



Veterans

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We can never do enough to repay the sacrifices made by the brave patriots who served our Nation's armed forces.

From the minutemen who stood their ground at Lexington and Concord, to the GI's who stormed the beaches of Normandy, to the service members who served valiantly in Iraq and Afghanistan, American veterans deserve our deepest appreciation and respect. They represent our best and brightest - an all volunteer force serving with honor and distinction under the most difficult of circumstances. They and their families make daily sacrifices that the rest of us cannot begin to comprehend, and all to the benefit of our way of life and our cherished freedom.

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"To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan."

~ President Abraham Lincoln

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The bravery and honor of current and former service members is unparalleled and as a result, they deserve the very best training, health care and benefits this nation can offer. They are heroes and Congress must honor its covenant to provide for them and their families.

With the words, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan," President Abraham Lincoln in his second Inaugural Address affirmed the Nation's obligation to care for those injured in defense of our Nation and to provide for families of those who perished on the battlefield.

Today, a pair of metal plaques bearing those words flanks the entrance to the Washington, D.C. headquarters of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), making it clear that through the VA, the Nation carries out its responsibility to care and provide for those who stood to defend her.

The various benefits were initially administered by three different federal agencies: the Veterans Bureau, the Bureau of Pensions of the Interior Department and the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. But in 1930, the Veterans Administration was established to "consolidate and coordinate government activities affecting war veterans." Since then, the VA health care system has grown from 54 hospitals in 1930, to include 171 medical centers, more than 350 outpatient, community and outreach clinics, 126 nursing home care units and 35 domiciliaries. The responsibilities and benefits programs of the Veterans Administration grew enormously over the six decades following its establishment. In 1989, the Department of Veterans Affairs was established as a Cabinet-level position.

Today the VA provides the most comprehensive system of veterans assistance in the world offering a wide range of benefits from education and training to life insurance and burial benefits. The VA is the second largest federal department and has more than 300,000 employees. As of February 2012, the estimated total veteran population was 22,234,000. This includes more than 7.4 million Vietnam-era veterans, Gulf War-era veterans numbering nearly 5.9 million, Korean conflict veterans at 2.3 million, while World War II veterans total 1.7 million.

Unfortunately, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have brought renewed attention to the needs of veterans, including the needs of homeless veterans. Both male and female veterans have been overrepresented in the homeless population, and as the number of veterans increases due to these conflicts, there is concern that the number of homeless veterans could also rise. The recent economic downturn has also raised concerns that the homelessness could increase among all groups, including veterans. The exact number of homeless

veterans is unknown, although the methods used to estimate their numbers have been improving in recent years.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Brief History of the Department of Veterans Affairs

Editor's Note: The following brief history is courtesy of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The VA is the federal agency responsible for serving the needs of veterans by providing health care, disability compensation and rehabilitation, education assistance, home loans, burial in a national cemetery, and other benefits and services.

The provision of various post-service benefits to military veterans dates back to the period before the Revolutionary War. The Continental Congress of 1776 encouraged enlistments during the Revolutionary War by providing pensions for soldiers who were disabled. Direct medical and hospital care given to veterans in the early days of the Republic was provided by the individual States and communities. In 1811, the first domiciliary and medical facility for veterans was authorized by the federal government. In the 19th century, the Nation's veterans' assistance program was expanded to include benefits and pensions not only for veterans, but also their widows and dependents.

After the Civil War, many State veterans homes were established. Since domiciliary care was available at all State veterans homes, incidental medical and hospital treatment was provided for all injuries and diseases, whether or not of service origin. Indigent and disabled veterans of the Civil War, Indian Wars, Spanish-American War, and Mexican Border period as well as discharged regular members of the Armed Forces were cared for at these homes.

Congress established a new system of veterans' benefits when the United States entered World War I in 1917. Included were programs for disability compensation, insurance for servicepersons and veterans, and vocational rehabilitation for the disabled. By the 1920s, the various benefits were administered by three different federal agencies: the Veterans Bureau, the Bureau of Pensions of the Interior Department, and the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers.

The establishment of the Veterans Administration came in 1930 when Congress authorized the President to "consolidate and coordinate Government activities affecting war veterans." The three component agencies became bureaus within the Veterans Administration. Brigadier General Frank T. Hines, who directed the Veterans Bureau for seven years, was named as the first Administrator of Veterans Affairs, a job he held until 1945.

The VA health care system has grown from 54 hospitals in 1930, to include 171 medical centers; more than 350 outpatient, community, and outreach clinics; 126 nursing home care units; and 35 domiciliaries. VA health care facilities provide a broad spectrum of medical, surgical, and rehabilitative care. The responsibilities and benefits programs of the Veterans Administration grew enormously during the following six decades. World War II resulted in not only a vast increase in the veteran population, but also in large number of new benefits enacted by the Congress for veterans of the war. The World War II GI Bill, signed into law on June 22, 1944, is said to have had more impact on the American way of life than any law since the Homestead Act more than a century ago. Further educational assistance acts were passed for the benefit of veterans of the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam Era, Persian Gulf War, and the All-Volunteer Force.

In 1973, the Veterans Administration assumed another major responsibility when the National Cemetery System (except for Arlington National Cemetery) was transferred to the Veterans Administration from the

Department of the Army. The Agency was charged with the operation of the National Cemetery System, including the marking of graves of all persons in national and State cemeteries (and the graves of veterans in private cemeteries, upon request) as well and administering the State Cemetery Grants Program.

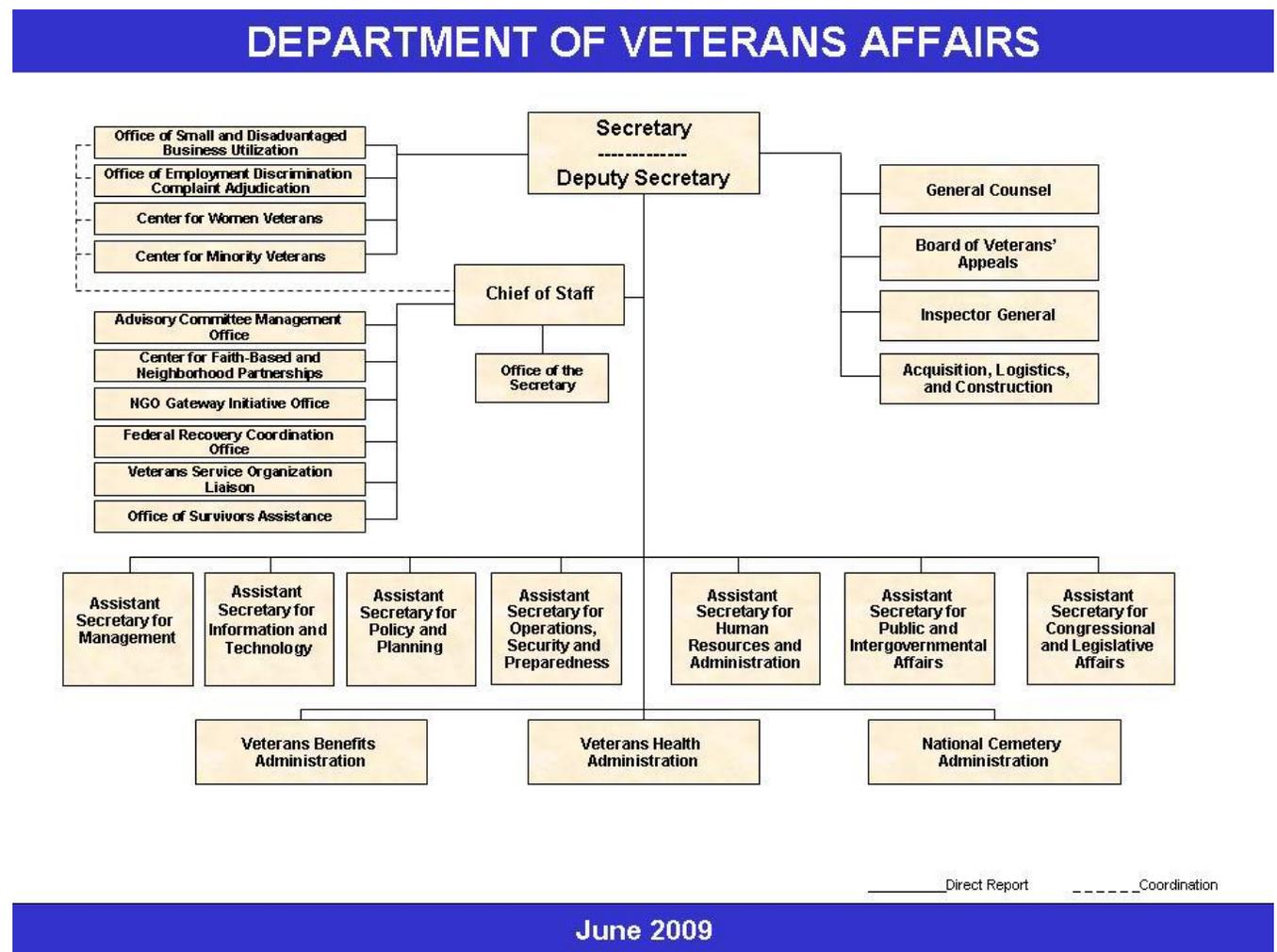
The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was established as a Cabinet-level position on March 15, 1989. President Bush hailed the creation of the new Department saying, “There is only one place for the veterans of America, in the Cabinet Room, at the table with the President of the United States of America.”

Today’s Department of Veterans Affairs

At the time of this writing, the current Secretary of Veterans Affairs is retired U.S. Army General Eric K. Shinseki. Click [here](#) to view Secretary Shinseki’s biography piece on the VA’s website.

Today, the VA provides the most comprehensive system of veterans assistance in the world, offering a wide range of benefits including: disability, education and training, vocational rehabilitation and employment, home loan guaranty, dependant and survivor benefits, medical treatment, life insurance and burial benefits.

Below is a chart representing how the VA is organized top to bottom:



The VA is the second largest federal department and has more than 300,000 employees. VA comprises a Central Office (VACO), which is located in Washington, D.C., and field facilities throughout the Nation administered by its three major line organizations: Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and the National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

Services and benefits are provided through a nationwide network of 153 hospitals, 956 outpatient clinics, 134 community living centers, 90 domiciliary residential rehabilitation treatment programs, 232 Vet centers, 57 Veterans benefits regional offices and 131 national cemeteries. Located on the VA website is a convenient Facility Locator tool through which all of these various facilities can be located by zip code, by state or by type of facility. You can access the VA's Facility Locator by clicking [here](#).

OVERVIEW OF VETERANS' BENEFITS

As touched on earlier in this chapter, the VA offers a wide range of benefits and services to eligible veterans, members of their families and survivors of deceased veterans. VA programs include disability compensation and pensions, readjustment benefits and health care programs. The VA also provides life insurance, burial benefits, housing and other loan guaranty programs and special counseling and outreach programs. While eligibility for specific benefits varies, veterans generally must meet requirements related to discharge type and length of active-duty military service.

VA Benefits in Brief is a printable document produced by the VA that provides an at-a-glance description of VA benefits, as well as contact phone numbers and locations and is available [here](#).

***Editor's Note:** Candidates may be interested in a more exhaustive summary of veterans' benefits. More information can be found through the following links, provided by the VA:*

Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors – 2011 Edition ([full version](#))

[Introduction and Acronyms](#)

[Chapter 1: VA Health Care Benefits](#)

[Chapter 2: Veterans with Service-Connected Disabilities](#)

[Chapter 3: VA Pensions](#)

[Chapter 4: Education and Training](#)

[Chapter 5: Home Loan Guaranty](#)

[Chapter 6: VA Life Insurance](#)

[Chapter 7: Burial and Memorial Benefits](#)

[Chapter 8: Reserve and National Guard](#)

[Chapter 9: Special Groups of Veterans](#)

[Chapter 10: Transition Assistance](#)

[Chapter 11: Dependents and Survivors Health Care](#)

[Chapter 12: Dependents and Survivors Benefits](#)

[Chapter 13: Appeals of VA Claims Decisions](#)

[Chapter 14: Military Medals and Records](#)



[Chapter 15: Other Federal Benefits](#)

[VA Facilities](#)

[Phone Numbers and Web Sites](#)

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

The VBA is responsible for administering the VA's programs that provide financial and other forms of assistance to veterans, their dependents and survivors. Major benefits include veterans' compensation, veterans' pension, survivor benefits, rehabilitation and employment assistance, education assistance, home loan guaranties and life insurance coverage.

***Editor's Note:** This chapter will go into more detail regarding the multitude of benefits and financial assistance the VBA and the VA provide to our veterans.*

Click [here](#) to view an interactive map displaying the four Area Offices of the VBA, facilities located in each Area and within each state.

Compensation and Pension Programs

The VA's Compensation and Pension Programs provide direct payments to veterans, dependents and survivors as a result of the veteran's service-connected disability or because of financial need.

Disability Compensation: This is a monetary benefit paid to veterans with disabilities that are the result of a disease or injury incurred or aggravated during active military service. The benefit amount is graduated according to the degree of the veteran's disability on a scale from 10 percent to 100 percent (in increments of 10 percent). Disabled veterans may also be eligible for vocational rehabilitation, grants for adaptive housing and automobiles and a clothing allowance.

Dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC): This is paid to the surviving dependents of veterans who died as a result of service-connected causes; certain totally (100 percent) disabled veterans who died as a result of nonservice-connected causes; and service members who died on active duty.

Pension: These programs are designed to provide income support to veterans with wartime service and their families for a nonservice-connected disability or death. These programs are for low-income veterans and survivors and are means-tested cash benefits for veterans who served during a period of war and have become permanently and totally disabled from nonservice-connected causes or are elderly (over age 65). Veterans must meet income or net worth criteria to be eligible for VA pensions.

Burial and Interment Allowances: These are payable for certain veterans. A higher rate of burial allowance applies if the veteran's death is service-connected.

Spina Bifida Monthly Allowance under 38 U.S.C. 1805: This is provided for children born with Spina Bifida who are children of individuals who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam Era, or served in or near the demilitarization zone in Korea during the period Sept. 1, 1967, through Aug. 31, 1971. Payment is made at one of three levels and is based on degree of disability suffered by the child.

Children of Women Vietnam Veterans Born with Certain Defects: This program provides a monetary allowance, health care and vocational training benefits to eligible children born to women who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the period beginning on Feb. 28, 1961, and ending May 7, 1975, if they suffer from certain covered birth defects. The VA identifies the birth defects as those associated with the service of the mother in Vietnam and result in permanent physical or mental disability.

Education Programs

The VA's Education Programs provide resources to veterans, service persons, reservists and certain veterans' dependents to help with readjustment and restore educational opportunities lost because of service to the country, to extend benefits of higher education to qualified persons who may not otherwise be able to afford it, to aid in military recruitment and the retention of highly qualified personnel, to encourage membership in the Selected Reserve and to enhance the national workforce.

Details on any and all of the VA's Education Programs can be found at <http://www.gibill.va.gov>.

Post-Vietnam Era Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP): VEAP is available for eligible veterans who entered active duty between Jan. 1, 1977, and June 30, 1985. Benefits and entitlement are determined by the contributions paid while on active duty and veterans have 10 years after separation from service in which to use the benefit.

Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB): MGIB provides a program of education benefits that may be used while on active duty or after separation from service. There are several distinct eligibility categories. Generally, a veteran will receive 36 months of entitlement and has 10 years after separating from service to use the benefit. The MGIB is the largest of the VA's readjustment programs.

Montgomery GI Bill – Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR): MGIB-SR is a program funded and managed by the Department of Defense (DoD) and is available to members of the Selected Reserve. VA administers the program but DoD determines the member's eligibility. Generally a qualified member of the Reserve will receive 36 months of entitlement and will have 14 years in which to use the benefit.

Reservists Educational Assistance Program (REAP): REAP is a program funded and managed by DoD and is available to members of the Selected or Ready Reserve who are called to active duty to support contingency operations. VA administers this program, but DoD determines eligibility. In general, a qualified member of the Selected or Ready Reserve will receive 36 months of entitlement and will be able to use the benefit as long as he or she remains in the Selected or Ready Reserve.

National Call to Service: This is a program of education benefits that may be used while on active duty or after separation. The person must have enlisted on or after Oct. 1, 2003, under the National Call to Service program and selected one of the two education incentives provided by that program. A veteran will receive education benefits based on the education initiative selected. These are either:

- education benefits of up to 12 months of MGIB benefits (the three-year rate); or
- education benefits of up to 36 months of the MGIB benefits (half the two-year rate).

Dependents Educational Assistance Program (DEA): DEA is designed to assist dependents of veterans who have been determined to be 100 percent permanently and totally disabled due to a service-connected condition, died due to a service-connected condition, or died while on active duty. Dependents typically receive 45 months of eligibility. The criteria for using this benefit are bulleted below:

- children have eight years to use this benefit
- a spouse of a living veteran has 10 years to use this benefit
- a surviving spouse of a veteran who died with a 100 percent service-connected condition has 10 years to use this benefit
- a surviving spouse of a veteran who died on active duty has 20 years to use this benefit.

Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program (Post 9/11-GI Bill): The Post 9/11-GI Bill updated the GI Bill in 2008 giving veterans with active duty service after Sept. 10, 2001, enhanced educational benefits that cover more educational expenses, living allowance, money for books and the ability to transfer unused educational benefits to spouses or children. It became effective Aug. 1, 2009, and also includes the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Frye Scholarship Program for the children of service members who died while on active duty.

Loan Guaranty Program

The Loan Guaranty Program provides assistance to veterans, certain spouses and service members to enable them to buy and retain homes. Assistance is provided through VA's partial guaranty of loans made by private lenders in lieu of the substantial down payment and private mortgage insurance required in conventional mortgage transactions. This protection means that in most cases, qualified veterans can obtain a loan without making a down payment. Also, the Loan Guaranty Program offers the following:

Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) Grants: SAH Grants are available to veterans with specific service-connected disabilities for the purpose of constructing an adapted home or modifying an existing home to meet the veteran's needs. The goal of this program is to provide a barrier-free living environment that affords the veterans a level of independent living he or she may not have otherwise enjoyed.

Native American Direct Home Loans: These direct loans are made by the VA and are available to eligible Native American veterans and, in certain circumstances, spouses who wish to purchase or construct a home on trust lands.

Servicing Assistance: This program provides help for borrowers having difficulty in making their loan payments. This assistance can take several forms, but the goal is to try and keep the veteran in the property and avoid foreclosure.

Insurance Programs

The Insurance Programs were created to provide life insurance at a "standard" premium rate to members of the armed forces who are exposed to the extra hazards of military service. Veterans are eligible to maintain their VA life insurance following discharge. In general, a new program was created for each wartime period

since World War I. There are four life insurance programs that still issue coverage as well as a program of traumatic injury coverage.

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI): SGLI provides up to \$400,000 of life insurance coverage to active-duty members of the Uniformed Services and members of the Reserves, cadets and midshipmen of the four service academies, members of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and members who volunteer for assignment to a mobilization category in the Individual Ready Reserve. SGLI also offers Family Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (FSGLI) for up to \$100,000 in coverage for a service member's spouse, if the service member is on active duty or a member of the Ready Reserve of a uniformed service. All dependent children are automatically insured for \$10,000 at no charge.

Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI): Individuals who separate from service with SGLI coverage can convert their coverage to VGLI, regardless of health, by submitting an application with the first month's premium within 120 days of discharge. After 120 days, the individual may still be granted VGLI provided evidence of insurability is submitted within one-year of the end of the 120-day period. If the member is totally disabled at separation, SGLI coverage continues for free for two years, after which VGLI can be granted without evidence of insurability.

Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI): A veteran who has a VA service-connected disability rating but is otherwise in good health may apply for life insurance coverage of up to \$10,000 within two years from the date of being notified by VA of the service-connected status. This insurance is limited to veterans who left service after April 24, 1951. If the veteran is totally disabled, premiums are waived and he or she may apply for an additional \$20,000 of coverage under this program.

Veterans Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI): Mortgage life insurance protection for up to \$90,000 is available to severely disabled veterans who receive a SAH Grant.

Servicemembers' Traumatic Injury Protection (TSGLI): TSGLI is a rider to the SGLI policies and provides automatic traumatic injury coverage to all service members under SGLI, effective Dec. 1, 2005. It provides for payment between \$25,000 and \$100,000 (depending on the type of injury) to SGLI members who sustain a traumatic injury that results in certain severe losses. The benefit is retroactive to Oct. 7, 2001, if the loss was a direct result of injuries incurred in Operations Enduring Freedom or Iraqi Freedom.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program helps service members and veterans with service-connected disabilities prepare for, find and keep suitable jobs. For veterans with service-connected disabilities so severe that they cannot immediately consider work, VR&E offers services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible. Vocational rehabilitation services include a vocational evaluation (i.e. assessment of interests, aptitudes and abilities), vocational counseling and planning, employment services (i.e. job-seeking skills and job-placement assistance), training for suitable employment, supportive rehabilitation services and independent living services. In general, a veteran must complete a program of rehabilitation services within 12 years from the date of VA notification of entitlement to service-connected disability compensation. This period may be deferred or extended if a medical condition prevents the veteran from pursuing rehabilitation services for a period of time, or if the veteran has a serious employment handicap.

Vocational and Educational Counseling: VR&E can also provide a wide range of vocational and educational counseling services to service members still on active duty, as well as veterans and dependents who are eligible for one of the VA's educational benefit programs. These services are designed to help an individual choose a vocational direction and determine the course needed to achieve the chosen goal. Assistance may include interest and aptitude testing, occupational exploration, setting occupational goals, locating the right type of training program and exploring educational or training facilities which might be utilized to achieve a vocational goal.

Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

The VHA is among the largest providers of health professional training in the world. It operates one of the largest and most effective research organizations in the United States, is a principal federal asset for providing medical assistance in major disasters and serves as the largest direct-care provider for homeless citizens in the United States. The VHA is primarily a direct service provider of primary care, specialized care and related medical and social support services to veterans through the Nation's largest integrated health care system. Veterans generally must enroll in the VA health care system to receive medical care. Eligibility for enrollment is based primarily on previous military service, disability and income. Once enrolled, veterans are assigned to one of eight categories:

Editor's Note: This information is provided by the VA and can also be found [here](#).

Priority Group 1

- Veterans with VA Service-connected disabilities rated 50% or more.
- Veterans assigned a total disability rating for compensation based on unemployability.

Priority Group 2

- Veterans with VA Service-connected disabilities rated 30% or 40%.

Priority Group 3

- Veterans who are former POWs.
- Veterans awarded the Purple Heart Medal.
- Veterans awarded the Medal of Honor.
- Veterans whose discharge was for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.
- Veterans with VA Service-connected disabilities rated 10% or 20%.
- Veterans awarded special eligibility classification under Title 38, U.S.C., § 1151, "benefits for individuals disabled by treatment or vocational rehabilitation."

Priority Group 4

- Veterans receiving increased compensation or pension based on their need for regular Aid and Attendance or by reason of being permanently Housebound.
- Veterans determined by VA to be catastrophically disabled.

Priority Group 5

- Nonservice-connected Veterans and noncompensable Service-connected Veterans rated 0%, whose annual income and/or net worth are not greater than the VA financial thresholds.
- Veterans receiving VA Pension benefits.
- Veterans eligible for Medicaid benefits.

Priority Group 6

- Compensable 0% Service-connected Veterans.
- Veterans exposed to ionizing radiation during atmospheric testing or during the occupation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- Project 112/SHAD participants.
- Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975.
- Veterans who served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations from August 2, 1990, through November 11, 1998.
- Veterans who served in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998, as follows:
 - Veterans discharged from active duty on or after January 28, 2003, for five years post discharge

Priority Group 7

- Veterans with incomes **below** the geographic means test (GMT) income thresholds and who agree to pay the applicable copayment.

Priority Group 8

- Veterans with gross household incomes above the VA national income threshold and the geographically-adjusted income threshold for their resident location and who agrees to pay copays

Veterans eligibility for enrollment: Noncompensable 0% service-connected and:

- Subpriority a: Enrolled as of January 16, 2003, and who have remained enrolled since that date and/ or placed in this subpriority due to changed eligibility status.
- Subpriority b: Enrolled on or after June 15, 2009 whose income exceeds the current VA National Income Thresholds or VA National Geographic Income Thresholds by 10% or less

Veterans eligible for enrollment: Nonservice-connected and:

- Subpriority c: Enrolled as January 16, 2003, and who remained enrolled since that date and/ or placed in this subpriority due to changed eligibility status
- Subpriority d: Enrolled on or after June 15, 2009 whose income exceeds the current VA National Income Thresholds or VA National Geographic Income Thresholds by 10% or less

Veterans not eligible for enrollment: Veterans not meeting the criteria above:

- Subpriority e: Noncompensable 0% service-connected
- Subpriority g: Nonservice-connected

The VA provides free inpatient and outpatient medical care to veterans for service-connected conditions and to low-income veterans for nonservice-connected conditions. VA provides a comprehensive medical benefits package to all enrolled veterans. Broadly, this includes preventive care services (e.g. immunizations, physical examinations, health care assessments, and screening tests); inpatient and outpatient medical care, surgery and mental health care, including care for substance abuse; prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, and medical and surgical supplies; and durable medical equipment and prosthetic and orthotic devices, including eyeglasses and hearing aids. In general, the VA provides nursing home care to veterans with service-connected conditions that are clinically determined to require nursing home care and to veterans with service-connected disabilities.

The VA’s full Veterans Health Benefits Guide is available [here](#).

Today’s VHA provides care at more than 1,400 sites throughout the country, employs a staff of 255,000 and maintains affiliations with 107 academic health systems. More than 65 percent of all physicians in the U.S. today have trained in VA facilities.

Click [here](#) to view an interactive map displaying the 21 regional networks of the VHA and facilities located in each.

National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

The NCA operates 131 national cemeteries in the United States and Puerto Rico, together with oversight/management of 33 soldiers’ lost, Confederate cemeteries and monument sites. More than 3.5 million veterans, spouses and dependents are buried in the system’s nearly 7,900 acres of developed land. NCA’s mission is to honor our Nation’s veterans with final resting places in national shrines and with lasting tributes that commemorate their service to our Nation. The NCA accomplishes this through four major program areas:

- Providing for the interment of eligible service members, veterans, reservists, National Guard members and eligible family members in national cemeteries.
- Furnishing headstones and markers for the graves of veterans throughout the United States and the world – in FY 2009, NCA furnished more than 350,000 headstones, markers and inscriptions.
- Administering the State Cemetery Grants Program, which provides grants to states and tribal governments for establishing, expanding and improving state veterans’ cemeteries – since the Program was established in 1978, 274 grants totaling more than \$389 million have been awarded.
- Providing Presidential Memorial Certificates to veterans’ loved ones to honor the service of honorably discharged deceased service members or veterans – in FY 2009, NCA issued more than 655,000 Certificates on behalf of the President.

Click [here](#) to view an interactive map displaying the five Service Networks of the NCA, facilities located in each Service Network and within each state.

TODAY'S VETERANS

As of February 2012 (most recent VA statistics available at the time of this writing), the estimated total veteran population was 22,234,000 ([source](#)).

This includes more than 7.4 million Vietnam-era veterans, representing the single largest period-of-service component of the veteran population. Gulf War-era veterans now comprise the second largest component, numbering nearly 5.9 million. Korean conflict veterans number 2.3 million, while World War II veterans total 1.7 million. Veterans serving only in peacetime number 5.7 million - about one-in-four veterans ([source](#)).

Approximately 42 percent of our total veteran population is 65 or older. Female veterans number about 1.8 million, or eight percent of the total veteran population ([source](#)).

Homelessness Among Veterans

Unfortunately, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have brought renewed attention to the needs of veterans, including the needs of homeless veterans. Both male and female veterans have been overrepresented in the homeless population, and as the number of veterans increases due to these conflicts, there is concern that the number of homeless veterans could also rise. The recent economic downturn also has raised concerns that homelessness could increase among all groups, including veterans.

The exact number of homeless veterans is unknown, although the methods used to estimate their numbers have been improving in recent years. Until 2011, both the VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) conducted separate assessments of the number and percentage of homeless veterans over a period of years, beginning in 1998 and 2006, respectively. However, beginning in 2011, the two agencies announced that they would coordinate their efforts and use one count as “the definitive estimate of veteran homelessness.” This joint-estimate comes from HUD’s biennial “point-in-time” count of homeless individuals - both VA and HUD will be using this method from now on. Point-in-time required local HUD jurisdictions to conduct a count of sheltered and unsheltered homeless persons on one night during the last week of January every other year. It is a snapshot of the number of people who are homeless on a given day, and they are not meant to represent the total number of people who experience homelessness over the course of a year. The VA, historically, has estimated homeless veterans using a method called “year-long estimate.” This is simply based on a full year’s worth of information, rather than one day, and based on a sample of communities rather than a total of all communities.

According to HUD’s point-in-time estimate, in 2009, there were 75,609 homeless veterans, or 16 percent of the total adult homeless population. According to the VA’s point-in-time estimate for 2009, there were 106,558 homeless veterans.

The federal response to the needs of homeless veterans, like the federal response to homelessness generally, began in the late 1980s. While homeless veterans are eligible for and receive services through programs that are not designed specifically for homeless veterans, the VA funds multiple programs to serve homeless veterans. The majority of homeless programs are run through the VHA. The VBA operates one program for homeless veterans. Additionally, the VBA has made efforts to coordinate with the VHA regarding homeless veterans by placing Homeless Veteran Outreach Coordinators (HVOCs) in its offices in order to assist homeless veterans in their applications for benefits. To find out additional information regarding the

VA's homeless veteran programs, visiting the Homeless Veterans portion of the VA website will prove helpful: <http://www.va.gov/homeless/>.

In addition, the Department of Labor (DOL) is responsible for programs that provide employment services for homeless veterans while HUD collaborates with the VA on two additional programs.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY IN THE 112TH CONGRESS

The House Committee on Veterans Affairs has dealt legislatively with several issues facing our Nation's veterans during the current 112th Congress to ensure that they are getting the care and benefits they need and deserve. This section will highlight a few of these bills as well as provide a compilation of veterans' legislative accomplishments from the 112th Congress, provided by the Committee on Veterans Affairs.

H.R. 1383, Restoring GI Bill Fairness Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-26)

One issue in particular dealt with the Post-9/11 GI Bill. On July 26, 2011, the House passed H.R. 1383, the Restoring GI Bill Fairness Act of 2011. It passed the House unanimously and was signed into law by President Obama on Aug. 3, 2011. This law temporarily authorized the VA to pay tuition and fees on behalf of eligible veterans attending non-public education and training institutions under the Post 9/11 GI Bill, in an amount greater of \$17,500, or the maximum in-state rate for undergraduate tuition and fees in effect on Oct. 27, 2010.

This temporary change will prevent students who have already enrolled in high-cost non-public schools from experiencing a reduction in tuition and fees paid by VA on their behalf due to changes made in the last Congress under the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-377). With this new law, student veterans, who had been accepted for enrollment by a school on or prior to Jan. 4, 2011, but were not necessarily attending the school at that time could be "grandfathered" in under the Post 9/11 GI Bill and can remain enrolled in the school of their choice.

This was a great, bipartisan accomplishment for our Nation's veterans and the 112th Congress.

Below you will find a compilation of 112th Congress legislative accomplishments put together by the House Committee on Veterans Affairs. This can also be viewed [here](#) on the Committee's website.

House Bills (11 bills not including those 2 which were enacted into law):

H.R. 802, as amended – (*Rep. Bob Filner D-CA*), To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a VetStar Award Program. Passed the House by the Yeas and Nays (2/3 required): 408-11 (Roll No. 383) on June 1, 2011.

H.R. 1025 – (*Rep. Timothy J. Walz D-MN*), To amend title 38, United States Code, to recognize the service in the reserve components of certain persons by honoring them with status as veterans under law. On motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill Agreed to by voice vote on October 11, 2011.

H.R. 1263, as amended – (*Rep. Bob Filner, D-CA*), To amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to provide surviving spouses with certain protections relating to mortgages and mortgage foreclosures, and for other purposes. On motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended Agreed to by voice vote on October 11, 2011.

H.R. 1407, as amended – (*Rep. Jon Runyan R-NJ*), Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2011. On motion to suspend the rules and pass the bills, as amended Agreed to by voice vote. May 23, 2011.

H.R. 1484, as amended – (Rep. Bob Filner D-CA), Veterans Appeals Improvement Act of 2011. Passed the House by the Yeas and Nays (2/3 required): 419-1 (Roll No. 377) on May 31, 2011.

H.R. 1627, as amended – (Rep. Jeff Miller R-FL), Honoring American Veterans Act of 2011. Passed the House by the Yeas and Nays (2/3 required): 380-0 (Roll No. 330) on May 23, 2011.

H.R. 1657, as amended – (Rep. Marlin Stutzman R-IN), To amend title 38, United States Code, to revise the enforcement penalties for misrepresentation of a business concern as a small business concern owned and controlled by veterans or as a small business concern owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans. Passed the House by the Yeas and Nays (2/3 required): 385-1 (Roll No. 332) on May 23, 2011.

H.R. 2074, as amended -- (Rep. Ann Marie Buerkle R-NY), Veterans Sexual Assault Prevention and Health Care Enhancement Act. On motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended Agreed to by voice vote on October 11, 2011.

H.R. 2302, as amended – (Rep. Marlin Stutzman R-IN), To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to notify Congress of conferences sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes. On motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended Agreed to by voice vote on October 11, 2011.

H.R. 2349, as amended – (Rep. Jon Runyan R-NJ), Veterans' Benefits Act of 2011. On motion to suspend the rules and pass the bill, as amended Agreed to by voice vote on October 11, 2011.

H.R. 2433, as amended – (Rep. Jeff Miller R-FL), Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011. Passed the House by the Yeas and Nays (2/3 required): 418 - 6 (Roll No. 785) on October 12, 2011.

Legislation Enacted Into Law

Public Law 112-26 (H.R. 1383, as amended) – (Rep. Jeff Miller R-FL), **Restoring GI Bill Fairness Act of 2011**. Passed the House by the Yeas and Nays (2/3 required): 389-0 (Roll No. 331) on May 23, 2011. Passed the Senate, with amendments, by unanimous consent on July 21, 2011. House agreed to the Senate amendments (2/3 required): 424-0 (Roll Call No. 638) on July 26, 2011. Was signed into law on August 3, 2011.

Public Law No: 112-37 (H.R. 2646, as amended) – (Rep. Bill Johnson R-OH), Veterans Health Care Facilities Capital Improvement Act of 2011. Passed the House by Yeas and Nays (2/3 required): 412-3 (Roll No. 714) on September 20, 2011. Passed the Senate, without amendment, by unanimous consent on July 23, 2011. Was signed into law on October 5, 2011.

Public Law No. 112-56 (H.R. 674, as amended) --(Rep. Wally Herger R-CA). The provisions of H.R. 2433, the “VOW to Hire Heroes Act,” are incorporated into H.R. 674. Passed Senate with an amendment by Yea-Nay Vote. 95 - 0 on November 10, 2011. House agreed to the Senate amendment, agreed to by the Yeas and Nays: (2/3 required): 422 - 0 on November 16, 2011. Was signed into law on November 21, 2011.

CONGRESSIONALLY CHARTERED VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Service Organization	Date of Charter
<u>Navy Mutual Aid Association</u>	Jul. 28, 1879
<u>The American Red Cross</u>	Jan. 5, 1905
<u>The American Legion</u>	Sept. 16, 1919
<u>National Amputation Foundation, Inc.</u>	1919
<u>American War Mothers</u>	Feb. 24, 1925
<u>Disabled American Veterans</u>	June 17, 1932
<u>Veterans of Foreign Wars</u>	May 28, 1936
<u>Marine Corps League</u>	July 4, 1937
United Spanish War Veterans	April 22, 1940
<u>Navy Club of the United States of America</u>	June 6, 1940
American Veterans Committee	1944
<u>American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor</u>	Mar. 21, 1946
<u>AMVETS (American Veterans)</u>	July 23, 1947
<u>American G.I. Forum</u>	March 1948
<u>Military Chaplains Association of the USA</u>	Sept. 20, 1950
<u>Legion of Valor of the USA, Inc.</u>	July 4, 1955
<u>Congressional Medal of Honor Society</u>	July 14, 1958
Veterans of World War I	July 18, 1958
<u>Military Order of the Purple Heart</u>	Aug. 26, 1958

Service Organization	Date of Charter
<u>Blinded Veterans Association</u>	Aug. 27, 1958
<u>Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.</u>	June 1960
<u>National Association for Black Veterans, Inc.</u>	July 1969
<u>Swords to Plowshares: Veterans Rights Organization</u>	Dec. 23, 1974
<u>Air Force Sergeants Association</u>	Nov. 18, 1997
<u>Paralyzed Veterans of America</u>	Aug. 11, 1971
<u>Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc.</u>	May 5, 1980
<u>Gold Star Wives</u>	Dec. 4, 1980
<u>Italian American War Veterans</u>	Nov. 20, 1981
<u>U.S. Submarine Veterans, Inc.</u>	Nov. 20, 1981
<u>National Veterans Legal Services Program, Inc.</u>	1981
<u>American Ex-Prisoners of War</u>	Aug. 10, 1982
<u>Women's Army Corps Veterans Association</u>	Oct. 30, 1984
<u>American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.</u>	June 12, 1984
<u>Polish Legion of America</u>	June 23, 1984
<u>Catholic War Veterans</u>	Aug. 17, 1984
<u>Jewish War Veterans</u>	Aug. 21, 1984
<u>Pearl Harbor Survivors</u>	Oct. 7, 1985
<u>Vietnam Veterans of America</u>	May 23, 1986
<u>Army and Navy Union</u>	Nov. 6, 1986
<u>Non-Commissioned Officers Association of America</u>	April 6, 1988

Service Organization

Date of Charter

[National Association of County Veterans Service Officers, Inc.](#)

June 1990

[Military Order of the World Wars](#)

Oct. 23, 1992

[The Retired Enlisted Association](#)

Oct. 23, 1992

[Fleet Reserve Association](#)

Oct. 23, 1996

[National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs \(NASDVA\)](#)

N/A

[Women Airforce Service Pilots of World War II](#)

N/A

Other Veterans Service Organizations and Military Associations

- [Air Force Association](#)
- [Association of the United States Army](#)
- [Association for Service Disabled Veterans](#)
- [Berlin Airlift Veterans Association](#)
- [Enlisted Association of National Guard](#)
- [National Association of County Veteran Service Officers](#)
- [National Association of Uniformed Services](#)
- [National 4th Infantry \(IVY\) Division](#)
- [National Guard Association of the United States](#)
- [Reserve Officers Association](#)
- [The Retired Military Officers Association](#)
- [Korea Defense Veterans of America](#)

VETERANS TALKING POINTS

- We should protect and fight for the veterans of our nation to ensure that they have access to appropriate health care and benefits.
- Funding for veteran programs should remain a top priority.
- Although America is facing economic and budgetary difficulties, our federal budget should not be balanced on the backs of veterans who have served our country with distinction and courage.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) website – <http://www.va.gov/>
- House Committee on Veterans' Affairs – <http://veterans.house.gov/>
- National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (NCVAS), VA website – <http://www.va.gov/vetdata/>
- State/Territory Veterans Affairs Offices, VA website – <http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm>