



# VETS NEWS

July | August 2012

Jim Willis, Director

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## HONORING THE HOME FRONT AND FRONT LINES



### OREGON BREAKS GROUND ON THE STATE'S WWII MEMORIAL

SALEM – On the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Allied invasion of France, June 6<sup>th</sup>, memories became fresh and emotions swelled as hundreds gathered to witness the ceremonial groundbreaking of Oregon's World War II Memorial in Willson Park on the grounds of the state Capitol.

Many don't recall an event in recent history where so many veterans of World War II were assembled in one place. It was history, once again, in the making.

"There's not very many of us left, and I think it's very nice that they would do this," said Alvin Christopherson of Salem, a World War II veteran who lived through the attack on Pearl Harbor.

"I was actually on duty that morning, wide awake. And I heard a drone and looked up. I counted 80 Japanese war planes," said Christopherson.

SEE *GROUNDBREAKING* ON PAGE 3

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## Director's Message

# MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO HELP VETERANS

**Jim Willis,**  
Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs

It seems it's convention season and my staff and I have been busy moving around the state to hear from our veterans and their families. My sincere appreciation is extended to all of our National Service Organizations for the many courtesies extended to ODVA during our visits. I also want to thank all of our veterans, their families and survivors for all that you do to aid your fellow veterans and their families throughout the year.

I want to thank the Vietnam Veterans Oregon Memorial Fund Board members for the exceptional ceremony they conducted on Memorial Day, May 28<sup>th</sup>, in celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Oregon's Vietnam Memorial. The weather was great and there was a good turnout of both Vietnam veterans, along with friends and family of all ages.

The June 6<sup>th</sup> groundbreaking of Oregon's World War II Memorial is covered within this edition of *VETS NEWS*, and I would like to thank everyone who has made a donation in support of getting us closer to our goal of building this long overdue memorial. My special thanks go to the North Salem High School Army Junior ROTC who provided the Color Guard for the groundbreaking. When finished, the site will memorialize those we lost, and remember all who served, both here at home and in the theaters of war around the world.

Beyond the quiet dignity of this memorial, educational story boards will be provided so that

generations of Oregonians and visitors will be able to know and understand the true sacrifice of this admired generation of great Americans.

I also want to thank the Korean War Veterans Association for hosting the 62<sup>nd</sup> anniversary ceremony of the start of the Korean War held in Wilsonville on June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Sometimes referred to as the "Forgotten War," ceremonies such as these will ensure that this war and these veterans will never be forgotten and their commitment and courage will continue to be an example for everyone who has served.

As I attend events such as these across our state, I continue to see young people who either come in groups, or attend with their relatives. It gives me hope that the lessons of these wars that were fought across the world will be learned and understood. And that in the future, and by good citizenship, these young people will maintain and preserve what the members of our armed forces, and those who supported them at home, fought so hard to protect.

My thanks to all of you who are supporting the Veterans Home in The Dallas and those of you who have already made contributions to the new Veterans Home to be built in Lebanon.

Jim Willis, Director

# RESEARCH LINKS TBI TO BRAIN DISEASE

*From the VA Blog*

While wars tend to carry a signature weapon, traumatic brain injury has often been called the signature wound of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Modern combat medicine and forward surgical teams have saved an amount of lives unthinkable even 60 years ago. But that yields complications: troops have survived wounds and injuries that would have killed in the past.

Veterans are returning home with traumatic brain injury (TBI) in unprecedented numbers. Yet, for the first time, a VA-led study has linked brain injuries from combat to a degenerative brain disease most commonly found in athletes.

The study provides the strongest evidence yet that some and perhaps many combat veterans with invisible brain injuries caused by explosions are at risk of developing long-term neurological disease — a finding that, if confirmed, would have profound implications for military policy, veteran's programs and future research.

Most significantly, brain injuries are notoriously difficult to detect and treat, so these findings may help researchers unravel the complexity of the injuries that has frustrated a generation of medical professionals.

A newly discovered malady, chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), is a gradual degeneration in brain function due to repeated head injuries that causes both concussions with symptoms and concussions.

CTE symptoms start slowly and creep up on the patient. Initially, there may be concentration and memory problems with episodes of disorientation and confusion, dizziness, and headaches. It is as if the concussion symptoms were starting to return even without a new head injury. The person's emotions become unstable and the patient can become aggressive and psychotic.

CTE manifests itself in the form of psychiatric symptoms, learning deficits, dementia and progressive brain cell death.

If you sustained a head injury (like a concussion), check out the TBI resource page for symptoms, screening information, and recovery and rehabilitation options: [www.polytrauma.va.gov/understanding-tbi/](http://www.polytrauma.va.gov/understanding-tbi/)



## VETERANS' HOME COMMUNITY CENTER RECEIVES NAMESAKE PORTRAIT

As Lily Smith, 18, pulled the drape to unveil the portrait of her grandparents, Stan and Jean Adams, at the Oregon Veterans' Home, everyone could immediately see the smiling resemblance to her grandmother.

The new portrait, painted by Portland artist Eduardo Fernandez (on right), now hangs in the Stan and Jean Adams Community Center, which was dedicated in December 2011.

Lily and her dad, Greg Smith, were the honored guests as the portrait was unveiled on June 20.

"Our family is forever grateful for the honor of this center being named after Mom and Stan. It's an honor for us," Greg Smith said. "It's a lovely portrait of them."



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**Input for the next issue must be received by August 1.**

**GROUNDBREAKING FROM PAGE 1**

For Christopherson and dozens of World War II veterans in attendance, a war memorial for Oregonians is a long-time-coming.

Jim Willis, director of the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs and one of the Oregon World War II Memorial Foundation board members, has made it his mission to give the “greatest generation,” who were typically too modest and humble to draw attention to their achievements, their proper due.

“When they came home the last thing in the world that they cared about was any kind of memorial,” Willis said. “And that’s why the national World War II memorial wasn’t dedicated until 2006. That war ended in 1945. It took the nation that long.”

Secretary of State Kate Brown, one of the nine representatives who turned the first shovel of dirt for the memorial site, said three words define the veterans of the Second World War.

“Sacrifice, as in the act by 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. David R. Kingsley of Portland to give his parachute to a fellow crew member before his bomber crashed after bombing the oil fields in Ploesti, Romania, in 1944. Kingsley was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously in 1945.”

She added, “Tenacity, as in the life and career of 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Robert Diez, one of the Tuskegee Airmen, a unit of America’s first black aviators. And courage, when considering the careers and service of Ken Jernstedt, one of the original Flying Tigers volunteer pilots in China, later a state senator and mayor of Hood River; Rex T. Barber, a fighter pilot from Culver who was part of the top-secret mission to locate and shoot down Japanese Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto.

“There’s American-born Japanese Kennie Namba of Portland, who served as a member of the mostly all Japanese U.S. Army 442<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment, and Donald Hughes, a Navy pilot in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, who was buried this week in Portland,” Brown said.

Foundation honorary board member, Bill Markham, flew B-17 bombers over Europe with the 8th Air Force and later became the longest-serving state representative (1969-75 and 1977-99, for a total of 28 years).

“It will not be about war,” Markham said of the memorial. “It will tell the story of the men and women in war and on the home front.”

Markham is one of 12 honorary board members who are supporting the Foundation’s efforts to build the state’s memorial. Others include Govs. John Kitzhaber, Ted Kulongoski, Barbara Roberts, and Victor Atiyeh, Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici, Oregon Medal of Honor recipients Bob Maxwell and Arthur Jackson, and World War II veterans Gerry Frank and Art Sorenson.

Oregon is one of only six states that do not have an official state World War II memorial. Financed entirely by private donations, the aim is to have the memorial completed by Veterans Day 2012. However, that date will depend on raising enough money to complete the project.

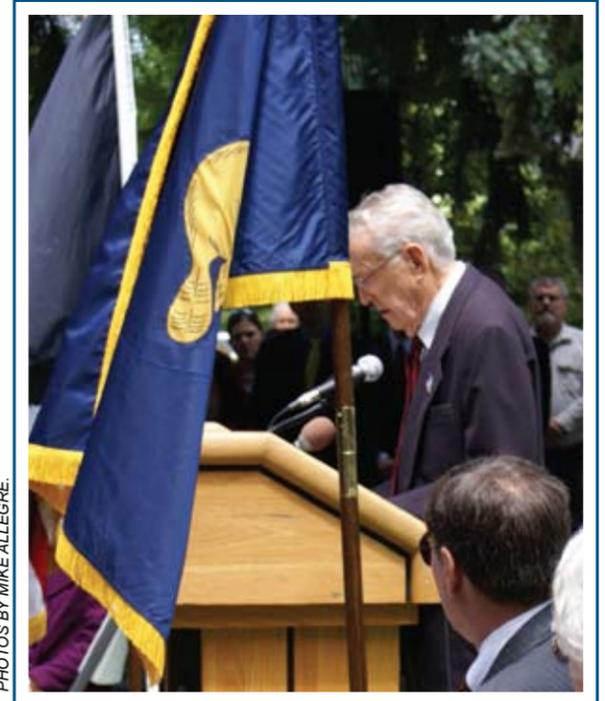
Once completed, the memorial will commemorate and honor the service of more than 152,000 Oregon men and women of the armed forces, the support of countless civilians on the home front, and the ultimate sacrifice of more than 3,750 Oregonians who gave their lives during the war.

In 2011, the Oregon Legislature authorized an official Oregon World War II Memorial to be built on the capitol grounds. The Oregon World War II Memorial Foundation is the non-profit organization

charged with raising private funds to build the memorial as well as unify Oregon communities to honor their veterans from that era, and the generation of people who supported the war effort on the home front. The foundation’s fundraising goal is \$1.5 million.

In addition to Brown, Jaffe, Markham, Plame and Willis, others who took part in the groundbreaking were Sen. Brian Boquist (R-Dallas), chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs, and an Army veteran of the Iraq War; Rep. Brad Witt (D-Clatskanie), co-chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee; and Marian Beresford of Portland, representing those who worked on the home front in support of the war effort.

To learn more about the memorial, the Oregon World War II Memorial Foundation or to make a donation, go to: [www.oregonwwiimemorial.com](http://www.oregonwwiimemorial.com)



PHOTOS BY MIKE ALLEGRE.



**More than 30 World War II veterans and their families joined the festivities at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Oregon World War II Memorial. Former long-time state representative and World War II B-17 bomber pilot Bill Markham (Top photo at podium), addressed the crowd of more than 200 and reminded them the memorial is not about the war, but about those who served during the war and those on the home front.**

**Front page photo: The first mounds of dirt signifying the start of efforts to build the Oregon World War II Memorial were shoveled on June 6th by honored guests. They included (L-R): ODA Director Jim Willis; Lou Jaffe; Bill Markham; Bob Plame; Sec. of State Kate Brown; Marian Beresford; State Rep. Brad Witt; State Sen. Brian Boquist and Gerry Frank.**



Help Oregon honor the greatest generation. Donate today.

Donation Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

**If you would like to make a donation in the name of a WWII veteran or civilian who contributed to the WWII War effort, please provide the following information. You will receive an official WWII Honoree Certificate with the name if the person indicated below:**

Name of Veteran Honoree \_\_\_\_\_  
 Branch of Service \_\_\_\_\_ Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
 -OR-  
 Name of Civilian Honoree \_\_\_\_\_  
 Activity that honoree participated in to contribute to the war effort  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Relationship to Honoree (ie: Son, Daughter, Spouse, Friend) \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail donations to 805 NW Skyline Crest Road, Portland, OR 97229  
 For more information email [info@oregonwwiimemorial.com](mailto:info@oregonwwiimemorial.com) or visit [www.oregonwwiimemorial.com](http://www.oregonwwiimemorial.com)

# OEF/OIF BURN PIT EXPOSURES AND NEGATIVE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

Missouri Congressman Todd Akin has pushed for creating a registry of military personnel who worked near open-air burn pits in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is asking the Pentagon for details regarding an April 2011 Army memo, which said poor air quality at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, could affect the long-term health of those stationed nearby.

Akin wrote Defense Secretary Leon Panetta in June requesting more information on the memo, which he says contradicts what he's been told by the Veterans Affairs and Defense departments, that "there is no conclusive link between burn pit exposures and negative health consequences."

The memo, signed by Army Capt. G. Michael Pratt, then an environmental science engineering officer with Task Force Peacekeeper at Bagram, said "results of air samples taken over approximately the last eight years indicate there may be an increased risk of long-term adverse health conditions."

Between 2005 and 2010, readings for particulate matter at the Bagram site, including Camp Sabalu-Harrison, were in the "unhealthy" range, two to three times the national air quality standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency, according to the memo.

"The primary contributor ... was a burn pit which services the trash generated on BAF with a population of up to 40,000 service members and

contractors. Throughout the deployment, the burn pit smoke plume drifted over the [logistics support area] exposing service members to increased air contaminants," the memo states.

According to Pratt, the pollution increased the risk for troops developing long-term health effects, such as chronic bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, asthma and other cardiopulmonary diseases.



Akin said the memo sparks more questions on the airborne hazards of burn pits.

"Our country rushed MRAPs into Iraq and MATVs into Afghanistan to protect our troops from IEDs. I am concerned that while we have responded

to these acute threats quickly, we have failed to respond to long-term health threats like burn pits," Akin wrote in his letter to Sec. of Defense Leon Panetta.

The Army memo builds on a 2006 Air Force memo penned by Lt. Col. Darrin Curtis, bioenvironmental engineering flight commander for the 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing at Balad, Iraq, who said that base's burn pit posed an acute health hazard and the "possibility of chronic health hazards."

Curtis began requiring that medical officers note assignments near burn pits into airmen's medical records. The Defense Department closed its last burn pit in Iraq in December 2010. It operates small pits in Afghanistan in remote areas that do not have clean-burning incinerators, according to Pentagon officials.

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) keeps a database of nearly 600 veterans who say they have illnesses related to burn pit exposure. A spokesman from DAV told *Military Times* in 2011 he believes more service members could develop chronic disorders as they age.

The House version of the 2013 defense authorization bill would require DoD to develop a plan for tracking environmental exposures faced by service members.

A separate bill, the Open Burn Pit Registry Act, is under review by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

## Women in Combat: ARMY OPENS UP JOBS TO FEMALE SOLDIERS

*Compiled from the Army Times and other reports*

In May, the Army began placing women in as many as 14,000 combat-related jobs by opening up six military occupational specialties and placing women in 37 battalions across nine brigade combat teams. The new Defense Department (DoD) policy is allowing female soldiers began formally moving into jobs in previously all-male battalions, a program that will later go Army-wide.

The move is a result of rule changes following a report in February that opened some 14,000 new positions to women in critical jobs much closer to the front lines. Under the new policy, female officers and non-commissioned officers will be assigned to combat units below the brigade level. While the change in policy opens up new jobs for women in the military, there are still more than 250,000 jobs that remain closed to women.

They will not be allowed to serve as infantry, armor and special operations forces — considered the most dangerous combat jobs. The new DoD policy opens up an additional 3 percent of Army jobs to women. About 30 percent of Army jobs will remain restricted to men.

"The last 11 years of warfare have really revealed to us there are no front lines," Brig. Gen. Barrye Price, director of human resources policy at the Army G-1 (personnel) told Army Times. "There are no rear echelons. Everybody was vulnerable to the influence of the enemy."

Women make up almost 15 percent of the 1.4 million Americans on active military status and many are regularly engaged in combat activities as part of their service. Overall, more than 255,000 female military members have deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. Price said they have earned more than 400 valor awards, including two Silver Stars, the nation's third-highest award for valor.

Since the wars began at least 144 women have been killed in combat and non-combat related incidents. More than 860 were wounded.

The Army will place women in 37 battalions in nine of its 45 active-duty Brigade Combat Teams (BCT). These soldiers will be placed in military jobs (MOS) that already are open to women, Price said. However, women didn't previously serve in these units because regardless of the MOS, they were barred from being assigned to combat units below the brigade level

A lawsuit filed recently by Col. Ellen Haring and Command Sgt. Maj. Jane Baldwin of the Army Reserve argues that the policy, based solely on gender, violates equal protection and is unconstitutional. Their complaint in the case is that this discrimination has unfairly restricted their opportunities for career advancement, higher earnings and pensions.

It's been reported that Baldwin has served in South Korea, Germany and Iraq in 25 years of

service. She was banned from applying for a position to help create a new Army Reserve unit because it was called a combat job. Haring, a West Point graduate with 28 years of service, changed her specialty from the Signal Corps in mid-career so she could support special operations. Yet, because of the policy excluding women, she hasn't been able to get the experience required for the jobs she seeks.

The Army also is eliminating a provision that has banned women from being "co-located" with units that are directly or routinely involved in combat. This opens up six MOS's in 80 units that had never been open to women to include Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) crewmember, MLRS operations fire detection specialist, field artillery fire finder radar operator specialist, M1 Abrams tank system maintainer, Bradley Fighting Vehicle system maintainer, and artillery mechanic.

To start, most of the women who are placed in these battalions will be volunteers from the BCTs' home stations. The Army plans to recruit new soldiers who want to enter these specialties but it also is seeking soldiers who want to reclassify and retrain into these jobs.

In November 2012, six months after the exception to policy is implemented, the Army will report back to the defense secretary. Price said officials will then report to Congress, which will have to approve any expansion of this program.

# 1 IN 10 VETERANS HAVE NO HEALTH INSURANCE

From the Urban Institute, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

One in 10 of the nation's 12.5 million nonelderly veterans report either not having health insurance coverage or using Veterans Affairs (VA) health care, according to the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS).

Oregon is one of four states with the highest rate of uninsured veterans.

This report, prepared by the Urban Institute and released by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is the first-ever to provide estimates of uninsured among veterans and their families both nationally and at the state level, and to assess the potential for the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to reduce their uninsured rates.

Veterans are less likely than the rest of the nonelderly population to be uninsured. An estimated 1.3 million veterans and nearly 950,000 members of their families are uninsured, together making up 4.8 percent of the nation's 47.3 million uninsured in 2010.

Four states have uninsured rates below 6 percent—Massachusetts, Hawaii, Vermont, and North Dakota. Meanwhile, four states—Louisiana, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana—have uninsured rates above 14 percent.

There are currently around 13 million veterans between the ages of 19 and 64 living in the U.S.

Some 17 percent of those without insurance report are suffering from service-related disabilities or functional limitations, while 41 percent say they have unmet medical needs. Another 34 percent say they have delayed care due to cost, the report notes.

With wars winding down in Afghanistan and Iraq, the findings also showed that one in four uninsured veterans served between September 2001 and 2010.

The coverage provisions under the ACA could increase coverage among the U.S. population, including many uninsured veterans. An estimated 50 percent of uninsured veterans would qualify for expanded Medicaid coverage, and 40 percent of uninsured veterans could potentially qualify for subsidized coverage through health insurance exchanges if they do not have access to affordable employer coverage.

States that have made the least progress in implementing health insurance exchanges have the highest rates of uninsured veterans; almost 40 percent of uninsured veterans and their family members live in these states.

Success in covering uninsured veterans will depend largely on aggressive ACA implementation and enrollment efforts nationwide.

# NEARLY HALF OF NEW VETS SEEK DISABILITY BENEFITS

From The Associated Press and other reports

Filings for benefits and service related disability claims are at a historic rate. According to an Associated Press report in late-May, 45 percent of the 1.6 million veterans from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are now seeking compensation for service-related injuries.

Additionally, new veterans are claiming eight to nine ailments on average, and the most recent ones over the last year are claiming 11 to 14.

By comparison, Vietnam veterans are currently receiving compensation for fewer than four, on average, and those from World War II and Korea, just two.



Many factors are driving the dramatic increase in claims — the weak economy, more troops surviving wounds, and more awareness of problems such as concussions and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Almost one-third have been granted disability so far.

Aggressive outreach and advocacy efforts also have brought more veterans into the system, which must evaluate each claim to see if it is war-related. Payments range from \$127 a month for a 10 percent disability to \$2,769 for a full one.

These new veterans are seeking a level of help the government did not anticipate, and for which there is no special fund set aside to pay.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is backlogged in claims, but “our mission is to take care of whatever the population is,” said Allison Hickey, the VA’s undersecretary for benefits. “We want them to have what their entitlement is.”

The House of Representatives approved legislation on May 31 to boost health care spending for veterans and provide more money to compensate record numbers of Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans claiming service-related disabilities as they return home.

Roughly half of the \$148 billion measure is for veterans’ pensions and disability payments over which lawmakers have little practical control. That includes a 20 percent, \$10.5 billion increase for such payments.

The measure also boosts spending for VA medical services in 2014 by \$2.2 billion, a 5 percent increase that came even as the VA revealed earlier this year that it had overestimated medical care costs by \$3 billion for this year and \$2 billion for next.

VA medical programs are budgeted more than a year in advance to insulate them from the ups and downs of the budget process.

# WOUNDED VETS TO GET SS BENEFITS FASTER

Compiled from the Social Security Administration

There is good news for veterans applying for Social Security disability benefits after a wartime or duty-related injury. The Social Security Administration (SSA) and Department of Defense (DoD) are working together to make the application process for wounded veterans more efficient.

When wounded warriors want to make a Social Security disability claim, electronic medical records now can be requested through one central DoD website.

SSA Commissioner Michael Astrue said this is the first step toward the long term goal of a fully automated

solution of improving medical information sharing using technology and the Nationwide Health Information Network Exchange.

“The new process will improve the speed, accuracy and efficiency of the disability program,” Astrue said.

The nationwide initiative was originally part of a five-state pilot program and included 60 treatment facilities. It shortens that wait time from five weeks to just 72 hours. In addition to a shorter wait time for claims to be decided upon, the number of medical exams requested by the SSA when documents are missing has decreased.

An advertisement for Oregon's IMAVET license plates. The central image shows a license plate with 'Oregon' at the top, 'IMAVET' in large letters, and 'VETERAN' at the bottom. To the left is a Vietnam Campaign Medal and to the right is an American flag. There are 'MONTH STICKER' and 'YEAR STICKER' labels. Below the plate, text reads: 'VETERAN RECOGNITION LICENSE PLATES', 'A variety of license plates recognizing military service are available through DMV. Sales of these the plates help support the Oregon Veterans' Home.', and 'GET YOURS TODAY!'.

# MILITARY CONVENTIONS, REUNIONS AND EVENTS

**Traveling Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in La Grande** – Located at the Gun Club, at the Hwy. 203 Junction and I-84, July 19-23. Opening ceremonies, July 19, at 2 p.m. Flag ceremony daily, 7 p.m. Closing ceremonies and Taps, 2 p.m., July 23.  
*Contacts: Jerry Blankenship, 541-910-2020; Ken McCormack, 541-805-9321*

**National Reunion of the 1st Marine Division Assoc.** – Hosted by the Oregon/Columbia River Chapter, in Portland, Aug. 13-19, at the Marriott, Downtown Waterfront.  
*Call for reservations: 503-226-7600. Contact: Steven Easterday, 503-828-7144, portlandsteve@gmail.com, or www.1stmarinedivisionassociation.org/*

**47th Annual ANG Western States Golf Tournament** – Will be played in Portland and Ridgefield, WA, Aug. 21-23. Open to all Oregon Air and Army National Guard members, retirees and dependents. Tournament proceeds go to the 142nd FW Community Foundation. Room reservations: Red Lion on the River-Jantzen Beach, 866-257-5990.  
*www.angwesterninvitational.com Contact: Geoff Gehrke, 360-624-0964*

**USNR Midshipmen's School** – Reunion in San Antonio, TX, Sept. 23-27, at the El Tropicano River Walk Hotel.  
*Contacts: Carl Duncan, 210-408-1766, elcid8603@sbcglobal.net, Bob Burke, 760-384-4902, res16xt2r@verizon.net*

**US Merchant Marine WWII Veterans Regional Conference** – Meeting Sept. 30 to Oct. 2, at the Sands Regency Hotel in Reno, NV. Reservations: 800-233-4939. Send checks to AMMV, Sacramento Chapter, P.O. Box 1793, Cedar Ridge, CA 95924.  
*More information: [www.usmm.org/western2012.pdf](http://www.usmm.org/western2012.pdf)*

**USS Begor (APD-127) - Final Reunion** – In San Diego, at the Holiday Inn Bayside, Oct. 3-7. Tours and a Luau will be included. Reservations: 800-662-8899, or email, res@holinnbayside.com  
*Contact: Rich Pardy, 541-582-1761, rogriv@q.com, or [www.ussbegor.org](http://www.ussbegor.org)*

**FACs (Forward Air Controllers) Reunion** – The annual convention and reunion, Oct. 17-21, in Tucson, AZ. Hotel reservations: 800-222-8733 or online, [www.fac-assn.org](http://www.fac-assn.org). Register no later than Aug. 17.  
*Contact: Elton Humphreys (Rash 03), 281-825-1606, ehumphreys2@cox.net*

**USS Princeton Veterans Inc. (CV, CVA, CVS, -37, LPH-5)** – Their semi-annual reunion is in Philadelphia, PA, Oct. 15-19.  
*Contact: Ron Hoak, Assoc. Chaplain/Historian, 503-658-8356, rshoak@comcast.net*

**Underage Military Veterans Service** – Monthly meeting is on the first Friday, 10:30 a.m., at Farm House Restaurant, 3612 SE 82nd, Portland.  
*Contact: Willie Paradise, 503-665-1739*

**Vietnam 25th Infantry Div., 1st Air CAV Vets** – All veterans are invited to meet monthly for lunch and conversation on the second Tuesday at Superking Buffet, 5105 SE 82nd Ave., Portland.  
*Contact: Gary Hartt, 503-632-6955*

**US Merchant Marine-Navy Armed Guard Meet** Oregon's AMMV now meets on the third Monday of each month at Tigard's Hometown Buffet, 11530 SW Pacific Hwy. (99W).  
*Contact: Bob Roberts, 503-663-7876*

**10th Mountain Division Group** – Newcomers, WWII comrades and their descendants meet monthly on the last Wednesday. Discussions include maintenance planning, improvements and planting for the 10th Mountain Memorial Grove. Lunch: 12 p.m., Eastmoreland Golf Course Club House, 2425 SE Bybee Blvd., Portland.  
*Contact: Jim Bray, 503-913-7058*

**Raffle Supports Homeless Veterans** – Lacey's House is raising money to provide 19 more beds and open another home for Oregon's only privately funded, full-service home for homeless veterans. Win a 1969 Chevy Nova. Tickets: \$10 each, or 20 for \$100. Drawing: Sept. 11.  
*Contact: Mike, 503-890-9791; [mike.laceyshouse@hotmail.com](mailto:mike.laceyshouse@hotmail.com)*

*Send your upcoming events online by linking to [www.oregon.gov/ODVA/INFO/VetsNews.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/ODVA/INFO/VetsNews.shtml), or email to: [vetsnews@odva.state.or.us](mailto:vetsnews@odva.state.or.us)*

**VETERAN AND MILITARY APPRECIATION DAY**  
**AUGUST 28TH**

**OREGON STATE Fair**

☆ **CELEBRATE FREEDOM DAY** ☆  
**FREE FAIR ADMISSION** on August 28th for all veterans and military personnel.

*No vouchers needed. Military ID or documentation appreciated but not required.*

## DOD TO EXPAND SABBATICALS TO GUARD/RESERVES

*From the Military Times and AFBA*

A new proposal from the Department of Defense (DoD) would allow a greater number of service members to take advantage of a useful sabbatical program. Officials want to expand the Career Intermission Pilot Program (CIPP) to members of the National Guard and Reserves and recently submitted a detailed plan to Congress, *Military Times* reported in April.

Currently, CIPP is available to all branches of the military, but the Navy is the only one that offers it.

The program allows troops to take a one to three-year break from the service due to professional or personal reasons without any penalty. During that time, they receive a small monthly stipend and are covered by the military's health care system.

When members return to active service, they are restored to the same pay grade, retaining eligibility for promotion and assignments as if there had been no gap in service and serve two additional months on active duty.

The proposal is being sent to Congress as part of the 2013 defense budget, and DoD officials hope it will be approved as a way to test whether CIPP could work as a new career retention program, as other options have not worked quite as well, the publication reports.

# WOOF'D – BY A PORTLAND BOY: A TALE OF OREGON B-29 CREWMEN

Submitted by Col. (ret.) Robert Wright, US Air Force

Tom Bowen had that wry grin his buddies knew well. They smiled while he held the little stray dog as they bumped along the flight-line. The Army truck stopped in front of the familiar Quonset hut for the required mission debriefing. It was almost like home; returning to the hut meant they'd survived another long, harrowing mission, trying to bring the war to an end.

A few years earlier, this Portland native was student body president at Grant High School. Now he found himself in a world war, a B-29 bombardier flying fire-bombing missions over Tokyo from Tinian Island. Tom was known for his jokes and dry wit since joining the squadron when it was formed at McCook Army Airfield, Nebraska, nine months earlier. Aircrews knew the next mission could be their last, but Tom also knew that a little humor went a long way to help make life somewhat bearable and to maintain sanity under the stress of wartime combat.

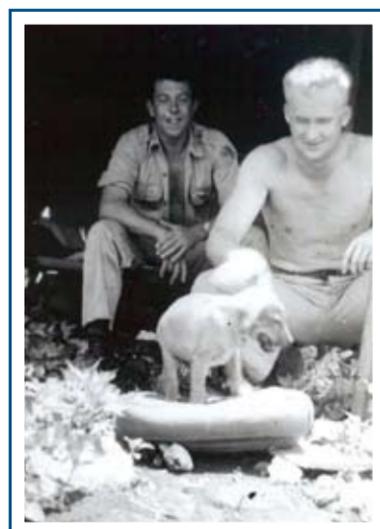
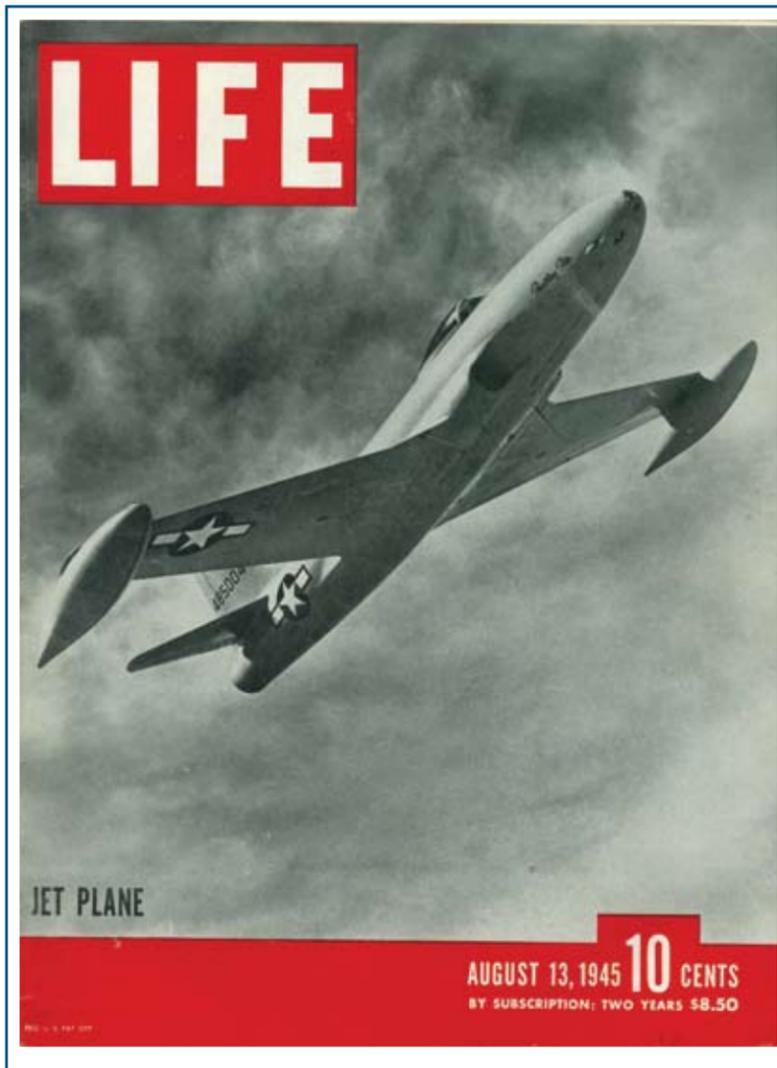
As they shuffled into the hut for the intelligence debriefing, the only other Oregon native in the squadron, Jack Cramer, joined them, a navigator from another B-29. As always after each mission, shot glasses of whiskey were slid across the table to the aircrews with, "Welcome back fellas. Thanks."

Tom held the little dog on his lap as the details of the bombing missions were recounted and written down. When finished, the intelligence officer, who knew Tom's wit, asked, "OK, Bowen, what's with the dog?" Tom then wove fiction with fact.

The result of fire-bombing wooden structures in a large city was horrendous on the ground – and in the air. The raids were flown at low altitudes, within anti-aircraft gun range. The large B-29s were flung around violently in the fire-bred turbulence. Some were upended and lost, diving into the ground. As they flew over the inferno, cinders, small chunks of charred wood and bits of burnt newspaper were caught up in the strong, hot air currents. When the bomb bay doors were opened, the burnt debris swept in, and it had to be swept out by ground crews back on Tinian. This fact was well known and reported by war correspondents.

With a deadpan, straight face, Tom said that on the return flight a crewmember had found the dog wedged between steel braces in a corner of the bomb bay, and they had managed to resuscitate the poor thing. He went on to confirm that the dog certainly was not on the aircraft when they took off. Tom offered the only plausible explanation – that the dog had been blown up into the air by an explosion on the ground and carried up into the bomb bay by extremely powerful thermal updrafts from the burning city. There were a few smiles; a wink. Certainly, none of the aircrews in the debriefing hut, or on the island, believed Tom's story. But there were others in the hut.

The intelligence officer was well aware of fantastic tales from tired flyers. After the hut cleared, he called Tom's crew back in, demanding to know where the dog had come from. The dirty, scarred mongrel had been found wandering around Tom's



**Clockwise from top: *Life* magazine featuring Tom's prank dog story as the truth; B-29 crewmembers Tom Bowen and Jack Cramer, 9<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, on Tinian Island; Two unknown B-29 crewmen with their unit's pup, Pookus.**

aircraft while they waited for the truck. They picked up the dog and Tom invented the story, with the help of his crew, on the way to the hut.

This bit of humor found legs, so to speak. Aircrews in the 9<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group thought it was a good joke. But, some others believed it. The story was embellished and spread quickly over the island. Tom and Jack just quietly smiled when they overheard groups of soldiers and airmen talking about the Japanese dog found in a B-29 bomb bay. There were reliable reports that the "flying canine" story had even been transmitted in a radio communiqué to bomber command. The story was locally famous, but it would become infamous.

Riding on its wave of notoriety, the dog was given the name Pookus, and was adopted and cared for by the B-29 aircrews, and became a happy mascot bringing smiles between missions.

Tom and Jack led remarkably parallel lives after first meeting in Nebraska for B-29 training. They were the only two Oregonians in their squadron, and they knew they were from God's country. They arrived on Tinian on the same date, on different B-29s of the 9<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. They flew combined bombing raids together until they accrued the required number to merit rest and recuperation back in the United States. They completed their 35<sup>th</sup> mission on the same day and rode on the same returning troop transport aircraft, landing in San Francisco.

Tom and Jack arrived back in Portland on the same train. Their parents, who did not know each other before then, met them at Union Station on August 6, 1945, a date that changed the tide and nature of war, forever.

After welcoming hugs of relief, Jack's father told him that he had just heard something about a big bomb being dropped on Japan. Tom and Jack did not know that the separate, very secure secret area of the airfield on Tinian Island had held the end of the war.

Both soon went to the University of Oregon on the GI Bill. After graduation, Jack started a law practice; Tom partnered to help run his father's insurance agency. Tom and Jack's offices were on S.W. 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Portland, just two blocks apart. They had been through a lot, to say the very least, and had formed a lasting bond. They had lunch together nearly every day until Tom retired, and they saw each other often until Tom's passing in 1993.

Both married women with the same first name, had children by them, but both divorced and remarried. Jack's father, John Cramer, Senior, was appointed the first president of Portland State University in 1955. Cramer Hall is named in his honor. One of Tom's sons is a veteran of the Vietnam War. Jack, who now lives in Portland's west end, sees him often, both veterans of wars a generation apart.

Jack recounts that a week after their return to Portland, they were quite surprised to read a story in the Aug. 13, 1945 issue of *Life* magazine, accompanying a two-page photo spread of the aerial war over Japan. Tom's prank story had been documented as truth for a much wider audience. The article stated, "A low flying B-29 slammed through flying debris, later discovered that an unhappy Japanese dog (Pookus) had been blown through the bomb bay into the plane."

The short story was embellished with another impossible event, "Updrafts were so bad over one target that a B-29 dropped its bombs, had them blown back into the plane." Tom may have had something to do with that as well.

The *Life* magazine story became legend as part of the 9<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group's valiant and decorated history, being retold again and again over drinks at reunions.

The facts unfolded some years later when those involved in reporting and publishing this story realized that they had been "woof'd – by a Portland boy."

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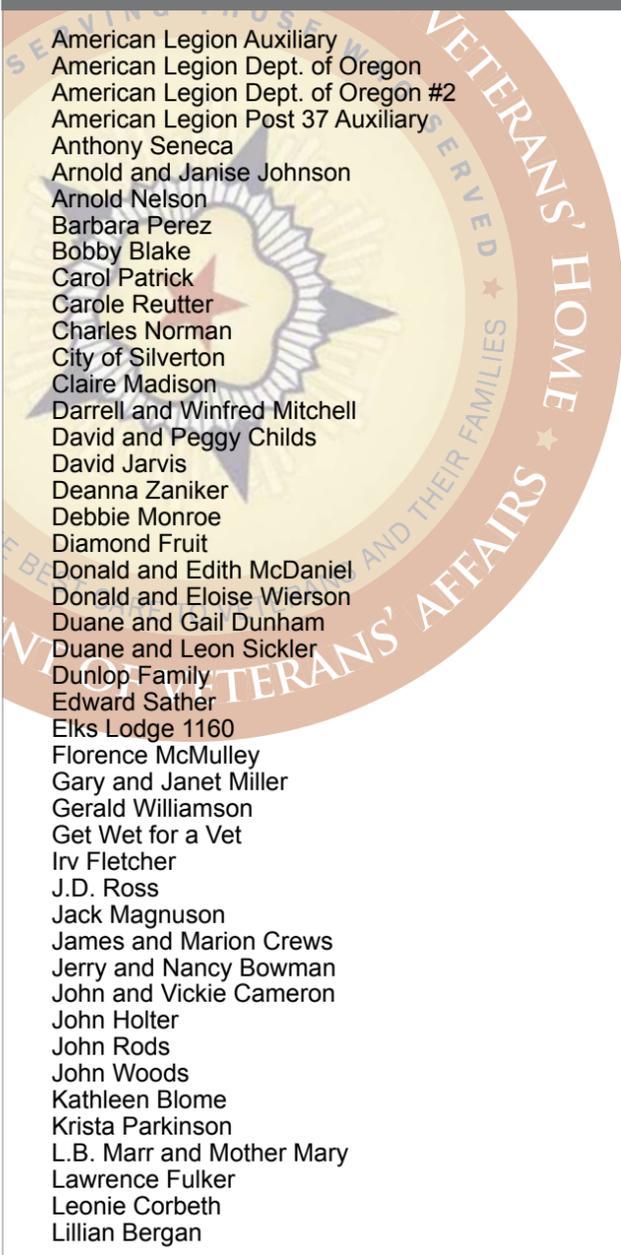


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*Contributions during the months of April and May 2012.*



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## AGENT ORANGE CONNECTION: HYPERTENSION AND COPD

Compiled from the VA



A new Army Chemical Corps Vietnam-Era Veterans Health Study has been designed to learn if high blood pressure (hypertension) and some chronic respiratory diseases are related to herbicide exposure during the Vietnam War.

Approximately 4,000 veterans who served in the U.S. Army Chemical Corps sometime during the Vietnam era (1965-1973) have been asked to participate in this study. The study follows a request by Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki for VA to conduct research on the association between herbicide exposure and high blood pressure (hypertension), as a basis for understanding if hypertension is related to military service in Vietnam.

VA is also interested in learning more about the relationship between herbicide exposure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

This study is a follow-up of a similar study, conducted from 1999-2000, where the health status of individuals who served in the Army Chemical Corps since the 1990s was examined.



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# MOBILE VET CENTER CONNECTS SERVICES TO VETS IN RURAL SOUTHERN OREGON

By Stacy D. Stumbo

Reprinted with permission of the Grants Pass Daily Courier

The Grants Pass Vet Center is bringing health on wheels to people in rural areas.

The center is among 20 recipients of new Mobile Vet Centers from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Chris Cooper, the Grants Pass Vet Center's readjustment counseling technician, said the 40-foot long recreational vehicle will increase access to services for veterans and their families in rural and underserved communities.

"It's like a big billboard for the VA," Cooper said of the rig, which boasts a colorful logo, the slogan "Keeping the Promise" and a bald eagle in flight.

The American-made, customized vehicles are

equipped with confidential counseling space and a state-of-the-art communications system. Services include counseling for readjustment and post-traumatic stress disorder; drug and alcohol addiction and referral; jobs and benefits; and bereavement.

The mobile centers also can provide emergency support in natural disasters. Each has a satellite dish, six phone lines, a fax line, notebook computers, four encrypted computer lines and a wireless network. Cooper said the RV is one of only two mobile centers in Oregon. It will travel from Grants Pass to Bend and the Oregon coast, to the border of Idaho and even to Sacramento, Calif.

"It's very special, and we're lucky to have it."

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY BULLARD, DAILY COURIER



**Chris Cooper of the Grants Pass Vet center stands beside the new Mobile Vet Center. The RV has helped increase services for veterans and their families in rural and underserved communities.**

## PROGRAM TO RETRAIN UNEMPLOYED VETERANS

WASHINGTON — Unemployed veterans between the ages of 35 and 60 can now apply for new benefits to cover education costs for up to one year through a joint U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) program that focuses on retraining 99,000 veterans for high-demand jobs.

"This important tool will help those who served our country receive the education and training they need to find meaningful employment in a high-demand field," said Sec. of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "Veterans are disciplined, hardworking, goal-oriented team members who can play a vital role in helping businesses and the economy grow."

As part of a provision of the Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW), the Veteran Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) allows qualifying veterans to receive up to 12 months of assistance equal to the full-time Montgomery GI Bill — Active Duty rate, currently \$1,473 per month.

Applications are based on a first-come, first-serve basis for VRAP for programs that begin on or after July 1, 2012. Assistance under this benefit program ends on March 31, 2014.

To qualify, veterans must:

Be 35-60 years old, unemployed on the day of application and not dishonorably discharged.

Start education or training after July 1, 2012, in a VA-approved program of education offered by a community college or technical school leading to an associate degree, non-college degree or a certificate for a high-demand occupation as defined by the Department of Labor.

Not be eligible for any other VA education benefit program (e.g., Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment).

Not be enrolled in a federal or state job training program within the last 180 days.

Not receive VA compensation at the 100 percent rate due to individual unemployability.

Within 30 days after completion of a program, the DOL will engage with participants to help

them find good jobs that utilize their newly learned skills.

"We are working diligently with our partners around the country to ensure our veterans have access to all the benefits and services to which they are entitled — especially when it comes to those unemployed," said VA Undersecretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey.

Veterans are also encouraged to visit nearly one of 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers across the nation for assistance from staff, local veterans'

employment representatives and disabled veterans' outreach program specialists. Locate the center nearest you at [www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org).

For more information on VOW, high-demand occupations and how to apply for VRAP, visit [www.benefits.va.gov/VOW](http://www.benefits.va.gov/VOW) or call VA's call centers toll-free at 800-827-1000. Veterans may also access the VRAP application online at [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov) through eBenefits.

For more information about other DOL's veterans programs, go to [www.dol.gov/vets/](http://www.dol.gov/vets/).

## VA TO HIRE 1,900 MENTAL HEALTH WORKERS

Compiled from the Military Times and VA

In an effort to reduce the long waits that many veterans face for mental health care, the Department of Veterans Affairs has announced that it will hire 1,900 mental health workers, an increase of more than 9 percent.

The new positions include 1,600 clinicians, among them nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers, as well as nearly 300 support staff. Additional mental health professionals will be hired this year at VA Medical Centers (VAMC) in Portland, White City, Boise, Spokane, Walla Walla and at the Puget Sound.

Portland VAMC spokesperson Dan Herrigstad said since September 2011, they have hired 10 additional mental health staff and plan to hire an additional 24 full-time staff by this September.

"We feel very confident in our ability to provide quality mental health care services that are needed by our veterans here in the Pacific Northwest. We urge veterans in our communities to reach out and connect with the VA to receive the care they might need and certainly deserve," he added.

The VAMC's in White City, Walla Walla and Boise will add one additional mental health professional at each location.

The Chair of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, Sen. Patty Murray, called the new positions "desperately needed" given the high suicide rates among veterans and the influx of service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan seeking mental health care.

"Too often, we have seen staff vacancies, scheduling delays and red tape leave those veterans who have been brave enough to seek help in the first place left with nowhere to turn," Murray said.

Veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health conditions often must wait weeks or months for care, delaying treatment that may prevent some from taking their own lives, according to testimony at congressional hearings last year.

Our efforts will not cease with the announcement of the 1,900 additional personnel," said VA Secretary Eric Shinseki. "Future adjustments may be likely."

Shinseki said the plans for new hires have been in the works for months and were not in response to the Inspector General's report. "We will continue to review and monitor our facilities and veterans' feedback so that we can make other adjustments that are needed."

The rising numbers are driven by claims from veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with complex injuries as well as those from Vietnam veterans, who now face fewer barriers to filing Agent Orange-related claims as a result of a recent policy change.

The VA has seen a 35 percent increase in the number of veterans seeking mental health care since 2007, and over that time has increased its mental health staff by 41 percent, Shinseki said.

# VA'S EBENEFITS WEB PORTAL IS ENHANCED

The Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Defense (DoD) recently announced enhancements to the eBenefits web portal, which allow service members, veterans, and their families to more easily register and interact with VA and DoD online. The eBenefits portal is a joint VA/DoD service that provides resources and self-service capabilities for users to access and manage their VA and DoD benefits, claims, and military documents.

eBenefits offers two main services: a catalog of links to military and veteran benefits on other web sites, and a customizable workspace that provides personalized and secure information and tools. With a Premium eBenefits Account, veterans, service members, and their families can access and manage many aspects of their benefits.

With new improvements that allow users to verify their identity online and a new registration wizard that walks people through a step-by-step series of challenge questions, registration for an eBenefits

account is now easier than ever. Look for new features in the coming months to assist veterans with access to employment information and support.

There are more than 40 self-service features including the ability to: Access official military personnel documents; submit a disability compensation claim; view the status of their disability compensation claim; view enrollment



status for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits; transfer Post 9-11 GI Bill entitlement to eligible dependents (Service members only); update direct deposit information and see payment history; obtain a VA guaranteed home loan certificate of eligibility; order hearing aid batteries and prosthetic socks; access

TRICARE online.

The site has two types of registration: a Basic eBenefits Account, which offers general information about benefits, and a Premium eBenefits Account, which allows users to access their personalized benefits information and use the full functionality of the site.

“By continuing to raise awareness, removing access barriers and regularly expanding website functionality, we’re giving veterans and service members the online support they’re asking for,” said Robert Reynolds, director of VBA’s Benefits Assistance Service. “We encourage veterans to check out eBenefits and register for their own personalized account today.”

Register online and learn more about what you can do with a Premium eBenefits Account at [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov).

# OBAMA TARGETS DECEPTIVE COLLEGE VET RECRUITING

President Obama issued an executive order on April 27<sup>th</sup> that is designed to protect veterans, service members, and their families from deceptive marketing practices by educational institutions that target them for their federal education benefits.

The executive order contains new rules for how institutions receiving military and veteran education benefits recruit students, disclose financial information, and track student outcomes.

Fraudulent and aggressive practices by institutions

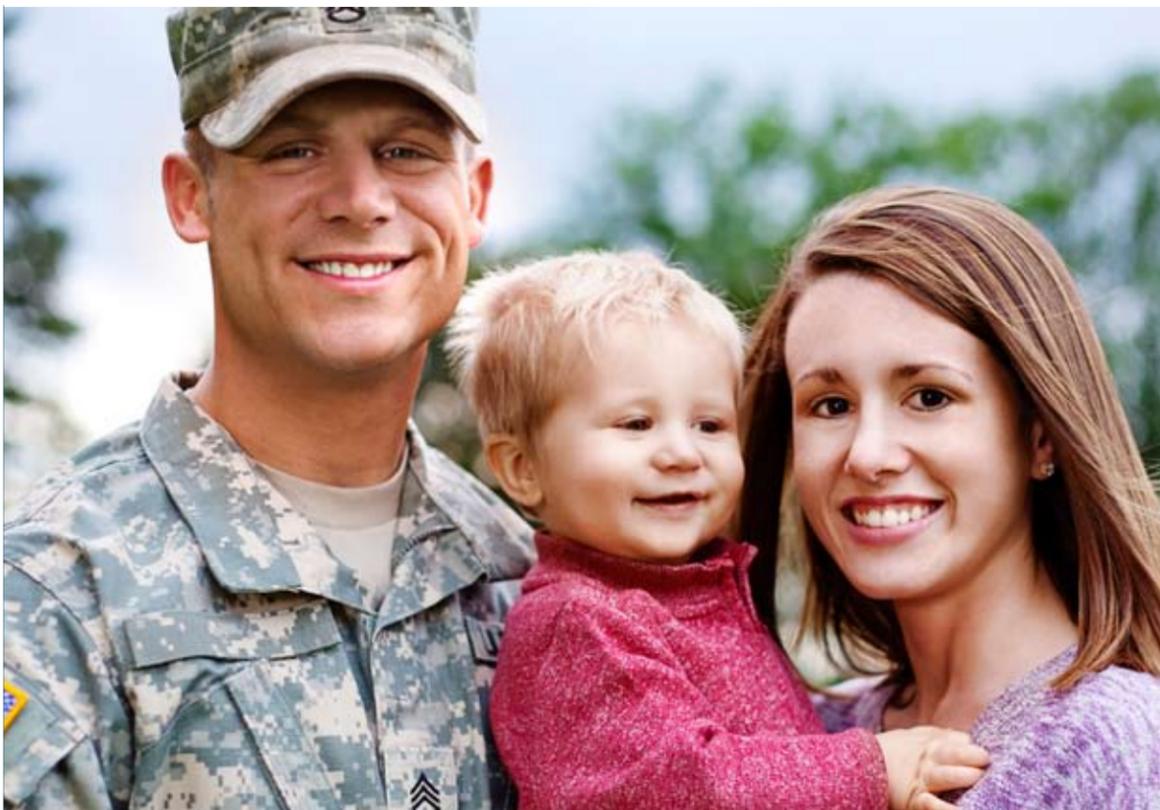
that target veterans and service members have increasingly caught the attention of lawmakers.

Though the Obama administration says it is not singling out one group of colleges, for-profit colleges enroll far greater proportions of military and veteran students than do nonprofit institutions, and tend to be among the largest recipients of military education benefits.

Of the \$4.4 billion in Post-9/11 GI Bill dollars paid to colleges and universities from 2009 to 2011,

more than one-third, about \$1.65 billion, went to for-profit colleges, according to a report released last fall by a U.S. Senate committee.

The executive order also creates a centralized complaint system for students receiving federal military and veterans educational benefits and a mechanism to refer the complaints to the appropriate government agency or department for appropriate action.



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# PANEL PROBES VET 'PENSION POACHING'



Sen. Ron Wyden

WASHINGTON -- Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden and Senate Aging Committee Chairman Sen. Herb Kohl, Wisc., held a hearing on June 6 to discuss a program that has become a marketing tool to sell inappropriate financial instruments to elderly veterans.

The hearing coincided with the release of a Government Accountability Office report investigating "pension poaching" practices by unscrupulous financial planners operating in the VA's pension program.

The Enhanced Pension with Aid and Attendance (or A&A) is a supplemental pension benefit designed to provide most-needy veterans with funds to fulfill their every day needs. Unfortunately, problems with the design and administration of the VA pension program have led to a growing industry of predatory financial planners and attorneys who are using A&A to target vulnerable seniors and sell them inappropriate financial tools.

"It is clear that a program created to help the neediest among us has become a magnet for rip off artists preying on unsuspecting seniors," Wyden said. "In the current budgetary climate, having a program so rife with loopholes that allow for financial planners to game the system on behalf of seniors will undermine support for what should be an important lifeline. With the help of the VA and Chairman Kohl, it is my hope that this program can be reformed and returned to its original goal of helping those who need it most."

For veterans to be eligible for the aid and attendance pension, they must show that they are financially in need of the support. However, loopholes in the program allow for creative financial accounting to make seniors appear less wealthy than they are.

Kohl said many veterans and their families are being hurt because their assets are being tied up, they're forced to pay exorbitant fees if they need to access their money and they may no longer qualify for Medicaid benefits. "The increased filing of questionable claims has also increased the backlog of pending VA pensions, slowing the process for veterans who truly need assistance," he said. "It also comes at a great cost to taxpayers, who pay for these needs-based pensions that go to individuals who are not actually in need."

An entire industry of financial planners and attorneys has sprung up in recent years aimed at selling seniors financial instruments that help them appear to be less wealthy, but can also tie up their finances for months or years without even guaranteeing that the seniors will eventually qualify for aid and attendance.

The financial maneuvering can often affect a senior's ability to qualify for Medicaid benefits and other government assistance programs. The financial professionals then extract fees for selling seniors financial tools like annuities and trusts that seniors cannot touch for years without paying a huge penalty and promise to help them apply for the A&A benefit.

Questions regarding the Pension Poacher issue or veteran benefits can be directed to the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs at 800-692-9666 (toll-free within Oregon).

## VETERANS' SERVICE OFFICERS

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	503-650-5768	..... Rick Rutherford
	503-650-5631	..... Gina Thomas
Clatsop .....	503-440-8310	..... Philip Simmons
Columbia .....	503-366-6580	..... Grace Clark
Coos .....	541-396-3121, Ext. 362	..... Mary Ann Sackett
Crook .....	541-447-5304	..... Angela Gilley
Curry .....	866-298-0404	..... Kimberly O'Neal
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Harney .....	541-573-1342	..... Guy McKay
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Linn .....	800-319-3882	..... Kim Grooms
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Marion .....	503-373-2085	..... ODVA
Morrow .....	541-922-6420	..... Linda Skendzel
Multnomah .....	503-988-3620, Ext. 25005	..... Katie Pereault
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Sherman .....	541-565-3408	..... Bryan Hunt
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Union .....	541-962-8802	..... Byron Whipple
Wallowa .....	541-426-3155, Ext. 241	..... Linda McIntyre
Wasco .....	888-804-1817	..... Russell Jones
Washington .....	503-846-3060	..... Eric Belt
Wheeler .....	800-982-1172	..... Bryan Hunt
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Blinded Veterans Association	541-265-9087	..... Frank Armstrong
Disabled American Veterans	503-412-4750	..... Robert Lougee
Military Order of the Purple Heart	503-412-4770	..... Jennifer Burt
Paralyzed Veterans of America	503-412-4762	..... Ken Fink
Veterans of Foreign Wars	503-412-4757	..... Jack Zule

State Offices-ODVA	Phone	Service Officer
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# VETS NEWS

July | August 2012  
 Jim Willis, Director

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## HONORING THE HOME FRONT AND FRONT LINES



### OREGON BREAKS GROUND ON THE STATE'S WWII MEMORIAL

SALEM—On the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Allied invasion of France, June 6<sup>th</sup>, memories became fresh and emotions swelled as hundreds gathered to witness the ceremonial groundbreaking of Oregon's World War II Memorial in Willson Park on the grounds of the state Capitol.

Many don't recall an event in recent history where so many veterans of World War II were assembled in one place. It was history, once again, in the making.

"There's not very many of us left, and I think it's very nice that they would do this," said Alvin Christopherson of Salem, a World War II veteran who lived through the attack on Pearl Harbor.

"I was actually on duty that morning, wide awake. And I heard a drone and looked up. I counted 80 Japanese war planes," said Christopherson.

—SEE **GROUND BREAKING** ON PAGE 3

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