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 With the stunning Retina display,
 5MP iSight camera. Ultrafast Wi-Fi + 4G LTE. 64GB

\$ 10 Donation
 Chances of winning: 1 in 500



For the benefit of American Legion Post 295 Vietnam Veterans Memorial Gaithersburg, MD



HONOR GUARD UNIFORMS

A source has been located for the Army Green Pants & Coats. Some black boots may be available.

If you want to participate with the Honor Guard send me your Coat , pant and shoe sizes ASAP so that the cant be picked up on Wednesday, June 13th. .

Read more on
AmLegionPost295.org

POST COMMANDER's BLOG

DATELINE (NEWS)

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Greetings Legion family,

Memorial Day has past and I hope you took itime to remember those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. On Sunday, Post 295 Legion Riders departed Krispy Kreme Donuts in Rockville, MD at 6:30 am to participate in Rolling Thunder's 25th Anniversary Ride. It was a great ride. Craig Roberts, Post 295 member and National PR Chairman posted a great story and video about the ride here <http://www.legion.org/riders/171821/rolling-thunder-emotional-journey>

We welcome all riders. Contact me to get added to the rider contact list.

Post 295 has a lot to offer to the community all thanks to efforts of the National Organization. In 1942, the National Commander of the American Legion authored and pushed the original GI Bill through Congress. The efforts of the American Legion forever changed the landscape of the United States. Only one other Veteran Organization, Jewish War Veterans supported the GI Bill. The rest of the VSOs argued that it was too expensive.

We have begun a Capital Campaign to raise funds to support the American Legion programs outlined below. For every donation of \$10, the donot will receive a coupon toward being selected to get 1 of 2 of the New iPads. We will give the iPads away after we sell all of the coupons.

Raising needed capital will enable Post 295 to sponsor more programs.

- This year marks our 29th season of American Legion Baseball. With a new coach we expect continued success. The franchise fee of \$3,00 for both Senior & Junior teams, alone puts a substantial dent in our funds. We've uploaded videos of players on Gaithersburg Post 295's BB pages.

Want to look like a Legionnaire?

Order a Legio



n Cap from Emblem Sales today.

Post Calendar

MAY 20 ~ 1 PM

Department Executive Committee Meeting

American Legion Post 71
Oakland, MD

May 27 ~ 6AM (kickstand up 6:30)

Rolling Thunder

Meet-up at Krispy Kreme
14919 Shady Grove Rd
Rockville, MD
Call 240-505-4660 so we know you are coming.

JUNE 2 ~ 4 PM

SMD Reception for District Commander Bob Ouellette

American Legion Post 82
La Plata, MD

June 14 ~ 7 PM

POST MEETING

Mont Village Golf Club ~ Grill Room (around back, downstairs)

June 24 ~ 1PM

SMD Caucus

Post 295
Clinton, MD

July 5 ~ 6PM

Bethesda Big Train Non-Profit of the Night Shirely

- Operation Provide Comfort started in 2003 to support OIF II wounded warriors at the Bethesda Hospital has accomplished quite a lot. We are now assisting with helping families with family members with PTSD and we are looking to expand our PTSD assistance to our community.
- Post 295's Americanism Program is sending 3 boys to Boys State at Washington College in Chestertown, MD at a cost of \$300 each.
- The Honor/Color Guard is a go. We are in the process of procuring more uniforms
- Members of Sons of the American Legion Squadron 295, won the Maryland High School Oratorical Contest. We can do more and offer more prize money for the participating students.
- Post 295's newsletter "Dateline" is available online.

Please give today and ensure a stronger America. Your assistance will ensure American Legion Post 295 thrives.

For the Veteran, Bob Ouellette
Southern Maryland District Commander &
Post Commander



Blue Star Museums

Blue Star Museums is a collaboration among the National Endowment of the Arts, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and more than 1,500 museums across America. First launched in the summer of 2010, Blue Star Museums offers free admission to all active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day, May 28, through Labor Day, September 3, 2012. See the map below for museums participating this summer.

Leadership support has been provided by MetLife Foundation through Blue Star Families.

[Find your Blue Star Museum](#)



LEGISLATIVE DIVISION UPDATE LEGION-RELATED LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

The U.S. Senate was in session this preceding week. The House is scheduled to return from recess next week (May 28-June 1),

Povich Field

Cabin John Regional Park
(100 Free Tickets - Just ask -
donations accepted)



Sponsor this newsletter for \$300 a year or \$150 for 6 Months. Other opportunities available.

D-DAY JUNE 6, 1944

29th U.S. Infantry
Division
Motto: 29th Let's Go

The U.S. Infantry Division mobilized at Ft. George G. Meade was comprised of National Guard members from Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia and Pennsylvania. The 29th ID was in the first assault wave to hit the beaches at Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944. They landed on Omaha Beach and occupied Isigny on June 9th. In total, the

while the Senate has scheduled its home work period for that week. The House is scheduled to be in recess during the week of June 11-15.

Senate Committee Plan Eliminates TRICARE Increases

Preliminary reports from the Senate Armed Services Committee indicate the Pentagon plan proposed by President Obama to raise Tricare health care fees as a way to dramatically reduce personnel costs appears to have been set aside.

Unlike the House consideration of the National Defense Authorization Act, the Senate bill is considered behind closed doors. The Senate Armed Services Committee spent nearly the entire week drafting their version, and when completing their work last night, preliminary reports indicate The American Legion's efforts to prevent dramatic TRICARE premium increases, a tiered annual fee structure, and other changes were successful. While work on the 2013 defense budget is far from over, the Senate committee's decision comes one week after the House of Representatives passed its own version of the 2013 defense authorization bill that also omits the Defense Department's proposal to raise enrollment fees and deductibles for working-age retirees, including income-based enrollment fees for the Tricare Prime and the Tricare For Life programs. With the Defense Department plan omitted from both the House and Senate versions of the defense policy bill, it would take some extraordinary reversal by lawmakers to approve the Pentagon plan as part of the final compromise legislation that will be completed later this year. The American Legion will remain engaged on this matter as the full Senate considers the bill and necessary compromises are addressed in differences between the Senate and House versions.

House Passes FY 2013 National Defense Authorization Act

On May 18 the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2013, H.R. 4310, passed the full House by a vote of 299-120. This followed the approval of the bill on May 10 by the House Armed Services Committee by a vote of 56-5. The legislation provides the pay, funding and authorities for America's men and women in uniform, and is the key mechanism by which Congress fulfills its primary constitutional responsibility to "provide for the common defense." In the legislation, Chairman Howard "Buck" McKeon and members of the committee show their commitment to: restore fiscal sanity to a defense budget that is inconsistent with the threats America faces; keep faith with America's men and women in uniform; align our military posture in a dangerous world; and rebuild a force after a decade at war.

H.R. 4310 begins to restore the defense budget, reflecting concern about America's mounting debt, but also ensuring that our armed forces have the resources they need to meet an increasingly dangerous world. It also recognizes that the military has absorbed 50% of deficit reduction efforts to date, though it comprises only 20% of the federal budget.

The bill authorizes funding for national defense at \$554.2 billion

29th ID suffered 19,814 casualties, killed, wounded and missing. 29 Let's Go!

Jobs for Maryland Veterans

Thursday is Jobs for Maryland Veterans Day! When MDVA receives notices from employers who are interested in hiring veterans, these notices will be posted in a weekly Job Board email. Please do not contact MDVA regarding any of the listed opportunities. Employers should be contacted directly. These are the postings for May 3rd.

Veterans Job Fair and Expo

Washington DC VA Medical Center is hosting a veterans only job fair on Thursday, May 30 from 10 am - 3 pm. Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation will also be in attendance to help veterans improve their job search skills.

The Washington DC VA Medical Center address is: 50 Irving St NW, Washington, DC 20422
202-745-8000

for the base budget, and an additional \$88.5 billion for overseas contingency operations. This level of funding is consistent with the House-passed budget resolution. It is \$3.7 billion above the President's budget request, and is an incremental step to address the \$46 billion decrease when considering where the President proposed national defense would be for fiscal year 2013 in last year's budget.

Both the President's budget request and the House-passed budget authorized national defense above the Budget Control Act (BCA); however, in crafting the House budget, the House was careful to identify other non-defense sources to accommodate the needed increase in national security accounts while reducing overall funding below the BCA cap.

The legislation provides our war fighters and their families with the care and support they need, deserve, and have earned; while ensuring that proposed drawdown plans do not cut to the heart of the Army and Marine Corps. Vital provisions include:

- Troop Pay - The FY13 NDAA authorizes a 1.7% pay increase and extends bonuses and special pay for our men and women in uniform.
- TRICARE - The FY13 NDAA restates the firmly-held sense of Congress that prior service to our nation is a pre-payment of healthcare benefits in retirement. As such, it rejects the President's proposal to increase some TRICARE fees and establish new TRICARE fees. The President' budget proposed more than doubling pharmacy co-pays, an annual enrollment fee for the TRICARE for Life benefit for Medicare-eligible retirees, income-based enrollment fees for TRICARE Prime, and an annual enrollment fee for TRICARE Standard and Extra and raising TRICARE Standard and Extra deductibles. In contrast, the FY13 NDAA includes a modest increase in TRICARE pharmacy co-pays in 2013 and a cap on pharmacy co-pays beginning in 2014 that would allow fees to rise by no more than the annual retiree COLA. This is offset by a 5-year pilot program that requires TRICARE for life recipients to obtain refills of maintenance drugs through the TRICARE mail-order program.
- Limiting Troop Reductions. As the size of the military is reduced, the FY13 NDAA caps the number of troops that can be separated from the force in a single year. The bill also mandates that in the future, funding for troops designated for separation must be part of Department of Defense's (DOD) base budget and not carried in accounts for contingency operations.
- Combating Sexual Assault. The FY13 NDAA reflects a bipartisan effort to provide significant new regulations and procedures for combating and prosecuting sexual assault within the military.
- Military Chaplains. The measure includes a religious freedom conscience clause for military chaplains and service members.

This year, through the incorporation of the Right to Habeas

VANGEL Paper Inc.

Local, family-owned recycling and data destruction business is looking for hardworking, reliable straight-truck drivers with good customer service skills. The position is full-time (40 hours) and you must be available for over-time. The starting salary is \$14 per hour Class C; \$16 per hour Class B. Benefits include 401K and pension profit sharing plans, paid vacation, and medical (HRA) and dental.

Job requirement: 21 years of age 1 year previous truck (5 ton GVW) driving experience. Clean driving record, pass pre-employment drug screening and random drug tests, pass background check. Call 410-644-0616

HELP WANTED? HIRE A VET!

As part of their series on veterans and jobs, Patch.com has begun posting veterans' resumes on Patch. Please check out the following link to find out how to post your resume. It lists what additional information should be included in your posting.

Contact Whitney Teal, at whitney.teal@patch.com for additional information.

[Help Wanted? Hire a Vet!](#)

VETERANS RETRAINING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (VRAP)

The VRAP program offers 12 months of retraining assistance to Veterans who are:
Unemployed
At least 35 but no more than 60 years old
Have an other than dishonorable discharge
Not eligible for any other VA education

Corpus Act, the bill makes clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that every American will have his day in court. The FY13 NDAA also prohibits the transfer of detainees from Guantanamo Bay to the United States and prohibits use of funds to house Guantanamo terrorist detainees in the United States.

H.R. 4310 requires the President to notify Congress of any planned force reductions in Afghanistan prior to any public announcement of such a decision. Notification would include assessment of conditions on the ground that enable such a force reduction, including the relevant security risks associated with the reduction in force levels, and an assessment of the operational capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).

The bill also includes a Sense of Congress that this country should: maintain security gains as the U.S. transitions security to the Afghans; transition to advise and assist at the earliest as conditions on the ground allow; and not maintain an indefinite combat mission. The President should: consider our Commander on the ground's assessment for a combat presence through 2013; maintain a force of at least 68,000 through 2014 unless fewer forces achieve objectives (68,000 is the post surge withdrawal level expected this September 2012); and maintain troop presence and funding sufficient to advise and assist the ANSF after 2014.

- **Special Operations.** Enables Special Operations Forces to sustain the current fight and rebalance across the globe where appropriate to counter and mitigate threats, and work with partner nations. Preserves and institutionalizes other capabilities such as irregular warfare and security force assistance within the services and U.S. Special Operations Command.
- **North Korea, China, Iran.** Requires Combatant Commanders to give their assessment of capability gaps against North Korea, China, and Iran. Iran. Reinforces the United States' commitment to use all elements of national power to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon and enhances the credibility of the military option, should it prove necessary.
- **Support for Israel.** Supports key allies, including Israeli Cooperative Missile Defense programs like Iron Dome. Pakistan. Freezes security assistance funding to Pakistan until Pakistan reopens vital supply routes to U.S. troops in Afghanistan.
- **Nuclear Modernization, Oversight and NNSA Reform.** Modernizes and supports DOD's nuclear forces, including intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear bombers and the Navy's strategic submarines and submarine-launched ballistic missiles. Strengthens congressional oversight of the nation's nuclear weapons war plan. Reforms the National Nuclear Security Administration's governance and management systems to make the agency more independent and efficient
- **Homeland Missile Defense.** Supports a robust national missile defense, including \$100 million for an East Coast

**benefit program
Not in receipt of VA
compensation due to
Individual
Unemployability (IU)
Not enrolled in a federal
or state job training
program
Enrolled in a VA
approved program of
education offered by a
community college or
technical school
Application process
begins May 15th!**

VRAP Factsheet

American Legion Extension Institute now available online

The American Legion's official training program for officers, members, Legion College applicants and those who simply want to expand their knowledge of the nation's largest veterans service organization is now available online.

The American Legion Extension Institute has been rewritten, updated, streamlined and enhanced with videos, digital photos, clickable links, a historical timeline and additional features. To register and take the course, visit www.legion.org/alei. The program is designed to take less than two hours to complete. It is divided into six sections, with a quiz at the end of each, followed by a final exam.

The sections closely follow the Four Pillars of service for the organization. They include:

- History & Organization
- Veterans Affairs &

third site for national missile defense to align with the rising threat from Iran.

- **Space.** Provides additional funding for national security space programs, approximately \$50 million above the Administration's request.
- **Cyber.** Increases oversight on development of cyber operations capabilities.
- **Science and Technology.** Supports several key areas of science and technology investments to ensure the Department meets future defense needs.

The bill restores and retains vital systems, platforms, and authorities needed to maintain America's combat power after a decade of war while declining to take up Administration requests, such as two rounds of base closure, which could damage vital military infrastructure. In addition, the NDAA:

In contrast to the President's budget proposal, H.R. 4310 preserves tactical airlift crucial to DOD's ability to support troops on the ground with agile combat support, such as C-130 Hercules, C-23 Sherpas, and C-27J Spartan aircraft proposed for early retirement. Maintains close air support and ground interdiction capabilities provided by A-10 Warthogs and F-16 Fighting Falcons slated for premature divestment prior to the forecasted service-life end of each aircraft. The Committee believes these assets remain vital to governors who have important roles as first responders in times of crisis.

- **Navy Cruisers.** Restores three of the four Navy cruisers proposed for early retirement in Fiscal Year 2013, each of the cruisers has more than a decade of useful service left, and can help make up the lack of combat power behind the President's "pivot" to Asia.
- **Counter-IED.** Supports counter-IED funding to protect the troops on the ground.
- **Heavy Armor.** Sustains America's heavy armored production base by maintaining minimum sustained production of Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles, and Hercules recovery vehicles.
- **Airborne Electronic Warfare.** Maintains the option for additional airborne electronic warfare capabilities by supporting advance procurement for the EA-18G.
- **Army Ground Combat.** Fully funds the Army Ground Combat Vehicle development program.
- **Aircraft.** Fully funds requests for 50 AH-64 Apaches, 59 UH-60 Blackhawks, and 44 CH-47 Chinooks, 29 F-35 Lightning II aircraft, 26 F-18 E/F Super Hornets, V-22 aircraft, 36 MQ-9 Reaper UAS.
- **Submarines and Destroyers.** Authorizes a multi-year procurement for up to 10 Virginia-class submarines and up to 10 DDG-51 Arleigh Burke class destroyers.

The Senate Armed Services Committee was meeting behind closed doors this week to develop that chamber's version of the NDAA. Final action was expected by week's end. It is expected that the Senate NDAA will more closely resemble the President's budget vision; expect a lively summer in this area. The President

- Rehabilitation
- National Security
- Americanism
- Children & Youth

has already threatened to veto the House version if it ever reaches his desk.

The online course is \$4.95 for members of The American Legion and Sons of The American Legion. The registration fee is \$9.95 for non-members. Payment can be accepted securely and conveniently on the course registration page.

The American Legion Extension Institute online training program replaces the series of printed booklets that had been printed and sold through National Headquarters.

[Start Training Now](#)

Legislative Division Actions

National Journal Policy Summit: Obesity and National Security
On Wednesday, May 23, the National Journal held a policy summit to examine the impact of the growing rate of obesity among Americans on national security, specifically in terms of recruiting and retention.

The event began with words by retired U.S. Navy Rear Admiral James Barnett, Jr. representing Mission: Readiness, an organization which is concerned with ensuring that children are able to become adults who are capable of serving in the military to ensure the defense of the United States. Mr. Barnett addressed the issue of the growing rate of children who are obese in America, and the impact it is having, and will continue to have, on military readiness in the future. According to Mt. Barnett, 75 percent of Americans age 17-24 are ineligible for military service. Of this 75 percent, one quarter are ineligible due to physical fitness, including weight. Mr. Barnett pointed out that if current trends continue, upwards of 43 percent of the American population could be obese; this creates obvious difficulties for military readiness, and by extension, national security. The answer to the problem, he suggested, is the cultivation of a culture which values health and fitness, and which instills these habits into our children.

The panel consisted of four members: Christine Ferguson, Director, STOP Obesity Alliance; Tracy Fox, President, Food, Nutrition & Policy Consultants; COL Heidi Warrenton, Chief Nurse Executive, U.S. Army Public Health Command; and Marian Tanofsky-Kraff, Associate Professor, Uniformed Services University. The panel fielded questions from Maggie Fox who is the Managing Editor of Healthcare and Technology for the National Journal, as well as the audience, and discussed strategies for dealing with the issue as the country moves forward. Much of the discussion revolved around efforts aimed at stemming the tide of obesity, including, like Mr. Barnett, discussion of the cultivation of a culture in which healthy lifestyles are promoted in children from a young age, and the problem of providing healthy school lunches for children. Additionally, the problem of maintaining military readiness was addressed. A Mission: Readiness study entitled Too Fat to Fight states that about 1,200 first-term enlistees are discharged annually without fulfilling their contractual obligations, which costs the military upwards of \$1.1 billion annually. The Pentagon has recently formulated new nutritional standards for military meals for the first time in 20 years, which are designed to give troops and their families more access to fresh fruits, vegetables, more whole grains,

lean meats and low-fat dairy products, and will be available in military dining halls, base schools, vending machines and snack

bars.



Senate VA Committee Examines Disability Evaluation System

On May 23, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a hearing evaluating the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). The IDES was a product of the intense scrutiny and reform efforts that occurred after dramatic failures were found at Walter Reed hospital in 2007. Through the IDES, separating service members who have been identified possibly unfit due to injury or illness, are evaluated jointly by the Departments of Veteran Affairs (VA) and Defense. The system was developed to combine two disjointed processes into one systematic review that not only provided a determination of a fitness for duty, but also a VA disability rating should a service member's injuries require discharge. Presently, over 27,000 servicemembers are involved in IDES.

Nearly one year ago, the committee held a similar hearing to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the program. Daniel Bertoni, of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) stated, "Timeliness has steadily worsened since the inception of this program." During the hearing, it was revealed active duty troops waiting 394 days on average during this process while National Guard and Reservists wait 420 days. This is worse than the numbers presented a year ago of 357 and 370 days respectively, and a dramatic deterioration from 2008 where they were less than 300 days.

While the goal remains to complete the process within 295 days, only 19 percent of active duty service members completed the process within that goal. Both the VA and DOD pledged to improve this to 60 percent in the coming year. Of particular note that has been corroborated by The American Legion staff at IDES locations has been the delay in processing of VA benefits. In 2010, it took an average of 48 days for a newly discharged veteran to receive his/her benefits after discharge. In 2011, this only slightly improved to 38 days, still well beyond the goal of 30 days.

While every member of the committee expressed frustration on the overall report and failure to meet goals and improvements, most including the DOD and VA witnesses could not point to specific methods that will improve the process. Utter frustration and hollow promises remained the common sentiment of everyone. As Chairman Patty Murray (WA) stated, "As more and more men and women return from Afghanistan and as the military downsizes, we're going to continue to see an even larger group of service members transition through the disability evaluation process."



Rep. Cumming Announces Legislation to Expand Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act

On Thursday, May 24 American Legion staff members Shaun Rieley (Assistant Director of Legislative) and Mark Walker (Deputy Director of Economics) attended a press conference at Baltimore's historic 5th Regiment Armory. The event was hosted by Rep. Elijah Cummings (MD) to announce his proposed amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act - H.R. 4310 - which expands the protections afforded to servicemembers under the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA).


The legislation would: extend SCRA protections to surviving spouses of service members killed in the line of duty; extend post-service mortgage protections from 9 to 12 months; require all financial institutions to designate an SCRA compliance officer; require financial institutions with more than \$10 billion in assets to maintain a toll-free number; and extend some SCRA protections to all 100% disabled veterans leaving the military. Rep. Cummings stated "Service members shouldn't have to fight for housing when they come back from fighting for the country." This legislation would make strides toward ensuring that veterans do not have to worry about housing issues back home while they are focused on completing their mission overseas. Maryland Department of Veteran Affairs Secretary Edward Chow, Jr., and St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center, Inc., Executive Director Gerard Joab also spoke and offered praise for the legislation.



Update on Flag Amendment Bills

Sen. Orrin Hatch's (UT) office continues to solicit additional cosponsors for Senate Joint Resolution (S.J. Res.) 19, a proposed constitutional amendment to protect the American flag from physical desecration. Its text states simply: "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." The cosponsor total for the Senate legislation stands at 35, with the recent additions of Sens. Debbie Stabenow (MI) and Tim Johnson (SD). To date, H.J. Res. 13 - the House companion to the Senate measure - has accumulated 86 cosponsors, with the addition last week of Reps. Tim Griffin (AR) and Daniel Lipinski (IL).

Please contact your representatives' and senators' offices, and ask them to become cosponsors of the flag amendment in their respective chambers. If they are already cosponsors, be sure to thank them for their support.



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: "I have been an American Legion member for 23 years and would like to know why The American

Legion was not included in the list of 32 members of the Military Coalition that released a statement to the DOD 2013 Federal Budget Proposals on March 14."

The American Legion long ago chose not to entangle ourselves with coalitions and partnerships. Two which are most often seen by veterans are the Military Coalition and the Independent Budget. Our lack of inclusion within these groups doesn't necessary equate to disagreement with them, or even limit our partnership in working with them. The problem cited at the time, which would still hold true today, is the overall use by the coalition of our members and the manner in which they make decisions.

For example, some members of the Military Coalition are adamant that TRICARE must not change in any way from today's program. Others hold a different tack and argue that some changes might need to occur in order to "save" TRICARE from much more drastic proposals. If The American Legion joins the coalition and gets one vote, that vote, representing 2.4 million members, might have the same weight as the vote of a much smaller veteran or military organization with only several hundred members. The overall "position" of the coalition might then be against our resolutions and position.

Moreover, our current position is one of membership supremacy and heritage. Fortunately, because of nearly 100 years of programs and advocacy that are interwoven into the fabric of America, everyone knows of The American Legion brand. That coupled with a significant amount of members nearly guarantees we have an opportunity to opine on our position. The same can't be said for dozens of other organizations. This is a byproduct of decades of careful use of our organization's brand, expertise by volunteers and staff, and dedication to the ideals upon which we were founded. We should be careful to never jeopardize our brand.

Yet, as I said, there are often times we agree with the exact position or only a modified version of the Military Coalition or Independent Budget. On these occasions, we do our best to make certain people understand why we differ. Moreover, when we concur, our organizations work side by side to note to everyone who will listen, "every veteran and military organization believes you should . . ." When these stars align, we've seen magic happen.

I hope this helps you understand our relationship to the Military Coalition. Our positions and statements can always be found in either the press release or legislative section of our website: www.legion.org.

The American Legion Legislative Division Tim Tetz, Director
(202) 263-5752



Veterans Retraining Assistance Program

(VRAP)

Veterans Retraining Assistance Program: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Labor (DoL) are working together to roll out the new Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) program on July 1, 2012. The VRAP offers 12 months of training assistance to Veterans who:

- Are at least 35 but no more than 60 years old
- Are unemployed
- Received an other than dishonorable discharge
- Are not be eligible for any other VA education benefit program (e.g.: the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Assistance).
- Are not in receipt of VA compensation due to unemployability.
- Are not enrolled in a federal or state job training program.

The program is limited to 45,000 participants during fiscal year 2012, and to 54,000 participants from October 1, 2012, through March 31, 2014. Participants will receive a monthly payment equal to the full-time payment rate under the Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty program (currently \$1,473 per month). The benefit will be paid directly to you and you are responsible for paying your expenses including tuition, fees, and books. The Department of Labor will offer employment assistance to every Veteran who participates or applies to the VRAP program. Participants must be enrolled in a VA approved program of education offered by a community college or technical school. The program must lead to an Associate Degree, Non-College Degree, or a Certificate, and train the Veteran for a high demand occupation. VRAP will provide training for programs of education that lead to a high demand occupation, as determined by the Department of Labor. At

http://www.gibill.va.gov/documents/VRAP_High_Demand.pdf

can be found a breakdown of positions covered in the following:

- Management Occupations
- Business and Financial Operations
- Computer and Mathematical Occupations
- Architecture and Engineering Occupations
- Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations
- Community and Social Services Occupations
- Legal Occupations
- Education, Training, and Library Occupations
- Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations
- Healthcare Practitioner and Technical Occupations
- Healthcare Support Occupations
- Protective Service Occupations
- Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations
- Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations
- Personal Care and Service Occupations
- Sales and Related Occupations

- Office and Administrative Support Occupations
- Construction and Extraction Occupations
- Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations
- Production Occupations
- Transportation and Material Moving Occupations

How to Apply - The Department of Labor and the Department of Veterans Affairs will begin accepting applications on May 15, 2012. To complete the application, you will need to know your direct deposit information (bank routing number and account number), the name and location of your school, the program you wish to pursue, and the applicable high demand occupation. Go to <http://benefits.va.gov/vow/education.htm> to find out more. For veterans seeking a employment now there are extensive employment resources available for Veterans provided by the Federal Government. Visit <http://www.fedshirevets.gov> and the Department of Labor's <http://www.dol.gov/vets> to learn more. [Source: <http://benefits.va.gov/vow/education.htm> May 2012 ++]

JOINT SERVICE OPEN HOUSE & AIR SHOW

"Keeping America Strong and Secure, United in Purpose and Steadfast in Service"

The 2012 Joint Service Open House, featuring the Blue Angels, the Golden Knights, and many other exciting aerial and ground attractions.

Join us Saturday May 19th and Sunday May 20th, open to the general public.

Department of Defense card holders and school-sponsored children invited to join us on Friday, May 18th.

Unauthorized vehicles are prohibited from Joint Base Andrews. Shuttle bus transportation provided from FedExField parking and Branch Ave Metro Station.

In-bound buses to the event will stop running at 1PM on Sat and Sun.

Inclement weather? Call our information line at 301-981-4600 to check



[Read More](#)

VA testing whether meditation can help treat PTSD

by Steve Vogel

Seeking new ways to treat post-traumatic stress, the Department of Veterans Affairs is studying the use of transcendental meditation to help returning veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Veterans Affairs \$5.9 billion system for mental-health care is under sharp criticism, particularly after the release of an inspector general's report last month that found that the department has greatly overstated how quickly it treats veterans seeking mental-health care.

VA has a huge investments in mental-health care but is seeking alternatives to conventional psychiatric treatment, said W. Scott Gould, deputy secretary of veterans affairs.

The reality is, not all individuals we see are treatable by the techniques we use, Gould said at a summit Thursday in Washington on the use of TM to treat post-traumatic stress suffered by veterans and active-duty service members.

By some estimates, 10 percent of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan show effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, numbers that are overwhelming the department.

Conventional approaches fall woefully short of the mark, so we clearly need a new approach, said Norman Rosenthal, a clinical professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University's medical school.

Rosenthal told the gathering that TM, a meditative practice that advocates say helps manage stress and depression, is possibly even a game-changer in how to treat PTSD.

VA is spending about \$5 million on a dozen clinical trials and demonstration studies of three meditation techniques involving several hundred veterans from a range of conflicts, including Iraq and Afghanistan. Results from the studies will not be available for 12 to 18 more months.

But Gould said he was encouraged by the results of other trials presented at the summit. Two independent pilot studies of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans showed a 50 percent reduction in symptoms of post-traumatic stress after eight weeks, according to the summit's sponsor, the David Lynch Foundation, a charitable organization founded by the American filmmaker and television director.

Results from the initial phase of a long-term trial investigating the effects of TM on 60 cadets at Norwich University, a private military college in Vermont, have shown promise, school officials said at the summit.

Students practising TM at Norwich showed measurable improvement in the areas of resilience, constructive thinking and discipline over a control group not using the method. The statistical effect we found in only two months was surprisingly large, Carole Bandy, an associate professor of psychology who is directing the Norwich study, said at the summit.

For us, it's all about the evidence, said Norwich President Richard W. Schneider, who added that he was a skeptic before the trial began.

Operation Warrior Wellness , an initiative of the David Lynch Foundation, is providing TM training to troops recovering from wounds at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state. Soldiers report dramatic improvements in sleep, according to the foundation, as well as significant reductions in pain, stress and the use of prescription medications.

Lynch, the director of Blue Velvet, Mulholland Drive and the television series Twin Peaks, is a longtime practitioner of TM. The VA is very interested in what this can do, Lynch said in a telephone interview Thursday. He acknowledged that many in the military are wary of transcendental meditation, with its New Age and mystic connotations.

Big-time, Lynch said. They're skeptical until they start hearing stories, or experiencing it for themselves.



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Veterans Skills to Jobs Act

American Legion supports H.R. 4155 and S. 2239

ACTION ALERT - [TAKE ACTION NOW](#)

(May 16, 2012) After serving our country honorably, all veterans deserve the chance to earn a paycheck and support their families. Unfortunately, the unemployment rate for veterans returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan remains stubbornly high. According to the latest Employment Situation of Veterans' annual report from The Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate for veterans who served post 9/11 was 12.1 percent in 2011, compared with the jobless rate for all veterans of 8.3 percent. Those hit the hardest from that group are our young male veterans, ages 18-24, which have an unemployment rate of 29.1 percent, higher than the 17.6 percent jobless rate of their young male non-veteran counterparts. This is unacceptable and unnecessary.

The Department of Defense provides some of the best vocational training in the nation for its military personnel. There are many occupational career fields in the armed forces that can easily translate to a civilian counterpart; additionally, there are many occupations in the civilian workforce that require a license or certification.

Upon separation, however, many service members, certified as proficient in their military occupational career, are not licensed or certified to perform the comparable job in the civilian workforce, thus hindering chances for immediate civilian employment and delaying career advancement. This situation creates an artificial barrier to employment upon separation from military service.

On March 7, U.S. Rep. Jeff Denham (CA-19) and Rep. Tim Walz (MN-1) introduced the Veterans Skills to Jobs Act , H.R. 4155 , to streamline the bureaucratic processes for veterans with relevant training to get jobs when they return home. Later that month, a companion bill, S. 2239 , was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Bill Nelson (FL) and cosponsored by Sens. Olympia Snowe (ME), Amy Klobuchar (MN) and Richard Blumenthal (CT).

The Veteran Skills to Jobs Act helps address the unacceptably high rate of veteran unemployment by directing the head of each federal department and agency to treat relevant military training as sufficient to satisfy training or certification requirements for federal license, so that veterans can get back to work quickly. Congress and the nation have a compelling interest in fostering the employment of veterans. An expanded credentialing program has widespread support on Capitol Hill and from many top defense officials. It marks a major cultural shift for the military, which once held the view that making it easier for troops to get out would reduce retention and hurt the military.

The federal government is uniquely situated and obligated to take the lead on this, not only to overcome old attitudes, but to set an example for state and local government agencies which grant occupational licenses and set certain professional standards.

As the Nation's largest veterans service organization, The American Legion believes there are none more deserving than

America's service members and veterans. All Legionnaires, concerned citizens, veterans and their families are requested to write, call and visit their congressional representatives to either request their co-sponsorship of the Veteran Skills to Jobs Act or to thank them for their support.

[Read More](#)

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