

VFW SERVICE OFFICER NOTES FOR THE TEN-HUT JANUARY 2021

National Museum of the United States Army Now Open

The National Museum of the United States Army located at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, is officially open to the public. The museum observes enhanced health and safety measures for visitors. Free, timed - entry tickets are required and there will be no walk-up tickets available. This is the first national museum to capture over 240 years of Army history. Details can be found at: www.thenmusa.org/visit

New National Native American Veterans Memorial Opened

On Veterans Day, the new [National Native American Veterans Memorial](#) opened this past Veterans Day. This monument honors the military service of Native Americans opened on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The memorial, *Warriors' Circle of Honor*, consists of an elevated stainless-steel circle balanced on an intricately carved stone drum. The artist who designed the memorial, Harvey Pratt of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, served in Vietnam from 1962 to 1965. The museum has a complementary new online exhibition, [Why We Serve: Native Americans in the United States Armed Forces](#). Get more info at:

<https://www.npr.org/2020/11/11/933473533/new-memorial-recognizes-generations-of-military-service-by-native-american-veter>

Volunteer for COVID-19 Research Studies

VA is conducting studies to test new COVID-19 vaccines, treatments, and to better understand how the virus affects people. Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age, but do not have to be veterans or be enrolled in VA health care. Participants will not be required to pay for care related to the study and will possibly be compensated for their travel and time. For additional information see: <https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-research>

VA moving ahead with plans to outsource all compensation and pension exams

Despite concerns from lawmakers, Veterans Affairs officials are moving ahead with plans to outsource nearly all [compensation and pension exams](#) in coming months, a move they believe will improve service for veterans. For more information go to: https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/11/16/va-moving-ahead-with-plans-to-outsource-all-compensation-and-pension-exams/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=EBB%2011.17.20&utm_term=Editorial%20-%20Military%20-%20Early%20Bird%20Brief

VA Cost-of-Living Adjustment for 2021

Veterans receiving government benefits will see a cost of living increase take effect on Dec. 1, 2020, and will be reflected in the Dec. 31, 2020 payment. This is equal to the increase granted for Social Security benefits, which will be 1.3% for 2021. The increase will be for wartime

disability compensation, compensation for dependents, clothing allowance, and dependency and indemnity compensation to surviving spouses and children.

Understanding Your VA Patient Billing Statements

Veterans will not be charged for interest or administrative charges until at least December 31 for medical care received since April 2020.

VA stopped mailing monthly patient billing statements in April. Veterans with an account balance will receive information-only letters in November with information on copayment charges and voluntary payment options.

Can You Hear Me Now?

Does your spouse constantly yell at you? You never listen to me! How about the TV – it's TOO LOUD!!!! Well, if you're familiar with these comments help is here – at least from a telephone perspective.

CAPTEL offers veterans who have difficulty hearing over the phone with a FREE! The device is easy to hook up. It has a large screen, can be used as an answering machine, GREAT speaker, speed dial functions, and caller ID. There are **NO** age restrictions, **NO** income min/max, **NO** monthly fees, and **NO** contracts.

Here's how you get one. Call Alexandra Cooper at 612.300.1565. Or send her an email: Alexandra.cooper@oeius.org. She'll ask you a couple of quick questions and within two weeks you should receive a device.

I'm not guaranteeing you still won't stop getting yelled at, but at least you'll be able to carry on a decent conversation over the phone.

Financial Assistance for Veterans Impacted by COVID-19

MDVA has had a tremendous response to the COVID-19 Disaster Relief and Special Needs Grants for Minnesota Veterans. We began accepting applications on Monday, April 6. We are striving to complete application processing as soon as possible.

Eligible applicants must be:

1. A Veteran or the surviving spouse of a deceased Veteran as defined by MN Statute 197.447;
2. A Minnesota Resident, and;
3. Negatively financial impacted by COVID-19.

It's easy to apply:

- Veterans can apply for the Disaster Relief Grant on our website.

- To apply for the Special Needs Grant, Veterans should work with their County Veterans Service Officer.

Applications will continue to be accepted until the \$6.2 million in funds are depleted. Veterans can apply through their County Veterans Service Officers or online at MinnesotaVeteran.org/COVIDRelief

COVID-19 Disaster Relief Grant application status

The MDVA team is working as quickly as possible to process the applications for the COVID-19 grants.

As applications are uploaded into our system, we send an email to applicants to confirm that step has been completed. If we need any additional information to support your application, we will email you. Thank you for your patience while the MDVA COVID-19 team works diligently to input and process the applications.

The current estimated processing time is approximately 8 business days.

COVID-19 K-12 Distance Learning Support Grant Available

MDVA is now offering a COVID-19 K-12 Distance Learning Support Grant to help mitigate the negative financial impact a family experiences by implementing their school district's distance learning or hybrid learning plans by providing a one-time grant.

Applicants for the COVID-19 K-12 Distance Learning Support Grant must demonstrate a negative financial impact on or after August 1, 2020. A closing date for the K-12 Distance Learning Support Grant will depend on the availability of funding, but not later than June 30, 2021.

More information is available at MinnesotaVeteran.org/COVIDRelief

VA's Women Veterans Quick Start Guide Now Available

The VA Women Veterans Quick Start Guide (QSG) provides clear and concise information on how to apply for benefits and access VA health care. How to schedule regular checkups, fill prescriptions and access specialists, such as cardiologists, gynecologists and mental health providers, are outlined in the latest quick start guide. Get more information at: [VA's Women Veterans Quick Start Guide now available](#)