

## **VFW SERVICE OFFICER NOTES FOR THE TEN-HUT JANUARY 2019**

### **Operation Protect Veterans IMPORTANT!!!**

I am confident all of us have received emails that tell us of a BIG inheritance from some king on the African continent, or we have a family member who is being held in jail and needs bail money, and finally our computer is about to crash immediately if we don't return the phone call. **DO NOT** respond to these phone calls or emails.

The AARP Fraud Watch Network is working with the US Postal Inspection Service to raise awareness of common scams that target America's military veterans.

Watch and report suspicious emails, phone calls, or mailings targeting military veterans and report them to [protectveterans@aarp.org](mailto:protectveterans@aarp.org)

### **100% Disabled or IU Veterans Can Now Have Their Student Loans Forgiven - FEDERAL TAX FREE**

In the past, veterans who were 100 percent disabled or had a finding by the Department of Veterans' Affairs of Individual Unemployability (IU) could get their student loans forgiven, but unfortunately it was considered to be taxable income by the IRS. That meant an unexpected tax bill for people who were often completely unprepared to pay such a large amount of money, and for some people this increase in reported annual income made them ineligible for means-tested programs like Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

**Good news!** This is no longer the case. Now, any student loans forgiven due to disability are no longer considered income. VA and the US Department of Education are working together to make it easier for you to apply.

This is the case, regardless of how old you are or how long ago you took out student loans - be sure to spread the word!

The Department of Education will be sending letters to veterans who may be able to apply for this federal tax-free forgiveness of their student loans. To see what these letters will look like, [click here](#). **The letters will say that they are from the Department of Education and Nelnet**, the servicer administering the IU student loan forgiveness process. If you get a letter from someone else, beware because it could be a scam.

The Department of Education and Nelnet manage a website, [disabilitydischarge.com](http://disabilitydischarge.com), to provide resources and more information on how to start your discharge application online. Even though it is a ".com" website, you can trust this website. This is the website Nelnet uses to help Department of Education Borrowers.

### **Deal to Extend Benefits for 'Blue Water' Vietnam Veterans Appears to be Dead for This Year**

Hopes for a deal this year to extend disability benefits to thousands of [“blue water” Navy veterans](#) who claim toxic exposure while serving in the Vietnam War were all but ended on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December after supporters could not get unanimous support in the Senate for a potential fix.

The measure, passed by the House overwhelmingly earlier this year, would require Veterans Affairs officials to automatically assume about [90,000 veterans who served in ships off the coast of Vietnam](#) were exposed to Agent Orange for benefits purposes.

This move would bring that group in line with hundreds of thousands of other Vietnam veterans who served on the ground there or on ships traveling upon inland rivers. [VA officials have objected to the plan](#), saying the available scientific evidence does not support extending the benefits.

“If we can afford to send veterans to war, it’s unacceptable that we can’t afford to take care of them when they return home wounded, ill or injured,” said B.J. Lawrence, national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. “This obstruction forsakes our nation’s promise to take care of those who were injured or made ill due to their military service.”

### **Did You Get Your Flu Shot Yet – It’s Not Too Late!**

Everyone age 6 months and older who wants to reduce the risk of getting sick should get a [flu shot](#) (PDF, 224KB).

Those more at risk of illness and complications from the flu include:

- People age 65 and older
- People with health problems such as asthma, diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung disease and other chronic illnesses or conditions
- Pregnant women
- Caregivers of infants or family members with health problems
- [Health Care Personnel \(HCP\)](#)

### **Where can you get a flu shot?**

Veterans enrolled in VA health care can get a flu shot at their [nearest VA health care facility](#). If you are not enrolled in VA health care, [find out if you qualify](#).

Perhaps a more convenient option is to go to a local Walgreens. Veterans enrolled in VA health care can get a flu shot at Walgreens, and the information will be automatically added to their VA health record. Learn more about [VA's partnership with Walgreens](#).

### **Can my family get flu shots from VA?**

VA doesn't vaccinate family members of veterans or VA staff. If they would like to get a flu shot, check the [flu shot locator](#) on Flu.gov.

## **Prescription Refill Options for Veterans**

Did you know you have refill options? VA is dedicated to providing veterans with safe, effective, and medically necessary medications and supplies. This includes the process of requesting refills of those prescriptions.

### **How do you request a refill?**

To receive a refill by your VA prescriber, you must request a refill using one of the following options:

- **By phone:** Most VA Pharmacies have automated telephone refill lines. The phone number of your local VA Pharmacy is on your prescription label. To order refills by phone, you need your prescription number (shown as Rx number on the prescription) and Social Security Number. [You can also check VA medical facility telephone numbers online.](#)
- **By mail:** [VA Pharmacy provides a refill request form](#) with each prescription filled. To refill by mail, please complete the request form and mail it to your VA pharmacy at the address listed on paperwork that arrives with your prescription.
- **Online:** Veterans can use [My HealtheVet](#) or the [VA Rx Refill mobile application](#) to request prescription refills online. Both tools require that veterans have a personal My HealtheVet Advanced or Premium account. The VA Rx Refill mobile app requires a [DS Logon](#). You can view your prescription history and track the delivery status of your package online. Prescriptions that need special handling (such as refrigeration) are mailed from your local medical center and cannot be tracked on My HealtheVet at this time. To receive your prescription on time, request your refill at least ten days before you run out. VA will not process your refill until seven to ten days before you're scheduled to run out.

### **When Was The Last Time You Explored The VA Website?**

**Know The Benefits You're Eligible For!** Visit [Explore.VA.gov](#) for details on benefits for family members or click the link for information on all VA benefits.

### **Get The True Facts On Your GI Bill Payments!**

Non-payment of GI Bill benefits has been in the news lately. Get the straight scoop from this website: <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/54198/>

### **Can I Get Travel Costs for VA Health Care?**

Many Veterans can be reimbursed for travel costs related to VA health care services. If the Winona County arranged travel using the Disabled American Veteran's (DAV) van, you're not eligible to collect travel pay. [The Beneficiary Travel program](#) helps eligible veterans receive mileage reimbursement. In some cases, it can pay for the costs of an ambulance or a wheelchair van. When a privately-owned vehicle is not reasonably accessible or travel by a common carrier such as a plane, train, bus, taxi, or light rail is medically necessary, veterans may be reimbursed.

The transportation is to help veterans get to and from their VA health care facility, or to VA-authorized non-VA health care for which the veteran is eligible. Veterans may apply for travel reimbursement by completing [VA Form 10-3542](#) (Veteran/Beneficiary Claim for Reimbursement of Travel Expenses). Veterans usually receive payments from electronic fund transfers to a bank account or a debit card.