

VFW SERVICE OFFICER NOTES FOR THE TEN-HUT FEBRUARY 2021

Senior Driving Improvement Classes

This is a GREAT way to save \$\$ on your car insurance!! If you haven't taken this class yet, you will need to take the 8-hour course. All classes are held in the Winona Middle School, Rm. 260. Here's the listing of the classes:

8-Hour

<u>Class #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Times</u>
AE57-2-2	16 Apr 21 & 17 Apr 21	17:30 – 21:30

4-Hour

<u>Class #</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
AE57-2	15 Mar 21	17:30 – 21:20
AE57-3	20 May 21	17:30 – 21:30
AE57-4	14 Jun 21	12:30 – 16:30

Visit the website at: www.winonaschools.org/communityed or call 507.494.0900

Attn: Gulf War Veterans!

Desert Storm was a short war, but Veterans from that era still have many different avenues and programs to connect with VA. Below is information on how Desert Storm Veterans can engage with VA.

Get a free health exam

VA's [Gulf War Registry Health Exam](#) alerts Veterans to possible long-term health problems that may be related to environmental exposures during their military service. The registry data helps VA understand and respond to these health problems more effectively.

Important points about registry health exams:

- **Free** to eligible Veterans and **no co-payment**.
- **Not a disability compensation exam** or required for other VA benefits.
- Enrollment in VA's health care system **not necessary**.
- Based on **Veterans' recollection** of service, not on their military records.
- Veterans can receive **additional registry exams**, if new problems develop.
- Veterans' family members are **not eligible** for registry exams.

VA's [Gulf War Registry Health Exam](#) alerts Veterans to possible long-term health problems that may be related to environmental exposures during their military service. The registry data helps VA understand and respond to these health problems more effectively.

Contact your local [VA Environmental Health Coordinator](#) about getting a Gulf War Registry health exam.

Register for the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry

Veterans who are eligible for the Gulf War Registry may also join the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry, which includes additional data related to airborne hazards.

- The registry is a database of information about Veterans and service members collected through a questionnaire.
- [OEF/OIF/OND/OFS](#) Veterans and service members who have deployed to the [Southwest Asia theater of operations](#) on or after August 2, 1990, as well as those who have deployed to Afghanistan or Djibouti after September 11, 2001, can use the registry.

[Check your eligibility and sign up](#) through an online questionnaire.

For Men Who Served In Desert Shield/Storm it May Be Time for a Prostrate Exam

For men, screening tests often include a prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test. For men between ages 55 and 69, talk with a healthcare provider about the pros and cons of screening. For more information go to: www.va.gov/find-locations

More ways to engage with VA

[Apply for health care benefits.](#)

[File a VA disability claim.](#)

[Apply for the GI Bill and related benefits.](#)

[Apply for a VA home loan Certificate of Eligibility.](#)

[Types of Veteran ID cards.](#)

[How to apply for a discharge upgrade.](#)

10 New VA Resource Guides for Veterans and Their Families

The [VA Welcome Kit](#) is a simplified guide to help access VA's care, benefits, and services. Learn how to access **health care**, **mental health** services, **community care**, **disability** compensation, **Vet Centers**, **survivor** benefits, and more.

Sign Up For COVID-19 Vaccine Information

VA wants you to know about COVID-19 vaccine availability. Sign up today to receive secure information about when you can get a vaccine. [Learn more.](#)

New Copay Rates for 2021

Know what to expect from VA's health care costs in 2021. Updated copay rates are available now. [Learn more.](#)

Dementia and the Aging Brain

As we age, we may start having trouble hearing or with our vision. But what if you can't remember things or think clearly? [Learn more about possible changes in your brain.](#)

Be Careful When Donating To Veterans Charity Groups

A Florida-based group running a supposed charity for wounded veterans has settled allegations that its deceived donors and has agreed to close its doors. Word to the wise give your donations to credible veterans' organizations.

Reduce Your Mortgage Interest Rate

Are you looking to refinance your current mortgage? VA's interest rate reduction refinance loan (IRRRL) may be able to help. We recommend a personal financial health assessment to determine if refinancing your current mortgage is right for you. [Learn if you're eligible and how to apply.](#)

Benefits for Blue Water Navy Veterans

Did you know? VA provides benefits to Blue Water Navy Veterans who served as far as 12 nautical miles from the shore of the Republic of Vietnam or in the Korean Demilitarized Zone and who have [health conditions associated with herbicide exposure, such as Agent Orange.](#)

DIC for Military Families

If you're the surviving spouse, child, or parent of a service member or Veteran who died from a service-related injury or illness, you may be eligible for VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), a tax-free monthly financial benefit. [Learn about DIC eligibility criteria!](#)

Debt Payments Resume

To ease financial difficulties during the pandemic, [VA's Debt Management Center](#) suspended collections on debts established after April 3, 2020. Effective Jan. 1, 2021, benefit debt payments have resumed. If you have questions or difficulties making payments, [please submit your request online!](#)

About VA Copays

Typically, if you have an injury or disability caused by your military service, you are eligible to be treated for that condition by the VA for free. Also, some veterans with lower income levels are exempt from having to make copays for their medical care. And if your disability or injury is severe enough for the VA to rate you at least 50% disabled for compensation benefits, all of your medical care from the department is free.

But veterans with a lower level of disability rating may have to pay the VA a copayment for care, depending on what type of medical services you get and what condition you are being treated for.

For example, if you are rated 10% disabled for high blood pressure, you can get your doctor's appointments for that condition and blood pressure medication from the VA for free. But you must pay a copay for any medicine or treatment that isn't related to your high blood pressure.

Rx Refills and the Pandemic

During the pandemic, people who regularly take prescription drugs for chronic conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure may be concerned about getting refills. We're working hard to get you your prescriptions when you need them. [Learn more](#)

PDBR Review of Disability Claims Continues

The Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR) was created by the FY2008 Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that reassess the accuracy and fairness of combined disability ratings of 20 percent or less for service members who were separated from service, rather than medically retired because of medical conditions.

To be eligible for a PDBR review, service members must have been medically separated between Sept. 11, 2001, and Dec. 31, 2009, with a combined disability rating of 20 percent or less and found ineligible for retirement. According to Military.com only 19,000 of the more than 71,000 eligible have requested a review of their claim. The PDBR claims that more than half of the reviewed claims have been upgraded to a disability rating of 30 percent or more.

The review panel is authorized to recommend an increase in a disability rating, uphold the previous finding or issue a disability rating when the previous board did not assign one. The board, however, **is NOT able to recommend a lower rating**. Eligible veterans can request a board review by submitting a Department of Defense Form 294, Application for Review of Physical Disability Separation from the Armed Forces of the United States, which is [available online](#).

Veterans requesting a review must mail their completed and signed DD Form 294 to SAF/MRBR, 550 C St. W., Suite 41, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas 78150-4743. Applicants may submit statements, briefs, medical records or affidavits supporting their application.

For more information about the PDBR, [go online](#).

VA Launches New Single Access Phone Number

VA announced a new phone number to access all VA services. 1.800.MyVA411 (1.800.698.2411) is available 24 hours-a-day, 365 days-a-year, to serve veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. Callers have the option of pressing 0 immediately to be connected with a customer service agent. The Veterans Crisis Line (1.800.273.8255) and the White House VA Hotline (1.855.948.2311) will still be available at their current numbers. Read more at: <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5588>

Military retirees – Beware!

Military retirees can still be court-martialed, Supreme Court affirms. Any veteran who retired after 20 or more years of active duty service can be recalled and put in the military justice system, even for crimes committed after they hung up their uniform. It rarely occurs and is up to the service secretaries to pursue, but it has been used more frequently in recent years. About 2 million retirees are subject to this rule.

Military Rape Cases Have No Statute of Limitations, Supreme Court Decides

In an 8-0 opinion issued Thursday, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that military personnel accused of a rape between 1986 and 2006 -- a period previously subject to a five-year statute of limitations -- can be charged for the crime.

Veterans group members in Capitol riot to be purged from organizations

Disabled American Veterans, AMVETS will expel any members found guilty in connection to the raid.