

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



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VET NEWS

February 2006

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE - DONATIONS NEEDED

The Lexington County VA office has some medical equipment which can be loaned out to veterans. We have a wheelchair, Rascal scooter, and walker currently available.

If you are aware of any surplus or no longer needed equipment, please contact the VA office. We'll make it available to other veterans.

WWII AND VIETNAM CERTIFICATES STILL AVAILABLE

The VA office still has certificates and pins available for presentation to WWII and Vietnam veterans. In addition, we have a limited number of certificates and pins for the Korean War veterans.

Contact the VA office to arrange for presentation at an appropriate ceremony.

VETERAN ASSISTANCE NEEDED

Veterans are needed periodically for a number of community activities:

- Speakers for school groups, interviews, TV or radio programs
- Volunteers who can donate some time at Dorn VA Medical Center to drive the shuttle, visit patients, man the information desk, etc.

Volunteers who would like to participate should contact the VA office.

GIRL SCOUT COOKIE TIME

Once again the Girl Scouts in the Columbia area are selling cookies. Part of their cookie program is to offer purchasers the opportunity to buy additional boxes to be sent to troops overseas by the Blue Star Mothers. Last year, they sent 8,000 boxes overseas.

Support the Girl Scouts and the Blue Star Mothers by buying an additional box or two of cookies for the troops overseas.

NEED A TAX BREAK?

TAKE A CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTION AND HELP VETERANS THROUGH THE INCOME CHECKOFF

South Carolina Veterans' Trust Fund—South Carolinians helping veterans! As veterans' benefits continue to erode, this Trust Fund ensures that your voice is heard via supporting veterans' programs designed to benefit veterans and their families. This fund complements many state and federal initiatives and is managed by veterans for veterans.

South Carolina Military Family Relief Fund—This fund awards grants to families of members of the South Carolina National Guard or Reserves who are called to active duty as a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Grants are distributed based on need, status and circumstances.

Make your donations on your SC State Income Tax Return.



DRIVERS NEEDED FOR LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS' VAN

A volunteer driver or volunteer drivers is/are needed for the Lexington County Veterans' Van. The van will be parked at the Lexington County Auxiliary Building at 605 West Main Street, Lexington, SC. The van will be titled to the VA Medical Center which has the responsibility for maintenance, fuel, and insurance.

The designated driver(s) will be required to take a physical examination at the Dorn VA hospital and have a current driver's license. For more information call Gary Baker at 803-785-8401.

REQUIREMENTS FOR VAN/POV DRIVERS

Need copy of current DRIVER'S LICENSE

Need copy of current AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

**Must view DRIVER SAFETY VIDEO
If you are a DAV Van and/or POV Driver**

**Must sign SC Dept. of Public Safety Request
for Drivers Information—Form MV-20**

Must have a VAN DRIVER'S PHYSICAL EXAM

**Must complete Van Drivers' Questionnaire
VA Form May 1991-10-0043A**

Must complete a DAV VA Form 20

441.5 BILLION DEFENSE BILL INCLUDES BENEFITS CHANGES

Congressional negotiators have approved several landmark changes in military benefits, particularly for members of the National Guard and reserve.

The 2006 defense authorization bill approved Dec. 16 by House and Senate negotiators includes:

- A precedent-setting plan opening the military's Tricare health plan to any drilling member of the National Guard or reserve who agrees to continue in uniform.
- Income replacement pay of up to \$3,000 for reservists mobilized for 18 months or longer who make less money on active duty than as civilians.
- A change allowing reservists mobilized for more than 30 days to receive full Basic Allowance for Housing, which means an average increase of \$400 a month.

The compromise bill also includes extensions of more than 20 pays and bonuses that are due to expire Dec. 31; creates a \$2,500 bonus for transferring from one service to another; and increases the maximum payment possible for assignment incentive pay and hardship duty pay.

Lawmakers were putting final touches on the bill and hope to get it to President Bush for his signature by Christmas.

The \$441.5 billion defense bill, which carries an additional \$50 billion in war-related supplemental spending, includes authorization to increase active-duty strength by 10,000 soldiers and 1,000 Marines as part of a package of personnel-related provisions aimed at reducing the burden of deployments and encouraging enlistment and re-enlistment.

Among the pay-related provisions is a decision, which would apply retroactively, to provide a \$100,000 death gratuity to survivors of all service members who die on active duty, not just those who die in combat or combat-related training.

The new eligibility would be retroactive to Oct. 7, 2001, with back payments due to families who received as little as \$12,000 because last year the Pentagon proposed, and Congress endorsed, a policy that paid more for combat deaths than noncombat deaths.

For service members who incur wounds, injuries or illnesses incurred in a combat zone or in a combat operation, negotiators also agreed to create a new \$430 monthly payment that would be provided for the entire time spent recovering in a military hospital.

For military retirees who are rated 100-percent disabled by the Department of Veterans Affairs for non-combat injuries and have unemployability as a factor in their rating, the bill promises a modest change — by 2009, they will be allowed to concurrently receive their full retired pay and veterans' disability compensation. Current law would have made them wait until 2014 to receive full payment of both.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLANS (Medicare Part D)

Starting January 1, 2006, prescription drug coverage will be available to everyone with Medicare through Medicare prescription drug plans. All Medicare prescription drug plans will provide at least a standard level of coverage set by Medicare. VA has determined that its prescription drug coverage for veterans enrolled in the VA health care program is at least as good as the standard Medicare prescription drug coverage benefit, meaning that the enrollment in VA health care provides veterans with "creditable coverage" for Medicare Part D purposes.

Veterans should remember that in addition to prescription drugs, VA's Medical Benefits Package provides a full range of health care benefits. Veterans will still be eligible to receive all current health and prescription drug benefits if they choose to enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan. Veterans do not have to choose between VA coverage and a Medicare prescription drug plan; they may participate in either or both. However, if a veterans decides to enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan and disenroll from VA, he or she may not be able to re-enroll later if VA is not enrolling all priority groups.

What the above article means is that if you are currently receiving your medications from the VA, you need not sign up for Medicare Part D. Your VA coverage is as good. If for some reason in the future you no longer qualify for VA coverage, you can join the Medicare Part D without a penalty.

FORGOTTEN WARRIOR



He lives alone In
the hills and the trees

He bares his soul To the cool mountain breeze

He talks to the Spirit He listens to the Wind
They shield him from memories Buried deep within

The world has forgotten The sacrifice he made
The scars he bears remind him Of the high price he paid

Freedom is not given But with blood it has been bought
By warriors such as he And by the wars they fought

We can't forget our warriors Or let them die in vain
But with respect and honor We can help to ease their
pain

Our Freedom will be taken If no one will defend
God bless our Forgotten Warriors Who live to fight
again.

-Unknown-

God and the soldier all men adore
in times of trouble, but no more.
For When war is ended and all things righted,
God is neglected, the old soldier slighted.



"...I do not mourn our fallen dead, but rather,
thank God that such men lived."
Gen. George Patton

RED FRIDAYS



You will see a great many people wearing Red every Friday. The reason? Americans who support our troops used to be called the "silent majority." We are no longer silent, and are voicing our love for God, country and home in record-breaking numbers. We are not organized, boisterous or overbearing. We get no liberal media coverage on TV to reflect our message or our opinions.

Many Americans, like you, and all our friends, simply want to recognize that the vast majority of America supports our troops. Our idea of showing solidarity and support for our troops with dignity and respect can be shown on every Friday until the troops all come home.

Let's make the United States on every Friday a sea of red. If everyone of us who loves this country will share this with acquaintances, co-workers, friends and families, it will not be long before the USA is covered in **RED** and it will let our troops know the once "silent" majority is on their side more than ever.

The first thing a soldier says when asked "What can we do to make things better for you?" is...We need your support and your prayers. Let's get the word out and lead with class and dignity, by example; and **wear something RED every Friday.**

**WE LIVE IN THE LAND OF THE FREE,
ONLY BECAUSE OF THE BRAVE.
THEIR BLOOD RUNS RED—
SO WEAR RED EVERY FRIDAY!**

([http://redfridays.us./](http://redfridays.us/))

SEND A CARD OR LETTER

*A Recovering American Soldier
c/o Walter Reed Army Medical Center
6900 Georgia Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20307-5001*

*A Recovering American Sailor or Marine
c/o National Naval Medical Center
8901 Wisconsin Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20889*

**VA/DOD
Seamless Transition Program**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DOD) are working as partners to meet the needs of our newest veterans—the men and women who served in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom—by creating a seamless transition from active duty to civilian life as a veteran.

Each VA Medical Center will have a Point of Contact (POC) to assist in the transition of care from Department of Defense (DOD). Dorn VAMC POC is Richard Rivers, 803-776-4000, ext. 7982.

Each VA Medical Center will have a Case Manager for combat veterans to coordinate care over the course of time that VHA health care is being provided. Dorn VAMC OEF/OIF Case Manager is Faela Maney, 803-776-4000, ext. 7303.

The Veterans Health Care will provide up to 2 years **free** medical and mental health care from the date of separation from active duty, for health care issues related to active duty service. Patients can receive VA hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care for any illnesses; even if there is insufficient medical evidence to conclude that their illness was a result of their combat service.

Free care can continue beyond the two years for service connected conditions. “Service Connected” conditions are mental and medical health care issues that occurred as a result of active duty service. (Non-service connected conditions can be treated, but the veteran could not incur a co-payment).

Veterans can submit their service-connection claim with the help of Veterans Service Organizations (VSO).

Veterans also are entitled to 90 days of dental care at the VA from the date of separation from active duty, if they have not received dental care within 90 days prior to separation.

Vet Centers around the nation have established an additional staff member to provide outreach specifically to OEF/OIF veterans. Columbia Vet Center contact is Susan Toth, 765-9944.

To enroll for care at a VA facility, the veteran submits a VA Form 10-10 EZ and his/her DD214 to the Enrollment/Eligibility Office. This form is available at www.va.gov and at the Enrollment/Eligibility Office.

Each VA Regional Office has a Point of Contact for service-connection claims inquiries. Point of contact in Columbia is Marcia Hempy, (803) 255-4164.

VIETNAM VETERANS LICENSE PLATES

South Carolina Motor Vehicle special interest plates for Vietnam Veterans are now available. Cost is \$20.00 and your present plate. Must have DD-214 or other documentation to show you were in Vietnam (i.e., you were awarded the Vietnam Service medal).

VETERANS SPECIALTY TAGS

A veteran can have two of any tag he wants and for which he qualifies (i.e., V-tag, Purple Heart, POW, etc.) (except MOH). For example, if he has 6 cars he could get 2 V-tags, 2 PH tags, and 2 POW tags, **BUT HE CAN ONLY RECEIVE TAX EXEMPTION ON TWO** vehicles regardless of any combination of tags.

SUPPORT YOUR LEXINGTON VFW POST #8738

February 11: 5-7 p.m. All you can eat fish fry with hush puppies coleslaw, baked beans; eat in or take out for \$5.00.

March 4: 5-7 p.m. 10 oz. Ribeye steak dinner, baked potato, salad, dessert, drink. Tickets in advance encouraged--\$10.00.

NEW PURPLE HEART STAMP ANNOUNCED

The U.S. Postal Service is re-issuing the Purple Heart stamp, which was originally issued on May 30, 2003, to honor the sacrifice of members of the United States military services who have been killed or wounded in action.

Until the issue of the 39-cent Purple Heart stamp, the current 37-cent Purple Heart stamp will remain on sale at postoffices, online at the Postal Store at 222.usps.com/shop, through the USA Philatelic catalog and by calling toll-free -800-STAMP-24.



**PENSION RATES AND MAXIMUM INCOME
LIMITATIONS 12/1/2005 THROUGH 11/30/2006
(Pub. L 109-111)**

Effective December 1, 2005, the Director, Compensation and Pension Service of the Department of Veterans Affairs', Veterans Benefits Administration issued the following draft Pension, Dependency & Indemnity Compensation (DIC) rates and income limitations. These rates will implement VA benefits increases in pension under: Pub. L 95-588 (improved Pension), the maximum annual income limitations in pension programs in effect June 30, 1960 (Old Law Pension) and the maximum annual income limitations in effect December 31, 1978 (Section 306). The new rates will be effective December 1, 2005 and will be reflected in checks or electronic transfers received by veterans and beneficiaries on or about December 31, 2005.

IMPROVED PENSION

Maximum Annual Rates

Veteran without dependent spouse or child:	\$10,579
Veterans with one dependent spouse or child:	\$13,855
Veteran in need of aid and attendance (A&A) without dependent:	\$17,651
Veteran in need of aid and attendance (A&A) with one dependent:	\$20,924
Veteran permanently housebound (HB) without dependent:	\$12,929

Disability Compensation and DIC

Veteran permanently housebound (HB) without dependent:	\$16,205
Increase for each dependent child:	\$ 1,806
Increase for veterans of certain periods of war (WWI/Mexican Border Period):	\$ 2,400

Two Veterans Married to One Another (Combined Rates)

Both wartime and are permanently and totally disabled:	\$13,855
One is housebound (HB):	\$16,205
Both are housebound (HB):	\$18,555
One is in need of aid and attendance (A&A):	\$20,924
Both are in need of aid and attendance (A&A):	\$27,621
One is A&A and one is HB:	\$23,270

Surviving Child

Where surviving child is eligible but child is not in custody of spouse	\$1,806
Surviving child where there is no surviving spouse	\$1,806

Maximum Income Limitation Pension in Effect on 13/31/78 (Section 306)

Veteran or surviving spouse with no dependents:	\$12,034
Veteran or surviving spouse with one or more dependents:	\$16,167
Veteran with one dependent in receipt of A&A:	\$16,676
Child with no entitled veteran or surviving spouse:	\$ 8,450
SBP/MIW annuity limitation:	\$ 7,094

Maximum Income Limitation Pension in Effect on 6/30/60 (Old Law)

Unmarried veteran:	\$10,535
Veteran or surviving spouse with one or more dependents:	\$15,188
Child with no entitled veteran or surviving spouse	\$10,535

Parents DIC Rates and Maximum Income Limitations

Visit <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates/comp05.htm> (pending)

BASE SERVICE CONNECTED MONTHLY COMPENSATION RATES FOR 2006

For the period ending 11/30/2006 for a single veteran

(38 U.S.C) § . 1114)

% DISABILITY	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Amount (\$)	112	218	337	485	690	873	1099	1277	1436	2393

Disability Compensation and DIC

Spouse in receipt of DIC:	\$438
Spouse not in receipt of DIC:	\$257
Child 18-23 in school:	\$218

SPECIAL MONTHLY COMPENSATION FOR CERTAIN MULTIPLE DISABILITIES

(38 U.S.C. 1114, (paragraph))

Veteran only¹--all amounts are monthly maximum except (k) which is additional to base rate.

(k)	87	(o)	4,176
(l)	2,977	(p)	4,176
(m)	3,284	(r) (1)/(2)	5,968/6,845
(n)	3,737	(s)	2678

CLOTHING ALLOWANCE FOR CERTAIN DISABLED VETERANS

(38 U.S.C. § 1162)

The annual clothing allowance for veterans whose service-connected disabilities require the wearing or use of prosthetic or orthopedic appliances that tend to wear or tear clothing or whose physician prescribed medication for a service-connected condition that causes irreparable damage to the veteran's outer garments is \$641 for the period ending 11/30/1006.

¹ See current VBA rate schedules effective 12/01/2005 for additional dependent rates

**ADDITIONAL SERVICE-CONNECTED COMPENSATION
FOR SELECTED DEPENDENTS²**
(38 U.S.C. § 1115)

Any veteran entitled to compensation under 38 U.S.C. § 1114 and whose disability is rated not less than 30% shall be entitled to additional compensation for dependents.

(S=Spouse, C=Child, C>18=Child over 18 in School, P=Parent,
AA=Additional Spouse in need of Aid and Attendance)

% Disability	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
S	40	54	67	81	94	108	121	135
S+1C	69	93	116	139	163	186	209	233
NoS, 1C	27	36	45	54	63	72	81	91
Each additional C	20	27	34	40	47	54	61	68
Each C>18	64	86	107	129	150	172	193	215
1 P	32	43	54	65	76	87	98	109
Spouse A&A³	37	48	61	73	85	97	110	122

DEPENDENCY & INDEMNITY COMPENSATION (DIC) CHILDREN⁴
(38 U.S.C. § 1313)

Where there is no surviving spouse of a deceased veteran entitled to DIC, payment shall be made in equal shares to the children of the deceased veteran as follows:

One child:	\$438
Two children	\$629
Three children:	\$819
Each additional child:	\$157

**CHILDREN OF VIETNAM VETERANS
Spina Bifida Benefits**

(38 U.S.C. § 1805 (b)(3))

Level I monthly rate:	\$ 254
Level II monthly rate:	\$ 879
Level III monthly rate	\$1500

Children of Women Vietnam Veterans with Certain Birth Defects
(38 U.S.C. § 1815(c))

Level I monthly rate:	\$ 116
Level II monthly rate:	\$ 254
Level III monthly rate	\$ 879
Level IV monthly rate	\$1500

² This table is for quick reference only and does not include all possible combinations of dependents. For a complete listing and formulas consult current VBA rate schedules effective 12/01/2005.

³ Consult current VBA rate schedules effective 12/01/2005 for spouse A&A for veterans less than 100% SC disabled.

⁴ Consult current VBA rate schedules effective 12/01/2005 for additional numbers of dependent children and per child shares.

**HOW TO GET HELP
WITH HEATING BILLS**

SCE&G \$250 CREDIT:

Lexington County residents can apply with the Aiken/Barnwell/Lexington Community Action Commission: (803) 794-6778.

THE WOODYARD FUND:

Area residents who need assistance with heating bills should apply at the Salvation Army, 2025 Main St., Columbia, SC or call: (803) 765-0260, ext. 18.

UNITED WAY OF THE MIDLANDS:

A toll-free resource hotline that can refer people to assistance providers is: (866) 892-9211.

STATEWIDE INFORMATION:

Refer to www.thestate.com for a listing of S.C. numbers outside the Midlands area.

FREE SAT/ACT SOFTWARE

A group of NFL, NFL Europe, AFL and CFL football players is donating several million dollars worth of SAT and ACT test prep programs valued at \$199 each to families in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard for the school year 2005-2006. Through this sponsorship, active duty, National Guard, Reserve, and retire military personnel can obtain eKnowledge's \$199 SAT/ACT Standard Power Prep program(s) and the \$199 is waived.

Families who request the program(s) pay only shipping and handling costs associated with the request. Servicemembers may request as many programs as they need for the students in their lives. The DoD has created a secure website through its Military Homefront site to quickly verify a person's military status before linking the to the software ordering site. To access the site, visit the Military Homefront website.

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY
605 West Main Street, Suite 101
Lexington, SC 29072
(803) 785-8400**

**The Veterans Affairs Office will be closed
February 20
for Presidents' Day**

FEBRUARY OUTREACH PROGRAM

February 7th	8-12	Batesburg-Leesville
February 14 th	9-12	Chapin
February 21th	8-12	Swansea

NEW OFFICE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Lexington Main Office:	785-8400
From Batesburg-Leesville:	332-8400
From Chapin:	941-0231

These are toll-free calls