



NEWS AND VIEWS



VOLUME 19

ISSUE 7

July 2017

10th Veterans Luncheon Ken Holybee

On Wednesday June 21st, I attended the 10th annual Assembly Veterans Luncheon in Sacramento. Brian McKeown went with me this year. The person most responsible for making this the most attend event in Sacramento is Pete Conaty. Pete is a member of the California Veterans Benefit Fund, the 501 c, 3 that puts on the event. There were about 400 people in attendance this year. The program is hosted by the chair of the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee. The coordination to put on one of these events is enough to drive some of us off the grid. There are 80 assembly districts in California and each Assembly member choses one veteran from their district to honor. They are honored on the floor of the assembly, have their picture taken and receive a proclamation. When you are honored on the floor, your name goes in the permanent record of the Assembly. They then attend the luncheon as the guest of the legislator and are joined by others that are sponsors or dignitaries from the area. The guest speaker at this year's event was Darin Selnick, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Darin is from California and has a background with working with the government and the veterans. He is also an Air Forces veteran. I always enjoy these programs because I can get an insight into what is going on around the state and what veterans are seeing in their areas.



Assembly member Frank Bigelow and Dick Southern, CSC 2nd Vice President, with his Proclamation

Added to the first picture is Dick's wife Carol Southern, Treasurer for the CSC AVVA



Pictured L to R: Pete Conaty, chair and coordinator, Tony Cordero, Chair of Sons & Daughters in Touch, Darin Selnick, advisor to secretary Shulkin, Ken Holybee, Dick Southern, Veteran of the Year for the 5th District Assemblyman who is next, Frank Bigelow

Vietnam Veterans of America Redwood Empire Chapter 223

Santa Rosa, California

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Color Guard: Dave Phillips

Dinner/Dance: Lou Nuñez

Education: John McGivney

Finance: Pat Christen

Food Give-A-Way: John McGivney

Legislation: Ken Holybee

Membership: Robert Kreyer

Newsletter: Ken & Sonja

Scholarship Fund: Sunny Campbell

UVC: Ken Holybee

Veterans Building: Ken Holybee

Website: Bill Burke

If you would like to purchase an Business Card sized ad to put in our NEWSLETTER, Please call the chapter office. Phone number is: 707-526-4218

Contributors to the News and Views: Ken Holybee, Kate O'Hare-Palmer, Bill Burke. Thanks to all. Would like to see more articles next month. Support the chapter. I don't write articles, I just put it together. There are a lot of interesting stories out there, send them to Ken and he will forward them to me.

NOTICE

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of VVA,INC., National, State or Chapter 223 or the newsletter staff, but those of the corresponding party. All articles by the Chapter have permission for reprint in all Vietnam Veterans of America newsletters. Anything else permission must come from the original source.

Did you know that there is a Blue Star area in front of the Santa Rosa Veterans Building, and according to the contract with the County WE, the Veterans, are responsible for taking care of it. Let Ken or Lou know if you want to help on the project of cleaning up that area. Also, the cement pots in front of the building are also the Veterans project. We need flowers or plants of some kind to put in them, and to keep them watered....

President's Report for July



During the Memorial Day program, I spoke with Tim Mahoney about getting services for a veteran that has been cremated. I have been asked about this a few times and it may come up more as we lose more veterans. The question was about getting an honor guard for a service a month or more after the death and cremation. Tim informed me that this is a common question since people sometimes try to plan a service when people can better deal with and prepare for the service. His response was to go to the funeral home where the veteran was cremated and ask them to make the arrangements. Part of the services the funeral homes provide is to contact the military service to make the arrangements for the honor guard and for the next of kin to receive the burial flag. Remember that there are provisions that all veterans are to be buried with honor. If you have any problems getting these arrangements made there are a lot of people that will assist you. It is not being disrespectful to ask these questions to make sure all the wishes of the veteran and their family are carried out. June has been an interesting month. We are spending Wednesday nights at the Santa Rosa market. One week we are bundled up like we are on the tundra in winter and the next we are pouring sweat and remembering the tropics. Come on down and spend a little time talking or just listening to the music and watching the people. We are also down a few people at the coffee cart. If you are an early riser and need to get out of the house come on down. It is always rewarding to spend time at these two places. We hear a lot of what is going on with veterans and what we need to work on changing. Listening to the veterans in our community can help us in dealing with the local VA and getting the assistance we need.

I attended the memorial service for Carl Jensen on June 17th. Carl was a past VVA state president and a state board member. He was also a founding member of chapter 547 in Marin county. Carl was an interesting person and an avid runner in high school and col-

lege. He was very well respected in Marin county and was in the headlines because of his running ability. He still has unbroken records for some of his fields. There is a run in Marin county called the Dipsy. Carl was the last person to win this race as a scratch runner. This was before he went to Vietnam and came home wounded. Carl was told he would never run again. Well in 1983 he ran the Dipsy again and completed it. Look up this run and see what it takes to even complete it. Doug Skjerseth, one of our members, went to school and ran with Carl. He was at the memorial service and spoke about seeing Carl before he left for Vietnam and after his return. Sometimes, or most of the time, we find out when we lose someone what impact they really have on our lives. Carl touched a lot of people and the one constant was they spoke of his contagious laugh.

For you that have not been in daily communication with the board, our secretary Alan Dalton, has been under the weather and in a state of depression. He is stuck at home and is unable to get around very well. If you have the time give him a call and cheer him up a little. He has some very slow healing problems that just get him down.

On the happy side of life, we are planning our annual dinner dance fundraiser. The funds we are raising in this event are going to assist veterans. Lately we have been assisting some younger veterans. Seems like most veterans are younger now, but we have been able to keep the wolves from the door for a few and help them feed their children. See Lou to get tickets to sell or let him or Bill know if you know someone, or would like to sponsor the event or buy a table with a sponsorship. When you look around the county and see how many fundraisers are going on weekly, think about where the money goes. Would you believe that most of the money raised in fundraisers in Sonoma county goes to someone outside the county? When making donations look and see, or ask, where the money is used. Is it in our county? Is it in the state? Who does it assist and how? There is a need in our area for more than we can ever begin to fix, but if we can help a few and know that we are doing good, we can sleep a little at night.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

National Veteran Health Equity Report

Latest Updates:

OHE Releases New VA National Veteran Health Equity Report Data Visualization Tool
Data from the National Veteran Health Equity Report now available publicly.

Department of Veterans Affairs releases data visualization tool that includes new data story featuring the National Veteran Health Equity Report.

New video trainings posted.

Darrell G. Kirch, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Association of American Medical Colleges, endorses the National Veteran Health Equity Report. Read it here.

The National Veteran Health Equity Report details patterns and provides comparative rates of health conditions for vulnerable Veteran groups. Specifically, this report is designed to provide basic comparative information on the sociodemographic, utilization patterns and rates of diagnosed health conditions among the groups over which the VHA Office of Health Equity (OHE) has responsibility with respect to monitoring, evaluating and acting on identified disparities in access, use, care, quality and outcomes. The report allows the VA, Veterans, and stakeholders to monitor the care vulnerable Veterans receive and set goals for improving their care.

Data for the National Veteran Health Equity Report are from centralized, national VHA administrative databases of enrollment, outpatient, inpatient, and Non-VA (Fee) medical care, but do not include long-term care services or care received privately by VHA users. All of the report chapters are drafted by VA subject matter experts.

The 2016 version of the National Veteran Health Equity Report details VHA care for vulnerable Veterans by race/ethnicity, gender, age, geography, and mental health status receiving VHA care in Fiscal Year .

<https://www.va.gov/healthequity/NVHER.asp>

- PRESS RELEASE -

THE GATHERING – Reunion of
Transportation Corps Vietnam Veterans
And Gun Truck Crews at
Morro Bay, CA 9/10-9/15 2017

The fifteenth reunion of Vietnam Transportation veterans will take place Sunday, Sep 10 to Friday, Sep 15th. The reunion is open to anyone who served as a part of or with any Army transportation unit anywhere during the years of the Vietnam Conflict, or anyone else who would like to come!

Gun trucks were a field expedient innovation of the 8th Transportation Group which provided convoy and supply support from Qui Nhon over steep mountain passes to

Pleiku. There were also gun trucks built by engineer units who repaired the roads along this supply route. Other Transportation Corps gun trucks provided convoy security in the southern part of Vietnam. The armored and heavily armed cargo trucks, generally 5-tons or 2-1/2 tons with .30 and .50 caliber machineguns and later mini-guns, were placed at the beginning and end of convoys, and sometimes in the middle depending on the size of the convoy, to provide protection and return fire when ambushed. The Transportation Corps has two Medal of Honor recipients who were killed in action while serving on guntrucks.

Veteran attendees will be headquartered at the Inn at Morro Bay, 60 State Park Rd, Morro Bay, CA. To make room reservations call 805-772-5651. Cut-off for special room rates is 8/27/2017. Ask for "The Gathering" when reserving your rooms.

Due to travel concerns and mileage, replica trucks may not be at this years' Gathering. Point of contact is Kathy Blackstone, kblack-stone5272@yahoo.com cell 936-239-3006

Submitted by Kate O'Hare-Palmer

At 100-years old, retired Marine Col. Julia Hamblet, the longest-serving director of the women's branch of the Marines, died 1 MAY at a nursing home in Williamsburg, Virginia, according to the Washington Post. She was 100 years old. Hamblet's military service that began with the U.S. Information Service, where she worked for six years. In 1943, she became one of the first women to be commissioned officers during World War II, a decision that would take her from being the adjutant to Col. Katherine A. Towle, director of Women Marines, to being decorated with the Legion of Merit. By the end of World War II, Hamblet had commanded 2,600 women in the aviation group. In 1946, she became the director of the Women's Reserve.

In 1953, Hamblet became the director of Women Marines, a position she would hold until 1959 when, according to the Washington Post, she voluntarily stepped down claiming she was "blocking other women officers for promotion." She retired from the Marine Corps in 1965, but never stopped serving the nation. She began her new civilian life with a position working at the U.S. Office of Education (now the Department of Education). After 13 years, she retired to Alexandria, Virginia, where she volunteered with the American Red Cross and the YWCA. [Source: MarineCorpsTimes | Rachael Kalinyak |

Website for Purchase of Dinner Dance Tickets Announced

From: Bill Burke

Chapter 223 has announced that an Eventbrite website has been established to get tickets for the 2017 version of our annual fundraiser to be held on Saturday, September 9, 2017. Go to the Eventbrite.com website and then enter vva, Santa Rosa, CA, All Dates into the search boxes and hit search. Click on the picture of the dinner dance and you will be able to purchase your tickets.



Bill Burke and Ken holding the new table cover, with Alan Duncan and Sunny Campbell looking on. Ken says come by Wed. Night Market and see it up close.

2016 Scholarship Recipient letter

Britnee Howard a 2016 Scholarship recipient, wrote to say a big thanks again for her scholarship. She just completed her first year at Pacific University, in Oregon. She had a great first year and she joined the women's lacrosse team and met many wonderful people. She is very excited that next year she will be a Resident Assistant in one of the dorms. She is very excited for this new journey.

I know my grandfather is looking down on me and appreciates the opportunity you all have given me. Thank you again and I am very honored to have received this award.



Diane Thomson at Bruce's "Remember Me Board" in Memorial Cemetery on Memorial Day. With her are Matt Kamanu and Bob Evans.



This was sent by one of our VVA national women vets.... the pic is a woman vet that lives there in Huntsville, Ala...she is a service connected disabled vet after her service in Iraq.

Sent to us from Kate O'Hare-Palmer

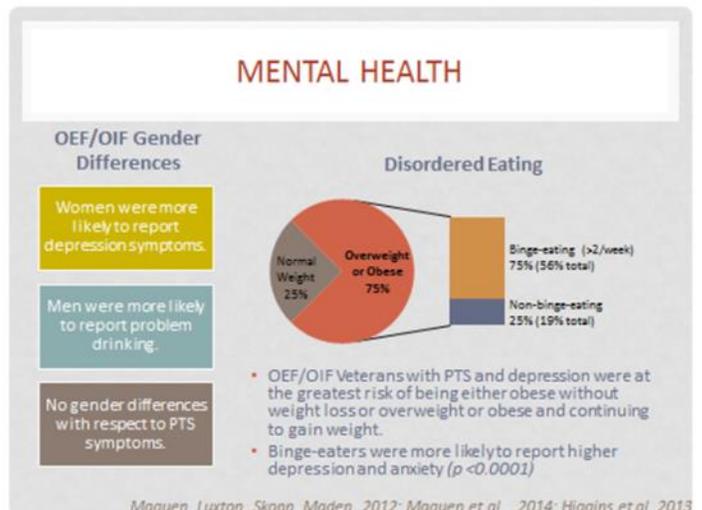
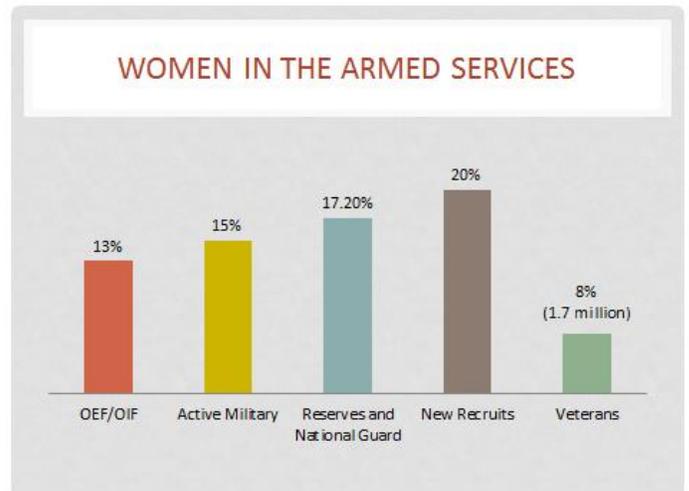


Telling Stories at Past CSC President Carl Janson's memorial service.

Sent by Kate

Women Veterans.
Kate O'Hare-Palmer

On June 9, 2017, the Santa Rosa VA Clinic held a Women Veterans Luncheon. There were about 50 women veterans that attended. The Televideo system was set up so that we could listen to a presentation by a woman veterans researcher from the San Francisco VA, Dr. Magruen. She spent about 45 minutes reviewing the newer information about what medical and psychological research is happening for women veterans. It is important to note that it has only been in the last 5 years that much research has been directed to women veterans. The discussion section was lively and, at times, intense as some women shared their active duty military experiences. Many suggestions were made about ways to enhance services at the clinic. This section was followed by a simple lunch with time for getting to know other women veterans in Sonoma County.



A.G. Schneiderman Announces Settlements With Vietnam Veteran's Charity And Its Founder For Squandering Millions In Donations

Submitted by: Kate O'Hare-Palmer

Investigation Found That The Charity Spent The Majority Of Its Millions In Contributions On Paying Professional Fundraisers And Insider Expenses

Charity To Permanently Close And Pay Damages; President And Founder Returns Severance, Pays Damages, Issues Apology, And Is Banned Nationwide From Handling Charitable Assets

Schneiderman: This Organization Took Advantage Of The Good Will Of Millions, Yet Failed To Fulfill Nearly All Of Its Promises To Help Those Who Have Sacrificed For Our Nation

NEW YORK – Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman today announced that his office has reached settlements resolving investigations into the National Vietnam Veterans Foundation, which also operated as the American Veteran Support Foundation (the “NVVF”), its former President and Founder, John Thomas Burch, Jr. (“Burch”), and its Vice President, David Kaufman (“Kaufman”). NVVF has operated nationwide since 1992 and began soliciting in New York in approximately 2008. By 2014, NVVF was collecting nearly \$9 million nationwide from its fundraising campaigns, soliciting small dollar donations from the public through direct mail and phone calls -- purportedly to help Vietnam Veterans. Nearly all of the money raised through its direct mail campaigns was instead used to pay its fundraisers. For example, in 2014, \$7.7 million of the \$8.6 million raised was used to pay NVVF’s fundraisers. The fraction that actually made it to NVVF was further reduced by a pattern of abuse, mismanagement and misspending by NVVF’s former President, Burch.

“There is nothing more shameless than exploiting military veterans in order to enrich oneself. The actions of this charity and its founder are appalling,” said Attorney General Schneiderman. “This organization took advantage of the good will of millions, yet failed to fulfill nearly all of its promises to help those who have

sacrificed for our nation. This settlement sends a clear message that charities will not get away with fleecing donors in New York.”

“VA employees are held to high standards and are afforded a special public trust to execute their duties properly for the benefit of veterans and the American people,” said Michael J. Misal, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General. “The VA OIG's investigation found that Mr. Burch engaged in conduct prejudicial to the Government, and misused his position and government equipment for his own personal enrichment. As a lawyer for VA with ethical, fiduciary, and professional obligations, his conduct is particularly disturbing and repugnant.”

As part of the settlement, Burch paid \$100,000 to the Attorney General, most of which will be re-directed to charities actually helping veterans. Burch also repaid his severance pay received from NVVF and will cooperate with ongoing investigations into others associated with NVVF and its fundraisers. Burch will also be subject to a permanent nationwide bar on access to charitable assets or decision-making.

Burch issued an apology to donors of NVVF and to Vietnam Veterans whom he exploited in order for fundraisers to collect money. Burch also admitted that NVVF had paid 90% of its donations to its fundraisers and admitted to deceptively marketing how solicited money would be spent. In the settlement, Burch admits to the Attorney General’s findings and to his misconduct, including the following:

- Burch used NVVF funds to pay for foreign and domestic travel, frequenting night clubs in the Baltimore area on a nearly weekly basis, ordering excessive and expensive food and drink at the country’s top restaurants and lavishing gifts on women;

- Burch financed this lifestyle with his own credit cards and then submitted receipts to NVVF’s bookkeeper for reimbursement. Burch’s expense reimbursements to NVVF describe fictitious meetings or NVVF business with individuals that were not present or did not exist. For example, in 2012 Burch spent approximately \$800 in one night frequenting night clubs and hotels in the Baltimore area. Burch described the nature of these expenditures on the Foundation’s expense

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

reimbursement form as “work on homelessness” and “veteran issue”;

· Burch, who was in charge of the NVVF’s discretionary “Emergency Assistance Program,” awarded significant amounts of cash to a handful of women, all of whom were born after the Vietnam War ended. Six of those women received over \$10,000 and one over \$20,000; and

· In addition to Burch’s salary at NVVF, Burch reimbursed himself for life and medical insurance, pharmaceutical and medical expenses, parking for his two private automobiles in downtown Washington, D.C., where he worked, telephone, fax, internet, and building security services at his home, memberships, conference fees, and subscriptions.

For its part, NVVF will cease fundraising in New York as of June 2016 and will cancel its registration to solicit donations in New York and initiate steps to dissolve in its home state by the end of this month.

Kaufman, NVVF’s Vice President, will be subject to a permanent nationwide ban on handling charitable assets going forward and agreed to cooperate with the ongoing investigation into those associated with NVVF. Kaufman will remain as Vice President only to assist with NVVF’s orderly dissolution and distribution of the NVVF’s assets subject to the Attorney General’s approval.

The Foundation and Kaufman admitted that NVVF had made false filings with the Charities Bureau, including failing to disclose the identity of the fundraisers that operated on its behalf in New York, all fees associated with its fundraising activities, and the Foundation’s top independent contractors. NVVF and Kaufman also admitted that much of NVVF’s money was not spent in the way NVVF described in its solicitations – to immediately provide Vietnam Veterans in need with fundamental benefits such as food, shelter, hygiene and money for phone calls. Instead, thousands of dollars were spent by NVVF on purported consultancies and studies to be performed by friends or relatives of NVVF directors which work product was never released to the public, and on travel for

its board of directors, including a trip to Normandy, France, in 2014.

Agreements can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

The full text of the Foundation, Kaufman and Burch’s admissions are available [here](#) and [here](#). The full text of Burch’s apology is available [here](#).

This investigation into NVVF highlights the importance of AG’s Charities Bureau’s annual *Pennies for Charities* report, which reveals that charitable donations obtained by many professional fundraisers are largely spent on fundraising and administrative expenses, with only a small fraction left for charitable work. The latest *Pennies for Charities* report may be accessed [here](#).

The A.G.’s Tips for Charitable Giving are available [here](#).

This case is being handled by Assistant Attorney General Elizabeth Ann Fitzwater, with the support of Charities Bureau accountant Cintia Brown-Felder, and Legal Assistant Carolyn Fleishman. James Sheehan is the Charities Bureau Chief. Alvin Bragg is Executive Deputy Attorney General for Social Justice.

More information about the Attorney General’s Charities Bureau and organizations regulated by the Bureau may be found [at **www.charitiesnys.com**](http://www.charitiesnys.com)



July 2017

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|---------------------|-----|--|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | | | | | 1 Poker Game setup begins @ 4:30 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 Happy 4th | 5 Wednesday Night Markets | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 Board Meeting 1 PM | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 General Meeting Potluck at 6 meeting at 7 | 19 | 20 | 21 CSC Meeting in Fresno All Weekend | 22 Newsletter Articles Due |
| 23 CSC meeting Ends | 24 | 25 9-12 Food Give A Way Contact John McGivney 575-5261 | 26 United Veterans Council@7:30 PM SRVets | 27 Fold Newsletter at 10 AM | 28 | 29 |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | |

August 2017

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|--------------------|--|--|--------------------------|-----|------------------------------|
| | | 1 | 2 Wed. Night Mrk | 3 | 4 | 5 Poker Game, set up at 4:30 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 National Conv. In New Orleans Board Mtg 1PM | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 General Mtg 6 pm Potluck, 7 PM Meeting | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 Newsletter Articles Due |
| 20 | 21 Copy Newsletter | 22 9-12 Food Give A Way Contact John McGivney 575-5261 | 23 United Veterans Council@7:30 PM SR Vets | 24 Fold Newsletter 10 AM | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

VA Standardizing Caregiver Plan Before Opening to Older Veterans

Sent by: Kate O'Hare-Palmer

For those of you that have been following the whole Caregiver crisis for veterans, there has been some movement in the dialogue in the last few weeks. The VA Budget that was presented to the VA Senate Committee included new language for caregivers. VA Secretary David Shulkin has told congressional committees in recent weeks he supports a change in law to expand the post-9/11 caregiver program so that its cash stipend and menu of support services can benefit caregivers to severely injured veterans from earlier generations.

First, however, the VA wants to standardize how the post-9/11 program is administered across more than 150 VA medical facilities supported by more than 360 caregiver coordinators. Toward that end, the VA on Wednesday issued its first policy directive on screening, supporting, and dismissing participants for post-9/11 benefits so the program is more uniform and predictable.

Over the six years of program operations, 11,000 veterans using in-home caregivers had their eligibility revoked, and almost 1,800 of these veterans lost or forfeited caregiver benefits more than once, according to VA data.

"Forty-one percent of revocations occurred because veterans no longer met clinical eligibility criteria.

Thirty-four percent asked to end benefits, sometimes because marriages to caregivers dissolved under the stress and demands of wartime injuries.

Fraud or program abuse accounted for 11 percent of revocations. Eight percent of participants lost eligibility for non-compliance, such as refusing home visits. In 4 percent of cases, the caregiver or veteran died.

Only 1 percent of veterans dropped the benefit to enter residential care. **The 41 percent tossed from the program for no longer meeting screening criteria**

raised the most concern among advocacy groups. Too many lost eligibility, proponents argued, because initial VA assessments screened applicants using criteria shaped by limited resources and individual judgment." According to Tom Philpott @Military_Update.

Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) and Rep. James Langevin (D-R.I.) have reintroduced identical bills, the Military and Veteran Caregivers Service Improvement Act (S. 591, H.R. 1472), which would extend eligibility not only to older veterans with severe injuries but also to veterans of any age severely disabled due to service-connected illnesses. Sen. Patty Murray was very vocal at the last VA Senate Committee hearings in her questioning of Dr. Shulkin's proposed budget and it's inconsistency for expanding caregiver benefits to all generations. VVA has long supported the expansion of these benefits to include members of our generation and their increased need for caregivers as our population ages.

Dr. Shulkin hasn't backed a particular bill but said he supports expanding caregiver benefits to all generations, arguing it saves money to care for veterans in their homes rather than in nursing homes, where VA cost obligations are multiple times higher than providing in-home caregivers with benefits. This same argument is being discussed at our California State level Veterans Homes. The Hoover Study that was presented at California State Budget Committee has found that in-home caregivers are more cost effective than some of our state veterans homes. This is being factored in on how some of these facilities may close or be moved to areas that are in alignment with feasibility of services and family visitation.



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News and Views

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Vietnam Veterans of America of Membership Application
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