



South Dakota Department of the Military
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



GOVERNOR SIGNS HB 1163

Today, Gov. Daugaard signed House Bill 1163, a bill that revised the periods of time during which veterans may use tuition benefits at institutions under the control of the Board of Regents.

Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard and Education Program Manager Shane Olivier worked with Rep. Zikmund in crafting this legislation.

Those joining the Governor at the time of the signing were: SDDVA's Shane Olivier, Rep. Zikmund, Senator Van Gerpen and SDDVA's Ryan Fowler.

Inside this issue:

MJFSVH Update	2
VA Expands Hepatitis C Drug Treatment	2
Todd County Hires New VSO	3
2016 Cost of Care Act	3
Veteran's Suicide Programs	4
Veterans Day Poster Program	5
Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day	6
Upcoming Events	7



MJFSVH UPDATE



Mark Williamson, Commander of The Military Order of the Purple Heart, recently presented the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home with a donation of \$400. to enhance the lives of the veterans at the Home.

Last week, Gov. Dennis Daugaard made a quick



visit out to the State Veterans Home to spend some one-on-one time visiting with our heroes. He also viewed first-hand a SWAT exercise that was conducted by local and state law enforcement officers in Building 3 at the State Veterans Home.

VA EXPANDS HEPATITIS C DRUG TREATMENT

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it is now able to fund care for all veterans with hepatitis C for Fiscal Year 2016 regardless of the stage of the patient's liver disease. The move follows increased funding from Congress along with reduced drug prices.

"We're honored to be able to expand treatment for veterans who are afflicted with hepatitis C," says VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. David Shulkin. "To manage limited resources previously, we established treatment priority for the sickest patients. Additionally, if veterans are currently waiting on an appointment for community care through the Choice Program, they can now turn to their local VA facility for this treatment or can elect to continue to receive treatment through the Choice Program."

The VA has long led the country in screening for and treating hepatitis C. The VA has treated over 76,000 veterans infected with hepatitis C and approximately 60,000 have been cured. In addition, since the beginning of 2014, more than 42,000 patients have been treated with the new highly effective antivirals. In fiscal year 2015, the VA allocated \$696 million for new hepatitis C drugs (17 percent of the VA's total pharmacy budget) and in fiscal year 2016, the VA anticipates spending approximately \$1 billion on hepatitis C drugs. The VA expects that with the expansion, many more veterans will be started on hepatitis C treatment every week this fiscal year.

In addition to furnishing clinical care to veterans with hepatitis C, The VA research continues to expand the knowledge base regarding the disease through scientific studies focused on effective care, screening, and healthcare delivery including to female veterans and veterans with complicated medical conditions in addition to hepatitis C.

For additional information on Hepatitis C treatments Veterans can log onto <http://www.hepatitis.va.gov/patient/hcv/index.asp>.

TODD COUNTY NAMES NEW VSO

Todd County has selected Ronald D. Valandra as their new veterans service officer. Valandra replaces Terry Cousin who used to cover Todd and Tripp Counties and now just covers Tripp.

Ron is a US Navy "in country" Vietnam Veteran and a former IHS administrator.

Ron will be in his office on the first and third Fridays from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. His phone number and email address are as follows: 605.856.2567 and toddcountyvso@gmail.com.

Please join SDDVA in welcoming Ron to our network.

VETERANS EQUAL COST FOR CARE ACT OF 2016

U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds (R-S.D.), a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, has introduced the *Veterans Equal Cost for Care Act of 2016* to improve care for veterans who receive health care under the Choice Act program. This legislation would amend the Choice Act by eliminating the "secondary payer clause" to make certain veterans do not pay more for private care under the Choice Act than they would if they were seen at a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facility.

"Because we are a large, rural state, South Dakota veterans are disproportionately forced to use the Choice Act program to receive care at a non-VA facility," said Rounds. "The intent of the Choice Act, which is to provide relief to those facing long appointment wait times and those who live far from VA facilities, is undermined because of higher out-of-pocket costs and reimbursement issues. In fact, problems with the Choice Act is the number one issue my constituent services representatives handle on a day-to-day basis.

"The *Veterans Equal Cost for Care Act* would make certain veterans do not pay more for private care under the Choice Act program than they would if they were seen at a VA facility. If the VA doesn't have the capacity to serve the veterans it is intended to serve, it is only right that it picks up the bill for outsourcing its duties. It is a step in the right direction toward addressing the many problems within the VA to make certain our veterans receive the best care possible."

In response to long wait times at VA facilities, the 113th Congress passed the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act (Choice Act) in 2014. The Choice Act authorizes veterans who live more than 40 miles from a VA facility or are forced to wait more than 30 days for an appointment the opportunity to receive care at non-VA facilities. However, the Choice Act also includes a "secondary payer clause" for veterans who have private health insurance that forces these veterans to pay more out-of-pocket than they would for the same care at a VA facility. Rounds' legislation repeals the "secondary payer clause."



VA ANNOUNCES ADDITIONAL STEPS TO REDUCE VETERAN SUICIDE

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced new steps it is taking to reduce veteran suicide. The steps follow a February 2 Summit, *"Preventing Veteran Suicide – A Call to Action,"* that brought together stakeholders and leaders to discuss current research, approaches and best practices to address this important subject.

"We know that every day, approximately 22 veterans take their lives and that is too many," said VA Under Secretary for Health, Dr. David Shulkin. "We take this issue seriously. While no one knows the subject of veteran suicide better than the VA, we also realize that caring for our veterans is a shared responsibility. We all have an obligation to help veterans suffering from the invisible wounds of military service that lead them to think suicide is their only option. We must and will do more, and this Summit, coupled with recent announcements about improvements to enhance and accelerate progress at the Veterans Crisis Line, shows that our work and commitment must continue." Several changes and initiatives are being announced that strengthen the VA's approach to Suicide Prevention. They include:

- Elevating VA's Suicide Prevention Program with additional resources to manage and strengthen current programs and initiatives;
- Meeting urgent mental health needs by providing veterans with the goal of same-day evaluations and access by the end of calendar year 2016;
- Establishing a new standard of care by using measures of veteran-reported symptoms to tailor mental health treatments to individual needs;
- Launching a new study, "Coming Home from Afghanistan and Iraq," to look at the impact of deployment and combat as it relates to suicide, mental health and well-being;
- Using predictive modeling to guide early interventions for suicide prevention;
- Using data on suicide attempts and overdoses for surveillance to guide strategies to prevent suicide;
- Increasing the availability of naloxone rescue kits throughout VA to prevent deaths from opioid overdoses;
- Enhancing Veteran Mental Health access by establishing three regional tele-mental health hubs; and
- Continuing to partner with the Department of Defense on suicide prevention and other efforts for a seamless transition from military service to civilian life.

For information about VA initiatives to prevent Veteran suicide, visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/.



2016 NATIONAL VETERANS DAY POSTER

Calling all artists!

The 2016 National Veterans Day Poster Contest is underway. Every year, the VA's National Veterans Outreach Office, in conjunction with the Veterans Day National Committee, publishes a commemorative Veterans Day poster. The poster is selected from artwork submitted by artists nationwide and is distributed to VA facilities, military installations around the world and across cities and towns in our nation. It also serves as the cover of the official program for the Veterans Day observance at Arlington National Cemetery.

Over the years these posters have illustrated the rich history of our country's Servicemembers. The winning posters clearly reflect pride and patriotism in saluting veterans while providing the thematic artistry for the year.

Poster guidelines, submissions must:

- Be 18" x 24" at 300 dots per inch, scale down submissions to 9"x12."
- Represent veterans from all branches of service. The Committee may select a particular submission but ask the artist to make modifications to the original design. Additional changes may be required prior to printing.
- Reflect the diversity of our veteran and military population in terms of race, gender and disability status.
- Include sufficient information to demonstrate that the image is the work of the artist and is not copyrighted material (i.e. photos and concepts).

Artists should submit electronic versions as jpg images or PDF files by email to vetsday@va.gov or send copies of artwork on a CD with artwork files to:

Veterans Day National Committee
Department of Veterans Affairs
ATTN: Micheal Migliara (002D)
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Submissions are not restricted to "human centric" presentations, such as a joint color guard. Imagery of American icons, monuments or scenery can qualify, for example, the American flag. To view examples of past winning submissions visit www.va.gov/opa/vetsday/gallery.asp.

The deadline for submissions is Apr. 15, 2016. A selection committee will convene in May 2016 to review submissions and make a final selection.

Questions? Contact the Veterans Day Coordinator at vetsday@va.gov.



GOVERNOR PROCLAIMS MARCH 30 WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

Governor Daugaard proclaims March 30, 2016 as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day in South Dakota.

By South Dakota statute, March 30, also has been designated as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, a day to pay tribute to the fallen, the missing, the wounded, the millions who served, and the millions more who awaited their return.

Make sure to take time on the 30th to thank all the Vietnam Veterans you know — and even those you don't know!

Executive Proclamation State of South Dakota Office of the Governor

Whereas, The Vietnam War was fought in Vietnam from 1961 to 1975 and involved North Vietnam and Viet Cong in conflict with the United States and South Vietnam; and,

Whereas, In 1965, there were 80,000 United States troops in Vietnam and by 1969 a peak of approximately 543,000 troops was reached; and,

Whereas, On January 27, 1973, the Treaty of Paris was signed, which required the release of all United States prisoners of war held in North Vietnam and the withdrawal of all United States Armed Forces from South Vietnam; and,

Whereas, On March 30, 1973, the United States Armed Forces completed the withdrawal of combat troops from Vietnam, and more than 58,000 members of the United States Armed Forces lost their lives in Vietnam and more than 300,000 were wounded; and,

Whereas, In 1982, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated in the District of Columbia to commemorate those members of the United States Armed Forces who died or were declared missing in action in Vietnam; and,

Whereas, In 2006, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated at the South Dakota State Capitol to commemorate the South Dakota soldiers who died or were declared missing in action in Vietnam; and,

Whereas, More than 27,000 South Dakotans served valiantly under difficult circumstances during the Vietnam War and 210 made the ultimate sacrifice; and,

Whereas, Since their return, these veterans have contributed tremendously to their communities, states, and nation in an effort to advance the American ideals and aims for which they fought; and,

Whereas, The Vietnam War is a story of service members of different backgrounds, races, and creeds who came together to complete a daunting mission. It is a story of Americans from every corner of our Nation who left the warmth of family to serve the country they loved. It is a story of patriots who braved the line of fire, who cast themselves into harm's way to save a friend, who fought hour after hour, day after day to preserve the liberties we hold dear; and,

Whereas, By South Dakota statute, March 30 has been designated as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day, a day to pay tribute to the fallen, the missing, the wounded, the millions who served, and the millions more who awaited their return:

Now, Therefore, I, Dennis Daugaard, Governor of the state of South Dakota, do hereby proclaim March 30, 2016, as

WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS DAY

in South Dakota.



In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused to be affixed the Great Seal of the state of South Dakota, in Pierre, the Capital City, this Seventh Day of March in the Year of Our Lord, Two Thousand and Sixteen.

Dennis Daugaard
Dennis Daugaard, Governor

Attest:
Shantel Krebs
Shantel Krebs, Secretary of State

Upcoming Events

- Mar. 11—Beadle/Sanborn Veterans Benefit Forum—Beadle County Extension Center—Huron—11:00 am
Mar. 12—SFVAHCS Variety Show
Mar. 14-20—National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans
Mar. 15—Sioux Falls Vet Center Open House (3200 W. 49th Street) 3:00 pm—6:00 pm (CT)
Mar. 30—MJF Veterans Home Open House—1:00 pm (MT)
Apr. 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
April 15-17—DAV Convention—Rapid City—Adoba
Apr. 18-19—SDCMF Symposium—Black Hills State University Center—Rapid City
Apr. 20—Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls
May 10—SDDVA Mini Conference—Rapid City—TREA—1981 Centre Street
May 11—SDDVA Mini Conference Pierre—American Legion Post 8—520 S. Pierre Street
May 12—SDDVA Mini Conference—Brookings—City/County Building—520 3rd Street—Suite 300
May 14—South Dakota Vietnam Veterans of America Meeting/Election—Post 8 American Legion—Pierre
(election at 11:00 am (CT) and meeting at 1:00 pm (CT))
May 14—2nd Annual PVA Poker Run and Concert—Sanford Pentagon—Sioux Falls
Jun. 9-12—VFW State Convention—The Lodge at Deadwood
Jun. 16-19—American Legion State Convention—Ramkota—Watertown
Jul. 11—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
Jul. 23-24—Sioux Falls Air Show
Aug. 22-25—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Pierre Ramkota
Oct. 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)

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