected skin condition, medication prescribed by a physician which causes irreparable damage to the veteran's outer garments. A skin condition requiring use of medication is not considered static, and a redetermination is required each year.

The application form for the clothing allowance is VA Form 21-8678 Application for Annual Clothing Allowance (Under 38 U.S.C. 362). This form may be downloaded from <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/21-8678.pdf>, or a copy may be obtained by calling 1-800-827-1000, or from a local County Veterans Service Office (see the "County Government" listings in the telephone directory). However, any communication from a veteran describing the device or medication used and requesting payment of the clothing allowance is considered a claim for this benefit. A service-connected anatomical loss or loss or use of a hand or foot is presumed to require the use of a prosthetic or orthopedic device that wears out the clothing.

In August 2003, the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) transitioned the processing of annual clothing allowance claims to the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Therefore, any annual clothing allowance claim should be sent to the VA Medical Center or Outpatient Clinic of jurisdiction, for the attention of the Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service.

To be eligible for the 2004 clothing allowance, the veteran must have been found to meet the eligibility requirements on August 1, 2004. At the end of July computer-generated letter/applications are issued to veterans whose records are set to require annual redetermination of clothing allowance

eligibility. The 2004 clothing allowance payments for veterans who have been authorized recurring payments and for others whose awards are input before the last processing computer run of August will be issued on September 1. Checks for clothing allowance awards input after the last processing computer run of August will be issued in about seven to ten days after the award is authorized.

The 2004 clothing allowance is \$600.00. Veterans who are receiving their compensation payments by direct deposit will receive the clothing allowance payment by direct deposit. Veterans without direct deposit will receive their clothing allowance payments by check to the same address as their compensation checks.

**VETERANS GOLDEN AGE GAMES SET FOR THE SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY** (VA News Release June 22, 2004)  
WASHINGTON -- From the East Coast to the West, more than 500 "golden age" veterans will gather in Fresno, Calif., in July for the nation's largest sporting event for senior military veterans. The 18<sup>th</sup> National Veterans Golden Age Games, a national sports and recreational competition sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), will take place July 18–23 at the Fresno Convention Center and other area venues.

Events at the games are open to all U.S. military veterans age 55 or older who are receiving care at any VA medical facility. Hosted by VA's Central California Health Care System, the games have competition in swimming, bicycling, horseshoes, bowling, croquet and a pentathlon (softball hit, discus, shot put, basketball free throw and air guns). The athletes compete in open and wheelchair divisions in specific age groups.

For the first time this year, the National Veterans Golden Age Games will serve as a qualifier for the National Senior Olympics, to be held June 3-8, 2005, in Pittsburgh. The National Senior Olympics is a community-based member of the United States Olympic Committee and recognizes senior U.S. athletes in several age-groups.

A leader in geriatric care, VA offers a spectrum of health care services to veterans. Nearly 65,000 veterans will receive long-term care this year through inpatient VA or state veterans home programs. For more information about the National Veterans Golden Age Games and other VA national rehabilitation programs, visit VA's web site at [www.va.gov/vetevent/gag/2004](http://www.va.gov/vetevent/gag/2004).

#### **IMPORTANT DATES IN JULY**

**July 1** payments for June due

**July 5** Federal Holiday - Independence Day

**July 8** last day to input change of address or establish direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 07-30-2004 payments

**July 21** last day to change or cancel direct deposit on compensation and pension awards in time for the 07-30-2004 payments

**July 29** clothing allowance letters/applications sent to all veterans who are set for annual redetermination of clothing allowance eligibility

#### **VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:**

**VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg** - PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731 **1-800-827-1000**

**Regional Processing Office, Atlanta, GA** (education claims) -  
PO Box 100022, Decatur, GA 30031-7022  
**1-888-GIBILL1 (442-4551)**  
Telephone number for Chapter 30 self-verifications  
**1-877-823-2378**

**Veterans Health Administration Toll-Free Hotline** (medical care) - **1-877-222-8387**

**VA EFT Information Hotline** (electronic funds transfer - direct deposit) **1-877-838-2778**

**VA Insurance Center, Philadelphia** (VA Insurance) -  
PO Box 42954, Philadelphia, PA 19101 **1-800-669-8477**

**VA Health Administration Center** (CHAMPVA and Spina Bifida health care) -  
CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023  
CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024  
Spina Bifida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025 **1-800-733-8387**

**Foreign Medical Program Office** (medical treatment abroad) -  
PO Box 65021, Denver, CO 80206-5021 **303-331-7590**

#### **National Cemeteries**

10,000 Bay Pines Blvd N, Bay Pines FL **727-398-9426**  
6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell FL 33513 **352-793-7740**  
Naval Air Station, Pensacola FL **850-453-4108/4846**

**National Cemetery Administration Office of Memorial Programs** (headstones and markers) - 810 Vermont Ave NW, Washington, DC 20420 **1-800-697-6947**

**Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center** (certificates of eligibility)  
PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120  
**1-888-244-6711**

**Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) Unit** -  
Chicago VA Regional Office **1-800-829-4833**

#### **INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:**

VA Web Site: [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS)  
<http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/>

Property Management [www.ocwen.com](http://www.ocwen.com)

Florida Department of Veterans Affairs:  
[www.floridavets.org/](http://www.floridavets.org/)

St. Pete Regional Office: [www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete](http://www.vba.va.gov/ro/south/spete)

<b>July 30</b> payments for July due	
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