

News and Views

Volume 21 Issue 3 March 2019

A Publication of:

Vietnam Veterans of America Redwood
Empire Chapter 223

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NEWS AND VIEWS



Volumne 21 Issue 3 March 2019

PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER WITH OTHER VETERANS

President’s Message:

By Ken Holybee

April is here already. Hopefully we have had a dry day for the BBQ on Saturday, March 30th and the run of the moving wall in Winsor. I will again ask everyone to keep an eye on the monthly calendar so you know what and when we have events that may be of interest to you. There are a lot of meetings that I attend and some that I don’t have the time to attend. If you have interest in these feel free to step up and attend some - it can be very rewarding. It is very rewarding to take a roll in community projects dealing with veterans and others. Wednesday night market in Santa Rosa starts on May 1st. We can always use a couple of people to stop by and give us a hand. This is one of our outreach projects and we give a lot of information to veterans of all eras. We have our election of directors to the board at our March meeting. We have five director positions open for election. Feel free to step in and take a role in directing the direction of the chapter. it is an easy job and only takes as much time as you want to put into it.

We need to start thinking about the future of not just our organization but the future of veterans in our later years. The end of May is Memorial Day. We will again be out to put up the flags, present a wreath and return to take the flags down. Many of our members can no longer walk the distance or bend and lift the flags. We need the younger veterans and others to make sure this tradition does not go away. The summer means parades, outings and picnics. Can we still walk the parade route? We have not participated in parades for the last couple of years because of the inability of most of our members to walk the route. It is not the same riding in a trailer or truck. We were once young and active. I hope we can find a way to celebrate our lives with honor.

The article about the VA is from the VVA Web Weekly. I would encourage everyone that has an email account to go to VVA.org and sign up to receive the web weekly. You can also follow VVA on Twitter if you use that app. This is a format that will keep you up to date on many issues that are important to all veterans.

Recruiting Shortfall submitted by Kate

By: [Meghann Myers](#) from Army Times

After a Herculean effort to get the active-duty force up to 476,000 in 2017, the Army hit a stall in 2018: Tasked to grow by another 7,500 troops, the service ended up breaking even. The plan was to continue with a 4,000-troop bump over the next four years until the active component hit 500,000, but the Army’s latest budget is cutting that growth in half, Army Undersecretary Ryan McCarthy told Army Times on Thursday. “500K is the objective,” he said. “It’s just the pace to get there has slowed.”

Starting from this year’s 476,000 figure, the new plan is to add 2,000 a year through 2024, to hit 488,000 in the active component, with proportionate grown in the Army National Guard and Army Reserve. “We want to be able to maintain high quality standards,” McCarthy said.

In the past, during surges in end strength, the Army has increased enlistment waivers for factors like misconduct or aptitude, but Army Secretary Mark Esper has repeatedly said he won’t use those tactics to get to 500,000.

In fact, he has told reporters, his decision to cut the Army’s number of lower-quality recruits from 4 percent to 2 percent last year came around the same time it became clear that the service would miss its 76,500 Continued recruiting goal, which had already been reduced from 80,000.

Continued on page 7

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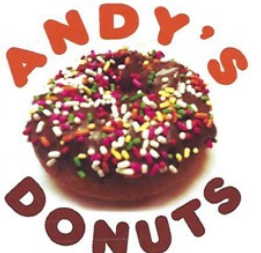
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Contributors to the News and Views: Ken Holybee, Kate O’Hare-Palmer. Thanks to all. Would like to see more articles next month. Support the chapter. I don’t write articles, I just put it together. There are a lot of interesting stories out there, send

Notice

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6/19



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Early bird \$70 per couple/\$80 at the door**



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VA Privatizing Veteran's Health Care While Launching Campaign to Deny It

By Suzanne Gordon March 11 2019
Submitted by Ken Holybee:

Acutely aware that its privatization plan has little support among veterans, the VA has launched a PR blitz to obscure what it's doing.

Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie testifies before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Capitol Hill in Washington.

The Trump administration's multipronged effort to privatize the VHA and push millions of veterans out of the VA system remains deeply unpopular among American veterans. But rather than adjust its proposals to meet the needs and wishes of veterans, the administration has a better idea: deny that the changes—which include funding private care at taxpayer expense—amount to privatization at all.

Over the past several weeks, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie and his advisors from the Koch brothers-funded Concerned Veterans for America (CVA) have launched a PR offensive refuting critics who contend that the agency's plan to funnel money to private care will lead to VHA privatization. In multiple press releases, Wilkie adamantly denied that channeling millions of veterans—and billions of taxpayer dollars—to private-sector health care providers amounts to VA privatization. Wilkie even convinced four former VA secretaries, including one who served under President Obama, to publish an op-ed at FoxNews.com echoing the VA party line. The VA's Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs followed up with a press release reasserting that, "The former secretaries also pushed back strongly against predictable and false claims that the new standards amount to privatization of the VA."

VA leadership has also sent out a number of directives instructing VHA public affairs officers and staff to refute veterans' concerns about VA privatization. A document entitled "Veteran Community Care (VA MISSION Act)—Eligibility and Access Standards," obtained by The Prospect from several sources who preferred to remain anonymous, has a long section advising how to counter any questions from veterans uneasy about privatization. Staff is directed to respond with, "There is no effort underway by anyone or at any level to privatize the VA." In yet another set of talking points delivered

to VA staff and public affairs officers, VA leaders claim that outsourcing more and more VHA care doesn't constitute privatization because privatization only occurs with "the transfer of ownership, property or business from the government to the private sector." It goes on to say, "There has never been a proposal to do this, not from the Administration, Commission on Care or from any Veterans organization, including Concerned Veterans for America."

In asking staff to serve as a mouthpiece for the CVA, the VA leadership is taking yet another step toward an organization that has long been hostile to the VHA. Indeed, Darin Selnick, who has been a senior advisor to CVA, is now overseeing the implementation of the MISSION Act inside the VA. As one VHA staffer who preferred to remain anonymous said, "I don't know if Selnick wrote this document or just edited it." CVA's current executive director, Dan Caldwell, then published his own op-ed in which he indicated that opponents to the proposal are making false attacks and engaging in scare tactics, noting "It's not about privatizing or destroying the VA." Then continuing their privatization denial, the VA's spokesperson Curt Cashour announced in a February 23 article in Stars and Stripes that, "Privatization is a myth that has been thoroughly debunked." As concern builds over Wilkie's proposal, it is critical for veterans, veterans service organizations, legislators, and the public to understand that the VA's narrow definition of privatization is erroneous. The vast literature on privatization makes abundantly clear that privatization is a spectrum of activities. As sociologist and Prospect Co-Editor Paul Starr has written, privatization involves "the contracting out of services formerly provided by government organizations to private producers."

This shift can involve, at one extreme, the wholesale auctioning off of public-sector activities to private businesses, as well as the gradual outsourcing of public services to private-sector providers, use of vouchers, and "privatization by attrition"; in which a government lets public services run down. In transferring taxpayer money from public agencies to private businesses, privatization starves the public, and enriches the private sector. Tellingly, privatization often involves a propaganda assault depicting government programs as broken beyond repair and government employees as callous or incompetent.

VA Privatizing Vet’s Health continued:

n their push to transform the VA, Republicans in Congress, the Trump administration, and the CVA have copied every move in the privatization playbook over the past five years. In their push to transform the VA, Republicans in Congress, the Trump administration, and the CVA have copied every move in the privatization playbook over the past five years. The CVA’s former CEO, veteran Pete Hegseth, has consistently attacked government provision of veterans’ health care, crowing in 2014 that the CVA “intentionally broadened the debate to include big government dysfunction generally.” Hegseth later went on to become a Fox & Friends host, and was praised because President Trump has sought him out often “so he could weigh in on the further privatization of veterans health care.”

When Darrin Selnick was appointed to the Commission on Care, he championed total VHA privatization in what was called the “Strawman Document.” In his written dissent from the Commission’s 2016 final report, Selnick also proposed emulating military insurance programs like TRICARE, which would ultimately turn the VHA into an insurer, rather than a primary provider, of care.

While Secretary Wilkie can protest as much as he likes, the fact remains that the VA’s new proposal for drive time alone will lead to a fivefold increase of eligibility for private care. Costs for expanding private care starting this June have been estimated at \$21.4 billion for the next five years (or as high as \$32.1 billion). Without additional funds appropriated by Congress, money to pay for private care will come directly out of the VHA budget—which will force VA layoffs, the termination of needed programs and even the shuttering of facilities. On February 27, Wilkie told the House Committee on Veterans Affairs that he hopes to expedite the VA Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission recommendations regarding which facilities to close, condense or expand. When a VA facility is closed, every one of its patients will be shifted to private sector care. If all this isn’t privatization, what is?

The VA’s plan to implement the recently passed MIS- SION Act could seriously imperil veteran health care—and push the department even further toward privatization.

We Are Getting Older

Submitted by Whit Patterson

Many of us are between 65 and death, i.e. old. My friend sent me this excellent list for aging . . . and I have to agree it's good advice to follow.

1. It’s time to use the money you saved up. Use it and enjoy it. Don’t just keep it for those who may have no notion of the sacrifices you made to get it. Remember there is nothing more dangerous than a son or daughter-in-law with big ideas for your hard-earned capital. Warning: This is also a bad time for investments, even if it seems wonderful or fool-proof. They only bring problems and worries. This is a time for you to enjoy some peace and quiet.
2. Stop worrying about the financial situation of your children and grandchildren, and don’t feel bad spending your money on yourself. You’ve taken care of them for many years, and you’ve taught them what you could. You gave them an education, food, shelter and support. The responsibility is now theirs to earn their own money.
3. Keep a healthy life, without great physical effort. Do moderate exercise (like walking every day), eat well and get your sleep. It’s easy to become sick, and it gets harder to remain healthy. That is why you need to keep yourself in good shape and be aware of your medical and physical needs. Keep in touch with your doctor, do tests even when you’re feeling well. Stay informed.
- 4 Always buy the best, most beautiful items for your significant other. The key goal is to enjoy your money with your partner. One day one of you will miss the other, and the money will not provide any comfort then, enjoy it together.
5. Don’t stress over the little things. You’ve already overcome so much in your life. You have good memories and bad ones, but the important thing is the present. Don’t let the past drag you down and don’t let the future frighten you. Feel good in the now. Small issues will soon be forgotten.
6. Regardless of age, always keep love alive. Love your partner, love life, love your family, love your neighbor and remember: “A man is not old as long as he has intelligence and affection.”

May 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Wednesday Night Market - set up @ 3:30	2 Continuum of Care 12:30pm Food Distrib.	3	4
5	6	7	8 Wednesday Night Market - set up @ 3:30	9	10	11
12	13 Veterans & Family Advi- sory Comm.	14 Board Mtg. 1pm	15 Wednesday Night Market - set up @ 3:30	16	17	18 Rose Parade 9:00-2:30
19	20	21 Town Hall Meeting with VA at Vets Bldg.	22 Wednesday Night Market - set up @ 3:30	23 Food Distri- bution	24	25
26 Annual Motor - Cycle Run	27 Memorial Day - Ave- nue of lags— set up at 6am	28	29 Wednesday Night Market - set up @ 3:30	30		

April 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6 Poker Night
7	8 Veterans & Family Advisory	9 Board Mtg 1pm	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 General Mtg 7pm Pot Luck 6pm	17	18	19	20 Newsletter Articles Due
21	22	23	24 UVC Meet- ing Vets Bldg	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Getting Older continued:

7. Be proud, both inside and out. Don’t stop going to your hair salon or barber, do your nails, go to the dermatologist and the dentist, keep your perfumes and creams well stocked. When you are well-maintained on the outside, it seeps in, making you feel proud and strong.
8. Don’t lose sight of fashion trends for your age, but keep your own sense of style. There’s nothing worse than an older person trying to wear the current fashion among youngsters. You’ve developed your own sense of what looks good on you – keep it and be proud of it. It’s part of who you are.
9. ALWAYS stay up-to-date. Read newspapers, watch the news. Go online and read what people are saying. Make sure you have an active email account and try to use some of those social networks. You’ll be surprised what old friends you’ll meet. Keeping in touch with what is going on and with the people you know is important at any age.
10. Respect the younger generation and their opinions. They may not have the same ideals as you, but they are the future, and will take the world in their direction. Give advice, not criticism, and try to remind them that yesterday’s wisdom still applies today.
11. Never use the phrase: “In my time.” Your time is now. As long as you’re alive, you are part of this time. You may have been younger, but you are still you now, having fun and enjoying life.
12. Some people embrace their golden years, while others become bitter and surly. Life is too short to waste your days on the latter. Spend your time with positive, cheerful people, it’ll rub off on you and your days will seem that much better. Spending your time with bitter people will make you older and harder to be around.
13. Do not surrender to the temptation of living with your children or grandchildren (if you have a financial choice, that is). Sure, being surrounded by family sounds great, but we all need our privacy. They need theirs and you need yours. If you’ve lost your partner (our deepest condolences), then find a person to move

- in with you and help out. Even then, do so only if you feel you really need the help or do not want to live alone.
14. Don’t abandon your hobbies. If you don’t have any, make new ones. You can travel, hike, cook, read, dance. You can adopt a cat or a dog, grow a garden, play cards, checkers, chess, dominoes, golf. You can paint, volunteer or just collect certain items. Find something you like and spend some real time having fun with it.
15. Even if you don’t feel like it, try to accept invitations. Baptisms, graduations, birthdays, weddings, conferences. Try to go. Get out of the house, meet people you haven’t seen in a while, experience something new (or something old). But don’t get upset when you’re not invited Some events are limited by resources, and not everyone can be hosted. The important thing is to leave the house from time to time. Go to museums, go walk through a field. Get out there.
16. Be a conversationalist. Talk less and listen more. Some people go on and on about the past, not caring if their listeners are really interested. That’s a great way of reducing their desire to speak with you. Listen first and answer questions, but don’t go off into long stories unless asked to. Speak in courteous tones and try not to complain or criticize too much unless you really need to. Try to accept situations as they are. Everyone is going through the same things, and people have a low tolerance for hearing complaints. Always find some good things to say as well.
17. Pain and discomfort go hand in hand with getting older. Try not to dwell on them but accept them as a part of the cycle of life we’re all going through. Try to minimize them in your mind. They are not who you are, they are something that life added to you. If they become your entire focus, you lose sight of the person you used to be.
18. If you’ve been offended by someone – forgive them. If you’ve offended someone - apologize. Don’t drag around resentment with you. It only serves to make you sad and bitter. It doesn’t matter who was right. Someone once said: “Holding a grudge is like taking poison and expecting the other person to die.”

Getting Older Continued:

Don’t take that poison. Forgive, forget and move on with your life.

19. If you have a strong belief, savor it. But don’t waste your time trying to convince others. They will make their own choices no matter what you tell them, and it will only bring you frustration. Live your faith and set an example. Live true to your beliefs and let that memory sway them.

20. Laugh. Laugh A LOT. Laugh at everything. Remember, you are one of the lucky ones. You managed to have a life, a long one. Many never get to this age, never get to experience a full life. But you did. So what’s not to laugh about? Find the humor in your situation.

21. Take no notice of what others say about you and even less notice of what they might be thinking. They’ll do it anyway, and you should have pride in yourself and what you’ve achieved. Let them talk and don’t worry. They have no idea about your history, your memories and the life you’ve lived so far. There’s still much to be written, so get busy writing and don’t waste time thinking about what others might think. Now is the time to be at rest, at peace and as happy as you can be!

REMEMBER: “Life is too short to drink bad wine and warm beer.”

**4th Annual Dancing
with the Stars
and Stripes
April 13, 2019**

**Sonoma Country Day School’s Jackson Theater, 4400 Day
School Place, Santa Rosa, CA**

The fourth annual Dancing with the Stars and Stripes fundraiser is coming to Santa Rosa on Saturday, April 13th. Proceeds benefit Veterans Resource Centers of America (VRC), a local nonprofit that has served veterans in the surrounding community since 1972.

Visit www.dancingwiththestarsandstripes.org to vote for a dance team, purchase VIP and general admission tickets, and find out how you can win a trip to Hawaii, a sailing excursion in the SF bay, a country getaway in Sonoma County, and other great raffle prizes.

The event will feature 11 two-person dance teams, each made up of a local “star” and a professional dancer. The teams have been practicing hard for months and are now putting the final polish on their shoes before they take the stage to wow the fans and professional judges. Many of the “star” dancers have never been on stage but are determined to overcome their fears in support of veterans.

Through social media, word-of-mouth, and private events, the dancers have also been hard at work raising money by soliciting votes for their teams from friends, family, and colleagues. Through their efforts, they’re raising awareness for the great work VRC is doing to reduce veteran homelessness and help veterans and their families achieve self-sufficiency and successfully reintegrate into their communities.

Visit www.vetsresource.org to learn more about VRC, which was founded right here in Sonoma County by a group of returning Vietnam veterans and has grown over the years into a full-service veterans service agency with locations in California, Arizona, and Nevada. Funds raised from DWTSS go directly to VRC’s veteran programs, primarily in the areas of housing assistance (homelessness prevention, transitional and long-term housing), behavioral health treatment (including PTSD and substance abuse counseling), and case management services that are tailored to the specific needs of each veteran.

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**Women Veterans Committee Report, VVA
Florida State Council—March 1, 2019**

Submitted by Kate O’Hare-Palmer

The majority of you are unaware that the ban on women veterans serving in combat was lifted by the Pentagon in January 2013 and only recently have women Marines begun serving in that capacity. The opportunity for women to serve in combat came as the result of law suits on the part of four women who have barnstormed the opportunities for women to serve in combat roles. So allow me to provide you with background information on women in combat. Throughout American history the fighting of wars has been considered a “males only” activity with laws and policy established to reflect and maintain that exclusivity. Yet women have always served our country unofficially. More than 20,000 women served as nurses during World War I. Thousands more served in support roles. An estimated 400,000 women served in World War II. In 1948, Congress passed a law allowing women to serve in peacetime forces. However, they could only make up no more than 2% of the total force. Women were banned from all ships except for hospital ships and Navy transport vessels as well as duty in combat missions. Women had no command authority over men at that time.

The end of the draft in the 1970s paved the way for large numbers of women to serve officially as part of an all volunteer force. In 1988, the Department of Defense created a “risk rule” in the hope of standardizing the military roles for assigning or excluding women from units and missions. According to the “risk rule”, women were not supposed to serve if their risk of exposure to direct ground combat, hostile fire, or capture was equal to or greater than the risk of the men serving in the combat units which they supported.

After the first Gulf War in which women served admirably, Congress repealed the ban on women serving in combat aircraft and on combat ships. Policy changes followed these legislative actions. In 1994, the Department of Defense rescinded the “risk rule” and opened up tens of thousands of previously closed military positions to the assignment of women. However the Secretary of Defense at the time, Lee Aspin, permitted significant policy restrictions to remain primarily on those that focused on women’s participation in direct ground combat.

DOD defined direct ground combat at that time as “engaging the enemy on the ground with individual or crew served weapons while being exposed to hostile fire and to a high probability of direct physical contact with the hostile force’s personnel. It takes place well forward on the battlefield while locating and closing with the enemy to defeat them by fire, maneuver, or shock effect.” This definition did not apply to today’s asymmetric battlefield in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. The lack of clearly drawn battle lines in the past made it difficult for commanders to adhere to policies written for a different kind of war. The combat exclusion rule that has historically dictated that women could not occupy any assignment in

any capacity to a unit below brigade level that had a primary mission of engaging in direct ground combat has dramatically changed.

The women of today’s military stand tall and proud alongside their male counterparts.

Greater than 20% of those serving in today’s Armed Forces are women and they are making an extraordinary difference in a multitude of ways. They are proud to serve and proud to care. Many of them have paid the ultimate price in their sacrifice of their life and limb in service to our great nation alongside the men with whom they have served. I ask that today after reading this, you pause to remember those women who have gone before us in their service and sacrifice to the United States of America, as well as to their commitment, dedication, and devotion to freedom.

By Connie C Christensen, COL AN AUS (Retired)
Chair, Women’s Veteran’s Committee /VVA Florida

Recruiting continued from page 1

it became clear that the service would miss its 76,500 recruiting goal, which had already been reduced from 80,000. Slowing down the pace of growth will give the service time to analyze whether its myriad new recruiting strategies — using neighborhood-targeted marketing, reauthorizing use of social media, a suite of new commercials and others — has had an effect on accessions.

“We’ve brought a lot of this online within the last six to seven months, and we just said to ourselves ... if we had a slower growth rate, we could focus in on the quality, we could get our new operating concept solid and start really firing on all cylinders,” McCarthy said. And if recruiting really turns around, he added, there’s room to ramp up growth in the next years’ budgets. “So for us to be at 478 by the end of this fiscal year, I’m confident at this juncture that we’ll get there,” he said.

Marketing overhaul

Fall saw the debut of the Army’s new recruiting slogan — Warriors Wanted — and going forward, congressionally mandated reforms to the service’s marketing team will be put into action.

Following a scathing audit of the Army Marketing and Research Group, which found that tens of millions of dollars had been spent on initiatives with no demonstrable results in recruiting numbers, the organization has been working on reform recommendations, McCarthy said.