

DoD All Volunteer Force

Survey Raises Serious Questions about Its Future

The results of a new survey of military and veterans and spouses — including details on financial difficulties — raise concerns about the future of the military, said the executive director of the organization that conducted the survey. Fewer military, veterans and spouses are likely to recommend military service, according to the findings, and the reasons are related to their own well-being, said Shannon Razsadin, president and executive director of the Military Family Advisory Network. “At the end of the day, families are having a hard time making ends meet, and that’s affecting their overall well-being,” she said. “We see the connection between well-being and loneliness, well-being and housing, well-being and food security. When you layer that on top of the fact that fewer people are likely to recommend military service, it paints a very clear picture of concern related to the future of the all-volunteer force.”

This is the fourth survey fielded by the organization, generally every two years. This time, the biggest surprise, said Razsadin, was the drop in the percentage of survey respondents who said they would recommend military life – from 74.5% in 2019 to 62.9% in 2021. The online Military Family Support Programming Survey was fielded from Oct. 4 to Dec. 15, 2021, with 8,638 participating. The largest group of respondents was spouses of active duty members, at 44%, followed by active duty members, at 14%. Nearly 60% of the respondents overall were between the ages of 25 and 39. “This was troubling for us,” Razsadin said. “It was really the fact that families do not feel like military life lines up with family life.”

Based on their answers, the reasons were related to frequent separations, and the fact that military life is not conducive to family life, she added, noting that the fact that the survey was conducted on the heels of the U.S. military’s exit from Afghanistan in 2021 didn’t show up in the findings, however. In general, over the years, a number of military children have followed in their parents’ footsteps, but there are indications those trends were waning, with other surveys finding that military parents are increasingly unlikely to recommend service to their children. But a recent survey of military teens found that 65 percent still want to serve in the military.

The MFAN report also pointed to a root cause of many problems that military families have understood for years: the military move. In 2021, those who had recently experienced a permanent change of station reported negative or very negative experiences with the reimbursement of moving costs, at 40%; effects on spouse employment, at 38%; and change in cost of living, at 56%. In the future, the organization will further look at these negative experiences, researchers stated.

Burden of housing costs

The survey provided more data on the impact of rising housing costs. Nearly half, 45%, of currently serving families experienced a severe housing burden, spending more than 50% of the household income on housing costs, such as mortgage or rent and utilities. That compares to 20% of veteran and retiree families. During an MFAN panel discussion of the results, Marine Corps wife Hana Romer said she and her husband are making rent and mortgage payments now, in order to secure housing when they move from Monterey, California, to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. They're set to PCS in December, and were being outbid by cash offers while house hunting in North Carolina. So they made the decision to build a house — and to lock in their interest rate in March.

Meanwhile, in Monterey, some families who arrived in June were still living in hotels by mid-July, waiting for housing, she said. The survey found that the situation of the local housing market ranked among the top five reasons for living on base in 2021, but wasn't noted in previous years' surveys. In 2021, and continuing into 2022, military families have been affected by skyrocketing housing prices. For those who lived off base, the poor condition of military housing has been the top reason in the surveys since 2019, but the lack of available military housing has also consistently been among the top reasons.

There was a bright spot regarding privatized military housing, Razsadin said. Residents are seeing better responsiveness on repair issues from their housing companies. But the results show issues with the military commands' responsiveness to military privatized housing issues. Legislation enacted in the last two years has aimed to require better response from housing companies, and improve the conditions, as well as improve oversight of this housing by the military. Most of those who lived in privatized housing, 64%, said the condition of their housing is unchanged. But 28% said conditions have gotten better; 8% said they have gotten worse.

Financial stress

The survey this year asked about total household income. Of the currently serving military families who participated, 44% have a combined household income of between \$25,000 and \$75,000, before taxes. That includes Basic Allowance for Housing. Hunger and food insecurity are more common in families that experience high stress due to finances, according to the findings. In 2021, one in six, or 16.6%, of military and veteran families were experiencing food insecurity or hunger, compared to about 15% in 2017. The highest frequency of those experiencing food insecurity was among currently serving, including Guard and Reserve families, at 18.4%, Razsadin said. In addition, 9.6% of the population were experiencing very low food security or hunger, she said.

Of those who had problems with food insecurity, 96% used federal assistance programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and 70% of those said they found those programs helpful. Overall, veteran and currently-serving military families have trouble

saving money. In veteran families, 38% have less than \$500 in emergency savings. In currently serving military families, 22 percent have less than \$500 in emergency savings. For military retiree families, 17% have less than \$500 in emergency savings. Enlisted families were most likely to have low or no emergency funds.

At the other end of the spectrum, 29% of currently serving families; 34% of military retiree families; and 21% of veteran families reported having \$10,000 or more in emergency savings funds. The most significant hurdle reported in saving money was income, but respondents also cited increased cost of living and inflation. “This survey was fielded when some of the COVID protections were still in place, before this massive inflation,” Razsadin said. “It’s a really big concern of ours. We’re hearing from families, especially families overseas right now, about major problems making ends meet, with issues of gas prices and COLA changes, and things like that.”

Recommendations

- Increase the availability of health care and mental health appointments. “Addressing this issue requires a close look at the reimbursement rates to ensure that community-based providers are appropriately compensated for their time, in a way that is commensurate with the civilian community,” they wrote.
- Increase the availability of child care.
- Right-size Basic Allowance for Housing to decrease the housing cost burden on military families.
- Review the pay structure. With the challenges of frequent moves, military spouse unemployment and child care, many military families must make ends meet on the service member’s pay alone. “These data show that relying on a single income to sustain the household is problematic for many,” the researchers stated.

In a recently released report detailing plans to address food insecurity in the military and longer-term economic security, Defense officials outlined some steps such as increasing child care options, working to increase employment opportunities for spouses, and reviewing the housing allowance and other allowances. In addition, DoD is working with the White House to initiate the 14th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) later this year. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | July 18, 2022 ++]

Food Insecurity

DoD’s Plan To Help The 24% Of Troops Experiencing It

About 24% of active duty service members experienced food insecurity at some point in 2020, according to a new Defense Department analysis of the problem in the military. And on 14 JUL,

DoD officials laid out a plan to do something about that. Officials said in a new report that they will focus on helping service members and families get the food they need, while also improving their economic security over the long term. For longer term economic security of service members, officials will analyze the Basic Allowance for Housing benefit; evaluate the feasibility of Dependent Care Flexible Spending accounts for service members; and review options to increase the dislocation allowance to further defray out-of-pocket costs for service members during a permanent change of station move.

Other efforts range from improving the availability of affordable, healthy food on military installations, to improving employment opportunities for military spouses and availability of affordable child care. Officials are also putting together a plan for implementing the new Basic Needs Allowance, set to start in January 2023, as a safety net for families in need. Efforts also expand and build on many programs and resources that have been available for years, and part of the work will involve more outreach and education to troops and families. The focus of this strategy “is to equip our service members and families with the tools, skills, and resources necessary to ensure they have access to sufficient nutritious food to meet the myriad demands of the military mission, without having to endure undue hardship or make difficult financial and personal decisions that may impact their quality of life,” wrote Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr., under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness, in the report.

Problems with financial security show up in a variety of ways, including food insecurity. Food insecurity is defined as a situation in which “a person or a household doesn’t have enough nutritious food to live an active, healthy life, and can range from relying on cheaper, less-nutritious foods to skipping meals,” according to the report. There’s also a difference between food security and hunger. “Hunger describes a physiological condition, while food security measures economic access to food rather than the experience of being hungry,” the report says.

DoD officials have abandoned their previous method for determining the prevalence of food insecurity in the military, which used the percentage of service members enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — also previously known as food stamps. The 13th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation completed in 2020 reported that between 0.08% and 0.1% of service members — between 880 and 1,100 members — use SNAP benefits.

The new analysis comes from the survey of active duty members, fielded from Oct. 26, 2020, through Jan. 25, 2021, which asked questions related to their experience over the previous 12 months, using the standardized U.S. Department of Agriculture measure of food security. That survey was fielded to a random, representative sampling of 125,000 active duty members. The response rate was 12%. It was fielded in the first year of the pandemic, and also before the current high levels of food inflation. The analysis of the 2020 Status of Forces Survey of Active Duty Members showed:

- 76% of total active duty service members were food secure, and 24% had experienced food insecurity at some point in the preceding year of the survey. Food security as

defined by USDA means access at all times to enough food for an active, healthful life for all household members.

- 14% reported experiencing low food security. That means reduced quality, variety or desirability of diet. There's little or no indication of reduced food intake.
- 10% reported experiencing very low food security. That means there were multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.
- Junior enlisted members, who have typically less than four years of service, are at the highest risk of food insecurity.

Analysis of the 2018 survey of active duty members, and the 2021 survey of active duty spouses, showed similar trend lines. For enlisted members with an unemployed spouse, 43% reported food insecurity at some point in the previous year. Overall, military spouses who were unemployed reported higher rates of food insecurity, 41%, than spouses who were employed, 22%. Officials are taking a broad approach to address the problem, even as they continue to gather data and conduct analysis of the root causes and impact of food insecurity. Cisneros will provide progress reports on each of six lines of effort to the deputy secretary of defense. The lines of efforts are:

- **Increase access to healthy food.** Actions include the Defense Commissary Agency's at-home grocery delivery pilot at eight locations, with agency-wide expansion expected soon after; the commissary agency's efforts to increase access to on-the-go, ready-to-eat, economical and healthy food options; and the military departments' reviews of dining facility hours and access to healthy options and the effectiveness of their meal card programs.
- **Review service member pay and benefits.** DoD is analyzing the Basic Allowance for Housing benefit and will evaluate the feasibility of implementing Dependent Care Flexible Spending accounts for service members. Advocates have long urged these steps. Officials are also reviewing ways to increase the dislocation allowance that troops receive to further defray the out-of-pocket costs troops incur when making a PCS move. Officials are also making plans to implement the Basic Needs Allowance in January 2023.
- **Enhance spouse employment opportunities.** DoD officials will categorize job opportunities offered by partners in the Military Spouse Employment Partnership program to identify gaps, find ways to increase employment in specific fields, and find ways to better connect spouses with job opportunities. They've been working on interstate licensure compacts for seven professions since last year. DoD will also expand the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood Plus program to additional states and finalize a near-term agreement with the Department of State to allow military spouses employed by the federal government to work remotely from overseas locations.
- **Reinforce financial resources and awareness.** Among other things, DoD and the services will launch a self-guided financial well-being assessment tool to help service members find resources.

- **Encourage service members and families to seek resources and services.** Among other things, DoD will develop a “Resources at the Ready” campaign to increase awareness of all military benefits and quality of life resources available to troops and their families. They’ll work with military-connected organizations to set up outreach sessions for service members and families.
- **Expand data collection and reporting.** Officials seek more data and analysis to understand the scope and reasons for food insecurity. One screening tool has been added to the Military Health System to identify those at risk of being food insecure. Parents answer questions about the child’s family, including food insecurity. All Military and Family Life Counselors will screen for food insecurity when they meet with service members and families.

DoD will conduct research to get information at the installation level about food insecurity, but they’ll also work with a number of federal agencies in various research efforts. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Karen Jowers | July 15, 2022 ++]

NDAA 2023

Update 07: Navy Might Be Required to Serve Vegan Meat on Some Bases

A provision tucked into the House version of 2023’s defense budget bill could require the Navy to serve up Beyond Burgers or Gardein at a number of forward bases. The amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 2023 would create a pilot program by March 2023 to offer “plant-based protein options” at at least two Navy forward operating bases. The secretary of the Navy would identify at least two forward Navy installations for the pilot effort and would be directed to prioritize bases “where livestock-based protein options may be costly to obtain or store,” the amendment states. It mentions specifically Joint Region Marianas, Guam; Navy Support Facility Diego Garcia, in the Indian Ocean; and U.S. Fleet Activities Sasebo, Japan, as examples of such bases.

The program would run for three years, according to the language. After that period, the secretary of the Navy would submit a report to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees including the following data:

- The consumption rate of plant-based protein options by sailors at bases in the pilot program.
- Effective criteria to increase vegan meat offerings at other Navy bases.
- And a comparative analysis of the costs to buy, store and serve the plant-based protein versus those for regular meat.

The amendment was introduced by Rep. Elissa Slotkin, a Michigan Democrat who worked at the State Department, Central Intelligence Agency and Department of Defense before her election to Congress in 2019. It reprises a separate resolution Slotkin introduced in 2021, which clarifies that troops at bases participating in the pilot would still have access to animal products and the vegan options would merely be an additional offering. The language and structure of the study also focus on the cost of shipping and preserving meat at remote or far-flung bases. Nonetheless, some house Republicans are decrying the proposal as an example of the liberal agenda infiltrating military matters.

Rep. Lauren Boebert, a Colorado Republican who initially voted against the 2022 defense budget bill due to what she described as “liberal woke garbage” within it, offered an amendment to strike Slotkin’s vegan meat proposal. That move was first reported by the Association of the U.S. Navy. Texas Republican Chip Roy called out the vegan meat proposal in 2021’s defense bill, including it in a Twitter thread explaining why he, too, voted against it. “A woke military that drafts our daughters, wastes resources on Green New Deal garbage, holds no one accountable for Afghanistan disaster, and prioritizes playing leftist politics over destroying our enemies,” he wrote in the thread. “Rep. Roy voted no.”

The Defense Department, however, has more reason to pursue cost-saving measures at chow halls now than it did before. On 13 JUL, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that inflation had reached a 40-year peak of 9.1% over the past year. While rising energy prices are a major factor driving the climbing costs, meat prices have gone up faster and further than other food staples, climbing more than 15% year over year. In places like Guam and Diego Garcia, where many grocery staples are imported, food costs on perishable items have long been high. A pound of chicken in Guam costs an average of \$9 right now; a gallon of milk goes for more than \$11.

To hear the vegan lobby tell it, troops have been clamoring for more plant-based options for a while. Activist group Mercy for Animals found that 81% of the 226 troops they surveyed wanted more access to plant-based foods, including vegan Meals, Ready to Eat, even though only 3.5% of respondents said they were vegan. And while that’s hardly scientific, the Air Force has found enough interest in vegan protein options that it has begun offering them, even without a congressional mandate.

In 2019, the service announced a partnership with hamburger chain BurgerFi that would bring the popular vegan Beyond Burger to food courts on bases; individual installations, such as Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina, also have taken steps to add vegan options at military chow halls. The Coast Guard has leaned into vegan offerings at facilities including Coast Guard Training Center Yorktown, Virginia, earning accolades from PETA for its efforts. [Source: NavyTimes | Hope Hodge Seck | July 18, 2022 ++]

NDAA 2023

Update 08: Wounded Knee MOH Revocation

Lawmakers took a step last week towards taking back the nation’s highest award for valor from Army troops who perpetrated one of the most infamous Native American massacres in U.S. history. The legislation to revoke the medals passed the House of Representatives as an amendment to the fiscal 2023 defense policy bill. Similar attempts have made it this far before, however, only to be stymied during compromises between the House and Senate versions of the bill. Some 20 soldiers received the Medal of Honor following the Dec. 29, 1890, massacre near Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota, where troops from the 7th Cavalry and accompanying artillery units killed hundreds of Lakota men, women and children.

The U.S. troops had nearly completed confiscating weapons from a Lakota encampment when a struggle with a reportedly deaf man sparked a chaotic one-sided firefight. When the smoke cleared, dozens of cavalry troopers were wounded or killed by friendly fire — likely from their artillery — and hundreds of Lakota were dead. Rep. Kaiiali‘i Kahele (D-HI) was the legislation’s primary sponsor, though other members of Congress, like Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and Rep. Reuben Gallego, D-Ariz., have pushed for similar legislation in the past. Kahele is a Native Hawaiian. Dubbed the “Remove the Stain Act,” the legislation’s advocates, which include more than a dozen Native American tribes and groups, say it’s a long-overdue step to right a historical wrong.

“As Congress continues to consider the FY23 NDAA, the most important defense legislative vehicle that is debated each year, we must remind ourselves of the uncomfortable truth that this land – the United States – was taken from indigenous peoples,” said Kahele in a press release. “Although we can never undo the irreparable damage inflicted on indigenous peoples, we can do our best to respect their lands, empower our communities and acknowledge the truth behind our shared history.”

The Senate is yet to pass its version of the defense policy bill, and the two houses of Congress will have to agree on a compromise version of the legislation. If Kahele’s amendment survives the compromise process, it will mark the success of a decades-long effort from Native American advocacy groups and other members of Congress. Congress officially apologized for the massacre in 1990, near its 100th anniversary, but did not rescind the medals then. But that’s far from certain. Previously, the act passed as part of the House’s fiscal 2022 defense policy bill, but did not make it into the final compromise legislation. [Source: Military Times | Davis Winkie | July 20, 2022 ++]

Defense Appropriations Bill 2023
Senate Armed Services Releases Full \$847B Bill

The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) on 18 JUL released the text of its annual defense policy bill, boosting the department's procurement and research funds by billions over its budget request. The SASC version of the fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act would authorize a \$45 billion increase in defense spending over the budget request, to a total of \$847 billion, at a time when high inflation is eating into the Pentagon's coffers, the US is contending with an increasingly aggressive China and the Pentagon is shipping weapons to Ukraine amid Russia's invasion of the country.

In a statement, SASC chairman Sen. Jack Reed called the bill an "important step forward." "From China's emergence as our most consequential strategic competitor to Russia's assault on Ukraine, the challenges before us are momentous," he said. "With broad, bipartisan support this year's NDAA increases funding for our national defense, invests in the platforms and infrastructure our military needs, and delivers critical resources for our allies and partners around the globe."

SASC's version of the NDAA appears to closely follow a summary of the legislation released last month, and gives the Pentagon about \$158 billion in procurement, up from \$144.2 billion in the Pentagon's ask. Congress increased funds for combat aircraft, Navy and Marine Corps vessels, armored vehicles, munitions, and short- and long-range fires, according to last month's bill summary. The bill authorizes \$137.7 billion in research, development, test and evaluation funds, more than \$7.5 billion over the budget request. That spending "supports" the Army's modernization efforts on long-range fires, future vertical lift, next-generation combat vehicle, and air and missile defense.

The RDT&E account also authorizes spending increases for microelectronics and hypersonics. That includes approximately \$300 million for the Pentagon's glide-phase interceptor initiative, which the head of the Missile Defense Agency has said is still in the early stages of R&D. It also provides an additional \$25 million for research into sea-launched cruise missiles — a potentially controversial provision considering the Biden administration's opposition to the program. The legislation also provides \$800 million in funding for the Ukraine Security Assistance Fund. On Friday, the US sent another \$400 million of weapons to the embattled country, bringing total US security aid for the Ukrainians to \$8 billion since the start of the Biden administration. In the committee's bill report, it underscored the importance of boosting funding for the Ukrainians.

"The committee recognizes the dynamic nature of the security situation in Ukraine requires that the Department have a variety of authorities at its disposal to support Ukraine's Armed Forces," the committee wrote. "The Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) is essential, both in the immediate fight against Russia aggression and as part of the longer-term effort to support the Ukrainian government's efforts to rebuild and enhance the military capabilities needed to maintain their sovereignty and defend their territory." In the Pacific, the NDAA boosts authorized funding for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative by \$1.1 billion "for unfunded requirements identified by the Commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command." Additionally, it authorizes \$245

million for Joint All-Domain Command and Control, including a joint force headquarters in the Indo-Pacific, according to last month's summary.

Sen. Jim Inhofe, who is retiring early next year and for whom the bill is named, said in a statement that he hopes "the Senate acts with a sense of urgency on the NDAA." "With the Chinese Communist Party accelerating the already historic modernization of its military, Russia continuing to destabilize security in Europe, and record-high inflation jeopardizing our buying power, Congress must do everything we can to give our military every advantage on the battlefield," the ranking member said. Late last week, the House of Representatives passed its version of the NDAA with a topline number of \$839 billion. Once the Senate votes on its version, legislators will hash out their differences in conference committee. [Source: Breaking Defense | Andrew Eversden | July 18, 2022 ++]

Military ID Cards

New Deadline for Some Military Retirees, Dependents

Retirees and military family members who have identification cards **with no expiration date** can choose to upgrade to the new Next Generation Uniform Services Identification, or USID, cards whenever it's convenient -- as long as it's done within the next four years, according to the Defense Department. There is no looming deadline for use of those old non-active duty cards without expiration dates, but the department expects to completely phase out and replace them with the next-generation IDs, which are more durable and have enhanced security features, by 2026, Maj. Charlie Dietz, a spokesman, told Military.com.

In the meantime, cards with expiration dates are required to be replaced within 90 days of elapsing. The Defense Department began the effort to update all those IDs to the new format in July 2020, but the changeover hit delays caused by the pandemic. "DoD plans to phase out and cancel the existing card forms in 2026 when all existing cards with an actual expiration date will have expired," Dietz wrote in an email. "After then, only the USID card will be accepted for installation and benefits access." The USID format for military retirees and dependents represents the first change to those identification cards in nearly 30 years; the last update was in 1993. The new design closely resembles the Common Access Card, or CAC, format issued to active-duty troops and department civilians.

But there was uncertainty among those with cards that list the expiration as indefinite. The IDs are needed to access military facilities and to confirm eligibility for various military benefits, so missing a deadline or losing the identification could disrupt cardholders' lives. Expired cards can be confiscated at base gates. Those with cards with no expiration dates "may have the card replaced at their convenience," according to Dietz. The department recommends they go to the

ID Card Office Online and use the office locator to find a site that issues the new cards and book an appointment. Retirees and their dependents, dependents of active-duty troops, reserve members and Medal of Honor recipients are among those who will receive the USID cards. A description of the new cards and a complete list of who is eligible can be found at <https://www.cac.mil/Next-Generation-Uniformed-Services-ID-Card>.

At the onset of the pandemic in April 2020, the Defense Department extended the deadlines for replacing expiring cards in an attempt to keep the military community from gathering in issuance offices and spreading COVID-19. By February 2021, more than 200,000 of the new IDs had been issued. "Social distancing and other pandemic safety precautions at DoD ID card sites worldwide has delayed the progress of existing card replacement, but generally most of those cardholders who needed to replace an expired card have done so," Dietz said July 13. [Source: MOAA Newsletter | JULY 18, 2022 ++]

POW/MIA Recoveries & Burials

Reported JUL 16 thru 31, 2022 | Fourteen

“Keeping the Promise“, “Fulfill their Trust” and “No one left behind” are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century as of FEB 2019 are: World War II 73,025 of which over 41,000 are presumed to be lost at sea, Korean War 7665, Vietnam War 1589 (i.e. VN-1,246, Laos-288, Cambodia-48, & Peoples Republic of China territorial waters-7), Cold War 111, Iraq and other conflicts 5. Over 600 Defense Department men and women -- both military and civilian -- work in organizations around the world as part of DoD's personnel recovery and personnel accounting communities. They are all dedicated to the single mission of finding and bringing our missing personnel home.

For a listing of all missing or unaccounted for personnel to date refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil> and click on ‘Our Missing’. Refer to <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories> for a listing and details of the 141 accounted for in 2005. If you wish to provide information about an American missing in action from any conflict or have an inquiry about MIAs, contact:

== Mail: Public Affairs Office, 2300 Defense Pentagon, Washington, D. C. 20301-2300, Attn: External Affairs Call: Phone: (703) 699-1420

== Message: Fill out form on <http://www.dpaa.mil/Contact/ContactUs.aspx>

Family members seeking more information about missing loved ones may also call the following Service Casualty Offices: U. S. Air Force (800) 531-5501, U. S. Army (800) 892-2490, U. S. Marine Corps (800) 847-1597, U. S. Navy (800) 443-9298, or U. S. Department of

State (202) 647-5470. The names, photos, and details of the below listed MIA/POW's which have been recovered, identified, and/or scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin are listed on the following sites:

- <https://www.vfw.org/actioncorpsweekly>
- <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases>
- <http://www.thepatriotspage.com/Recovered.htm>
- <http://www.pow-miafamilies.org>
- <https://www.pownetwork.org/bios/b/b012.htm>
- <http://www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces>

* VA *

VA Home Loans

Update 78: Pest Inspection Rule Changed

VA buyers everywhere can now pay for pest inspections to keep their loan moving forward. Veterans buying homes in areas prone to termite infestation typically need a pest inspection to satisfy the VA's property condition guidelines, known as the Minimum Property Requirements. Over the years, only VA buyers in certain areas of the U.S. have been allowed to pay for the inspection. For everyone else, the seller or another party to the transaction had to cover this cost. That distinction put some buyers at a disadvantage, especially in a competitive housing market where sellers were choosing between multiple offers. The VA loan program encourages buyers to negotiate with sellers regarding payment of the inspection fee and any repairs needed.

Space Force Guardians Can Now Use VA Home Loans

Current and discharged Space Force Guardians finally have liftoff for mortgages backed by the VA. The VA loan program announced last month that its certificate of eligibility (COE) now includes members and former members of the U.S. Space Force. A COE proves veterans meet the length-of-service and character-of-service requirements to be eligible for a VA loan. Lenders often get the COE for prospective buyers early in the loan process. A VA loan can't close without a COE in the file.

Guardians have closed on VA loans since the Space Force's creation, but their eligibility came from service in another branch, typically the Air Force. This update ensures service members who start their military careers in the Space Force can tap into this key benefit, which features no down-payment requirement and typically comes with the industry's lowest average rates for 30-year fixed-rate mortgages. Surviving spouses of Space Force veterans may also have VA loan eligibility.

VA Application Share Rises Slightly

The VA share of all U.S. mortgage applications rose during the first week of July to 11.2% from 11.1% in the prior week, the Mortgage Bankers Association said in a July 13 report. On the purchase side, the VA share of applications was 11.8%, up from 11.5% the week prior. VA's share of refinance applications was at 9.7%, down from 10.2% the week before. The combo of surging home prices and fast-rising interest rates has crimped demand year over year. The number of VA purchase applications in July's first week dropped 5.8%, compared to the same period a year ago, while refinance applications were down a whopping 80.9%, compared to last year.

[Source: Military.com | Chris Birk | July 15, 2022 ++]

Overseas Military Service Coordinator Program

Assistance for Veterans Expands

Veterans living overseas can get help receiving their VA benefits directly from the VA through a special program. The [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) Overseas Military Service Coordinator (OMSC) program offers specialized assistance to veterans living overseas, with either in-person or virtual assistance. With the advent of COVID-19, the virtual assistance program has been expanded and extended to at least Oct. 1, 2022, according to a [July 22 email newsletter](#). The virtual assistance program is in addition to the in-person assistance offered at [Landstuhl Air Force Base](#), Germany, and [Camp Humphreys](#), South Korea.

Veterans living in Europe should contact the Landstuhl OMSC using the following information:

- Phone: DSN 314.590.8200; Commercial :+49 (0) 6371 9464 8200
- E-mail: GermanyBDD.VBAPIT@VA.GOV
- Location: Landstuhl Regional Medical Center Building 3724, Rooms 110 and 112 Landstuhl, AE 66849
- Visitor hours: Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-noon and 1:15-3 p.m local time.

Veterans living in Asia should contact the Camp Humphreys OMSC using the following Information:

- Phone: DSN 757-2914; commercial: 050-3357-2914
- E-mail: KoreaBDD.vbapit@va.gov
- Location: Camp Humphreys Department of Veterans Affairs USAG Camp Humphreys BLDG P-6400 APO, AP 96271-5228
- Visitor hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-noon, 1-4 p.m local.

Veterans wishing to make appointments at either location are encouraged to schedule a virtual or in-person appointment on the Visitor Engagement Reporting Application (VERA), the VA's appointment scheduler.

- https://vets.force.com/VAVERA/s/flow/VERA_Start?office=germany_bdd_office
[Landstuhl VERA Appointment Link](#)
- https://vets.force.com/VAVERA/s/flow/VERA_Start?office=korea_bdd_office [Camp Humphreys VERA Appointment Link](#)

The same VA office that processes [Benefits Delivery at Discharge \(BDD\)](#) claims also assists overseas veterans. The Benefits Delivery at Discharge program is a VA program that allows separating military members to file their disability claim up to 180 days before being discharged, to speed up receipt of benefits. In addition to the OMSC program, the VA offers several contact methods for veterans wishing to receive assistance or solve problems with their benefits:

- Online: [Ask VA website https://ask.va.gov](https://ask.va.gov)
- Telephone: 412-395-6272 from 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Eastern, Monday-Friday
- [GI Bill](#) questions: 918-781-5678 from 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Eastern, Monday-Friday
- Direct deposit and currency conversion: 918-781-7550 from 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Eastern, Monday-Friday

Overseas veterans can also receive benefits assistance from the American embassy or consulate in their local country. They can visit [Social Security's Foreign Country Service Information page](#) for a list of federal benefits units with specially trained staff that can provide assistance with all types of government benefits and assistance questions. Veterans living in the Philippines can also visit the [Manila VA office https://www.benefits.va.gov/persona/veteran-abroad-philippines.asp](https://www.benefits.va.gov/persona/veteran-abroad-philippines.asp) for assistance with benefits and medical issues. There is also a VA hospital in Manila.

Stay on Top of Your Veteran Benefits

Military benefits are always changing. Keep up with everything from pay to health care by [subscribing to Military.com](#), and get access to up-to-date pay charts and more with all latest benefits delivered straight to your inbox. [Source: Military.com | Jim Absher | July 28, 022 ++]

VA Fraud, Waste & Abuse

Reported 16 thru 31 JUL 2022

Texas – Between 2013 and 2018, Inform Diagnostics, Inc. (formerly Miraca Life Sciences)—a clinical laboratory headquartered in Irving, Texas, that provides anatomic pathology services to physician practices throughout the United States—routinely conducted tests on biopsy specimens prior to a pathologist's review and without an individualized determination regarding whether tests were medically necessary. The laboratory submitted these medically unnecessary tests for

payment, causing Medicare and other federal healthcare programs to pay for false claims. Inform Diagnostics has agreed to pay \$16 million to resolve these allegations. The investigation was conducted by the VA OIG, US Attorney's Office, Department of Health and Human Services OIG, Office of Personnel Management OIG, and FBI. [Source: DVA OIG | Michael J. Missal, Inspector General | July 12, 2022 ++]

USA –The Department of Justice (DOJ) today announced 25 JUL criminal charges against 36 defendants in 13 federal districts across the United States for more than \$1.2 billion in alleged fraudulent telemedicine, cardiovascular and cancer genetic testing, and durable medical equipment (DME) schemes. The action includes criminal charges against several medical professionals and the owners and executives of telemedicine companies, clinical laboratories, DME companies, and marketing organizations. The alleged schemes involved the payment of illegal kickbacks and bribes by laboratory owners and operators in exchange for the referral of patients by medical professionals working with fraudulent telemedicine and digital medical technology companies. The charges include some of the first prosecutions in the nation related to fraudulent cardiovascular genetic testing, a burgeoning scheme. One particular case involved the operator of several clinical laboratories, who was charged in connection with a scheme to pay over \$16 million in kickbacks to marketers who, in turn, paid kickbacks to telemedicine companies and call centers in exchange for doctors' orders. As alleged in court documents, orders for cardiovascular and cancer genetic testing were used by the defendant and others to submit over \$174 million in false and fraudulent claims to Medicare—but the results of the testing were not used in the treatment of patients. Other defendants charged in this enforcement action allegedly controlled a telemarketing network, based both domestically and overseas, that lured thousands of elderly or disabled patients into a criminal scheme. The owners of marketing organizations allegedly had telemarketers use deceptive techniques to induce Medicare beneficiaries to agree to cardiovascular and other genetic testing. The VA OIG was one of several agencies that participated in this law enforcement action. [Source: DVA OIG | Michael J. Missal, Inspector General | July 25, 2022 ++]

VA EHR

Update 39: Cost Could Triple To More Than \$50 Billion

The cost of the Department of Veterans Affairs' new electronic health record system could increase to more than \$50 billion in 28 years, and a new company is now working to fix the problem-riddled system, senators said 20 JUL. "This should serve as a wake-up call to everybody, including the folks at VA, Oracle Cerner, and of course us because we have a lot of work ahead of us," Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., said during at the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee hearing about the health record system. In addition, the VA notified the Senate committee that its plan to deploy the electronic health record system at the Boise VA Medical Center was now delayed. The record system was originally scheduled to launch there 23 JUL.

"I will tell you that I support that decision," said Tester, the chairman of the committee. "I believe additional improvements are needed to ensure any future deployments are safe and successful. We need to know what's working and what's not, and we need to listen to the local VA administrators and employees about what they are saying." The VA originally signed a \$10 billion contract with Cerner in May 2018 to

overhaul the agency's health record system and make it compatible with the Defense Department. However, the cost later increased to \$16 billion. An independent review by the nonprofit Institute for Defense Analysis estimated the implementation of the electronic health record system would cost nearly \$39 billion in 13 years. The estimate also included more than \$17 billion to sustain the system. "Until Monday, we were not aware of how large the cost overrun truly is," Sen. Jerry Moran of Kansas, the ranking Republican on the committee, said during the hearing.

The system was first launched at the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center in Spokane, Wash., in October 2020. Since then, records issues have plagued the facility. VA Inspector General Michael Missal said in March that his office received wide-ranging complaints since the system launched in Spokane. Complaints included unauthorized and inaccurate medication orders, patients' name and gender errors, issues in scheduling primary care appointments, misdirected links to video medical appointments and lost referrals. "I'll be blunt," Terry Adirim, executive director of the VA's Office of Electronic Health Record Modernization, said at the hearing. "In hindsight, Mann-Grandstaff wasn't ready to adopt a new electronic health record. Planning was inadequate and lacked a thorough assessment of the site's readiness. And most importantly, in October 2020, VA medical centers were still being seriously impacted by the [coronavirus] pandemic."

Adirim also said VA personnel in Spokane were not at fault, and they should be commended. She also said the agency learned lessons from that failed launch. In addition to the cost analysis, the VA Office of Inspector General released two reports last week. One report found the electronic health record system sent medical care orders — such as psychiatric consults — to an undetectable location, which caused harm for 149 VA patients. In another report, the inspector general found two senior staff members at the Spokane facility gave inaccurate information to IG reviewers about the health record system training.

David Case, VA deputy inspector general, said the actions of the staff members were not intended, meaning a crime was not committed. However, the inspector general found that their actions did represent careless disregard. "It was a whole mix, a lack of communication, a lack of checking what the data was, a lack of even understanding what data was being produced by the consultant who was working on [electronic health record system], so there were a lot of problems," Case said. "It's within [VA's] purview how they want to hold these folks accountable, or whatever actions they want to take. We have no purview or authority to take action or really to recommend action."

VA Secretary Denis McDonough said 20 JUL at the VA's monthly news conference that the agency's Office of Electronic Health Record Modernization has been meeting weekly to ensure they sort out any issues related to patient safety or patient harm. "What our veterans should expect, what our clinicians should expect, what Congress, the [inspector general], and all of our partners should expect is that we take very seriously our obligations to patient safety, which is our No. 1 priority at VA," McDonough said. "We will get to the bottom of problems when they're identified and make sure that we can realize the promise at the heart of a modernized electronic health record that draws the full history of our veterans' service to the country by accessing his or her defense or DOD health record and the VA health record."

Oracle Corp. completed its \$28 billion acquisition of Cerner on June 8, with the latter now dubbed Oracle Cerner. The Austin-based company also took over Cerner's electronic health record contract with the VA, Defense Department and the Coast Guard. Mike Sicilia, executive vice president for industries at Oracle, said he spent the last six weeks reviewing the system's issues and working through engineering

plans. Moreover, he said the company had established a command center led by Oracle's senior engineers. "Our war room is conducting a top-to-bottom analysis of the entire system," Sicilia said. "It is already hard at work making a number of improvements that previously were not possible. If something isn't working for caregivers or patients, we plan to fix it first and work out the economics later."

Sicilia also said the company intends to move Cerner's electronic health record application to a modern cloud data center within the next six to nine months. He said the move would deliver better performance and stability for the user. "The Cerner [electronic health records] system is currently running on a dated architecture with technology that is, in some cases, two decades old ... and it requires massive amounts of manual support. This isn't unusual in the [electronic health records] industry, but it does lead to more frequent outages and degradations of service," Sicilia said.

He said Oracle's cloud infrastructure has built-in security, which will remove the possibility of human error that is a major cause of breaches. "I really do hope that the acquisition by Oracle is going to be a game-changer," Tester said. "I hope it is, and if it is, that's going to be good news for our veterans." [Source: Stars & Stripes | Sara Samora | July 21, 2022 ++]

VA EHR

Update 40: Overhaul May Be Scrapped If Fixes Aren't Made

House lawmakers warned that they may kill off the Department of Veterans Affairs costly and complicated electronic health records modernization effort unless officials can show significant progress in coming months. Administrators "have to fundamentally improve," said Rep. Mike Bost (R-IL), ranking member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, during a hearing on the topic 27 JUL. "If we don't see major progress by early next year, when VA says they intend to roll [the effort] out to larger sites, we will have to seriously consider pulling the plug."

"I hope the situation can somehow be turned around. But everyone involved in this needs to understand that the consequences are real, and that there are no blank checks." The criticism from House members came amid the second tense hearing for VA health records officials in the past week. On July 20, members of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee grilled department leaders over new delays in the 10-year modernization effort and reports that the \$16 billion price tag could more than triple in coming years. Just a few days earlier, the VA Inspector General's office released a new report detailing 149 cases of patient harm caused by the implementation of the new Oracle Cerner Millennium records software over a nine-month period at the department's hospital in Spokane, Washington.

A flaw in the system sent about 11,000 orders to an unknown and unchecked file, where requests for items such as appointments or blood tests went unanswered. In at least two cases, the lost files caused "major harm" to patients. The health records overhaul was announced by then-President Donald Trump in 2017 as a way to bring veterans health records onto the same system as the military, providing troops with a lifelong medical file. But the effort has been beset by

problems for the past few years. The new software has been deployed to sites in Ohio and Washington, but additional planned rollouts for 2022 have been delayed until 2023 amid the mounting concerns.

In testimony, Dr. Terry Adirim, director of the Electronic Health Record Modernization Integration Office, pushed back on the cost overrun estimates, saying they are based on the assumption putting the system in place will take more than 10 years. “We are still in the process of planning for a 10-year deployment and we should have a schedule out sometime in the fall,” she said. “However, there have been delays, and so it’s reasonable to expect that it could go beyond that, and we are doing that kind of contingency planning.”

Lawmakers called the situation troubling. Bost said he intends to draft legislation protecting patients and taxpayers from the program spiraling out of control. If Republicans win control of the House in the November election, he likely will take over as chairman of the committee and would wield considerable legislative power on the issue. Current committee Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA) said he still believes that the department must upgrade its records system but “I will not sit idly by and allow this program to endanger veterans.” Rep. Matt Rosendale (R-MT) called the system “fully dysfunctional” and said he believes it is “not safe or suitable to roll out anywhere else.”

Other panel members said they will work with VA officials to “hold program officials accountable,” which could mean reprimands and dismissals in coming months. VA officials have promised overhauls to the training programs to better prepare staff for future deployments. Leaders at Oracle Cerner have said publicly they are committed to fixing past problems with the system. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | July 27, 2022 ++]

Caregiver Program

Update 80: Expansion to All Eras of Service Remains Set for October

With about two months left until a congressional deadline, Veterans Affairs officials said plans to expand the caregiver support program to veterans of all eras remain on schedule, even if fixes to other aspects of the program are still in limbo. Currently, the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers — which provides a monthly stipend to qualified full-time caregivers of seriously ill or injured veterans — is open only to veterans who served before 1975 or after 2001. But per a mandate from Congress, the program must be opened to all families by Oct. 1 of this year. In comments to reporters on Wednesday, VA Secretary Denis McDonough said department leaders are on track to do that. “We’re going to expand in October,” he said. “We’re committed to that. It should have already been done by now, but we’ll get it done by October.”

About 33,000 families are enrolled in the 11-year-old program. Doubts about VA’s ability to expand it have surfaced in recent months amid other caregiver program turmoil. In 2021, in anticipation of the upcoming expansion, VA officials rewrote eligibility criteria and reviewed about 19,000 legacy

participants to see if they still qualified for the benefit. Specific payout totals based on where veterans live, but generally amount to about \$3,000 a month for the full level two stipend and \$1,800 for the partial level one stipend. In the spring, following months of outcry from advocates that too many families were being purged from the program, VA leaders suspended all program dismissals. Officials later acknowledged that under the new eligibility criteria as many as 90% of the legacy participants could have been stripped of caregiver benefits.

Since then, McDonough has publicly vowed to rewrite the eligibility criteria to better reflect the needs of injured veterans and their families. However, no timetable has been set for when that work will be completed. “We still don’t have those new criteria established, but the establishment of new criteria will not impact the launch of the expansion,” he said. VA officials have said that once those criteria are developed, they will be applied to existing program participants to see if the program participants still qualify for stipends. However, all current participants are guaranteed to continue receiving benefits until April 2023, under past promises by leaders.

Outside groups have complained that even after McDonough announced the pause in program dismissals, local officials have continued to review families cases and warn that they could lose eligibility in the future, even though the new program criteria still have not been developed. Past analysis of the program have estimated that the upcoming expansion plans could nearly double participation in it. At the VA web site https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/support_benefits.asp more information on the program is available. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | July 25, 2022 ++]

*** Vets ***

Vet Jobs

Update 277: Florida Schools to Let Veterans Teach Without Degrees

Florida has 9,000 teacher vacancies it needs filled before the summer comes to a close and the new academic year begins. The state’s Department of Education announced last week that military veterans can now fill those roles. “Our public schools are really at a crisis level seeing this massive number of vacancies,” Andrew Spar, Florida Education Association president, told ABC Action News. “In 2010, there were 8,000 graduates from Florida’s colleges and universities becoming teachers. That number was between 2,000 and 3,000 for the year that just ended. That’s a significant drop-off.”

Veterans will now receive a five-year voucher that allows them to teach in the classroom without typical accreditation or the necessary education requirements that other certified teachers must possess. The move is part of an \$8.6 million statewide initiative to provide careers and workforce training to veterans and their dependents. “We owe the freedoms we enjoy as Americans to our military veterans, and I am focused on ensuring Florida is the best state in the nation for those who have served to find great jobs, start or grow businesses and support their families,” said Florida Governor Ron DeSantis in a statement. “Business is booming in Florida,

and employers are looking for the leadership skills, training and teamwork military veterans bring to the workforce.”

The state’s Department of Education currently expects veteran candidates without degrees seeking teaching positions to have at least 60 college credits and a baseline 2.5 GPA. They need to pass the subject area examination for bachelor’s level subjects, as well. In addition, their service needs to amount to 48 months in the military, with an honorable or medical discharge. If hired by a school, they are required to be supervised by a teaching mentor. Teachers and local unions, on the other hand, feel this move will lower the standard of education for Florida schools.n“You can’t just throw a warm body in a classroom, that’s not the answer,” Barry Dubin, president of the Sarasota County Teachers Association, told the Herald Tribune.

While the shortage is dire, the decision to use veterans as a stop-gap measure has educators questioning the state’s criteria for teachers. “There are many people who have gone through many hoops and hurdles to obtain a proper teaching certificate,” Carmen Ward, president of the Alachua County teachers union, said. “(Educators) are very dismayed that now someone with just a high school education can pass the test and can easily get a five-year temporary certificate.” [Source: MilitaryTimes | Sarah Sicard | July 19, 2022 ++]

GI Bill

Update 317: House Panel Approves Expansion of Eligibility

Veterans who received a general discharge from the military for anything other than some serious crimes would be eligible for [GI Bill](#) benefits under a bill advanced by a House committee 19 JUL. The House Veterans Affairs Committee advanced the bill along largely party lines after lawmakers sparred over the military's COVID-19 vaccine mandate. The bill, as introduced by Rep. Scott Fitzgerald, R-Wis., was originally intended to extend GI Bill benefits only to veterans who have been discharged for refusing the COVID-19 vaccine, but the committee voted to replace Fitzgerald's proposal with a much broader one offered by committee Chairman Mark Takano, D-Calif.

Right now, veterans are eligible for GI Bill benefits only if they received an honorable discharge from military service. Under Takano's measure, veterans who received a general discharge under honorable conditions would be eligible for GI Bill benefits unless they committed or attempted to commit desertion, mutiny, espionage, sexual assault, murder, aggravated arson or burglary with intent to harm. Takano said the change could help "tens of thousands of veterans who left the service due to mental illness," as well as make "amends to the tens of thousands of veterans forced out of the military during 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' or due to the their sexual orientation."

General discharges are given when a service member's performance is broadly satisfactory but may have involved a minor infraction or did not meet all the conditions of a contract, such as drug or alcohol use. Those who commit serious crimes such as the ones listed in Takano's measure aren't supposed to be eligible for a general discharge. "I don't think we should prioritize those who have refused a vaccine ahead of those who were forced to leave the military for their sexual orientation or because of mental health or other personal reasons," Takano said during Tuesday's committee meeting. "Those with a general discharge shouldn't be left out in the cold, and we shouldn't allow those who refuse vaccines to jump ahead of the line."

The committee approved Takano's amendment 17-13 and then voted 15-13 to advance the bill as amended. Breaking party ranks, Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D-MI) voted against the amendment and advancing the bill, and Rep. Nancy Mace (R-SC) voted for the amendment and advancing the bill, while Rep. Conor Lamb (D-PA) voted for the amendment but against advancing the bill.

Republicans bristled at the overhauling of their attempt to shield from consequences service members who have refused orders to take the COVID-19 vaccine, accusing Democrats of a "political stunt" because the broader measure isn't likely to be voted on by the full House without a provision offsetting what Republicans said is a potential cost of \$11 billion over a decade. "This is nothing more than a malign attempt to turn the screws on service members who have different thoughts on vaccines," said Rep. Matt Rosendale (R-MT).

Republicans, who have baselessly questioned the efficacy and safety of COVID-19 vaccines, have made several attempts to force the Pentagon to suspend its vaccination mandate or lessen the consequences for refusers, largely through amendments to the annual defense policy bill. Most of those attempts have been unsuccessful, with Democrats narrowly controlling Congress. But Republicans did successfully insert a provision in last year's defense policy bill that said service members who refuse to take the COVID-19 vaccine can receive no less than a general discharge under honorable conditions. That protected most of those service members' veterans benefits, except for GI Bill benefits.

During Tuesday's House Veterans Affairs Committee debate, ranking member Rep. Mike Bost, (R-IL) lamented service members with a "very, very excellent record" losing those education benefits. But Bost also argued that the broader expansion of GI Bill benefits advanced Tuesday "starts us down a slippery slope that can negatively affect good order and discipline in our military." "For us to insert our judgment like this is simply unprecedented," he said. Democrats shot back that Republicans' own proposal could create issues with good order and discipline related to vaccinations, 17 of which are required in addition to COVID-19.

"It would create a pretty difficult command climate for the commanders that right now want to keep their troops safe and healthy and in the fight if their troops believe that they can basically decide which vaccines they want to receive and which ones they don't and that the penalties for that decision are minimal," Lamb said. [Source: Military.com | Rebecca Kheel | July 19, 2022 ++]

Vet Fraud & Abuse

Reported JUL 16 thru 31, 2022

North Carolina. A former soldier who defrauded Veterans Affairs out of nearly \$1 million by pretending to have a service-connected disability was sentenced in court to less than a year in prison, according to the Department of Justice. **John Paul Cook**, 58, from Marshall, North Carolina, received approximately \$978,138 in disability payments from the VA between 1987–2017 due to his fake blindness, the DoJ said. Despite his claims of being visually impaired, Cook repeatedly passed vision screening tests for his driver’s license, purchased and registered over 30 vehicles he routinely drove, and participated as a leader with the Boy Scouts of America in activities requiring eyesight, the DoJ added.

Federal district court judge Max O. Cogburn Jr. sentenced Cook to 10 months in prison, five of which will be served in home confinement, according to the DoJ. Additionally, Cook was ordered to serve three years of supervised release and to pay more than \$930,000 back to the VA. Court documents show that Cook enlisted in the Army in November 1985. The following year, after sustaining an injury, he argued that a preexisting eye condition had grown worse. After a medical evaluation in 1987, Cook was discharged and began receiving VA disability benefits, the DoJ said. His compensation increased over the next 30 years and by 2005, when the VA wrongly declared Cook legally blind, his compensation reached the maximum rate.

He also received additional monetary benefits to remodel his home, the DoJ said. “According to court records, Cook’s monthly VA disability payments in 1987 were \$1,411 per month,” the DoJ stated in the release. “With the incremental increases in his disability rating, as well as cost-of-living adjustments and his Special Monthly Compensation, these payments steadily increased over the years. By 2016, the monthly payment had risen to \$3,990.” Cook was indicted in December 2020 and pleaded guilty to the theft of public money on July 19, 2021, court records show.

Court documents submitted by Cook’s attorney note that the Army veteran and father of two, “is deeply ashamed of his actions in this case...He knows this was wrong.” Cook’s defense also noted he has been making repayments to the VA since 2017 when the department began “recouping his vision disability payments from his legitimate back disability payment.”

On July 13 in Congress, lawmakers on the House oversight and reform panel discussed how to combat financial scams and fraud that disproportionately affect current and former troops, but scams involving government agencies like the VA are also common. A church in Georgia, for instance, was raided by the FBI last month for allegedly scamming the VA out of millions, as reported by Military.com. In July alone, the DoJ prosecuted a case against a soldier at Fort Stewart, Georgia, who schemed to target COVID-19 relief programs and a Rhode Island woman

who falsified her military service to steal charitable contributions. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Jonathan Lehrfeld | July 25, 2022 ++]

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Illinois. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission has charged a retired Navy chief with fraud over allegations that he took nearly \$355,000 in investment funds from dozens of sailors, reservists and veterans who were part of a chief Facebook group and spent nearly half the money on gambling and personal expenses, the agency announced 28 JUL. **Robert L. Murray Jr.**, 42, stood up Deep Dive Strategies LLC, or DDS, in September 2020, collecting and mispending funds as part of an alleged crime that lasted until January, according to the criminal complaint. Navy officials confirmed that Murray was a chief hospital corpsman who retired in 2018 after 20 years of service.

“As a retired Navy Chief, Murray knew and took advantage of the trust in Navy Chiefs that is developed through service and special naval training,” the SEC’s complaint states. “Murray used the veneer of trustworthiness created by his U.S. Navy service to raise nearly \$355,000 from approximately 44 investors—most of whom also were affiliated with the Navy.” But instead of shepherding the sailors’ cash, Murray is accused of misappropriating about \$148,000 from the fund, spending it on gambling and personal expenses. He blew \$8,700 in shipmate money via debit card and check expenditures, \$83,500 in cash withdrawals and \$638.99 at Helzberg Diamonds, according to the complaint.

In February 2021, prosecutors allege, he transferred \$10,000 from the fund to his personal bank account, which had less than \$800 in it before the transfer. “Nine minutes after making the transfer, Murray purchased \$10,400 in casino chips from a Cleveland casino using the same personal bank account,” the complaint alleges. The complaint also indicates the retired chief and his fund weren’t the soundest options for shipmates looking to invest. Murray lost “a significant amount” of the brokerage account’s value in January 2021 by investing in GameStop options contracts, according to the complaint. The so-called “stonk” phenomenon involving the brick-and-mortar GameStop chain came to the fore last year, when amateur day traders united to push the company’s stock value through the roof before it crashed back down to earth.

“Murray’s foray into trading securities for the Fund was brief and unsuccessful,” the complaint states. The retired chief made his last DDS trade on Jan. 23, 2021, but the complaint doesn’t indicate whether that was the GameStop foray. “This final failed trade was a bet on deeply risky options contracts that had the potential to lose all value within 24 hours, which they ultimately did,” the complaint states. “The DDS brokerage account was left with \$161.98, which Murray later withdrew on February 4, 2021. In under a month, Murray lost almost all the Fund’s money he used to trade securities.”

Murray could not be reached for comment but “asserted his Fifth Amendment privilege during the SEC’s pre-filing investigation,” the complaint states. The complaint alleges that Murray used

the “Goats Facebook Group” to tout his “purported successes in trading options contracts” to group members. He sold units of DDS membership interests to investors at \$5,000 a unit. “Murray also created a channel on the Discord social media platform, where he live-streamed his trading activity and posted trading advice with a focus on options trading,” the complaint states. Murray started the fund in September 2020 and solicited investors through February 2021.

“He told investors that their money would be placed in the Fund and used to invest in publicly-traded securities,” the complaint alleges. While Murray told investors they could request a redemption of their fund investment at the end of 2021, the retired chief “almost immediately” began spending the fund’s money on personal expenses. Murray cut off contact with investors by March 2021 and “rebuffed their attempts to view an accounting of the Fund,” the complaint alleges. In the following months, some investors requested a refund, and Murray indicated in August 2021 that he would return what was left in the fund, but never did, according to the complaint. “To date, no Fund investors have received any return from the Fund,” the complaint states.

Murray currently resides in Anchorage, Alaska, but was living in Chicago and Ohio during his alleged crimes. SEC officials said that no one else has been charged. [Source: NavyTimes | Geoff Ziezulewicz | July 28, 2022 ++]

Vet Hiring Fairs

Scheduled As of JUL 31, 2022

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce’s (USCC) Hiring Our Heroes program employment workshops are available in conjunction with hundreds of their hiring fairs. These workshops are designed to help veterans and military spouses and include resume writing, interview skills, and one-on-one mentoring. To participate, sign up for the workshop in addition to registering (if indicated) for the hiring fairs which are shown on the Hiring Our Heroes website <https://www.hiringourheroes.org> for the next month. For details of each you should click on the city next to the date Listings of upcoming Vet Job Fairs nationwide providing location, times, events, and registration info if required can be found at the following websites. Note that some of the scheduled events for the next 2 to 6 weeks have been postponed and are awaiting reschedule dates due to the current COVID-19 outbreak. You will need to review each site below to locate Job Fairs in your location:

- <https://events.recruitmilitary.com>
- <https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/events/hiringfairs>
- <https://www.legion.org/careers/jobfairs>

[Source: Recruit Military, USCC, and American Legion | July 31, 2022 ++]

*** Vet Legislation ***

VET Bill Progress

16-31 JUL 2022

The Honoring Our PACT Act S. 3373 to Expand Health Care for Veterans Exposed to Burn Pits and Toxic Substances passed the House 13 JUL as an amendment to S.3373, **Protecting Our Gold Star Families Education Act** by a 342 – 88 vote. The next step for the bill is a vote on the Senate floor and, if advanced, will be sent to the President. The Honoring our PACT Act will broaden the definition of toxic exposure, expand access to comprehensive health care services covered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and strengthen benefits for veterans were exposed to toxic substances during their service.

The final version of the Honoring our PACT Act that passed the House 15 JUL includes the **COVENANT Act** (H.R.2368), which addresses toxic exposure to include both a comprehensive list of overseas locations that would qualify a veteran for earned benefits and a list of presumptive illnesses contracted as a result of airborne exposure, and the **Veterans Disability Claims Notification Improvement Act** (H.R.6131), which ensures the timely processing and notification of veteran claim decisions through modern, electronic means. Passage of the Honoring our PACT Act builds off the monumental passage of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act that finally granted benefits to veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange during their service off the coast of Vietnam.

The Honoring Our PACT Act, unexpectedly failed to pass on the Senate floor by a 55-42 vote on 27 JUL (U.S. Senate: U.S. Senate Roll Call Votes 117th Congress - 2nd Session) 60 votes were needed, to avoid another delay in the bill becoming law. The bipartisan bill was voted unanimously out of the Senate with an 88-14 vote in early June, and by a 342-88 vote in the House. However, this was not the case as Senators who had previously voted against and for the bill objected to how the money connected to the measure (about \$300 billion over 10 years) would be accounted for in the regular appropriations process. [Source: VVA Government Affairs | July 15 & 28, 2022 ++]

Congressional Resources

Member’s Contact Info & Vet Bill Status

If in doubt as to your legislator's online contact info or who they are, the below websites provide ALL legislator's names with contact info to facilitate the copying and forwarding of suggested letters to them, asking them questions, or seeking their assistance:

- <https://www.congress.gov/search?q=%7B%22source%22%3A%5B%22members%22%5D%2C%22congress%22%3A%5B%22117%22%5D%7D> – **House**
- <https://www.congress.gov/search?q=%7B%22source%22%3A%5B%22members%22%5D%2C%22congress%22%3A%5B%22117%22%5D%2C%22chamber%22%3A%22Senate%22%7D> – **Senate**

To check status on any veteran related legislation go to <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress> for any House or Senate bill introduced in the 117th Congress. Bills are listed in reverse numerical order for House and then Senate. Bills are normally initially assigned to a congressional committee to consider and amend before sending them on to the House or Senate as a whole. To read the text of bills that are to be considered on the House floor in the upcoming week refer to <https://docs.house.gov/floor>. Note that anyone can sign up and use MOAA's Legislative Action Center at <https://moaa.quorum.us/issueareas>. You do not have to be a member.

*** Military ***

Military Fraud & Abuse

Update 18; Soldier Stole Millions In COVID Relief and Student Loans

A U.S. Army soldier admitted to leading a “prolific” plot in which more than \$4.5 million worth of COVID-19 relief and student loans were stolen while stationed at a base in Georgia, federal prosecutors said. As part of her fraud scheme, the soldier and co-conspirators claimed to be permanently disabled veterans on more than a dozen fake disability applications sent to the U.S. Department of Education — allowing them to steal over \$1 million in federal student loans, according to court documents.

The soldier stationed at Fort Stewart, 39-year-old **Dara Buck**, pleaded guilty to an information charging her with conspiracy to commit an offense against the United States, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Georgia said in a July 15 news release. She is from Ladson, South Carolina. Buck also admitted to submitting more than 150 fake Paycheck Protection Program applications under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, “resulting in more than \$3.5 million in fraudulent disbursements,” prosecutors said.

Buck, who is a chief warrant officer 2 within the Army, is still an active military member, a Fort Stewart spokesman told McClatchy News. He declined to comment on the case amid the Justice Department's investigation. Her Army status is an intermediate level rank appointed by the secretary of the Army. “CW2 Buck chose to dishonor the U.S. Military and defraud the

American people she swore to protect and defend,” Special Agent in Charge Cynthia A. Bruce, of the Defense Criminal Investigative Service’s southeast field office, said in a statement. Buck faces up to five years in federal prison following her guilty plea, the release said.

The ‘prolific fraud scheme’

Between August 2017 and May 2021, Buck is accused of leading unnamed co-conspirators “to engage in multiple schemes to defraud” the U.S. government, court documents state. After the CARES Act was signed into law in 2020, more than \$600 billion in loans was authorized to help qualifying small businesses apply for support through the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), prosecutors said. Buck is accused of directly receiving PPP funds after submitting more than 100 fake applications to the Small Business Administration, according to the news release. Additionally, prosecutors said she would get paid by co-conspirators for submitting fake applications on their behalf.

These loans were submitted for “businesses that she purportedly owned” and she obtained roughly \$20,833 for each after lying about their gross income and monthly payroll, according to court documents. Co-conspirators would pay Buck \$500 to \$1,000 in cash or via CashApp or Zelle for each fake PPP loan application she submitted for them, prosecutors said. Meanwhile, federal student loan forgiveness was also targeted in Buck’s alleged fraud scheme, according to the news release. Buck is accused of writing a number of fake U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs letters in order to swindle more than \$1 million in student loans, court documents state.

The falsified VA letters were “used to fraudulently discharge federal loans at the taxpayers’ expense for someone who wasn’t even a veteran,” Special Agent in Charge David Spilker said in a statement. Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 allows “student loan borrowers with a total and permanent disability” to have certain loans discharged, prosecutors noted. Buck’s fake letters would falsely claim an applicant was a 100% disabled veteran to accompany fake TPD loan applications submitted to the Education Department, according to court documents. She is accused of charging \$350 to \$500 for each TPD loan submitted for others, prosecutors said.

Buck’s sentencing will occur after a pre-sentencing investigation is completed by the U.S. Probation Office, the release said. In terms of COVID-19 relief fraud, the U.S. Secret Service estimated in late December that nearly \$100 billion in COVID-19 relief money had been stolen across the country, a news release said. [Source: The Charlotte Observer | Julia Marnin | July 19, 2022 ++]

Military Fraud & Abuse

Update 19: Jewelry Retailer to Pay Millions for Duping Troops/Families

Harris Jewelry, a New York-based national jewelry outlet that catered to military bases across the country, agreed on Wednesday to pay \$34.2 million to settle claims that the firm targeted service members using shady credit transactions and "misleading" sales tactics, according to court filings. "Today's settlement resolves allegations that Harris Jewelers targeted military service members with dishonest sales and financing tactics at now-shuttered stores located near military bases across the country," said a press release from the California attorney general's office.

Advertisement

The retailer, which shut down nationwide during the pandemic, boasted of its service to service members and families in marketing materials. "For over 65 years, Harris Jewelry has been providing military personnel and their families exceptional customer service," the company's website said. "That remains its mission to this day." California's Department of Justice claimed that Harris Jewelry violated several federal and state laws, including the Military Lending Act, a regulation meant to protect service members from predatory sales practices, in part by requiring lenders to provide "written and oral disclosures" to troops seeking a loan, according to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC).

"Harris Jewelers targeted active duty service members with the sales pitch that purchasing from them on credit would, regardless of their credit history or subsequent payments, improve service members' credit scores," the press release said. The settlement requires Harris Jewelry to cease collecting millions of dollars of outstanding debt from thousands of service members, to include providing refunds of almost \$12.9 million to 46,204 service members who paid for jewelry and gifts with loans. Harris Jewelry is also banned from marketing its jewelry, according to the press release, "including ceasing operation of its businesses." The settlement and the subsequent ban spans 17 other states, including Georgia, Kansas, Virginia, North Carolina and Hawaii -- locations of prominent military bases.

In 2020, the Federal Trade Commission reported that military service members, veterans and their families accounted for 153,850 reports of fraud or identity theft at significantly higher rates than their civilian counterparts, with credit or lending-related scams constituting about 20% of those reports. "Today's settlement should serve as a warning to any businesses thinking of engaging in shady practices to make an extra buck," said California Attorney General Rob Bonta. "We will not stand idly by." [Source: Military.com | Drew F. Lawrence | July 20, 2022 ++]

USMC Retention

Update 03: Goals Exceeded Early, Hit More Than 100 Percent

The Marine Corps hit retention goals early for the first time in 10 years, the service announced last week. Over the past nine years, the Marine Corps reached approximately 97.2 percent of its

retention goal. However, for Fiscal Year 2022, the service already hit 101.1 percent of its goal, said Yvonne Carlock on behalf of Manpower and Reserve Affairs. The goal for FY22 for Marines on their initial contracts was 5,820, Carlock said in an email. For Marines with four to 20 years of service, the retention goal was 5,417.

Carlock was not able to provide retention goals for FY 2021 in time of publication. It is unclear if the retention goals for this year are higher or lower than in the past. It was also unclear the effect of COVID-19 on retention, Carlock said in the email. The Marine Corps has separated 3,069 Marines due to refusal to get vaccinated against COVID-19, according to the most recent report. Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. David Berger's Force Design 2030 calls for a reduced force of 175,000 Marines, USNI News previously reported. Force Design 2030 also calls for a focus on retention, going against the traditionally high turnover that is associated with the Marines.

The Marine Corps, like the other military branches, is struggling with recruitment due to a competitive marketplace. The service cannot recruit itself way out of talent challenges, Gen. Eric Smith, assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, said Monday. But the service can use retention to solve some of the problem. The Marine Corps is changing how they retain, Smith said at the Center for Strategic and International Studies event. Before the service would often wait until it received all the interest for reenlistment before racking and stacking each Marine. Now it is making the process more streamlined, with one step instead of 22, and making it more appealing for people to stay.

As an example, Smith said the service wants to be able to have conversations to figure out how it can keep Marines. If a service member says he or she would stay if they could stay in the same location for a couple more years, that could be a concession the Marine Corps makes in order to retain someone, Smith said. But Marines should not expect to ask that they stay in the same location for 20 years, Smith said. The Marines are also putting retention responsibility on leaders through the Command Retention Mission (CRM). "In support of the CRM, Enlisted Assignments and Retention Branch created multiple avenues to coach and education commanders," Carlock said in the email. "The on-the-road Key Leader engagements and multiple virtual engagements as well were used to strengthen relationships and communication throughout the Marine Corps."

While the service started its retention campaign before Talent Management 2030 was announced, the service was able to benefit from the attention to retention, Carlock said. Looking ahead to fiscal year 2023, the service is applying the Commandant's Retention Program, which uses the Headquarters Marine Corps to screen Marines and pre-approve them for re-enlistment, Carlock said. The retention team screened 24,680 and was able to pre-approve nearly approximately 2,500 for re-enlistment, she said.

"All these Marine[s] have to do is agree to reenlist, choose a unit option, and execute their reenlistment," Carlock said in the email. "The other 20 steps in the process have been completed

for them. Would we have wanted to do more than 2,500? Yes! But that was the maximum our team could process for now. We are looking at ways to increase that number.” [Source: USNI New | Heather Mongilio | July 20, 2022++]

USCG Fraud, Waste, & Abuse

Veteran, Wife Charged With Stealing Ids of Dead Kids

A U.S. defense contractor and his wife who lived for decades under the identities of two dead Texas children have been charged with identity theft and conspiring against the government, according to federal court records unsealed in Honolulu. **Walter Glenn Primrose** and **Gwynn Darle Morrison**, both in their late 60s, who allegedly lived for decades under the names Bobby Edward Fort and Julie Lyn Montague, respectively, were arrested Friday in Kapolei on the island of Oahu. Prosecutors are seeking to have the couple held without bail, which could indicate the case is about more than defrauding the government to obtain drivers’ licenses, passports and Defense Department credentials.

Primrose had secret security clearance with the U.S. Coast Guard and as a defense contractor and old photos show the couple wearing uniforms of the KGB, the former Russian spy agency, Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Muehleck said. Faded Polaroids of each in uniform were included in the motion to have them held. A “close associate” of Morrison said she lived in Romania while it was a Soviet bloc country, Muehleck said. Prosecutors said there is a high risk the couple would flee if freed. They also suggested that Primrose, who was an avionics electrical technician in the Coast Guard, was highly skilled to communicate secretly if released. The couple is also believed to have other aliases, Muehleck said. Lawyers for the couple declined to comment. A bail hearing is scheduled 28 JUL in U.S. District Court.

Primrose and Morrison were born in 1955 and they attended high school together in Port Lavaca, Texas, and then went to Stephen F. Austin University, according to court records. They married in 1980. There is no indication in court papers why the couple in 1987 assumed the identities of deceased children who would have been more than a decade younger than them. But an affidavit filed by Special Agent Dennis Thomas of the State Department’s Diplomatic Security Service noted that the couple lost their home in Nacogdoches, Texas, to foreclosure that year.

Court records don’t provide any information about what happened from the time they assumed their new identities until 1994 when Primrose, then about 39, enlisted in the Coast Guard as Fort, who would have been about 27. Primrose served in the service until 2016 when he began work for an unnamed U.S. defense contractor at the U.S. Coast Guard Air station at Barbers Point. “While he held that Secret clearance with the U.S. Coast Guard, defendant Primrose was required to report any foreign travel,” prosecutors wrote. “Investigation has revealed that defendant

Primrose did not report several trips to Canada while he did report other foreign travel.” The couple is charged with aggravated identity theft, conspiracy to commit an offense against the U.S. and false statement in application for a passport. [Source: AP | Jennifer Sinco Kelleher & Brian Melley | July 27, 2022 ++]

*** Health Care ***

Prescription Drug Costs

Update 81: Bill to Lower Insulin Costs Faces Delays in Senate

TSCL previously reported on a bi-partisan bill in the Senate that would lower the cost of insulin and cap the out-of-pocket cost to diabetes patients at \$35 a month. Because it was developed by Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Susan Collins (R-ME), it was hoped it could get a vote in the Senate this month. We said that because of Senate rules, the Shaheen-Collins bill will require support from at least 10 Republican senators in order to clear a filibuster and pass. However, it is far from clear that 10 Republicans can be found to support the bill. Some are citing fears of interfering with the free market as the reason for their opposition to the bill.

Now, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer has said he plans to hold a vote soon on the bill, but key Republican senators say they are not ready for a vote right now. “I agree we’ve got to deal with insulin, but I don’t think they’ve got the right mechanism to do it just yet,” said Sen. Mike Crapo (R-ID), ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee. Crapo said he agrees with Republicans who want to hold a hearing on the legislation before it is brought to a vote on the floor. Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA) said he’s waiting for the Congressional Budget Office to produce an updated analysis of the bill to understand its impact. He also wants to get a sense of how many drug-makers would voluntarily take up the bill’s offer to hold prices to a 2021 level in exchange for a prohibition on rebates. Drug-makers pay rebates to insurers or other entities in the supply chain partly to get better placement on insurance networks.

Democrats fear Republicans are stalling on passing the bill because they do not want to let the Democrats claim victory before the fall elections, while Republicans think Democrats are simply “rushing” the legislation to the floor to blame Republicans for its failure. [Source: TSCL Weekly Update | July 28, 2022 ++]

Diabetic Foot Problems

Preventing Wounds

It is important to recognize the signs of diabetic foot problems early enough. Good preventive measures can avoid long-term damage. It is particularly important to take good care of your feet, wear shoes that fit properly and avoid injury. People often need help with these things. About 20 to 30 out of 100 people who have diabetes develop diabetic foot problems over the course of their life. The first signs of these problems include dry skin on the feet and an increasing number of calluses (areas of thick, hard skin) on the feet. Later, ulcers may develop on the feet or toes. Diabetic foot ulcers are poorly healing open wounds that are hard to treat. But these long-term consequences of diabetes can be prevented. Doctors, family, good friends, nursing staff and regular medical foot care (podiatric treatment) can help here. It is particularly important to get support if you find it hard to take good care of your feet yourself.

What causes diabetic foot problems? Our feet usually have a good blood supply and are very sensitive. There are a lot of [nerves](#) in the skin that react to the slightest pressure and touch. For instance, most people will notice a small stone in their shoe right away. This may be different in people who have diabetes: Constantly high blood sugar levels often lead to

- **Nerve damage (neuropathy):** If nerves in the feet are damaged, sore areas and small injuries may be less noticeable or even not felt at all.
- **Damage to the blood vessels (macroangiopathy):** This reduces the blood supply to the feet, which can lead to the development of wounds that heal slowly.

[Smoking](#), [high blood pressure](#) and lack of movement can make blood vessel damage worse, reducing the blood supply to the legs and feet even more. If nerves and blood vessels in the feet are damaged, even minor injuries like cuts or scrapes can easily turn into [poorly healing wounds](#) (chronic wounds). They can develop as a result of

- **Wearing shoes that are too tight:** This can easily lead to rubbing, pinched skin and blisters.
- **Foot deformities:** Bunions (hallux valgus), [hammer toes and claw toes](#) can lead to sore areas.
- **Thick, hard skin (calluses).**

What are the signs of diabetic foot problems? The signs of diabetic foot problems differ depending on whether they are mainly caused by nerve damage or blood vessel damage.

Symptoms caused by nerve damage

- The foot becomes less sensitive to pain, pressure, heat and cold.
- The foot feels numb (“like walking on cotton”).
- The foot tingles (“pins and needles”).
- The skin is very dry and warm.
- A poorly healing wound develops, particularly on the sole of the foot.

Symptoms caused by blood vessel damage

- The foot feels cold.
- The skin is pale or blue.
- Walking leads to pain in the calves (lower legs) – but this symptom doesn't occur if there is nerve damage too.
- You can hardly feel a pulse in the feet.
- Open wounds develop, usually on the toes or heel.

How are diabetic foot problems diagnosed? The doctor

- examines the [skin](#) and checks whether the foot feels cold or warm,
- checks for wounds, sore-looking areas and deformities,

- sees how deep a wound is and whether it is infected,
- looks for signs of poor blood supply to the foot and
- tests how sensitive the nerves are by touching the feet with a tuning fork or a light nylon thread.

An [ultrasound](#) or angiography can be done to find out how good the blood flow is in the legs. Imaging techniques (x-ray exams, CT scans or MRI scans) can be done to see whether any bones have been damaged too.

What are the long-term consequences of diabetic foot problems?

If diabetic foot problems aren't discovered and treated early enough, chronic wounds (ulcers) may develop. They usually develop on the toes, sole of the foot, heel or ankle. Diabetic foot ulcers can become very deep and infected. Black areas in the wound are usually a sign that tissue has died. If the [ulcer](#) becomes very large, deep and infected, the toe or part of the foot may have to be removed (amputated). People often don't realize how dangerous wounds or injuries could become because the nerve damage prevents them from feeling much (or any) pain. As a result, many don't give the wounds the attention and care they need. Chronic wounds can be avoided. Even wounds that have been there for quite a long time can still heal following good treatment.

What is Charcot foot?

Charcot foot is a rare type of diabetic foot problem. The nerve damage is so severe that people don't even notice broken bones in their foot. It can lead to foot deformities, injury-prone skin and ulcers. The early signs of Charcot foot include redness, swelling and heat.

What can help you to recognize foot problems in time?

Some people have trouble recognizing diabetic foot problems themselves. There are various reasons for this:

- The nerve damage prevents them from feeling any (or much) pain in their feet. As a result, they often don't notice injuries or wounds on their feet. Or they don't notice that their shoes are too tight.
- Many can't see their feet very well because their [vision](#) has got worse due to their diabetes or age.
- They can't bend or move their body enough to be able to examine their feet closely. Because of this, it's very important to regularly have your feet examined by a doctor, keep an eye on your feet yourself too, if possible, and take wounds and sore-looking areas seriously, no matter how small they are. It can be helpful to use a hand mirror to look at the soles of your feet. If that's still difficult, though, you can ask a friend, family member or caregiver to check your feet regularly. Going to a [podiatrist for professional foot care](#) can help to recognize problems in time too.

How can long-term foot damage be prevented? There are a number of things you can do to make sure your feet stay healthy despite having diabetes. The main ones are:

- **Controlling your blood sugar levels:** Keeping your blood sugar levels down can prevent damage to the nerves and blood vessels. People who have [type 1 diabetes](#) need treatment with insulin to do this. In type 2 diabetes, changing your diet and getting more exercise is often enough to lower your blood sugar levels. Tablets (antidiabetics) or special injections (containing incretin mimetics) can be used as well. If these treatments aren't effective enough, people who have type 2 diabetes might have to use insulin too.

- **Reducing pressure on your feet:** This prevents wounds from developing. It is important to wear shoes that fit properly and aren't too tight. Your feet should be checked and measured.
- **Avoiding injuries:** People who have a higher risk of chronic wounds shouldn't walk barefoot, for instance – even at home.
- **Foot care:** Care for your feet and inspect them every day. People who are close to you could also help here. Professional foot care can be a good idea too.
- **Going to the doctor for regular check-ups:** The doctor will examine your feet and ask about symptoms like pain or abnormal sensations such as numbness.

It is very important to see a doctor soon if you notice anything unusual. Even minor injuries and areas of sore-looking skin should be taken seriously. High blood pressure and high blood lipids (high blood fats) further increase the risk of nerve and blood vessel damage. It can also be important to treat these medical problems. Giving up smoking lowers the risk of developing them, too.

How can you keep the skin on your feet strong and healthy? It is very important to prevent the skin on your feet from becoming vulnerable to damage and injury. The following things can help here:

- Wearing shoes that are long enough, wide enough and high enough so they don't pinch your feet. You should be able to move your toes easily and freely.
- Well-cushioned shoes.
- No bothersome stitching on the inside of your shoes (e.g. in the lining or straps) that could rub against your feet. Custom orthopedic shoes and insoles can sometimes be a good idea too.

Checking for – and removing – things like sand or stones in your shoes before putting them on. It is also important to repair or replace worn-out shoes. In people who have a foot deformity, surgery can be done to reduce the pressure on certain parts of the foot.

How can you avoid injury?

You can do the following to protect your feet from injury:

- Do not walk barefoot. Wear comfortable shoes instead.
- Wear seamless socks. You should change your socks every day.
- Do not use nail scissors to cut your toenails because you could easily cut your skin by accident. It is better to file your toenails instead – in a straight line so they don't [grow into the skin](#) (become “ingrown”).
- Do not have hot foot baths. They can damage the skin. This is also true for other sources of heat, such as hot water bottles or electric blankets. If the skin on your foot is injured, red or irritated despite doing these things, you should show it to your doctor. This is also true for small cuts or scrapes.

How can you take good care of your feet? Good foot care involves

- Washing your feet every day with lukewarm water and drying them properly afterwards, particularly the spaces between the toes.
- Moisturizing your feet with a cream, foam or lotion that has urea (5-10 percent) in it. Do not use greasy ointments, oils or zinc pastes!
- Avoiding or treating fungal foot infections (athlete's foot).
- Regularly filing your toenails in a straight line.
- Removing calluses (thick, hard skin) with a pumice stone.

- Checking your feet for redness, irritation, injuries, [athlete's foot](#) or other abnormal areas – every day, if possible. It can be difficult to see the whole of your foot, including the sole of the foot and the spaces between your toes. Using a hand mirror can help here.

What do disease management programs offer?

[Disease management programs](#) (DMPs) are structured treatment programs that aim to improve the management of chronic illnesses. They include regular doctor's appointments where you talk with the doctor and he or she examines you. It is also possible to take part in patient education classes, for instance. DMPs for people who have diabetes offer many advantages that can improve the treatment, so it's worth taking part in one. The aim is to avoid possible long-term problems caused by diabetes, such as diabetic foot problems. So the diabetes DMP should include:

- Regular foot examinations by a doctor (every 1 to 12 months, depending on the findings of the last examination).
- Advice about appropriate footwear.
- Prescriptions for medical foot care.
- Referrals to diabetic foot specialists if wounds develop on the feet. The treatment is usually coordinated by your family doctor, and sometimes by a diabetologist (diabetes specialist).

[Source: <https://www.informedhealth.org/diabetic-foot-problems-preventing-wounds.html> | July 2022
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* Finances *

SSA COLA 2023

TSCL Forecast Up to 10.5%

Once again, TSCL is being quoted in a number of media outlines regarding its forecast of the 2023 Social Security COLA. Among them is Yahoo Finance, which said this: “Based on new inflation data through June, the cost-of-living adjustment for Social Security benefits, or COLA, could be an increase of 10.5% next year, according to estimates from the Senior Citizens League, boosting the average retiree benefit by \$175.10 every month.” However, the article pointed out that a larger COLA is not all good news for seniors. The COLA will not go into effect until January of next year. In addition, it is likely a Medicare Part B increase will take a large portion of the new COLA. And it could push certain seniors into a higher tax bracket resulting in increased taxes and/or a reduction in some benefits.

Quoting TSCL’s Social Security Policy Analyst Mary Johnson, the article pointed out that “A bigger Social Security benefit translates to higher income, which can mean higher taxes for those with incomes above \$25,000 for individuals and \$32,000 for married couples, according to Johnson. Tens of thousands of retirees who have not paid taxes on their benefits in the past may

discover they must start doing so in 2023. “‘Because the income thresholds are not adjusted like ordinary tax brackets, these once-in-a-lifetime COLA increases could lead to permanently higher taxes for many retirees,’ Johnson said.

“Higher income can also result in cuts in income-related benefits for low-income seniors, Johnson said. A May-June survey from the Senior Citizens League found that 39% of participants who receive low-income benefits reported their low-income assistance was reduced due to this year’s 5.9% COLA, while 15% reported they lost access to at least one assistance program. “‘The most cruel irony is that a high COLA can lead to trims in income-related benefits such as SNAP and rental assistance for low-income beneficiaries,’ Johnson said.” [Source: TSCL Weekly Update | July 18, 2022| ++]

Used Car Scams

Update 01: Look Out For Too-Good-To-Be-True Prices

Used cars are in high demand, and scammers know it. Con artists are taking advantage of shoppers who turn to online platforms in search of a reasonably priced used vehicle. Be wary of this latest twist and too-good-to-be-true prices.

How this scam works

- You are shopping for a used vehicle on Craigslist, Facebook Marketplace, eBay, or another online platform. You find the make and model you want at an excellent price. Amazing!
- However, when you contact the seller, you find out that the vehicle is in another city. Fortunately, the seller knows a transport company that can deliver it to you. All you need to do is pay the transport company, which will hold the funds in escrow until the vehicle is delivered. Many scammers will add a sad story meant to tug on your heartstrings. For example, they may claim the car belonged to a relative who has passed away.
- In one recent BBB Scam Tracker report, the scammer claimed to be selling a car on behalf of their aunt, who inherited it from her recently deceased father. “‘The ‘Auntie’ claimed she was a nurse and worked shifts, and that my daughter's original email had fallen into her junk folder. The ‘Auntie’ had moved to another province thousands of miles from us. But if my daughter wanted to purchase the car for the stated price (which was well under the going price for a vehicle of this type, year and mileage), the Auntie had a contract with an automotive transport company.’”
- Once you’ve paid the third-party company, usually by a wire transfer or prepaid debit card, your vehicle won’t be delivered. The sale was a scam, and the con artist was in

cahoots with the third-party transport company. Unfortunately, your money is gone for good.

How to avoid used car scams:

- Watch out for prices that are too good to be true. It's probably a scam. Scammers know that used cars are in high demand, and they will tempt shoppers with great deals.
- Contact the seller by phone. As early as possible, speak to the seller on the phone and ask plenty of questions. If you get very vague answers, if the seller gets defensive or aggressive, or if they can't confirm their location or the location of the vehicle, you're probably dealing with a scammer.
- See the car before you buy it. Always make an in-person inspection and take a test drive before you purchase a vehicle.
- Don't give in to threats or pressure. Resist the urge to act immediately. Always take time to consider a purchase, especially if it's a vehicle that costs thousands of dollars.
- Don't wire funds for a car. Scammers often ask for wired funds because they are hard to track, and there's no way to get your money back. It's best to make large purchases by check or credit card.

For more information

See this [BBB Investigation on vehicle shipper and escrow scams](#). You may also want to read the BBB Tips on [buying a used car](#) and [buying a car online](#). If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to [BBB Scam Tracker](#). Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Learn how to spot a scam at [BBB.org/SpotAScam](#). [Source: Better Business Bureau | July 15, 2022 ++]

Rental Scams

Update 05: Be Wary Of Rental Scams When Planning a Party

If you are planning a party and need to rent [BBB Scam Tracker](#): chairs, decorations, a bouncy house, or any other supplies, scammers are looking to target you. BBB Scam Tracker is getting reports of party hosts tricked by rentals that don't materialize. Before planning your next party, get to know this scam to avoid being conned.

How this scam works

- You are planning a party and need to rent supplies. You do a web or social media search and find a few options. For example, you may find a website that looks legitimate and has a convenient online booking system. Or you might message someone through a social media account that seems professional. Either way, the "vendor" promises to reserve your rental for the date you need it – if you pay a deposit first. They may also require you to fill out a contact form with your personal details.

- The date of your party arrives, and your rental tent, furniture, or other supplies don't arrive. At this point, the "vendor" may tell you they've had an emergency and can't deliver on their promise. However, when you ask for your money back, the scammers will disappear completely. Other times, you can't contact the rental company at all.
- One consumer reported this experience to [BBB Scam Tracker](#): "The day of the event, the rental never came. I called the phone number, and it went straight to an answering machine... I left several messages. None have been returned, and it has now been two months."

How to avoid party rental scams:

- Do your research before you rent. Look for the rental company's website and ensure it has accurate contact information. Then, read consumer reviews about the company on third-party websites, such as BBB.org. Also, search the business name plus the word "scam" to make sure you don't find any reports of fraudulent business dealings.
- Be careful with your personal details. You may need to fill out a contract with personal information, but make sure you are dealing with a legitimate, professional company before you hand over sensitive information.
- See [the full article on BBB.org](#) for more tips.

For more information

Get BBB advice on [planning a wedding](#) or renting a [venue for your next party](#). If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to [BBB Scam Tracker](#). Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Learn how to spot a scam at [BBB.org/SpotAScam](#). [Source: Better Business Bureau | July 22, 2022 ++]

Air Travel Scams

Update 02: Airfare Scams Are Cashing In On Cancelled Flights

Airline travel is back in full swing, but scammers are taking advantage of [increased flight cancellations](#) with a new con. [BBB Scam Tracker](#) has received multiple reports of scammers creating fake airline ticket booking sites or customer service numbers to charge travelers for rescheduling fake flights. If you are buying airfare, use caution and double-check the URL or phone number before providing your credit card information.

How this scam works

- While doing an online search for cheap flights, you come across what seems like a great deal with a major airline. You book the flight—either through the website or by calling a customer support number.
- But shortly after making the payment, you receive a call from the company saying there's been a sudden price increase or an extra charge to finalize your booking. This is something a legitimate company would never do! **It turns out that you accidentally purchased**

tickets through a scam website or a phony customer service number. The price increase is a way to get more money out of you.

- In another similar con, your original flight was real, but the cancellation notice is fake. You get an email or text message claiming that your upcoming flight has been canceled, and you need to rebook. **When you call the number provided, the “airline” offers to book you a new ticket – for a price. However, if you follow up with real airline support, you’ll discover that nothing was wrong with your original flight.** The message was a scam, and you just gave your credit card details to a con artist.
- One victim told [BBB Scam Tracker](#): "I thought that I bought airline tickets with United Airlines through a company that sells at discounted prices. They called me shortly after I bought my tickets and said that the flight had been canceled. They wanted permission to put me on another flight with Southwest and said it would be 80 dollars extra... It turned out that United Airlines never canceled a flight. I tried to call this company and leave a message and I tried to email them to no avail. It turns out that the airlines were unaware of this ticket purchase."

How to avoid airfare scams:

- **Double check flight details before calling support.** Scammers are blasting out fake airline cancellation emails and text messages that can easily be mistaken for the real deal. Confirm the information in the message – such as the flight and reservation numbers – is correct before calling customer support.
- **Confirm the URL before you enter personal and payment information.** It can be easy to click on a sponsored ad or impostor website without noticing. Before entering any sensitive information, double check that you are on the right website and that the link is secure. (Secure links start with “HTTPS//” and include a lock icon on the purchase page. Learn more at [BBB.org/BBBSecure](#) .)
- See [the full article on BBB.org](#) for more tips.

For more information

For ways to protect yourself from travel scams, go to [BBB.org/Travel](#). Read more about [customer service number scams](#). If you’ve spotted a scam (whether or not you’ve lost money), report it to [BBB Scam Tracker](#). Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Learn how to spot a scam at [BBB.org/SpotAScam](#). [Source: Better Business Bureau | July 29, 2022 ++]

Cola Watch 2022 CPI Increase as of June

The June 2022 CPI-W is 292.542, 9.0 percent above the FY 2022 COLA baseline. The Consumer Price Index for July 2022 is scheduled to be released Aug. 10. The CPI-W baseline for FY 2022 is 268.421.

The calculation is made by comparing the average CPI from July through September of the current fiscal year to the average for the same months of the year prior. Remember, active duty pay raises are calculated differently. This information is calculated from the non-seasonally adjusted Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W). Calculation for monthly COLA change: (Monthly CPI-Yearly baseline CPI)/Yearly baseline CPI. Learn more about CPI on the BLS web page <https://www.bls.gov/cpi>. [Source: MOAA Newsletter | July 14, 2022 ++]

SSA Windfall Elimination Provision

Update 03: Social Security Fairness Act Sponsorship

The Social Security Fairness Act has finally reached the magic number of over 290 co-sponsors. The Social Security Fairness Act (H.R. 82), if passed into law, would eliminate the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset. The Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset are two provisions that unfairly reduce or even eliminate the Social Security benefits of millions of Americans who have devoted their careers to public service, as well as having worked other jobs that withheld payroll taxes from their wages for Social Security benefits.

Per a relatively new House rule, any bill with 290 cosponsors can be added to the House Consensus Calendar (The Consensus Calendar is the go-to place for common sense bipartisan bills to move out of the house closet and be enacted into law). Once on, it is teed up for a vote if it maintains those 290 cosponsors or more for 25 legislative days (that basically means days when the House is in session). Then, the bill is referred to the Senate, where it usually follows the same route through committees and finally to the floor. This chamber may approve the bill as received, reject it, ignore it or change it. The Senate version of H.R.82, S.1302, has 40 bi-partisan co-sponsor. That's pretty darn good! If the Senate accepts the bill from the house, or passes its own bill, it's on to the President.

If the President approves of the legislation, it is signed and becomes law. If the President takes no action for ten legislative days, the bill automatically becomes law. If the President opposes the bill, they may veto the bill. In addition, if no action is taken for 10 days and Congress has already adjourned, there is a "pocket veto". [Source: TSCL Weekly Update | July 18, 2022 ++]

State Retirement Income Tax

Latest Changes

Virginia

Virginia military retirees 55 years and older will be able to keep more of their retirement income thanks to language in the state budget passed this spring by the state's General Assembly. Gov. Glenn Youngkin on June 21 signed [the two-year budget](#), which exempts the first \$10,000 in military retirement income in the 2022 tax year. This number will jump to \$20,000 in 2023, \$30,000 in 2024, and \$40,000 in 2025 and beyond. The new law also applies to surviving spouses of military retirees. That's an estimated \$575 in tax relief per \$10,000 of exemptions, according to MOAA Virginia Council of Chapters State Legislative Affairs Chair Col. Monti Zimmerman, USA (Ret). Retirees from the U.S. Public Health Service or NOAA will not be eligible for exemptions.

New Mexico

This spring, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham signed legislation exempting up to \$30,000 in military veteran retirement income by 2024. Under [HB 163](#), all retired armed forces veterans will have \$10,000 exempted in tax year 2022 and \$20,000 in 2023. From 2024 to 2026, there will be a \$30,000 exemption before the law sunsets. MOAA's New Mexico Council of Chapters (NM CoC) is a member of New Mexico's Military & Veterans Leadership Council, which is working with legislators to make the \$30,000 exemption permanent and to include exemptions for surviving spouses and NOAA and USPHS retirees, said Lt. Col. Walter Paul, USA (Ret), the legislative chair for NM CoC.

Vermont

Vermont military retirees will also see tax relief in 2022, with a \$10,000 exemption for residents with gross income of \$50,000 or less, or \$65,000 or less for those married and filing jointly. The \$10,000 exemption is phased out over the next \$10,000 in additional retirement income, according to [a state-produced summary of the bill](#), H. 510. "It's not only the right thing to do for those who serve our country, but it's also another economic development tool in our toolbox," Gov. Phil Scott wrote April 18 [on his official Facebook page](#). Scott signed the bill, which included other tax reductions, [on May 27](#).mUSPHS and NOAA retirees, as well as surviving spouses, are not eligible for the exemption.

North Carolina

An amendment to this year's state Appropriations Act will exempt retirement benefits from the commissioned corps of both the U.S. Public Health Service and NOAA from state income tax. The exemption takes effect for the 2022 tax year. Last year, the 2021 Appropriations Act provided [an exemption from state taxes on military retirement benefits](#) for all military retirees and surviving spouses, but not USPHS or NOAA.

California

A bill that would have eliminated California retirement income taxes on all uniformed servicemembers over the age of 60 with 20 years of service died in the State Assembly Appropriations Committee this spring. Lt. Cmdr. Jeff Breiten, USN (Ret), Legislative Vice-

President for MOAA’s California Council of Chapters, said he believes the uncertainty of the proposed bill’s cost is what ultimately sunk it. Had the legislation passed, it would have taken effect in 2023 and ended after the 2033 tax year. “We are reviewing this year's efforts to see what we can do different next year to gain more support from the state legislators,” Breiten said.

Breiten said the bill had the backing of 28 veterans service organizations (VSOs) and that some assembly members have already reached out to him about introducing similar legislation in 2023. He hopes to garner even more support from organizations and individuals outside military circles. “We believe that the voters in California support this,” Breiten said. “We just need to do a better job of showing that they support this.”

[Source: MOAA Newsletter | Kipp Hanley | July 28, 2022 ==]

*** General Interest ***

Notes of Interest

JUL 16 thru 31, 2022

- **Suicide Helpline.** Effective 16 July 2022, “988” will serve as the new direct dial number for the National Suicide Prevention Helpline.
- **Coming War on China.** At <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAfeYMONj9E> is a 114 min 2016 documentary presentation on how we may well be on the road to a nuclear war between U.S. & China and its impact on the world. Not much has changed since.

DPRK-U.S. Relations

Update 05: North Korea Threatens Nuclear Strike on U.S.

Kim Jong-un has warned that North Korea is ready to use nuclear weapons against the U.S. in a potential conflict, claiming the U.S. is “in pursuit of military confrontation,” state media reported Thursday. “Our armed forces are now fully prepared to cope with any sort of crisis, and our state’s nuclear war deterrent is also fully ready to demonstrate its absolute power accurately and promptly true to its mission,” Kim said in a Wednesday speech to war veterans celebrating the 69th anniversary of the end of the Korean War, according to the Korean Central News Agency.

Kim claimed the U.S. is spreading rumors about North Korean threats, calling such behavior “just that of a gangster.” “The United States, while describing all the usual actions of our armed forces as ‘provocations’ and ‘threats,’ is openly waging large-scale joint war games, which gravely threaten the security of our state. Such a double-dealing behavior is just that of a gangster,

and this is driving the DPRK-US relations to a limiting point, a point of fierce collision, which cannot be reversed any further,” he said. The North Korean leader also claimed the new South Korean government led by President Yoon Suk-yeol is “driving the situation on the Korean peninsula into the brink of war.”

President Joe Biden and Yoon discussed starting conversations about joint U.S. and South Korean military training on the Korean peninsula when the two leaders met in May. Biden also reaffirmed the U.S. is ready “to deploy strategic U.S. military assets in a timely and coordinated manner as necessary.” “If the South Korean regime and military ruffians think about confronting us militarily and that they can neutralize or destroy some parts of our military forces preemptively by resorting to some special military means and methods, they are grossly mistaken!” Kim said. “Such a dangerous attempt will be punished at once by a powerful force and Yoon Suk-yeol regime and its army will be annihilated,” he added to the warning.

As tensions between North Korea and the U.S. rise, the communist state and Russia grow closer, with the Russian ambassador to Pyongyang saying North Korean “builders” will come to rebuild occupied Donbas. [Source: National Review | Diana Glebova | July 28, 2022 ++]

Electric Cars

Update 04: Support Slips for Phase Out of Gas-Powered Vehicles

A growing number of Americans are against phasing out gas-powered vehicles and believe stricter environmental rules are not worth the economic cost they may have, according to a recent report. Pew Research Center recently surveyed 10,282 U.S. adults about policies to address climate change. Among the findings: 55% of Americans oppose the idea of phasing out the production of trucks and cars with internal combustion engines by 2035. That figure is up slightly from last year, when 51% of Americans opposed the concept. Pew Research conducted its survey in early May, with the results highlighted in a report published last week.

Even so, policymakers in some states are already taking steps to transition away from gas-powered vehicles. In 2020, California Gov. Gavin Newsom issued an executive order calling for all passenger cars and trucks sold in California to be zero-emission by 2035. In March, Washington set the same goal for 2030. At the federal level, the Biden administration last year proposed regulations for emissions standards so that half of cars and vehicles sold would be electric by 2030.

While the majority of Americans are not inclined to say goodbye to gas-powered vehicles any time soon, a significant share, 42%, said they would be very or somewhat likely to consider going electric when it comes time to purchase their next vehicle. Among those respondents, helping the

environment and saving money on gas were the top reasons cited for their interest. The survey also found that willingness to consider buying an EV was higher among certain groups, including: current hybrid or electric vehicle owners (68%), those between the ages of 18 and 29 (55%), and people who live in urban areas (53%).

People older than 50, as well as those living in rural areas, are among the most skeptical when it comes to considering a future electric vehicle purchase, the survey shows. Overall, 67% of Americans said they would support incentives to encourage the use of hybrid and electric vehicles. A slight majority, 53%, of Americans said they believe stricter environmental laws would be worth the cost of lost jobs or other hits to the economy, but a growing share said the opposite. Forty-five percent of survey participants said stricter laws would not be worth the economic toll, up from 33% in 2019.

The increase is bipartisan but more significant among Republicans. Seventy-five percent of GOP respondents said stricter environmental laws and regulations are too costly for the economy, up from 55% in 2019. Meanwhile, 21% of Democrats agreed, up from 14% in 2019. Ninety percent of Americans said they were in favor of planting a trillion trees to absorb carbon emissions and 79% favored providing a tax credit to encourage businesses to develop carbon-capturing and -storing technologies. Both of these policies have broad bipartisan support, according to the report. Furthermore, 68% of Americans favor taxing corporations based on their emissions, and 72% of respondents said they support requiring power companies to use more energy from renewable sources.

Other Findings

A majority of Americans feel the federal government isn't doing enough to protect water and air quality, or to mitigate the effects of climate change. Black and Hispanic respondents are more likely than their white counterparts to report air pollution, concerns about drinking water, or a lack of green spaces in their communities. Environmental problems are also more likely to be reported in low-income communities than in middle- and upper-income areas. Fifty-eight percent of low-income Americans said safe drinking water is at least a moderate concern in their local community, compared with 37% of middle-income and 25% of upper-income respondents.

The survey also found that 71% of Americans experienced at least one of five extreme forms of weather last year, such as floods or intense storms, long periods of unusually hot weather, droughts or water shortages, major wildfires, or rising sea levels that erode shorelines. Most respondents who said they had experienced one of those events said they believed climate change to be a factor. To read the full report, refer to <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2022/07/14/americans-divided-over-direction-of-bidens-climate-change-policies>.

[Source: Route Fifty | Molly Bolan | July 1, 2022 ++]

Prosthetic Limb Tattoos

Walter Reed National Military Medical Center Policy

From the very cringe to the very meaningful, tattoos have a special place in the military. Now, a policy at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center will help ensure wounded service members don't have to part with the beloved tats they got during their time in uniform. "[O]ur general policy is that if you had a tattoo before you lost your limb and you would like the same tattoo on your prosthetic/artificial limb cover, then we will try to make this happen, depending on available resources," said Dr. Paul Paqsquina, chief of rehabilitation at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. It's unclear how long the program has been available for service members receiving treatment at Walter Reed.

Tattoos and troops are one of the world's more storied love affairs. Celebrated by young soldiers and at times begrudged by senior leaders, service member tattoos can range from absolutely outrageous to sentimental, providing an opportunity to memorialize fallen brothers or sisters. If nothing else, they often represent a memory, person, or place that was important enough that the service member wanted to keep it with them forever. And losing a limb in service to their country shouldn't take that away. More than 1,500 service members lost limbs during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to the Department of Defense. And Paqsquina says that of those, a "high percentage" has lost more than one limb. While the first step is saving a service member's life, according to Paqsquina, "the next step is restoring lives, and providing some meaning to those lives."

The program to recreate service members' tattoos is an attempt to "do whatever we can to make our nation's heroes 'whole' after the sacrifices they made," Paqsquina said, adding that its most important benefit is that troops are "proud and happy" to show off their prosthesis to friends and family. "This hopefully helps their self-confidence," he said, "encourages them to avoid isolation, provides an ice-breaker for meaningful conversations with people they meet for the first time, and gives the public a greater sense of the sacrifices made by our service members and the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities across the country and globe." [Source: Task & Purpose | Haley Britzky | Jul 21, 2022 ++]

Vocabulary

Some Words to Enhance Yours | 220801

Which word best fits these example sentences?

1. (a) What types of professionals research parapraxis?
(b) *Geologists – Psychologists – Seismologists - Endodontists*

2. (a) Sibyl's _____ memory helps her paint incredibly detailed reproductions.
(b) *Entropic – Eremitic – Eidetic - Ecstatic*
3. (a) What is a synonym for “inconnu”?
(b) *Stash – Stamina – Stranger - Stickler*
4. (a) Which professional is most interested in sternutation?
(b) *Arborist – Analyst – Allergist - Archivist*
5. (a) The island is a _____ paradise, visited by both walruses and sea-lions.
(b) *Plumiped – Quadruped – Pinniped - Milliped*

Answers

1. Psychologists: Parapraxis [par-ə-PRAK-sis] - A minor error in speech or action, (supposedly) representing the fulfilment of an unconscious wish; a Freudian slip.
2. Eidetic [i-DED-ik] - Relating to or denoting mental images having unusual vividness and detail, as if actually visible.
3. Inconnu [in-kə-NOO] - An unknown person or thing.
4. Allergist: Sternutation [stərn-yə-TAY-shən] - The action of sneezing.
5. Pinniped [PIN-ə-ped] - A carnivorous aquatic mammal of the order Pinnipedia, such as a seal or walrus.

[Source: www.wordgenius.com | July 15, 2022 ++]

News of the Weird

July 15 thru 31, 2022

Oh, the Humiliation – Bianca Chambers wasn't going to leave the sleuthing to the Detroit police after her Mercedes Benz was stolen. Using social media tips, she tracked her car all over the city, but each time she'd call 911, police would be too late to nab the thief. On July 13, though, she got lucky: The man who was driving her car parked and went to get his dreads twisted, and Chambers pounced. She walked into a barbershop, Fox2 Detroit reported, and confronted him. When he denied stealing her car, Chambers took him down by his dreadlocks. Customers subdued the unnamed man while Chambers slashed her own tires: "I thought he was gonna take off and I didn't know how long it was going to take for the police to pull up," she said. "You're just the dumbest criminal, that's all. You're joyriding in my car like nobody was going to see," she told the perp. Police said the man has a history of car theft. [Fox2 Detroit, 7/15/2022]

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Who Knew? – People in Gorakhpur, India, are struggling with record heat and lack of rainfall, as are many parts of the world. But according to the Daily Star, they had a different solution -- and it worked! "It's a time-tested belief that frog weddings are held to bring in rain," said organizer

Radhakant Verma. His group found two frogs on July 19 and held a wedding ceremony for them, with hundreds of people watching and a celebratory meal afterward. Sure enough, on July 20, the India Meteorological Department called for heavy rainfall in the area. [Daily Star, 7/20/2022]

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Unclear on the Concept – Japan is famously known for its culture of overworking. Rather than try to change that culture, two Japanese companies have developed an upright nap pod, where workers can sneak in a quick, private power nap without having to nod off in the restroom or at their desks. The boxes have been compared to upright tanning beds, Oddity Central reported. They offer support for the head, knees and back, even as workers stay in the standing position. "It's better to sleep in a comfortable location," noted Saeko Kawashima of Itoki, the furniture company that collaborated on the product. [Oddity Central, 7/10/2022]

o-o-O-o-o-

Ewww – In southwestern Idaho, an annual phenomenon is creating slick spots on the highways, CBS2-TV reported. The Idaho Transportation Department headed out on July 21 with heavy equipment to scrape Mormon crickets off Highway 51. When the crickets are crushed by cars, the resulting goo can become hazardous for motorists. The department posted a video on its Facebook page, but warned viewers: "If you get queasy easily, don't watch this with the volume on." Crunch! [CBS2, 7/21/2022]

o-o-O-o-o-

The Entrepreneurial Spirit – Jim Battan, 57, of West Linn, Oregon, figured out a way to pay off his \$110,000 backyard luxury pool: Since September 2020, Battan has hosted about 9,000 swimmers through an app called Swimply, NBC New York reported, making \$177,000. Battan admits there's more to the job than providing towels. He and his wife spend 12 to 14 hours a week managing bookings and doing maintenance. "I love the income, but I generally caution people from it," Battan said. "It takes a lot of time to learn about pool chemistry and maintenance. I look at my pool chemicals probably five to 10 times a day." But at \$70 per hour for five people, it's worth it to him. And his customers like it, too -- he has a high return rate. [NBC New York, 7/21/2022]

o-o-O-o-o-

Here Come Da Judge – KDKA-TV reported on July 19 that attorney Lauren Varnado, who was defending a Pittsburgh corporation in a courtroom in New Martinsville, West Virginia, accused Judge David W. Hummel Jr. of pulling a Colt .45 pistol out of his robes during the proceedings in March. Varnado alleged that Hummel pointed it "in a waving motion, like he was scanning, first at the defense counsel, and then (placed) it on the bench and slowly (turned) it to make sure the barrel of it is pointed at me." Because of the trial's contentious nature, Varnado had a security detail, but Hummel wouldn't allow them into the courtroom, saying, "I have bigger guns than they

have." Varnado said she is working with the FBI and the West Virginia Judicial Investigation Commission. "He cannot stay on the bench," she said. [KDKA, 7/19/2022]

[Source: <https://www.uexpress.com/oddties/news-of-the-weird/2022/07/22> | July 2022 ++]

Have You Heard or Seen?

Reagan Comments| Toons | George Carlin

Reagan Comments

Think what you will of Ronald Regan and his politics but most cannot dispute the following comments of his regarding our government:

- 'Here's my strategy on the Cold War: We win, they lose.'
- 'The most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the government and I'm here to help.'
- 'The trouble with our liberal friends is not that they're ignorant; it's just that they know so much that isn't so.'
- 'Of the four wars in my lifetime, none came about because the U.S. was too strong.'
- 'I have wondered at times about what the Ten Commandments would have looked like if Moses had run them through the U.S. Congress.'
- 'The taxpayer: That's someone who works for the federal government but doesn't have to take the civil service examination.'
- 'Government is like a baby: An alimentary canal with a big appetite at one end and no sense of responsibility at the other.'
- 'The nearest thing to eternal life we will ever see on this earth is a government program.'
- 'It has been said that politics is the second oldest profession. I have learned that it bears a striking resemblance to the first.'
- 'Government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it.'
- 'Politics is not a bad profession. If you succeed, there are many rewards; if you disgrace yourself, you can always write a book.'

George Carlin

85 years ago on May 12, 1937, George Carlin was born in Manhattan. In the 1970s, he underwent a professional makeover going from clean cut to someone who represented American counter-culture. In 1972, he began performing his most well-known monologue "Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television" that got him arrested and was the centerpiece of the 1978 Supreme Court case *F.C.C. v. Pacifica Foundation* which affirmed the government's authority to censor material on public airwaves. His 50-year career generated 23 albums, 14 HBO specials, 130 Tonight Show appearances and 3 books. Here are a few quotes (without any dirty words) in honor of the occasion:

- I think I am, therefore, I am ... I think.
- Isn't making a smoking section in a restaurant like making a peeing section in a swimming pool?
- I went to a bookstore and asked the saleswoman, 'Where's the self-help section?' She said if she told me, it would defeat the purpose.
- What if there were no hypothetical questions?
- Have you ever noticed that anybody driving slower than you is an idiot, and anyone going faster than you is a maniac?
- If you try to fail, and succeed, which have you done?
- When I ask how old your toddler is, I don't need to hear '27 months.' 'He's 2' will do just fine. He's not a cheese. And I didn't really care in the first place.
- If the black box flight recorder is never damaged during a plane crash, why isn't the whole airplane made out of that stuff?
- Think of how stupid the average person is, and realize half of them are stupider than that.
- Some people see things that are and ask, 'Why?' Some people dream of things that never were and ask, 'Why not?' Some people have to go to work and don't have time for all that.
- Most people work just hard enough not to get fired and get paid just enough money not to quit.
- 'Bipartisan' usually means that a larger-than-usual deception is being carried out.
- Fighting for peace is like screwing for virginity.
- Men are from Earth, women are from Earth. Deal with it.
- I have as much authority as the Pope. I just don't have as many people who believe it.
- One can never know for sure what a deserted area can look like.
- When you step on the brakes, your life is in your foot's hands.
- Some people have no idea what they're doing, and a lot of them are really good at it.

George Carlin died on June 28, 2008 in Santa Monica, CA. He was 71 years old

Thought for the Week 7/31/22

Military justice is to justice what military music is to music.

-- US Marine Corps

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