

# IOWA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWSLETTER



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515-252-4698 800-838-4692 <https://va.iowa.gov>

## Summer 2013

### Colonel (Ret.) Robert King Appointed Executive Director IDVA



On May 20, 2013, Governor Branstad named Col. Robert King (Ret.) as head of the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs in the Branstad-Reynolds administration.

Col. King, 64, served in the Iowa National Guard for nearly 36 years prior to his September 2004 retirement. During his last fifteen years of service he handled media relations, command information, and community relations for the Iowa National Guard.

"We are excited to welcome Col. Robert King as the new head of this important department. I have known Col. King for a number of years, and appreciate and understand how much passion and enthusiasm he will bring to this job. Veterans will have no bigger advocate than Col. Robert King," Branstad said.

Col. King's military awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal (4<sup>th</sup> Award), Army Commendation Medal (4<sup>th</sup> Award), Army Achievement Medal, Outstanding Volunteer Service Award, Humanitarian Service Medal, and brevet promotion to brigadier general. For a number of years, Col. King has played a major role in coordinating the Veteran's Day Parade at the Iowa State Fair. Colonel King was inducted into the Iowa Broadcaster's Association Hall of Fame in 2004.

[Source: Tim Albrecht, Office of the Governor]

#### — from IDVA Executive Director Robert King:

It's an honor for me to be appointed by Governor Branstad to serve as the Executive Director of the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs. I began my assignment on Memorial Day and am enjoying my new role of supporting and serving our veterans and their families. We are working to continue the communications that have been established with the veterans' network. I've been involved in veterans' affairs while I was serving as the Iowa National Guard public affairs officer and into my retirement. I am looking forward to continuing this very important work.

My first two months have been busy attending conferences and making presentations as well as becoming familiar with the operations of the office and the Iowa Veterans Cemetery. I've addressed the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars state conferences, had the pleasure to make a leadership presentation to Boy's State, and honored to be the guest speaker for the dedication of the headstone of a previously unmarked grave (89 years) of an Indian's War Medal of Honor recipient in Fredericksburg. I was also a guest on WHO Radio on the Fourth of July with Ed Vos, the Dallas County Veterans Affairs Director. It was another great opportunity to respond to questions about veterans benefits. And we are looking forward to saluting our veterans and families with the annual Iowa State Fair Veterans Day parade at 11:00 a.m. on

*Continued on page 2*

## *In Memoriam — Paul Ladd*

September 3, 1953 – June 24, 2013

IDVA is saddened to report the untimely death of Paul Ladd, Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired) and Boone County veteran service officer. A memorial service was held on June 28, 2013 at the First Evangelical Free Church in Boone. Full military honors were conducted by the Boone Veterans Council and the United States Marine Honor Guard at the Veterans Monument and United States Flag in Linwood Park Cemetery in Boone.

Paul had a degree in Business Management from UNI, a Master of Business Administrations from Florida Tech, and a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies from



Col. Paul Ladd

the Naval War College. He served 28 years in the Marine Corps and attained the rank of Colonel. He retired in 2004 and accepted the position of Boone County VSO in 2005. He was a devoted advocate for veterans and their families.

Paul enjoyed training for Ragbrai and riding with "Team Navy," and pursued many other interests including riding his Harley, Tae-Kwan-Do, and helping friends, and donating his time to his community.

He is survived by his wife, Debra, his son, Josh, his daughter Allyson, and many other family members. He will be greatly missed by his IDVA family and the veterans of Boone County.



## New Officers Elected for Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs

At the July 10, 2013 Iowa Commission of Veterans Affairs meeting, Kate Myers was voted in as the new Commission Chair, replacing Todd Jacobus; Jon Wille was voted in as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair, and Bill Wallace as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair – effective July 10, 2013.



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*Continued from page 1*

Monday, August 12<sup>th</sup> followed by a 1:00 p.m. concert by the Iowa Army National Guard's 34<sup>th</sup> Army Band on the Knapp Stage at the fair.

We recently relocated our Camp Dodge offices two blocks west of our former location. The new quarters are very nice and functional and we welcome you to visit us. The telephone number has changed and is reflected in the letterhead above as well as a complete listing on our website at <https://va.iowa.gov>. Our website is an excellent source of information about veterans benefits and various services and activities available to our veterans and their families. We encourage you to make others aware of the site.

We will soon begin construction at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery of a federal/state-funded project that includes a new columbaria plaza on the east side of the cemetery near the committal shelter, a new pump house and water filter system, and an expansion to the vehicle storage building. The cemetery staff and volunteers do an outstanding job. The veterans and families are very grateful for how we honor them and the services that we provide.

Again, I look forward to working with the IDVA staff and the veterans' support community to provide benefits and services to our veterans and their families.

— Robert King, Executive Director, Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs

## Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs

### Tymeson Appointed Chief Operating Officer of IVH

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, Governor Branstad announced that Jodi Tymeson, Executive Director of IDVA, would assume a new role as the Chief Operating Officer of the Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown. Tymeson's first day at IVH was May 28<sup>th</sup>. Governor Branstad stated, "Her tremendous leadership capabilities will be a great asset as we bring the level of care for our veterans to the next level." Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds added, "...General Tymeson will ensure the standard of care our veterans expect and deserve."

Tymeson served in the Iowa Army National Guard from 1974-2007. She is the first female promoted to brigadier general in the Iowa Army National Guard. She retired in 2007 with 33 years of service. Tymeson also served as a full-time 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in Cedar Falls from 1988-1992 and taught as a substitute from 1993-1998. From 2001-2010, Tymeson served nearly 30,000 constituents as a state representative. She led the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs as Executive Director from 2011-2013.



IDVA staff at Camp Dodge gather for Jodi Tymeson's last day

### IDVA has Moved!

IDVA has spent the past month moving from its home of over 40 years to a new location just 2 blocks west from our old building at Camp Dodge. Our new office sits on the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> Street & Main. The building and office space has been completely upgraded and refurbished. We share the building with



IDVA's new Camp Dodge home

three other entities. Our address remains the same except *building number has changed to: #3465*. There is ample parking and handicap spaces in the rear (southwest portion) of the building. Please refer to the contact page in this newsletter to find our new phone numbers. You are welcome to visit us in our new digs!

### Jodi Tymeson: 2012 Iowa Administrator of the Year



Jodi Tymeson & Ted Hall

Former IDVA Executive Director Jodi Tymeson was selected as the Iowa Association of Workforce Professionals Administrator of the Year for 2012 at their annual meeting in Ottumwa, Iowa. Jodi's contributions to the veterans community – including her staff, the 99 county directors of veterans affairs, the veterans service organizations, the legislative community, and the state of Iowa reflect her outstanding qualities as a public servant and leader.

Ted Hall, veteran, Iowa Workforce Development employee, and International Association of Workforce Professionals member presented the award.

Her IDVA employees knew her as an extremely hard-working, thoughtful, fair, and inspirational director. Congratulations!!

## Iowa Veterans Cemetery

The Iowa Veterans Cemetery reports that through July 22, 2013 there are:  
 Applications on file (still living): 6,345   Interments: 1,604   Veterans Interred: 1,316  
 Dependents interred: 288   Other states represented: 36   *In Memory of Markers:* 49



*IDVA Staffer Missy Miller arrives in Monroe during 2013 Ragbrai (riding with Team Froggie)*



*IDVA Executive Director Bob King (Team Grind Kings) stops at IVC during his 23<sup>rd</sup> Ragbrai and strikes a pose with Governor Branstad*



*The Fraternal Order of Eagles makes a donation to IVC*



*Bob King interviewed by Van & Bonnie during Ragbrai*

### IVC Seabee Memorial Dedication

A Seabee Memorial was dedicated at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery on Memorial Day – May 27, 2013. The United States Seabees were established during World War II to provide construction support for combat operations in all theaters. The Seabees have participated in every conflict since World War II and provide humanitarian relief during natural disasters.



John McCurdy, a World War II Seabee veteran was the inspiration behind the Seabee Memorial dedication. John coordinated the fabrication and logistics of having the monument installed at IVC. Funds for the monument were provided by Iowans who served in the Seabees and Navy Civil Engineering Corps from World War II to the present. Transportation services for the memorial were donated by ABF Freight Systems.

## County News

### Upcoming Events

#### ★Audubon County: The Wall That Heals

“The Wall That Heals,” a Vietnam Veteran Memorial, will be coming to Audubon County, August 30 through September 1, 2013 at the Audubon County Courthouse. For information, contact Gary Riesgaard: 712-563-2742 or [aced@iowatelecom.net](mailto:aced@iowatelecom.net).

#### ★Dallas County: Veterans Fair

The 2013 Dallas County Veterans Fair will be held November 1, 2013 from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Point of Grace Church, 305 Dartmoor Drive, Waukee, Iowa. For more information on attending or participating, contact Ed Vos, Director Dallas County Veterans Commission, 515-993-5809 or [ed.vos@co.dallas.ia.us](mailto:ed.vos@co.dallas.ia.us).

#### ★Johnson County

Johnson County VSO Gary Boseneiler has been donating some of his “spare time” to the Johnson County Armory & Veterans Memorial. The new memorial will be installed at the site of the old armory (925 S. Dubuque Street, Iowa City) and will serve as a permanent place of honor for families, friends, and community members to visit and reflect, and to remember those who bravely served our country. The memorial will include the armory’s original cornerstone, surrounded by stone crests of each branch of the military, reproductions of the concrete medallions from the armory – depicting the crest of each unit stationed there at the time or construction. Also featured will be two interpretative panels with the armory’s history in text and photographs, as well as a bench and stately flagpole.

The centerpiece of the memorial will be the engraved paver bricks that will honor any veteran or supporter from any branch of service, time period, and county.

For more information, contact Gary Boseneiler: 319-356-6049, [gbosenei@co.johnson.ia.us](mailto:gbosenei@co.johnson.ia.us), or Johnson County Grants and Communications Specialist, Mickey Miller: 319-356-6000, [mmiller@co.johnson.ia.us](mailto:mmiller@co.johnson.ia.us).

#### ★Linn County: Hiring Our Heroes Event

The University of Phoenix is sponsoring a hiring event in Cedar Rapids, (Linn County) Iowa on September 20, 2013 at the Cedar Rapids National Guard Armory, located at 1500 W. Wright Brothers Boulevard SW. An employment workshop for veterans and other military job seekers that focuses on resume writing, tips for successfully navigating hiring fairs, military skill translation, and interviewing will start at 9:00 a.m. The Hiring Fair begins at 10:00 a.m. and ends at 1:00 p.m.

To register for the workshop, visit [hohworks.eventbrite.com](http://hohworks.eventbrite.com). For registration questions, please contact [hiringourheroes@uschamber.com](mailto:hiringourheroes@uschamber.com) or call 202-463-5807.

#### ★Linn County: Veterans Charity Golf Outing

American Legion Post 298 will host the 1<sup>st</sup> annual Linn County Veterans Charity Golf Outing on August 24, 2013. The outing will be a 4-person best shot format to be held at Gardner Golf Course; a follow-up event at the Legion Post will include lunch, prize payouts, raffles, and auctions to add to the money raised. The event is limited to the 1<sup>st</sup> 36 teams to sign up.

The golf committee is looking for hole sponsors, golf teams, and volunteers to help with the event. Sign up sheets are available for the golf teams and volunteers at all veterans organizations in Linn County. If you know anyone who would like to sponsor a hole to assist the Veterans of Linn County please contact Don Tyne: 319-350-6736, [williamsr96@ymail.com](mailto:williamsr96@ymail.com). A sponsor can be an individual, a family, a group, or a business. A hole can be sponsored in memory of a veteran. The cost to sponsor a hole is \$150.00. They hope to have 5 or more sponsors per hole to

*Continued on page 5*

## County News Con't.

### Upcoming Events

*Continued from page 5*

meet a goal of \$10,000 to \$15,000. All monies raised will remain in Linn County to assist veterans charities. Just one of these charities – the Linn County VA food pantry, has served 2,600 needy veterans so far in 2013; Linn County homeless shelters served over 200 veterans and their families. The average age of a veteran's child is 9-years-old.

Linn County will also hold their "Veteran Stand Down" on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Contact Don Tyne, Linn County VSO, for more information.

#### ★Mills County: New Facebook Page

Mills County: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mills-County-Iowa-Veterans-Affairs/669917363034314>

#### ★Polk County: 5K Run/Walk

A 5K Run/Walk to honor and remember Iowa's fallen service members will be held on September 29, 2013, 10:00 a.m. at Raccoon River Park, 2500 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa. You may register online for \$25.00 up until September 15, 2013; late registration is \$30.00 after September 16<sup>th</sup>. For more information, visit [www.IowaRemembranceRun.com](http://www.IowaRemembranceRun.com), or contact Heather Johnson: [heather.johnson@iowaremembrancerun.com](mailto:heather.johnson@iowaremembrancerun.com).

#### ★Scott County

An Honor Flight of the Quad Cities is going to Washington, D.C. on August 29, 2013. The flight is being called a "Vietnam Guardians Flight". They will have over 60 Vietnam veterans serving as guardians to the Korean and World War II veterans making the flight.

★Purple Heart Day – celebrating Iowa veterans – will be celebrated on Saturday, August 10, 2013 from 11:00 – 2:00 p.m. at the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum, Camp Dodge, Johnston, Iowa. Speakers will include: Tony Powers, former broadcaster, author, and Purple Heart Recipient (Vietnam); Matt Harvey, Director of the Fort Des Moines Museum and Education Center; and Mary Ellen White, nurse in Vietnam at Long Binh, 1967.

Lunch will be provided by the Iowa Pork Producers and Fareway Stores. After the ceremony, there will be book signing by Tony Powers and self-guided tours of the museum.

### Past Events of Note

#### ★Story County

Congratulations to Story County volunteers! The Story County Freedom Flight was selected as a 2013 Governor's Volunteer Award for outstanding commitment and service. The award was presented during a special recognition ceremony on June 27<sup>th</sup> at the Southeast Polk High School auditorium.

Governor Branstad stated, "We are pleased to honor those who have given the precious gift of their time to make a difference and enrich lives all across Iowa. Thank you for your dedication and for contributing your talent to make this state great."



## County News Con't.

### Grave Dedication for Medal of Honor Recipient

Leroy H. Vokes, (11-12-1849 – 6-11-1924) was an American soldier in the U.S. Army who was assigned to the 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. Cavalry during the Indian Wars. He took part in a number of campaigns against the Plains Indians during the early 1870s. On April 26, 1872, Vokes was one of four men who received the Medal of Honor for "Gallantry in Action" for battling a party of Minneconjou Sioux at the Loup Fork of the Platte River in Nebraska. President Ulysses S. Grant presented the medal to Vokes, along with three other men – including civilian scout William "Buffalo Bill" Cody, Sgt. John Foley, and Pvt. William Strayer. Vokes was wounded in that battle – attacked by Indians who were believed responsible for stealing horses and killing several soldiers.

Vokes died at the soldier's retirement home in Washington D.C. and was brought by train to Fredericksburg, Iowa and laid to rest in the family plot at Rose Hill Cemetery. For 89 years, the burial spot of Vokes was unknown – without his name and unadorned for his bravery. Two years ago Paula Ellsworth, grand-

niece of Vokes, learned from genealogist Jeanette Kottke that her great uncle was buried in northeast Iowa. And now – thanks to the people in the veteran and Fredericksburg community, Voke's gravesite now has a marker. It is believed that his Medal of Honor was interred with his remains.



On Saturday, June 22, 2013 an Iowa National Guard honor guard and IDVA Executive Director Robert King presided over the ceremony to dedicate and unveil a white marble gravestone. Also speaking were Chickasaw County VSO Dave Jacobsen, State Sen. Dennis Black, and Iowa Army National Guard Col. Steven Altman.

At the end of his speech, King remarked, "They have served, fought, and died for our country. They have won battles and wars and left a proud legacy. They have provided each of us here the right to call ourselves an American and be a citizen of this wonderful country that is our home...And as it was with a young man named Leroy Vokes."



*Grandniece Paula Ellsworth receives the flag*



*Col. Robert King (Ret.) (L) & Chickasaw Co. VSO Dave Jacobsen*



## Local News and Updates

### Veterans Day at the Iowa State Fair 2013

Summer is upon us and that means it's time to be planning for the Veterans Day Parade at the Iowa State Fair! This year's parade will be on Monday, August 12 beginning at 11:00 a.m. *Please note the change in starting time from previous years.*

The 2013 Entry Application can be found on IDVA's website: <https://va.iowa.gov>. Application deadline is no later than Monday, August 5<sup>th</sup>.

Tonya Cook, Special Events Director for the Iowa State Fair, has made it possible for the parade participants to be admitted free again this year. Vehicle "parking permits" will be provided only to parade entry vehicles en-



tered in the parade. *Please remember these permits are extremely limited; consider carpooling.* The participants riding in the vehicles will be admitted free and will get their hand stamped outside of Gate 4.

Those veterans attending the fair but not participating in the parade will receive a \$3.00 discount off the ticket price on Monday, August 12 only. They will also need to show an ID that shows military/veteran status of some kind.

Call the IDVA office for questions: 800-838-4692 or 515.252.4698 or email [Mari.Mielke@iowa.gov](mailto:Mari.Mielke@iowa.gov).



## Legislative Updates

These veteran-related bills were signed by the Governor:

**HF 544** - relates to the Iowa veterans home and providing for the consideration of contributions to support as repayment receipts; Passed House 95-0; Amended and Passed by Senate 49-0; House Concurred 99-0; Signed by Governor 4-10-2013.

**HF 361** - provides for the issuance of special hunting licenses to certain nonresident disabled veterans and disabled members of the armed forces serving on active federal service; Passed House 100-0; Passed Senate 49-0; Signed by Governor 4-24-2-13.

**HF 545** - creates a new category of allowable expenditures from the Veterans Trust Fund (expenses related to screening or treatment for medical needs related to military service-connected traumatic brain injury for which payment or reimbursement is not otherwise available); Passed House 97-0; Amended and Passed Senate 50-0; Passed House 99-1; Signed by Governor 5-9-2013.

**SF 224** - will allow replacement drivers license for a \$10 fee; veterans will be able to have "veteran" designation placed on license any time by paying this replacement fee; Passed Senate 37-11; Amended and Passed House 99-0; Senate Concurred & Passed 38-12; Signed by Governor 5-1-2013.

**HF 613** - moves the war orphans educational assistance fund and related duties to the Veterans Trust Fund and the Commission of Veterans Affairs; Passed House 98-0; Passed Senate 50-0; Signed by Governor 5-1-2013.

## Local News and Updates

### Memorial Day 2013

More than 150 attendees gathered at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery on Memorial Day to honor those who died in our nation's service.

The program began with the national anthem, sung by vocalist Hannah Button, a sophomore at ADM High School in Adel. Pastor Bob Waldron of the First Presbyterian Church in Earlham, Iowa offered the invocation and



BG DeBieck talks to Memorial Day attendees

benediction, and Jodi Tymeson, former IDVA Executive Director, welcomed all who had braved a very rainy day to honor veterans. Gloria Doyle provided the sounding of taps; the Civil Air Patrol/Air Force Auxiliary posted and retired the colors

Brig. Gen. Arlan DeBieck, commanding general of the Army Reserve's 103<sup>rd</sup> Sustainment Company, delivered an inspirational Memorial Day message.

*These heroes are dead. They died for liberty—they died for us. They are at rest. They sleep in the land they made free, under the flag they rendered stainless, under the solemn pines, the sad hemlocks, the tearful willows, the embracing vines. They sleep beneath the shadows of the clouds, careless alike of sunshine or storm, each in the windowless palace of rest. Earth may run red with other wars—they are at peace. In the midst of the battles, in the roar of conflict, they found the serenity of death.*

—Robert Green Ingersoll, Civil War-era orator

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### Iowa Driver's Licenses – "Veteran" Designation

Beginning July 1, an update to Iowa law now allows veterans to have a "veteran" designation put on their driver's license or nonoperator identification card anytime they seek a new card — not just at the time of renewal. The cost for a duplicate DL or nonoperator ID is \$10.00.

To qualify for the designation, an honorably discharged veteran must present a copy of their DD214 or applicable discharge document to their county veterans affairs office. That office will confirm the applicant's veteran status and complete an Iowa DOT form that authorizes the Iowa DOT to place the designation on the driver's license or ID. The veteran must then take the completed form to any Iowa DL issuance location and request that the veteran designation be added to his or her DL or ID card.

Veterans may expedite the process by bringing a completed application form with them to their county veterans affairs office, along with a copy of their DD214. The form is available online at:  
<https://va.iowa.gov>.

The designation is designed to help Iowa veterans who can benefit from discounts offered to them by many businesses. Some businesses require proof of a veteran's status and the new update to Iowa law is one more way to make it easier.

For additional questions, contact Kim Snook, Director of Iowa DOT's Office of Driver Services: 515-237-3010  
[kim.snook@dot.iowa.gov](mailto:kim.snook@dot.iowa.gov).

## Local News and Updates Con't.

### Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day 2013



Former IDVA Executive Director Jodi Tymeson  
reads the Governor's Proclamation



VVA President Roger Elliott & AL Post 20 Commander Ron Langel



...And your soul will never fade away  
You live forever when the pipers play...



Honored Keynote Speaker Ron Albrecht, BG (IA)-(Ret)  
Iowa National Guard, Vietnam Veteran, U.S. Navy



Bugler Gloria Doyle & Piper Ron Husted

## Federal News and Updates

### A Slice of History from VA Historian Darlene Richardson

On March 3, 1865, the day before his second inauguration, Lincoln signed into law the first veterans preference act in America.

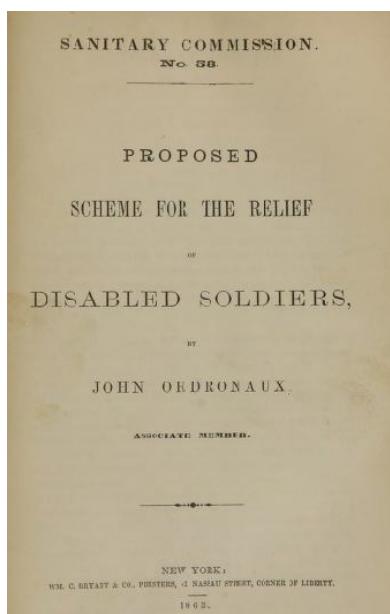
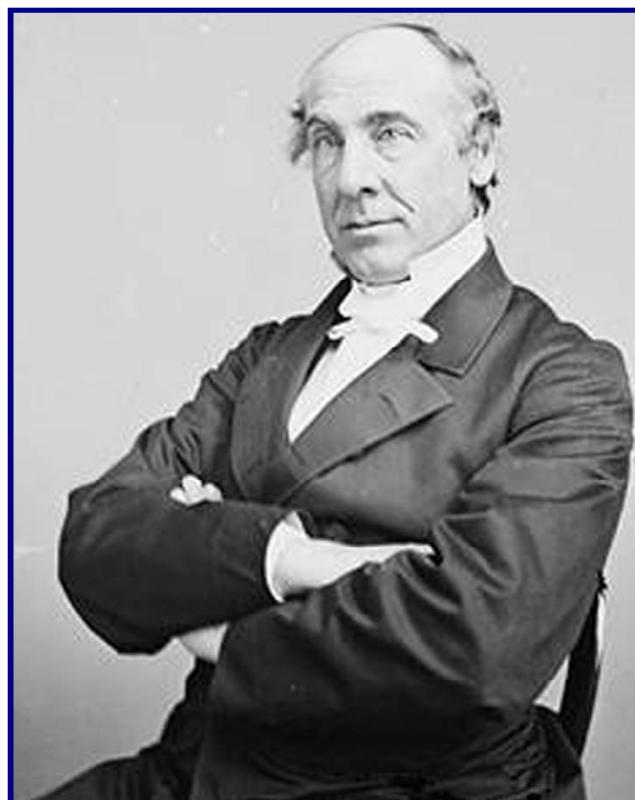
In 1862, during the second year of the Civil War, Dr. Henry W. Bellows, President of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, who was responsible for hospitals, medical care, and supplies for the Union's volunteer forces, grew concerned over the rising number of soldiers with amputated limbs or permanent disabilities and contemplated their impact on society after the war. In August 1862, Bellows contracted with "a distinguished sociologist," Stephen H. Perkins of Boston, to go abroad and document what benefits European countries provided to disabled veterans, to see if there was an existing model for the U.S. to emulate.

Perkins' travels took him to France, Italy, Prussia, Austria, and Russia and he completed his final report in 1863. He reported that the caste-privilege system so evident in the Old World could not be adopted in America and found that *Europe offered only examples of what not to do*. He discovered in Prussia (now Germany and Poland) the unique practice of "Versorgungs-schein" [sic] as a benefit available to disabled veterans. "Versorgungs-scheins" was a certificate given to disabled war veterans that authorized them to claim vacant civilian positions, within their ability, in post-offices, railroads, and other government employments. At the

time, roughly 1,500 certificates were issued annually, and once veterans found a position equal to their pensions, they were removed from the pension rolls, therefore relieving the country's pension burden.

Later in 1863, Surgeon John Ordronaux, M.D., prepared the United States Sanitary Commission's report No. 58, "Proposed Scheme for the Relief of Disabled Soldiers," which detailed 18 points, based largely on Perkins' report, for the U.S. solution. Proposition 13 of his report stated: "Is the Prussian versorgungschein [sic]-or privilege to fill vacancies occurring in subordinate government offices, on surrendering the pension already held-practicable with us?" This was the seed that later evolved into the veterans preference law.

Dr. Henry Bellows



Perkin's report, along with other studies and recommendations of the U.S. Sanitary Commission, provided the necessary framework for Congress to build upon in creating new benefits for Civil War veterans. The veterans preference law and creation of the first national soldiers and sailors asylum for volunteer soldiers (VHA origins) were borne out of the U.S. Sanitary Commission's foresight and conviction to serve sick and disabled Union soldiers of the Civil War.



—Darlene Richardson, Historian  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration

## Federal News and Updates, Con't.

### VA Mandates Overtime to Increase Production of Compensation Claims

As part of its ongoing effort to accelerate the elimination of the disability compensation claims backlog, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is announcing today that it is mandating overtime for claims processors in its 56 regional benefits offices. This surge will be targeted to eliminating the backlogged status of claims. The additional overtime hours that will be worked during this period will be used to help eliminate the backlog with continued emphasis on high-priority claims for homeless veterans and those claiming financial hardship, the terminally ill, former Prisoners of War, Medal of Honor recipients, and veterans filing Fully Developed Claims.

This is the latest effort in support of the Secretary's plan to reduce the backlog. Last month, the VA announced an initiative to expedite compensation claims decisions for veterans who have waited one year or longer. On April 19, VA began prioritizing claims decisions for veterans who have been waiting the longest, by providing provisional decisions that allow eligible veterans to begin collecting compensation benefits quickly. With a provisional decision, a veteran has a year to submit additional information to support a claim before the decision becomes final.

"We're committed to getting veterans decisions on their claims as quickly and accurately as possible," said Undersecretary for Benefits, Allison A. Hickey. "We need to surge our resources now to help those who have waited the longest and end the backlog."

Claims for Wounded Warriors separating from the military for medical reasons will continue to be handled separately and on a priority basis with the Department of Defense through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). On average, Wounded Warriors separating through IDES currently receive VA compensation benefits in 2 months following their separation from service.

Veterans can learn more about disability benefits on the joint Department of Defense-VA web portal eBenefits at <http://www.ebenefits.va.gov>. More information about filing Fully Developed Claims is available at: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/transformation/fastclaims>.



### VA Launches New Online Tools

The Federal VA has recently launched new online tools to help veterans learn more about the benefits they've earned.

#### Videos:

- ★ VA Disability Claims process: <http://youtube/QgfzRoHLjk>
- ★ Voc Rehab: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASPqtJWJ-KU&feature=share&t=list=UUBvOzPLmbzjtpX-Htstp2vw>

#### Infographics:

- ★ Fully Developed Claims: [http://benefits.va.gov/transformation/infographics/fdc\\_claims\\_cork\\_board.html](http://benefits.va.gov/transformation/infographics/fdc_claims_cork_board.html)
- ★ SAH: [http://benefits.va.gov/transformation/infographics/special\\_adaptive\\_housing.html](http://benefits.va.gov/transformation/infographics/special_adaptive_housing.html)
- ★ eBenefits: <http://benefits.va.gov/transformation/infographics/ebenefits.html>
- ★ VA Hiring: [http://benefits.va.gov/transformation/infographics/va\\_hiring.html](http://benefits.va.gov/transformation/infographics/va_hiring.html)

#### VA Home Loans

- ★ Eligibility: <http://youtu.be/E1NO7ma8hDU>
- ★ Benefits: <http://youtu.be/6ri8vfFA-Zg>
- ★ Realtors: <http://youtu.be/3OknSF2U4cY>
- ★ Service: <http://youtu.be/mANcyYEoluY>

For information or assistance regarding these online tools, contact: Samantha O'Neil, Public Affairs Specialist, VBA Corporate Communications, 202-632-8917, [Samantha.O'Neil@va.gov](mailto:Samantha.O'Neil@va.gov).

## Federal News and Updates Con't.

### Draft Gulf War Task Force Report Released Report Redefines How Care and Services are Provided to Gulf War Veterans

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced that the Department's Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses Task Force will publish a comprehensive draft report in the Federal Register for public feedback and comment. The report describes how the Department of Veterans Affairs has been, and will continue to address the concerns of veterans who deployed during the Gulf War in 1990 and 1991.

Over the past several years, the Task Force has refined an integrated roadmap to better synchronize efforts and improve care and services to Gulf War veterans. VA is working towards these efforts becoming a part of the culture and operations. This year's report continues to focus on efforts to improve health care for Gulf War veterans including innovative enhancements to clinical care. The draft report identifies seven specific areas where VA will strive to improve services for Gulf War veterans.

The seven areas focus on important components of health care, such as veteran-centric approaches to specialty and primary care, delivering veteran benefits, and improving open communications with Gulf War veterans. The Task Force also developed plans to improve linkages between specialty knowledge and services at the basic point of care to address treatment for chronic multi-symptom illness, an ongoing concern of Gulf War veterans, their families, and their providers.

Today, VA is seeking public comments on the draft Task Force report before final publication. The public notice and instructions for how to submit electronic and comments via postal mail will be posted at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov), and the draft written report will be open for comment for 30 days. In addition, VA recognizes that a great number of Gulf War veterans use the Internet on a daily basis to share their ideas and concerns, so VA has also created a public discussion board on the seven focus areas at: <http://vagulfwartaskforce.uservoice.com>. To view the report without making recommendations, please visit VA's website at: [http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/Draft\\_2012\\_GWVI-TF\\_Report.pdf](http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/Draft_2012_GWVI-TF_Report.pdf).



### President Obama Proclaims National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day

President Barack Obama has issued a proclamation marking July 27<sup>th</sup> as National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day. The following is the text of the President's proclamation:

Today, America pauses to observe the 60th anniversary of the end of the Korean War — a conflict that defined a generation and decided the fate of a nation. We remember the troops who hit the beaches when Communist forces were pressing south; who pushed back, and fought their way north through hard mountains and bitter cold. We remember ordinary men and women who showed extraordinary courage through 3 long years of war, fighting far from home to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met.

Most of all, we remember those brave Americans who gave until they had nothing left to give. No monument will ever be worthy of their service, and no memorial will fully heal the ache of their sacrifice. But as a grateful Nation, we must honor them -- not just with words, but with deeds. We must uphold our sacred obligation to all who serve — giving our troops the resources they need, keeping faith with our veterans and their families, and never giving up the search for our missing and our prisoners of war. Our fallen laid down their lives so we could live ours. It is our task to live up to the example they set, and make America a country worthy of their sacrifice.

## Federal News and Updates Con't.

### VA Grant Going to IA Agency to Help End Veterans Homelessness

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the award of \$717,986 in homeless prevention grant to the Iowa counties of: Linn, Johnson, Jones, Iowa, and Benton. The grants will serve approximately 252 homeless and at-risk veteran families as part of the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program. This award will serve veterans families associated with Hawkeye Area Community Action Program, Inc., one of 319 community agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

Under the *Supportive Services for Veteran Families* (SSVF) program, VA is awarding grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that provide services to very low-income veteran families living in — or transitioning to — permanent housing.

Those community organizations provide a range of services that promote housing stability among eligible very low income veteran families. Thanks to the SSVF grants, those community organizations will provide a range of services that promote housing stability and play a key role in connecting veterans and their family members to VA services such as mental health care and other benefits.

Community-based groups can offer temporary financial assistance on behalf of veterans for rent payments, utility payments, security deposits and moving costs. This is the program's third year. Last year, VA provided about \$100 million to assist approximately 50,000 veterans and family members.

More information about VA's homeless programs is available at [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless). Details about the *Supportive Services for Veteran Families* program are online at [www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp](http://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp). Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and their family members and friends can call VA's National Homeless Veterans Call Center at 1-877-4AID-VET. [Source: Valerie Buckingham, Public Affairs Officer - Iowa City VA Health Care System]



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*Continued from page 13*

This anniversary marks the end of a war. But it also commemorates the beginning of a long and prosperous peace. In six decades, the Republic of Korea has become one of the world's largest economies and one of America's closest allies. Together, we have built a partnership that remains a bedrock of stability throughout the Pacific. That legacy belongs to the service members who fought for freedom 60 years ago, and the men and women who preserve it today.

So as we mark this milestone, let us offer a special salute to our Korean War veterans. Let us renew the sacred trust we share with all who have served. And let us reaffirm that no matter what the future holds, America will always honor its promise to serve our veterans as well as they served us — now and forever.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim July 27, 2013, as National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day. I call upon all Americans to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities that honor our distinguished Korean War veterans.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand thirteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-eighth.  
BARACK OBAMA

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