

# VETERANS JOURNAL



PUBLISHED BY  
FRANKLIN COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION  
250 West Broad Street, Columbus Ohio 43215  
(614) 462-2500 FAX (614) 462-2505  
E-mail: [veteransservice@franklincountyohio.gov](mailto:veteransservice@franklincountyohio.gov)  
Website: [www.franklincountyohio.gov/vets](http://www.franklincountyohio.gov/vets)



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*Fall 2008 Issue*

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The information in this journal is being provided to make the veteran community aware of some current events, activities and veterans issues that are of mutual concern. From time to time, we will include some relevant information important enough to be repeated to insure that veterans and their families are aware of the full range of benefits and entitlements available to them.



## Thomas F. Heston Retires

Mr. Thomas F. Heston began his service to Franklin County on August 21, 1989 with the Department of Veterans Services and has served the county as the Veteran's Services Officer during his 19 years as an exemplary employee.

Growing up and living on the West Side of Columbus, Thomas developed close ties to the community and is fondly remembered for helping neighbors by mowing their grass, assisting the elderly in need and serving as the community's "paper boy" for many years.

Tom's dedication stretches beyond his neighborhood and extends to the entire county earning him respect and admiration among his colleagues for the compassion and patience he demonstrates in helping fellow veterans and their families connect with available services when facing tough times.

Everyone at Franklin County will miss Tom's devotion and sincerely thank him for his exemplary services and give our best wishes for happiness in all of his future endeavors.

## Events at Greenlawn Cemetery

Wednesday, Sept. 24, 5 to 7 p.m. Huntington Chapel, Third annual Heritage Day. Friends of Green Lawn will acquaint guests with Green Lawn and its work. Horse-drawn carriage rides are offered. Refreshments are served.

Saturday, Oct. 4, 11 a.m., Huntington Chapel, First Saturday at Green

Lawn. The foresight of Julian Griggs. The speaker is Conrad Haines, a historian for the city. Julian Griggs was city engineer from 1898 to 1906. During that time Griggs Dam/Reservoir was built. Haines will talk about why it was built and what it meant to the development of the city of Columbus.

All programs are free and open to the public. Since we are a nonprofit association, we do accept donations at all our functions.

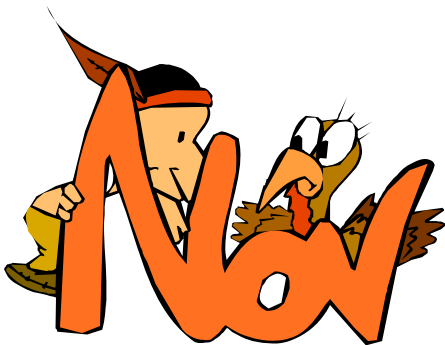
In addition, the 2009 Green Lawn calendar is about to go to the printer. We hope to have it ready to sell by Sept. 24 at Heritage Day. Calendars are \$10 and proceeds benefit the Green Lawn Volunteers. Photos on the calendar come from the photo contest administered by the Green Lawn Volunteers.



## 22nd Fall Begins



13th Columbus Day  
31<sup>st</sup> Halloween



28<sup>th</sup> Daylight Savings  
Time Ends

4<sup>th</sup> Election Day

11<sup>th</sup> Veterans Day

27<sup>th</sup> Thanksgiving



## Bye-Bye Greens

No, this has nothing to do with salads.

The Army has made it official - the green service uniform, which has defined the service since the mid-1950s, is going away.

In place of the green uniform will be a variation of the blue uniform, something many soldiers already own. Official word on the new "Army Service Uniform," or ASU, was released Aug. 20 in a message to all Army activities. The message defines the wear policy and the "bridging" strategy for transition to the new uniform.

## NAUS Calls on Senate to Approve Merchant Mariner Measure

Before the 110th Congress comes to a close, NAUS asks Congress to act on S. 961, the Belated Thank You for Merchant Mariners of World War II. "The Belated Thank You" bill would extend benefits to those once young men and women who went to sea as crewmembers of the Merchant Marine during World War II. The House acted last year on its version of the bill, but the Senate remains tied up on taking positive action to recognize the valor of Merchant Mariners whose heroic contributions helped secure American victory in World War II. On behalf of a grateful nation, we urge the Senate to bring S.961 to a vote. The bill has 59 cosponsors. You can help. Send a message: [Merchant Mariner Alert](#).

## Frequently Asked Questions

The DoD Military Health System web site offers clear answers to a number of frequently asked questions (FAQs). If you have a question regarding eligibility, active duty medical care for families, or special issues, you can get an answer at this DoD site from key TRICARE leaders such as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Dr Ward Casscells or Deputy Director of the TRICARE Management Maj. Gen Elder Granger. In fact you can send a question and get an answer to a personal inquiry in this section. Next time you have a few moments; NAUS suggests you check it out at [MHS FAQs](#).

## Full Concurrent Receipt for Retirees Rated as Individually Unemployable

As previously reported, last year's National Defense Authorization Act authorized full, immediate concurrent receipt for disabled retirees rated as "Individually Unemployable" (IU) by the VA. The provision takes effect Oct. 1 with payment retroactive to Jan. 1, 2005.

According to Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), the increase in IU payment will come in the November check. DFAS says, "Retirees will not need to take any action in order to receive this increased benefit amount. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service receive this information from the DVA [Department of Veterans' Affairs] on a regular basis."

In recent contact with DFAS, we are told that the retroactive payment is being worked out. While there is no clear timeline for these back-payments, DFAS informs us that a lump sum payment will be made once the calculation of individual payments is final.

Additional information can be found at the DFAS site: [DFAS-IU Information](#).

**Excessive thirst, extreme hunger, increased fatigue, irritability? Millions of Americans have these symptoms? What could it be?**



Diabetes is a growing problem in America, affecting an estimated 20.8 million people. The most common form – type 2 - accounts for 90 to 95 percent of all diagnosed cases. Unfortunately, almost one-third of those with type 2 diabetes don't know they have it, and millions more are unaware that they could be at risk.

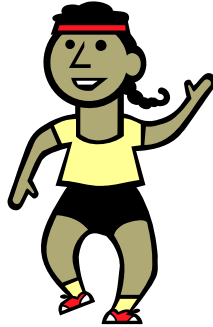
### LIFESTYLE CAUSES

Scientific evidence shows a consistent link between poor nutrition, obesity and increased risk for diabetes. Our bodies turn most of the food we eat into glucose (sugar), the basic fuel for our cells. With every meal, the pancreas releases insulin, a hormone that helps move glucose into the cells so the body can use it properly. Type 2 diabetes usually begins as insulin resistance, a disorder in which the cells do not use insulin properly. As the body's need for insulin increases, the pancreas gradually loses its ability to produce enough insulin to meet the increased demand. When glucose

builds up in the blood, symptoms of diabetes may begin.

### TIPS TO HELP KEEP DIABETES AT BAY

A National Institute of Health study of individuals with pre-diabetes found that simple lifestyle changes reduce their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 58 percent. To control your risk, consider the following.



1. **Eat right.** Be sure your diet includes lots of vegetables and fruits choose whole grain over processed grain products and drink water instead of sugar-sweetened drinks.
2. **Exercise.** Schedule 30 minutes of exercise into your routine five days a week.
3. **Lose weight.** Reducing your weight by 5 to 10 percent in combination with eating right and exercising may help you delay or avoid diabetes altogether.
4. **Control blood pressure.** Experts recommend reaching a blood pressure reading of 130/80 or below.
5. **Quit smoking.** Kicking the habit can improve your body's ability to use insulin properly.
6. **Talk to your doctor.** Discuss your risk factors for pre-diabetes and whether you should be tested.

### ARE YOU AT RISK FOR DIABETES?

Adults with diabetes have a high risk for heart disease, and are two to four

times more likely to have a stroke. Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness among adults and end-stage kidney disease. Due to nerve damage, lower-limb amputations occur among people with diabetes.

You may be at a higher risk for type 2 diabetes if you have any of the following characteristics:

- Family history of diabetes
- Low activity level
- Poor diet
- Over 45 years old
- Excess body weight (especially around the waist)
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Previous diabetes during pregnancy or giving birth to a baby weighing more than nine pounds
- Certain ethnicity, including African-American, Hispanic-American and American Indian.

### KNOW THE SYMPTOMS

See your doctor if you experience these symptoms of diabetes:

- § Frequent urination
- § Excessive thirst
- § Extreme hunger
- § Increased fatigue
- § Irritability
- § Sudden vision changes
- § Tingling or numbness in hands or feet
- § Sores that are slow to heal
- § More infections than usual

For more information, go to [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).

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## Pilot program may overhaul treatment of veterans

By Sydney J. Freedberg Jr.  
National Journal  
July 18, 2008

The influx of wounded troops from Afghanistan and Iraq has burst the seams of the military health care system. The much-publicized scandal in 2007 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, which kick-started reforms, has proved to be only the tip of a large and ugly iceberg.

The problem is not just about organizations and processes, but about mind-sets. Although most people in the Defense Department go above and beyond to take care of their wounded, others can still lapse into an attitude of "shut up, shape up, and soldier on"--especially toward those troops who suffer subtle but deeply disabling mental problems rather than obvious physical wounds.

Yet it is precisely the hard-to-diagnose cases of post-traumatic stress disorder and "mild" traumatic brain injury that have become the distinctive injuries of this war. This fall, however, the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs will decide whether to expand a pilot program that has the potential to dramatically change the treatment of those disabled in the line of duty. Started in November and currently limited to the Washington metropolitan area, the program takes aim at a bureaucratic redundancy that has long bedeviled injured troops leaving the armed forces. This is the double take in which--before discharge--the Army, Navy, or Air

Force first conducts an exit exam of a departing service member to assess any conditions that might trigger military disability benefits, and then--after discharge--the VA conducts its own entry exam of the same individual for the same conditions to determine eligibility for VA benefits.

Rarely do the two departments agree on just how disabled a departing service member is. Even when they do, they pay compensation at different rates set by different statutes. What's more, under federal laws banning "concurrent receipt" of both benefits by the same person, a disabled veteran will often discover his monthly check from the Defense Department is reduced by an amount equal to some or all of the value of his VA benefit. Because the VA is usually more generous, this offset can cut the payment from Defense to nothing. The whole system is a source of endless confusion and complaint. "The biggest criticism was the redundancy, the complexity," said Samuel Retherford, a retired Army colonel who oversees the pilot program as the Pentagon's deputy director for personnel management policy. "They had to re-explain their case, fill out forms over and over, and [re]state the same thing."

So, in the pilot program, the Defense Department is essentially subcontracting much of its disability assessment system to the Veterans Affairs Department. VA doctors will conduct one set of physical exams, and VA specialists will determine one set of disability ratings, which both departments will then use. This reform should go a long way toward eliminating the disparity in which the military has historically rated the exact condition in the exact same patients as less disabling, and therefore worthy of fewer benefits, than has the VA.

"There's this presumption of guilt that has pervaded the [military] system for years," said a veteran who works on Capitol Hill. "Good soldiers got screwed. The system never worked. It was dysfunctional in peacetime--but now it's an absolute disaster."

Last August, a government-ordered

study by CNA, a nonprofit research group, compared 31,473 individuals who had been assessed by both systems for the same condition. According to the study, the VA ratings were, on average, 8.6 percentage points (out of 100) higher than the Defense Department's. On mental disorders, the military rated disabilities much lower than did the VA: 11.9 percentage points lower for traumatic brain injury, 24.5 points lower for severe depression, and 32.8 points lower for PTSD.

Mental problems have been a major focus for the VA since Vietnam. In the military, they are still widely stigmatized or ignored--and given lowball ratings from official disability assessment boards. Take Wendell McLeod, an Army specialist mentally impaired after a 2005 accident in Kuwait. "He has to be reminded to do the simple things in life," said his wife, Annette, who has testified before Congress. "He hasn't started driving yet." Even as a passenger, she said, "he grabs the steering wheel now at the least little thing. He doesn't comprehend that just because there's a bag in the road, that doesn't mean it's an IED [improvised explosive device]."

Spc. McLeod is being treated by the VA, which assessed him as 100 percent disabled. But military raters initially declared his problems a case of mental retardation that was unrelated to and pre-existed his military service; they pointed to his receiving Title I remedial education in elementary school and denied him benefits. Annette McLeod had that ruling overturned through appeals, but she is still struggling to get a military board to reconsider an interim rating of 50 percent. "Hopefully, this will be the last battle with the Army," she told National Journal. Because of their case's high profile, she said, "for us it's a little bit easier this time around. But some people I've talked to, they're still bogged down in the system."

Dubious ratings like those given to Spc. McLeod have become distressingly common since the invasion of Iraq. "About a year and a half ago, we were getting anecdotal evidence that the Army's system was

severely underrating cases," said Kerry Baker, a staffer who works on veterans appeals for the 1.4 million-member Disabled American Veterans.

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"What we found was just atrocious." In one case, Baker went on, "we found a kid with several penetrating skull injuries, a couple of different craniotomies, major seizure disorder, major migraines on a daily basis, and a cognitive disorder so severe his mother was appointed as his guardian." The VA rated the young soldier as 100 percent disabled; the military, 10 percent.

The cause of such discrepancies goes back to the birth of the Republic. Since the American Revolution, the military has had a medical corps to keep troops healthy before battle and to patch them up after--focusing on the collective fighting power of the force and discharging any individual no longer fit to fight. By contrast, federal veterans' facilities--authorized by law in 1811--have always focused on care for people who were no longer serving a military purpose, but whose injuries, poverty, or both affected the conscience of a grateful nation.

Over time, however, the two systems have come to overlap in one area: the population eligible for benefits from both--military retirees. Most of these beneficiaries are commissioned officers and senior noncoms who served a full 20 years, but they include those who were so disabled in accidents or combat while in uniform that they were medically retired from military service and therefore eligible to use military hospitals as well as VA facilities for their care.

From 2003 through '07, the Pentagon medically retired more than 22,000 such disabled troops, who will receive military-subsidized

medical care and monthly pension checks for life. Another 57,000 troops have been "medically separated," discharged as unfit to serve but with lesser degrees of disability, which entitles them to only a onetime severance payment. All 79,000, both the medically retired and the medically separated, also count as disabled veterans who may qualify for VA health care and disability checks. Because the law often entitles the same person to two benefits, one from the Defense Department and one from the VA, each department must determine a disability rating.

Ostensibly, the two departments have used the same standard schedule, written by the VA, to rate each disabling condition, from 10 percent for a bullet through the foot to 100 percent for blindness in both eyes. But for years, the military "supplemented" the schedule with layers of regulations that effectively altered it beyond recognition--until Congress banned the practice last year. The 2007 "wounded warrior" reforms forced all military disability raters to use the VA schedule, without alterations, and ordered the pilot program combining the military and VA assessment systems.

Under the pilot program, the military uses not only the VA-written schedule of ratings but also VA doctors and VA ratings specialists to assess each service member. Military personnel still make the critical decision on whether a given individual is unfit to serve or can return to duty. The Defense Department and the VA provide different kinds of benefits, determined by different laws and regulations, for the same individuals. But the often-bizarre discrepancies in how the two departments rated the same condition in the same individual will no longer exist.

By the end of June, 461 service members had entered the pilot process, of whom just 61 had been discharged from the military (13 medically separated, 48 medically retired). The Washington area benefits from an unusually rich cluster of military and veterans medical facilities, which makes

coordination easier here than elsewhere. In late August, the Pentagon and the VA will begin considering a second location; probably an underserved and relatively rural area where implementing the pilot program will be distinctly harder.

Even if the expanded pilot program succeeds, wholesale adoption of the reforms is at least a year away. As the casualties keep coming in, the pressure on the disability system will continue to mount.

## **Important Notice - New Law Concerning Eligibility for Headstones and Markers**

Public Law 110-157, signed on December 26, 2007, allows the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to furnish a Government headstone or marker for the graves of eligible veterans who died on or after November 1, 1990, regardless of whether the grave is already marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker. Under the previous law, when the grave was already marked, only veterans who died on or after September 11, 2001 were eligible.

Public Law 110-157, also gives VA authority to "furnish, upon request, a [medallion](#) or other device of a design determined by the Secretary to signify the deceased's status as a veteran, to be attached to a headstone or marker furnished at private expense." This benefit will be available in lieu of a Government furnished headstone or marker, for veterans in privately marked graves that died on or after Nov. 1, 1990.

**We currently estimate the new device will be available in spring**

2009. Please continue to monitor the [new headstone device](#) web page for updated information regarding this new benefit.

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**Important:** Eligible veterans are entitled to either a Government-furnished headstone or marker, or the new device, but not both. If you think you may be interested in applying for the new device, we will begin accepting applications once a contract has been awarded for the manufacture of this new product. Application instructions will be posted on this website. If, after seeing the final new device design, you change your mind, you will still have the option to apply for a traditional Government-furnished headstone or marker.

There is no change in eligibility for veterans in unmarked graves:

Regardless of the date of death, VA will furnish, at no charge to the applicant, a Government headstone or marker for the unmarked grave of any eligible veteran in any cemetery around the world.

**Note:** There is no charge for the headstone or marker itself, however arrangements for placing it in a private cemetery are the applicant's responsibility and all setting fees are at private expense.

## VA FAILING TO INFORM GUARD AND RESERVISTS RETURNING FROM IRAQ/AFGHANISTAN OF POTENTIAL BENEFITS, NEW IG REPORT SHOWS

*Veterans Committee hearing on outreach to Guard and Reserve veterans Wednesday*

WASHINGTON, D.C. –U.S. Senator Daniel K. Akaka (D-HI), Chairman of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, today highlighted an [investigative report](#) issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs Inspector General (IG), on the efforts of VA to provide transition assistance to veterans returning from service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

*"The Inspector General found VA is not meeting its clear legal obligation to inform new veterans of the benefits they may have earned through their service," said Akaka. "Especially alarming is the finding that Guard and Reserve veterans made up over half of those uninformed, even though they compose only about a quarter of servicemembers deployed.*

*"I am deeply concerned that Guard and Reserve veterans, who serve in combat honorably alongside their fellow troops, are not receiving the same level of support from VA. These veterans sacrificed to fulfill their obligation to our country, VA must fulfill its obligation to them."*

Among other findings, the IG's audit found that in 2006, VA failed to send individual notices of possible benefits to over 65,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. Over 36,000 of those who were not sent notices from VA were members of the Guard and Reserve.

Senator Akaka introduced legislation last year to expand VA outreach, with an emphasis on Guard and Reserve veterans. This provision was included in [H.R. 4986](#), the **National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008**, which was signed into law on January 28, 2008. Under law, VA must inform Guard and Reserve veterans of the benefits they may be eligible by mail.

This Wednesday (July 23), Chairman Akaka will hold a public oversight hearing on the effectiveness of VA's overall outreach efforts to returning Guard and Reserve members. The hearing will be web cast live from the Committee's website, [www.veterans.senate.gov](http://www.veterans.senate.gov).

## VA, Monster Partner for Veteran Job Seekers Veteran-Owned Businesses Listed

WASHINGTON (July 22, 2008)- In a new plan to help veterans find jobs, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has partnered with Monster Government Solutions, a division of Monster Worldwide, Inc., a company that markets online employment services to employers and job seekers.

Part of VA's mission is to assist veterans to gain employment. Monster, in partnership with VA's Center for Veterans Enterprise, provides veteran-owned small businesses the opportunity to post job openings for veterans, including service-disabled veterans, at a large price discount. Monster will post the job openings for 60 days, twice as long as for other employers.

"This government-corporate partnership represents the best kind of effort to help those who gave up time in their lives to serve their country and return to an economic community that may not recognize their skills," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "The program should make it easier for employers to find qualified job candidates as well as veteran suppliers and service contractors."

To participate in Monster job listings, veteran business owners must be listed in VA's online Vendor Information Pages (VIP) maintained by the Department's Center for Veterans Enterprise at <http://www.VetBiz.gov>.

In addition to helping veteran owners get business from other companies

and prospective veteran employees find jobs, VA's VIP pages will give Monster a source for purchasing services itself and VA will refer appropriate, listed suppliers to Monster.

The VA-Monster agreement is initially for two years and provides for extensions.

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## **More Injured Vets Could Get Insurance Payouts (AFTIMES)**

By Rick Maze

[Air Force Times](#), July 17, 2008

More than 1,600 severely disabled veterans could receive retroactive traumatic injury insurance payments as a result of a newly released review of how benefits have been paid under the 3 1/2-year-old supplemental benefits program.

The payments, ranging between \$25,000 and \$100,000, could be paid as early as this fall as a result of discussions between the Department of Veterans Affairs, which runs the program, and doctors who are treating severely wounded combat veterans. The average retroactive payment would be \$32,000, according to the review, dated July 2008.

About 4,400 people have received traumatic injury insurance payments since the program was created in 2005. The estimated 1,640 people who would receive retroactive benefits as a result of the review include some who did not previously qualify and some who received payments but would

now get more, according to VA officials.

Officials said the report has 11 recommendations to expand definitions of traumatic injury for insurance purposes, and all are expected to be included in a revised regulation likely to be issued by VA this fall.

No payments can be made until final regulations are issued, but the new definitions would apply both to new injuries and also retroactively to injuries since Oct. 7, 2001.

Officials said that although the recommendations are not controversial and appear to have widespread support, the regulations that will spell out the changes are not final.

More than three-quarters of the people due payments as a result of the review suffered a traumatic brain injury or another traumatic injury that resulted in their being hospitalized for 15 consecutive days or more since Sept. 11, 2001, but did not qualify for insurance payments under existing criteria.

That criteria uses a six-part test to determine who can receive financial help by measuring a person's ability to carry out daily activities eating, bathing and using a toilet.

Those criteria would still be used, but being hospitalized as an inpatient for 15 continuous days would become a new way to qualify. The average insurance payment would be \$25,000 for those retroactively covered by the change, the report said.

Traumatic brain injuries and similar trauma have accounted for 2,550 of the 4,400 payouts of traumatic

injury insurance. Another proposed change would apply to about 300 people who suffered limb injuries so severe that amputation was possible but who, instead, have undergone multiple surgeries to save the limb. VA officials said doctors at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and at Brooke Army Medical Center said limb salvage requires more rehabilitation than amputations.

Jeremy Chwat of the Wounded Warrior Project, a nonprofit group that pushed Congress to create the insurance program, endorsed the recommendations.

"The proposed changes will improve the SGLI process and payments and make an already thriving program even better," said Chwat, the group's executive vice president for public policy and awareness.

Traumatic injury insurance is part of the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance program. A monthly premium of \$1 is charged on top of the normal SGLI premium for coverage aimed at helping troops and their families with the financial difficulties of severe injuries.

The services, especially medical staff, are heavily involved in the process because a medical professional must document the injury for a service member to receive the benefit. One recommended change would provide an insurance payment if a service member loses sight in both eyes for 120 days, a change from the current standard that requires total and permanent loss of sight. The report says military doctors are unwilling to declare someone permanently blind because there often is a chance that surgery, such as a corneal transplant, could restore the sight in the future. Applying the 120-day standard will

help troops receive benefits for the rehabilitation they need while they are unable to see, the report says. The program provides \$100,000 for loss of sight in both eyes and \$50,000 for the loss of sight in one eye. The definition of amputation of a hand or foot would change to include the loss of four fingers on a hand or four toes or more on a foot, or the loss of a thumb or big toe.

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The benefit would be \$50,000 for one affected hand and \$100,000 if both are affected, and \$25,000 for one affected foot and \$50,000 if both are affected.

The standard for determining when someone is severely burned also would change. The current standard provides payment for a third-degree burn covering at least 30 percent of the face or body. The review recommends covering second-degree burns covering 20 percent of the face or body after military doctors said that second-degree burns require the same rehabilitation as third-degree burns. The benefit for severe burns is \$100,000.

Facial reconstruction, not currently covered, would be added, with payments ranging from \$25,000 to \$75,000, depending on the severity of the injury and the surgery required.

Complete and total paralysis of a limb also would be added as a traumatic injury, worth a payment of \$50,000.

### **The Soldier**

**By JEWETT, SOPHIE**

**THE soldier fought his battle  
silently.**

**Not his the strife that stays for set  
of sun;**

**It seemed this warfare never  
might be done;  
Through glaring day and blinding  
night fought he.  
There came no hand to help, no  
eye to see;  
No herald's voice proclaimed the  
fight begun;  
No trumpet, when the bitter field  
was won,  
Sounded abroad the soldier's  
victory.  
As if the struggle had been light,  
he went,  
Gladly, life's common road a little  
space;  
Nor any knew how his heart's  
blood was spent;  
Yet there were some who after  
testified  
They saw a glory grow upon his  
face;  
And all men praised the soldier  
when he died.**

## **VA Announces On-Line Claims Applications**

WASHINGTON (July 16, 2008) - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that on-line applications are now accepted from veterans, survivors and other claimants filing initial applications for disability compensation, pension, education, and vocational rehabilitation and employment benefits without the additional requirement to submit a signed paper copy of the application.

Effective immediately, VA will now process applications received through its on-line application website (VONAPP) without the claimant's signature. The electronic application will be sufficient authentication of the claimant's application for benefits. Normal development procedures and rules of evidence will still apply to all VONAPP applications.

### **VONAPP**

([www.va.gov/onlineapps.htm](http://www.va.gov/onlineapps.htm)) is a Web-based system that benefits both internal and external users. Veterans, survivors and other

claimants seeking compensation, pension, education, or vocational rehabilitation benefits can apply electronically without the constraints of location, postage cost, and time delays in mail delivery.

VONAPP reduces the number of incomplete applications received by VA, decreasing the need for additional development by VA claims processors.

The on-line application also provides a link to apply for VA health care benefits and much more.

Over 3.7 million veterans and beneficiaries receive compensation and pension benefits from VA and approximately 523,000 students receive education benefits. Approximately 90,000 disabled veterans participate in VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program.

For more information about VA benefits, go to VA's website at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) <<http://www.va.gov>> or call our toll-free number at 1-800-827-1000.

## **The Post-9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008**

VA Fact Sheet

June 2008

Version 1.0 (6/30/2008)

Department of Veterans Affairs

The Post- 9/11 GI Bill is a new benefit providing educational assistance to individuals who have served on active duty on or after September 11, 2001.

### **When is The Post-9/11 GI Bill effective?**

The Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits are payable on **August 1, 2009** towards training completed after 7/31/2009.

### **Am I Eligible?**

An individual must have a minimum of 90 days active duty after September 10, 2001, and - Be honorably discharged from Armed Forces; or

- Be released from Armed Forces with service characterized as

honorable and placed on the retired list, temporary disability retired list, or transferred to the Fleet Reserve or the Fleet Marine Corps Reserve; or - Be released from the Armed Forces with service characterized as honorable for further service in a reserve component; or - Be discharged or released from Armed Forces for:

- Yearly books and supplies stipend of up to \$1000\*; and  
 - A one time payment of \$500 may be payable to certain individuals relocating from highly rural areas.

□ **NOTE** –Housing Allowance and books and supplies stipend is not payable to individuals on active duty. Housing Allowance is not payable for those training at less than half time.

Individuals must serve an aggregate period of active duty after September 10, 2001, of:

**Member Serves Percentage of Maximum Benefit Payable**

At least 36 months 100

At least 30 continuous days on active duty and must be discharged due to service connected disability 100

At least 30 months, but less than 36 months 90

At least 24 months, but less than 30 months 80

At least 18 months, but less than 24 months 70

At least 12 months, but less than 18 months 60

At least 06 months, but less than 12 months 50

At least 90 days, but less than 06 months 40

**Example for entire school year:**  
 Tuition and Fees charged for full time: \$3000  
 Highest In-State Tuition and Fees: \$4000  
 Actual Books and Supplies: \$750

**Example 1:** If you served for three years on active duty and separated, and you are going to school full-time, in the above example you would be eligible for \$3000 for tuition and fees, the monthly housing allowance, and \$1000 for books and supplies.

**Example 2:** If you served 12 months in the guard or reserves, and were going to school full-time, you would be eligible for \$1800 (60% of \$3000)

for tuition and fees and \$600 (60% of \$1000) for books and supplies stipend.

**How long am I eligible?**

Individuals who serve at least 90 consecutive days are eligible for 15 years from their last period of active duty. If service is 30 days or more and you are released for a service connected disability, you will be eligible for 15 years. For the latest information please visit our website at [www.GIBILL.VA.GOV](http://www.GIBILL.VA.GOV).

**What does The Post- 9/11 GI Bill cover?**

Approved training under The Post 9/11 GI Bill includes graduate and undergraduate degrees, vocational/technical training, and foreign training.

All training programs must be offered by an institution of higher learning and approved for purposes of chapter 30. Additionally, tutorial assistance, and licensing and certification test reimbursement are approved under the Post- 9/11 GI Bill. Additionally, if you are eligible for chapter 30, 1606 or 1607, you may be eligible to pursue training for on-the-job training, apprenticeship, correspondence, flight and preparatory courses under Post-9/11 GI Bill.

**Can I transfer my entitlement to my dependents?**

You must be approved by the Department of Defense (DOD) for eligibility to transfer entitlement to your spouse and dependent children. Please contact DOD or your military service for more information.

Visit [www.GIBILL.VA.GOV](http://www.GIBILL.VA.GOV) for up to date information on this and other education benefits.

**DO NOT RELY SOLELY ON THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS PAMPHLET TO DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY.**

Always submit an application for benefits to receive a formal decision.

**Zero real estate tax increase for the next three years**

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- o EPTS (Existed Prior to Service)
- o HDSP (Hardship) or
- o CIWD (Condition Interfered with Duty); or
- Continue to be on active duty.

**If I am eligible for the Montgomery GI Bill (chapter 30), Montgomery GI Bill- Selected Reserve (chapter 1606,) or the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (chapter 1607), am I eligible for Post-9/11 GI Bill?**

An individual may elect to receive benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill if, on **August 1, 2009**, the individual is eligible for chapter 30, 1606, 1607, or is serving in the Armed Forces.

**How many months of assistance can I receive?**

Generally the number of months of entitlement you can receive is 36 months. A person could earn 36 months of entitlement after serving the minimum 90 days.

**How much will I receive?**

Eligible individuals will receive a percentage, as determined by length of credible active duty service, of the following:

- Amount of tuition and fees not to exceed the most expensive in-State public institution of higher education;
- Monthly housing allowance equal to the basic allowance for housing (BAH) amount payable to E-5 with dependents, in same zip code as school\*; and

Zero real estate tax increase for the next three years. That was the announcement I made this past week, an unprecedented move but one that certainly was appropriate. What does it mean? Every three years, county auditors are required to adjust real estate values in their counties to reflect the current market using sales that occurred in the previous three years.

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In the 16 years I have been county auditor there has never been a time that the values we set three years prior remained so close to the current market that they needed no adjustment.

This is an update year for Franklin County. My staff and I have concluded that the current residential market is only about 3 percent above the level we set in 2005. By contrast in 2005, our last reappraisal, the market was 21 percent higher than the values we had set three years earlier. That was, of course, because residential sale prices in the county were going up rapidly, requiring us to increase values to comply with Ohio law.

Obviously that is not the case this year. Markets in other parts of the country are suffering much worse and would be happy with our numbers, but with only a 3 percent difference between the current sales and those of three years ago, there is no requirement to move the values up, so I won't. This decision is also consistent with the recommendation of the Ohio Department of Taxation. We anticipate non-residential values will see an increase as those markets have remained stronger than residential.

Once the county auditors values are set and used to create tax bills then only improvements to one's property

(such as room additions) will increase that tax value during the next three years. Tax rates on the other hand are set by the voters. If voters approve additional levies then of course taxes will increase whether the value goes up or not.

Our real estate market analysis will be repeated in three years as we conduct the state required reappraisal for 2011. This is the next possible time there will be a general value adjustment that could affect your real estate taxes payable in 2012.

Most taxpayers have been pleased with this decision, but what about those properties that may be worth less than they were in 2005? If that is the case for you, there is a process that invites your participation. In July we will mail to all property owners in Franklin County a tentative value figure along with a schedule of informal review sessions to be held throughout the county in August and September. If you have a recent sale or an appraisal from a licensed appraiser that indicates a lower value, please bring that information to one of the sessions. If it supports a lower value then we will adjust your proposed value and you will see a tax decrease.

We simply want the taxable value to be a true reflection of the current market. Fair and equitable value is always our goal. I invite you to help us locate all available information to maintain that goal.

In closing: the current residential market in Franklin County is secure but not appreciating as it had in the past. No value increase is needed for the 2008 update, so as a result you will not receive an increase in real estate taxes for 2009, 2010 and 2011.

Improvements to your property that change its market value or new voter-approved levies will impact taxes, but those decisions are in the homeowners' and voters' hands.

Joe Testa has served as Franklin County auditor since 1992. He can be reached by e-mail at [joe\\_testa@franklincountyohio.gov](mailto:joe_testa@franklincountyohio.gov).

On the morning of November 4, 1918, just a week before the end of World War I, the Second Manchesters Regiment took part in an attempt to cross the Sambre-Oise Canal in Northern France. British Engineers tied floats together into makeshift bridges under a rain of German fire, and infantry lined up to run across the flimsy floats into the teeth of it. It was as Tennyson wrote in "The Charge of the Light Brigade": "Their's not to reason why/ Their's but to do and die." Standing on the west bank heading a raiding party was a young English officer named Wilfred Owen. Before the battle ended, he was shot and killed. He would become one of the more celebrated poets of the 20th century.

At a time when accounts of war were heavily romanticized, Owen's poetry was blunt and real. Having been swayed to volunteer in part by the glory of war, Owen, along with his friend and fellow poet Siegfried Sassoon (pulled from the front after being shot in the head), felt it was his duty to relay the harsher truth, writing in a letter to his mother: "All a poet can do today is warn." And warn he did. His best known poem: "Dulce et Decorum Est," a vivid account of a poisoned gas attack, is brutal even by today's standards. Here's an excerpt:

Gas! Gas! Quick, boys!-An ecstasy of fumbling.

Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;

But someone still was yelling out and stumbling

And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime...

Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,

As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,

He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning. □

The poem ends with a bitter recrimination of its title, a famed line from the Roman poet Horace that

translates to: "It is sweet and fitting,  
to die for your native land."

If in some smothering dreams you  
too could pace

Behind the wagon that we flung him  
in,

And watch the white eyes writhing in  
his face,

His hanging face, like a devil's sick of  
sin;

If you could hear, at every jolt, the  
blood

Come gargling from the froth-  
corrupted lungs,

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Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud

Of vile, incurable sores on innocent  
tongues,-

My friend, you would not tell with  
such high zest

To children ardent for some  
desperate glory,

The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est,

Pro patria mori

While Owen takes an anti-war stance  
in this poem, his other poems and  
his hundreds of letters home reveal a  
more complex view. Owen wanted to  
see battle: "I hate washy pacifists,"  
he wrote his mother, "Therefore I feel  
that I must first get some reputation  
for gallantry before I could  
successfully and usefully declare my  
principles." He was a good soldier  
who had captured a machine gun  
post a month before and turned it on  
the enemy--an action that  
posthumously won him the Military  
Cross.

As he spent time in battle, he  
described his senses being  
"cauterized" until he could "laugh  
among the dying unconcerned." Less  
than a week before his death, he  
wrote in an almost joyful tone about  
the background of battle and the  
strong brotherhood of war: "It is a

great life. I am more oblivious than  
alas! yourself, dear Mother, of the  
ghastly glimmering of the guns  
outside, and the hollow crashing of  
the shells. . . Of this I am certain: you  
could not be visited by a band of  
friends half so fine as surround me  
here."

The tradition of soldier poets dates  
back at least as far as Ancient  
Greece and spans the globe. The  
great 8th century Chinese poet Li Po  
wrote in "Nefarious War": "So, men  
are scattered and smeared over the  
desert grass,/ And the generals have  
accomplished nothing." Randall  
Jarrell, known for harsh poems about  
World War II such as "Eighth Air  
Force" and "The Death of the Ball-  
Turret Gunner," vehemently  
condemned what he saw as  
misconceptions about war and  
soldiering. Vietnam veteran Yusef  
Komunyakaa's "Facing It" is a  
moving account of coping with the  
memory of war told through a visit to  
the Vietnam Memorial:

A white vet's image floats

closer to me, then his pale eyes

look through mine. I'm a window.

He's lost his right arm

inside the stone. In the black mirror

a woman's trying to erase names:

No, she's brushing a boy's hair.

The current war in Iraq has brought  
its own soldier poets. Brian Turner,  
an infantry team leader with the 2nd  
Infantry Division, recently published  
[Here, Bullet](#) with Alice James Books.  
He wrote almost the entire book  
while stationed in Iraq. For Turner,  
poetry was in part a way to cope with  
war. In the book's title poem, he  
taunts death: "If a body is what you  
want/ then here is bone and gristle  
and flesh." Whereas Owen felt it was  
his duty to warn, Turner takes the  
stance of a witness--thereby allowing  
us to witness.

In a PBS interview he said "I didn't  
try to superimpose a lot of political  
beliefs. I didn't try to make my poems  
a pulpit. I really wanted to just share  
the events themselves as much as  
possible..." Turner keeps the focus

off political debate and on the  
soldier:

Here is the clavicle-snapped wish,

the aorta's opened valves, the leap

thought makes at the synaptic gap.

Here is the adrenaline rush you  
crave,

that inexorable flight, that insane  
puncture

into heat and blood. And I dare you  
to finish

what you've started...because here,  
Bullet,

here is where the world ends, every  
time.

FRANKLIN COUNTY  
VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION  
250 W BROAD ST  
COLUMBUS OHIO 43215-2787

