

# The AMERICAN LEGION

# Department of France



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November 2013

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## DEPARTMENT COMMANDER James Settle

### My Fellow Legionaries

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> DEC held in Heilbronn several new committees were established. One of these committees will be checking on the feasibility of a Department Emergency Fund (DEF). The fund would assist members in times of need. Several Constitution change recommendations were announced; these changes will be reviewed by the Constitutional Committee and reported on at the 3<sup>rd</sup> DEC. In addition a revitalization committee was appointed to contact and help PO01 in its struggle to remain an active post. This should also be briefed at the 3<sup>rd</sup> DEC in March.

A bid for the Department Convention 2014 was provided by Post's GR09 and GR1982. After much discussion on both bids the body voted on GR09's convention bid. More information to follow, from GR09 Commander Jerry Aman.

Veterans Day is approaching fast. I will be in Saint Avold France, at the Lorrain American Cemetery for a Memorial Service and wreath laying. If you are planning to attend us in Saint Avold and are going to lay a wreath please advise me or the Department Adjutant so that arrangements for wreath stands can be made at Lorrain American Cemetery.

The Department Oratorical Final will be held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2014 in Stuttgart. Now is the time to start preparing for this event. I would really like to see more contestants at this year's event, and more support from the posts. If your area does not have a DoD School offer

# Department Officers

*Continued from Page 1*

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## ***From the Editor...***

Please send all input for the Department Newsletter to my e-mail address by the end of the month. Please use Word document format. Constructive suggestions to improve the Newsletter are also welcome.

If you want to stay informed on what is happening with **YOUR** Department you can also visit the following sites,  
[www.AmerLegionDeptFrance.org](http://www.AmerLegionDeptFrance.org)  
[www.Facebook.com/ALDeptFrance](http://www.Facebook.com/ALDeptFrance)  
[www.legion.org/fodpal](http://www.legion.org/fodpal)

Thank You.

David N. Greaux  
[davidgreaux@t-online.de](mailto:davidgreaux@t-online.de)

support/help to a post that does, this worked out just fine last year between post GR03 and GR79.

The Department is still in need of a JROTC Chairman. If you are interested in this program, please contact me or the Department Adjutant Comrade Max Rice.

**MEMBERSHIP, MEMBERSHIP, MEMBERSHIP.** I cannot stress membership enough. It is the bloodline of our organization. It enables us to perform our missions to the Veterans and their Families, and supports not only National Programs but ours also. While you are out there recruiting, new members do not forget your current members, get them to renew in a timely manner. If you have any questions on membership do not hesitate to contact the Membership Chairman Comrade Brown, at [joedan.pascal1@googlemail.com](mailto:joedan.pascal1@googlemail.com). He can answer your questions and resolve any problems you are having with membership.

I would like to remind all of you this is neither mine nor the Department Newsletter Editor's Comrade Greaux Newsletter. It is yours. Department Officers, Post Commanders, Adjutants, and members of this department can and should submit articles for this publication. You cannot convince me that your post or a member of your post has done something worth mentioning, and here is the place to do that, let the entire department know, what you are accomplishing. Take credit for what you are doing, to support your post, and its programs.

In closing I hope to see all of you at Saint Avold France on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2013. Please keep those in harm's way and their families, in your thoughts and prayers also.

James M. Settle  
Department Commander

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The Department Web Page is:  
[www.AmerLegionDeptFrance.org](http://www.AmerLegionDeptFrance.org)  
The department has a Face Book page at the following [www.Facebook.com/ALDeptFrance](http://www.Facebook.com/ALDeptFrance). Please visit and like this page. Thanks

**DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDER AT LARGE /**  
**MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN *Joe D. Brown***

SECOND DEPARTMENT DEC 26 OCTOBER 2013, HEILBRONN GERMANY



Vice Commander Brown (*GR79 Post Commander*) visits  
GR79 member Dennis Perry in Heilbronn hospital.



## MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS REQUIREMENTS TO JOIN THE AMERICAN LEGION

**IMPORTANT: EVERYONE MUST SUBMIT A COPY OF  
DD 214 OR DISCHARGE.**

### NEW MEMBERSHIP

Eligible veterans applying for first time membership must submit the following information to Post Membership Committee:

1. Complete American Legion Membership application.  
Applications are available at the Post Home
2. **COPY OF DD214 OR DISCHARGE**
3. Membership Dues Payment. Dues. (Amount Shown on Application). Make checks payable to your Post ..
4. If the information is correct, membership will be approved and then a membership card will be mailed to you.
5. Please see eligibility dates below.

### TRANSFERS

Veterans applying for transfers from your current Post to our Post must submit the following:

- a. Completed Member Data Form.
- b. **COPY OF DD214 OR DISCHARGE**
- c. COPY OF MEMBERSHIP CARD
6. Membership dues payment, if current year dues are not paid. If current dues are paid, please pay dues for next year's membership.

### ELIGIBILITY DATES

MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY in the American Legion is based on honorable service with the U. S. Armed Forces between:

(April 6, 1917 -November 11, 1918) World War I  
(December 7, 1941 - December 31, 1946) World War II  
(June 25, 1950 - January 31, 1955) Korean War  
(February 28, 1961 - May 7, 1975) Vietnam War  
(August 24, 1982 - July 31,1984) Lebanon/Grenada  
(December 20, 1989 - January 31, 1990) Operation Just Cause  
(August 2, 1990 - Today)\* *Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm*

Because eligibility dates remain open, all members of the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible to join The American Legion at this time, until the date of the end of hostilities as determined by the government of the United States. Must have served at least one day of active military duty during one of the dates below and honorably discharged or still serving honorably. :

For any questions please contact our membership chairman,  
[joedan.pascal1@googlemail.com](mailto:joedan.pascal1@googlemail.com) M-0170-1888034  
Membership Chairman  
Charlie Joe BROWN

**DEPARTMENT SERVICE OFFICER George Hall**

I am now set up at my home for VA, DAFS, SSA, ACG, CA.  
The address is AmKirchwald 3, 69251 Gaiberg

Phone H 06223 5475  
Phone M 0176 7227 6350  
Email [hallgt@yahoo.com](mailto:hallgt@yahoo.com)



**DETACHMENT  
COMMANDER  
Joshua J. Settle**



During the Detachment 2<sup>nd</sup> DEC discussion on the Detachment fishing event was conducted. The date will be the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 at Soldiers Lake in Ansbach. This event will be for only one day. Coordination for this event will be with Comrade Lane of GR1982.

Also discussed during the 2<sup>nd</sup> DEC were proposals for changes to the Detachment Constitution and By-Laws. Comrade Greaux and Settle will present the recommended changes at the 3<sup>rd</sup> DEC if approved; the changes would be effective for the 4<sup>th</sup> DEC and the Detachment Convention. Information will be sent out on the recommended changes well in advance of the 3<sup>rd</sup> DEC on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2014 hosted by Squadron GR07.

From the 26<sup>th</sup> of October until the 10<sup>th</sup> of November I will be in Virginia on a school exchange program. I am planning to visit the Detachment of Virginia and possibly a few Squadrons while there. Hopefully

I can get some new ideas on moving the Detachment forward.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of November I along with the Department Commander and Auxiliary President will be in Saint Avold France to participate in the Veterans Day Memorial and wreath laying Ceremony. I encourage all to participate if possible.

By now all Squadrons should have their 2014 Membership Cards. I encourage all squadrons to start their Membership renewals NOW. Remember the Detachment has a Membership fund which will allow Squadrons to do a transmittal now and then reimburse the Detachment once the dues are collected from their members.

I still encourage SAL Members in the Detachment that are Dual Members to carry your SAL Cap to events, this will show SAL support to their Post, Detachment, and the Department.

Those post desiring to start a squadron, please contact me or the detachment Adjutant and we will help you to get started.

In closing I hope to see all of you at this next DEC. Please keep those in harm's way and their families in your prayers.

Joshua J. Settle  
Detachment Commander  
Phone: 07138-67359  
E-Mail: [josh.sal@hotmail.com](mailto:josh.sal@hotmail.com)

## MESSAGE FROM SAL ALT NECMAN DAVID GRE AUX...

To all Squadrons, Detachment of France

We have a problem...AGAIN!

I am sending this message out in regards to TRANSMITTALS. Or I should say the lack of them being sent to our Detachment Membership Chairman Joe Brown. We are well into our 2014 membership year and as last informed only four squadrons have sent in a transmittal for the 2014 membership year. The membership cards have been in for months now and Membership Chairman Brown has assured me he has been in contact with all squadrons, or at least trying to contact someone responsible for the various squadrons, so I do not see what the problem is. If your squadron in not in possession of the 2014 cards maybe it is time to take the initiative and ask where are they!

I have been informed that various squadron members have paid their membership dues but the transmittals are not getting turned in. Those individuals who took the responsibility to process the transmittals are doing an injustice not only to the squadron members but to the Detachment of France.

If you need more information or assistance please contact our Detachment Membership Chairperson Joe Brown or Detachment Adjutant James Settle. I am sure they would be ecstatic to hear from you.

One more reminder...To all Legion Post Commanders, please take the initiation today to inquire of your SAL Liaisons if there is anything that you can do to insure that all operations run smoothly.

Thank You.

David Greaux  
ALT NECMAN  
Detachment of France



### DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT Isolde E. Settle



#### Fellow Auxiliary Members and Legionaries

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> DEC was a success we had a quorum, and we were able to conduct our business. I also had the opportunity to speak with Commander Schram BE02, he is very interested in the American Legion Auxiliary, and is trying very hard to establish an Auxiliary Unit in Brussels. Commander Schram asked for Flyers and Brochures, to help advertise the Auxiliary. I was able to send him a link to download such materials. Hopeful they helped.

Also keep in mind that Commander Buchanan GR1982 is also very interested in having an Auxiliary Unit in Ansbach also. I should find out more on this in December. I will be ordering three packets on establishing an Auxiliary unit from National one to keep on hand.

I have spoken a few times on our role to assist the post in their events, and the need to communicate with each other better to accomplish this. I believe that we are now doing a much better job at doing this and I am sure we are supporting the Legion with their events and efforts in supporting our past, present and future veterans and their families, more vigorously.

Remember the 11<sup>th</sup> of November is Veterans Day. I will be in Saint Avold France, Lorrain American Cemetery, to participate in a memorial and wreath laying ceremony.

In closing Please keep those in harm's way and their families, in your prayers.

Isolde E. Settle  
Department President

PHONE: 07138-67359  
E-Mail: [isoldesettle@outlook.com](mailto:isoldesettle@outlook.com)

# HALLOWEEN ACTIVITIES 2013

## GR 79 PUMPKIN FEST



## GR 06 HALLOWEEN PARTY



# LIST OF US CUSTOMS OFFICES IN EUROPE

*Information for retirees who may need to update or apply for a German Tax Card (pink card)*

OFFICE	LOCATION	CIVILIAN & DSN PHONE NUMBER	HOURS OF OPERATION
Ansbach	US FORCES CUSTOMS - EUROPE Barton Barracks Building 5254, Room 316	0981-183-7842 or 7546 DSN: 468-7842 / 7546	Mon-Fri: 0800-1600 Closed on weekends and US holidays
Bamberg	US FORCES CUSTOMS - EUROPE Warner Barracks Building 7011, Room 124,125	0951-300-7460 or 9312 DSN: 469-7460 / 9312	Mon-Fri: 0800-1200 & 1230-1530 Closed on weekends and US and German holidays
Baumholder	US FORCES CUSTOMS - EUROPE Smith Barracks Building 8724, Room 2	06783-6-7442 / 8193 DSN: 485-7442 / 8193	Mon-Fri: 0800-1200 & 1230-1600 Closed on weekends and US and German holidays
Garmisch	MP Station Artillery Kaserne Building 209	08821-750-3648 / 3601 DSN: 440-3601 / 3648	Tue - Fri: 1300 - 1600 Closed on weekends and German holidays
Geilenkirchen	470th ABS/LGT Geilenkirchen NATO Air Base Building 84, Rooms 8&9 (TMO-CS)	02451-632227 DSN: 458-6087 / 6031 / 6030	Mon-Thurs.: 0800-1600, Fri: 0800-1400, on first Thursday of the month 0800-1200 due to training Closed on weekends, German and some US holidays
Grafenwöhr	US FORCES CUSTOMS - EUROPE Grafenwöhr Garrison Building 621, Room 101	09641-83 7249/8901 DSN: 475-7249 / 7282 / 8901	Mon-Fri: 0900-1200 & 1300-1500 Closed on weekends, US holidays and the first Thursday of the month
Hohenfels	US FORCES CUSTOMS - EUROPE Training Area Building 10, Room 118	09472-83-2012 / 2745 DSN: 466-2012 / 2745	Mon-Fri: 0800- 1200 & 1300- 1530 Closed on weekends, US holidays and 1st Thursday of each month
Kaiserslautern	US FORCES CUSTOMS - EUROPE Kleber Kaserne Building 3245, Room 215	0631-411-7383 DSN: 483-7383	Mon-Wed: 0830-1200 & 1300-1600 Thurs.: 0830- 1200 & 1300- 1500 Fri: 0830-1200 & 1300-1600 Closed on weekends and US holidays
Ramstein	US FORCES CUSTOMS - EUROPE Ramstein Air Base Building 305, Room 14	06371-47-0100 DSN: 480-0100	Mon-Fri: 0800-1600 Closed on weekends and US holidays
Schweinfurt	US FORCES CUSTOMS - EUROPE Conn Barracks Building 64	09721-96-8846 / 8847 DSN: 353-8846 / 8847	Mon-Fri: 0800-1200 & 1230-1530 Closed on weekends and US and German holidays
Spangdahlem	US FORCES CUSTOMS - EUROPE Spangdahlem Air Base Building 139, Room 106	06565-61-4500 DSN: 452-4500	Mon-Fri: 0900- 1200 & 1300- 1600 Closed on weekends and US holidays
Stuttgart	US FORCES CUSTOMS - EUROPE Panzer Kaserne Building 2913, Room 303	07031-15-2657 / 2731 DSN: 431-2657 / 2731	Mon-Fri: 0800- 1200 & 1300- 1600 Closed on weekends and US holidays
Wiesbaden	US FORCES CUSTOMS - EUROPE Clay Kaserne Building 1038, Room 201	0611-705-6071 / 5188 DSN: 337-6071 / 5188	Mon-Fri: 0800- 1200 & 1300- 1615 Closed on weekends and US holidays



# FOREIGN AND OUTLYING DEPARTMENTS AND POSTS OF THE AMERICAN LEGION

ALASKA • CANADA • FRANCE • HAWAII • MEXICO • PHILIPPINES • PUERTO RICO • CHINA POST

*Still Serving America's Veterans... Around the World*



## I NEED PICTURES...I NEED HISTORY

I have a BIG problem; I have run out of pictures to post on The Department of France Website. I know there are Legionnaires in the Department that have pictures that need to be posted on the Website. We NEED to preserve this part of our Department History. If you have pictures for me, send me an e-mail, I will send you a link to a photo sharing program called "DROP BOX", when you get it go to "get started" and it will tell you step by step on how to use it. It is a program that National uses and it works great when you want to send a large amount of pictures. It's easy to use, I have

setup a folder called The Department of France, just create a file drag it into the Department folder; send me an e-mail with a short story plus date, the function, and location. I will pull it out of Drop box and post it on the Website, it's that easy.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at [dhaggan@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dhaggan@sbcglobal.net)

If you have a couple of minutes login into The Department Website and checkout the Photo Gallery.

## LET'S PRESERVE OUR DEPARTMENT HISTORY FOR THE FUTURE

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# Share your post's legacy On Centennial Celebration page

**THE AMERICAN LEGION**  
**100 Years** 1919-2019  
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI LIBRARY

**THE AMERICAN LEGION**  
*Centennial celebration*

**National Headquarters launches Centennial Celebration web platform**  
August 15, 2013

Twitter 0 | Facebook Share 1 | Email 0 | Print

Administration  
Notifications  
Manage Post  
Admins

History  
Post Index  
Share Your Post History  
Legion History

Tools  
Legacy & Vision  
Post History Workbook

Media  
Headlines  
Media Kits  
Press Releases

Calendar  
Related Links

In 2018, The American Legion will begin celebrating 100 years of service to veterans, military personnel, families and communities. To honor the Legion's centennial, many events at the national, department and post levels will occur starting at the 2018 National Convention in Minneapolis and continuing throughout the 2019 convention in Indianapolis. Planning for these celebratory events is currently underway by the Legion's 100th Anniversary Observance Committee, but help is needed at the post level to tell the larger story of The American Legion's first century.

All 13,000 Legion posts worldwide, whether chartered in 1919 or 2009, have histories and a legacies that have contributed to the overall identity of The American Legion. Each post can convey its legacy by sharing historical photos, videos and print material on the Legion's new Centennial Celebration web page: [www.legion.org/centennial](http://www.legion.org/centennial)

### **How to get started**

Posts are encouraged to form centennial committees now, made up of members who will collect historical artifacts and data on the post. For example, the centennial committee may identify:

- Who founded the post and when
- Who the post was named after
- Important dates in the history of the post
- Families involved with the post for multiple generations
- Notable members
- Notable alumni from youth programs such as Boys State, the Oratorical Contest or Legion Baseball
- What makes the post special or unique
- Great things the post has done for its community

If this information isn't accessible from post archives or members, speak with the local library or media outlets (newspapers, radio, TV) that have covered events about your post.

### **Share your story**

Once your post's centennial committee has collected photos, videos and print material related to its history, share it on the Legion's new Centennial Celebration web page.

To create a post history page, follow these seven steps:

1. Go to the Centennial Celebration web page, [www.legion.org/centennial](http://www.legion.org/centennial)
2. Register (in the upper-right hand of the page) to be an administrator. The administrator of a post's page allows him or her to monitor all content submitted to the page before it appears to the general viewing public.
3. Click "Share Your Post History" located under "History" on the left hand navigation column.
4. Enter your department and post number.
5. Click "Yes, create post x."
6. Complete the required fields needed to start; you only need your post number, city and charter date. If you don't know when your post was chartered, put in an estimated date until you find the answer; you can add/change information as you receive it.
7. Click "Save" when finished.

Once your post page is created, members — and those whose lives have been touched by the post — can add historical photos, timeline events (significant moments that helped build the chronology of your history) and upcoming events celebrating your history and the Legion's centennial.

And for step-by-step instructions on how to share your post's legacy and vision, download the Legion's [Centennial Celebration Workbook here](#).

If your post does not have access to the technical tools or expertise needed to create a Centennial Celebration history page, the workbook features paper forms of timeline events, photo galleries and upcoming events. The forms can be submitted to a third party who is willing to create the web page and act as the post's administrator.

For more information, please email: [ledwards@legion.org](mailto:ledwards@legion.org)

# COMMISSARIES TO START SCANNING IDS

Commissaries worldwide will soon start scanning all patron IDs and logging their household information when they go through checkout, commissary officials announced Oct. 31.

"In addition to verifying customers as authorized commissary patrons, we'll gain information that will give us a better understanding of our patrons, allowing the agency to provide the commissary benefit more effectively and efficiently," Joseph Jiu, director and CEO of the Defense Commissary Agency.

Fort Lee, Va., home to DeCA headquarters, started scanning IDs at checkout Oct. 22. The next phase of the rollout is scheduled to start Nov. 10 and all commissaries are expected to be participating by mid-January after the required software upgrade has been installed, officials said.



Commissary users out of uniform are currently asked to show their ID cards when they checkout as a way of ensuring they are authorized shoppers. Periodically some stores will also require patrons to show ID upon entrance, or, if they are not military ID card holders, receive a visitor pass. But the information on the ID cards is not currently collected or saved during any of those checks.

The commissary does already track some shopper data through the Commissary Rewards card system, which allows users to sign up for a card that can be loaded with electronic coupons. About one million cards were registered in the first year of that program, which launched August, 2012.

But with the new system officials will be able to track the information of all 5.3 million commissary eligible households.

Officials said the system will log the card ID number, rank, military status, branch of service, age, household size, and zip codes of residence and duty station of each shopper. It will not retain name, address, or phone number information, they said.

Patrons are required to input similar information when registering a Commissary Rewards card.

Army wife Jessica Dolley, whose ID was scanned as she shopped at the Fort Lee commissary Oct. 30, said the process went smoothly. The checker scanned her ID on the same scanner used for groceries before processing the rest of her purchase, she said. She said there have been signs up for weeks warning patrons about the upcoming change.

"It was very easy," she said. "They scanned it and started my order."

Although some commissary shoppers interviewed thought the program will collect too much of their personal data, many felt that commissary officials aren't planning to collect anything they haven't already given up.

"It's a government installation," said Sophia Ross, an Army wife at Fort Campbell, Ky. "If you didn't like them knowing all that information you shouldn't be married to the Army ... How is it going to hurt you if they know how many people are in your home? It's not."

Michelle Farmer, also at Fort Campbell, agreed. "I think who cares ... it's basic info the government has access to in (the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System) anyway and it's not like personal sensitive info," she said.

Commissary supporters said that this program will help the commissary show its value.

"We applaud this step forward by the Defense Commissary Agency. The retail grocery industry is driven to a great extent by a retailer's ability to understand the patron base, their core demographics and their preferences," said Patrick Nixon, the president of the American Logistics Association, which lobbies on behalf of the commissary. "This additional data will better position DeCA as it develops its marketing strategy for the 21st century commissary benefit. In addition, the breakout of the raw data on patron usage will go a long way in solidifying the value proposition of this important benefit to the military community."

# STATE DEPT. SEEKS VETS FOR FOREIGN POLICY JOBS

Secretary of State John Kerry on Thursday announced a new public-private partnership intended to advance career opportunities for veterans interested in foreign affairs.

Kerry offered no real details on how the Veterans Innovation Partnership -- or VIP -- will operate, but identified one university, one technology company, and four federal agencies, including State, that are signed onto the program.

"The bottom line is pretty simple," Kerry said, "I believe that those who have worn the uniform have shown that they know how to serve in one capacity and through that capacity have now developed new capacity to be able to serve yet again at the front [for the United States]."

Kerry was joined at the announcement by Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, D-Ha., who served two combat tours as a member of the Hawaii Army National Guard, USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah, and Department of Veterans Affairs Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Tommy Sowers.

Through VIP, veterans interested in foreign policy will be assisted in gaining international employment in the public and private sector, he said. In addition to the State Department, the partnership also

includes the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and Millennium Challenge Corporation.

Outside government, the University of Massachusetts-Boston and iRobot Corp., a maker of robots for the consumer, security and defense markets, have signed on, Kerry said.

The secretary said the VIP program is particularly important to him, reminding reporters and others at the press conference that he has been involved in veterans issues "literally, since the day I returned from Vietnam."

Kerry was a co-founder of Vietnam Veterans of America. He also was involved in the battle for veterans to be compensated for Agent Orange exposure and for increasing life insurance on service members raised from \$12,000 to \$500,000.

Kerry said the VIP program "is not just about what the State Department can do for veterans. It's really based on the notion that veterans can do a lot for the State Department, and we'd be foolish not to try to reach out and harness this talent that exists."

"Being a veteran doesn't automatically qualify you to be on the right side of any given foreign policy issue. It doesn't work that way," he said. "But it's a perspective. The experience of being a veteran does qualify you to speak with a voice that is a little bit different, and also helps you to validate ways in which we can project American voice and values abroad."

## DoD and VA Resume Normal Operations

Week of October 21, 2013

The end of the government shutdown means the return of federal workers and the resumption of funding for DoD and VA functions. It also means service members, military retirees, and veterans can relax knowing their pay and benefits will continue beyond the first of November. Now that things are returning to normal, the next concern is how the [2014 defense budget battles will affect our servicemembers and their families](#). [Read the Military Advantage blog for the full story](#).

## Depression is Treatable

Week of October 21, 2013

If you are concerned about yourself or a loved one, visit Military Pathways at [www.militarymentalhealth.org/](http://www.militarymentalhealth.org/) to take a free, anonymous, online self-assessment for common mental health conditions such as depression, posttraumatic stress disorder or generalized anxiety disorder. These conditions are treatable, and a self-assessment is not only easy but can be the first step you take toward getting the help you need. For more information, visit the [Defense Centers of Excellence Blog](#).

## FDA Warns Against Supplement

Week of October 21, 2013

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is advising consumers to stop using OxyElite Pro, a dietary supplement, because of suspected links to acute hepatitis. The FDA is investigating reports of acute non-viral hepatitis in Hawaii where 29 cases are linked to a dietary supplement. The FDA urges consumers to stop using the product while the investigation continues. The product is sold nationwide in retail stores and on the Internet. Eleven of the 29 patients have been hospitalized with acute hepatitis, two have received liver transplants and one person has died. The CDC is also investigating other cases of liver injury nationwide that could be related. For more information about the FDA warning, visit the [FDA website](#).

## University Giving Scholarships to Washington Vets

Week of October 21, 2013

In response to Governor Inslee's Executive Order 13-01 and its commitment to serving the U.S. Military, City University of Seattle is giving \$100,000 in scholarships to U.S. veterans who select Washington State as their home. In addition, City U is committing a number of its key resources to aiding individuals who have served their state and nation. To be considered for this scholarship, transitioning veterans must submit a transcript; proof of Washington State residency; a Certificate of Eligibility; an essay; and a personal statement. For more details, see this [press release](#).

## Veterans and the New Health Care Law

Week of October 21, 2013

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) sent out a letter a few weeks ago to veterans explaining their options under the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The new law will not change VA benefits. If a veteran is enrolled in VA healthcare, that coverage meets the standards for the ACA's insurance requirement. Most uninsured veterans are eligible for VA health care. However, not everyone who has served in uniform qualifies for VA health care such as Reserve or National Guard vets who served on active duty for training purposes only. Veterans who are not eligible for VA, and their families, could go to the Health Insurance Exchange. Another option, gaining Medicaid coverage, is limited in states that are not expanding the

program. Here are some ways to enroll in VA care or determine your eligibility: (1) visit [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll); (2) call 1-877-222-VETS (8387); and (3) visit your local VA health care facility. For more information, visit VA, the Affordable Care Act and You webpage at [www.va.gov/health/aca/](http://www.va.gov/health/aca/).

For more updates on VA benefits programs, visit the [Military Advantage blog](#).

## TRICARE IN A MOBILE WORLD

Week of October 21, 2013

Beneficiaries can access their TRICARE benefits and benefit information on their mobile devices through a variety of mobile applications and mobile-optimized sites. The mobile version of TRICARE.mil is accessible on mobile devices including tablets and smartphones simply by typing [www.tricare.mil](http://www.tricare.mil) into a mobile device's browser. Each of the TRICARE regional contractors also has their own mobile site or app: (1) Health Net, the North Region contractor, operates [www.hnfs.com/go/mobile](http://www.hnfs.com/go/mobile); (2) the South Region contractor, Humana Military, has a mobile site at [m.humana-military.com](http://m.humana-military.com); (3) In the West Region, UnitedHealth Military & Veterans has a mobile app for mobile devices called "OptimizeMe". The TRICARE pharmacy contractor Express Scripts, Inc. (ESI) offers both a mobile site, [www.express-scripts.com/mobile](http://www.express-scripts.com/mobile), and an app called Express Rx. Beneficiaries must register with ESI before using the mobile site by going to [www.express-scripts.com/activate](http://www.express-scripts.com/activate). For more information, call TRICARE or your contractor. Visit [www.tricare.mil/callus](http://www.tricare.mil/callus) for a list of contact numbers.

For more on TRICARE benefits, visit the [Military.com TRICARE section](#).

## RETIREE COLA SET FOR 2014

Military Retirees and annuitants will get a 1.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment in their January 2014 retiree checks.

Each fall the federal government determines the next year's COLA based on the Consumer Price Index. The CPI is a mixture of several factors including the inflation rate of the reflected in the cost of groceries, housing, medical care, energy and gasoline prices.

The COLA increase applies to military and federal civilian retired pay and Social Security benefits. VA Disability Compensation and Pension COLAs are

decided separately by Congress, but they typically reflect the rates of increase.

While this year's rate is a lower than last year's, many retirees may remember that there was no COLA increase in several years before.

NOTE: The Senate passed the bill to provide the COLA for veterans earlier this week. The House is expected to pass the bill in time for veterans to see the 1.5 percent bump in their January checks.

# VA CLAIMS BACKLOG FELL DURING SHUTDOWN

The veteran's claims backlog continued to drop this month despite the two-week government shutdown and dire claims from Veterans Affairs leaders that momentum on the problem had been lost.

VA officials reported Monday that 411,704 compensation claims have been pending for more than 125 days, the 15th consecutive week the official backlog number has decreased. The figure is down about 10,000 cases since Sept. 28.

But the decrease appears to contradict VA claims that the government shutdown would hurt efforts to clear the backlog, by depriving the department of funds for mandatory overtime to work on the problem.

On Oct. 1 -- the first day of the budget impasse -- VA assistant secretary of Public Affairs Tommy Sowers predicted an increase in the number of overdue claims because of the shutdown.

A week later, VA Secretary Eric Shinseki told members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee that "the momentum achieved in the past six months (on the backlog) has now stalled with the government shutdown." He also indicated that the department's stated goal of zeroing out the backlog in 2015 could be jeopardized by the shutdown.

In an email, VA officials acknowledged that the backlog did not increase during the shutdown but insisted that it did remain flat during the days department funding was restricted. That ignores a Oct. 14 report putting the backlog about 6,000 cases lower than where Shinseki had indicated just a few days earlier.

The department attributes the 10,000-case drop from Sept. 28 to Oct. 19 to the five non-shutdown days included in that reporting period, and the "hard work of our Veterans Benefit Administration employees" despite the distraction.

Republicans in Congress have accused the White House of exaggerating the effects of the shutdown and creating unnecessary hardships to make the budget fight more painful. That included decisions to close national parks and furlough thousands of government employees.

VA programs were somewhat insulated from the shutdown, because of millions in advance funding appropriated to the department. That kept veterans hospitals and care centers open and most department employees on the job, but did affect non-essential programs such as the overtime claims work.

Since March, veteran's claims processors have trimmed the backlog total by an average of 31,000 a month. It is unclear whether the slower progress over the last three weeks will prevent similar progress by the end of the month.

In a statement, House Veterans Affairs Chairman Jeff Miller said he was pleased with the latest numbers.

"It's great to see that the government shutdown didn't stop VA's backlog progress," he said. "If VA's claims processing overtime program, which is now set to resume, is as crucial to success as department leaders claim it is, we expect the backlog to shrink considerably more in the coming weeks."

Shortly after the shutdown's end, VA officials announced they would resume mandatory overtime for all VA claims processors, requiring about 20 hours of extra work before the end of November.

The department also plans to reinstate mandatory overtime again next spring, an indication that they believe they'll need the extra effort to keep the backlog trend headed downward.



# Why is veterans' advocate Arnold Fisher angry?

Arnold Fisher is angry.

The real estate mogul and philanthropist wants know why the U.S. government isn't doing more to help the country's veterans in their recovery from post-traumatic stress (PTS) and traumatic brain injury (TBI).

"If we can't do this, we are not a decent people," Fisher said. "We lose that decency if we can't help those who help us."

So Fisher is channeling his anger for the better good.

He told "On the Radar" in a behind-the-scenes interview at the "Hero Summit," hosted by the Daily Beast, that he and his family have made it their mission to fill the void in assisting the country's veterans through their two foundations: The Fisher House Foundation and the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund.



"All the money comes from the American people, the government is not part of this," Fisher said of the foundations, which operate through private donations. "Why, I don't know, but they're not, so if they're not, we have to step up."

The Fisher family's philanthropy on the part of veterans began in 1990.

"My family started this many, many years ago," Fisher said. "My uncle Zachary started it by going to a hospital with Admiral [Carlisle] Trost, and they came out in the evening and there was a car, the windows were fogged up and in the car was a sailor."

Fisher explained the sailor was sleeping in the car because his wife was in the hospital at the time, and he didn't have the money to get a hotel room for the night.

"Zach ... said that will never happen again, so he started the Fisher House," said Fisher.

The Fisher House Foundation, which is now operated by Arnold's son, Ken Fisher, provides a network of homes where the families of veterans can stay while their loved one undergoes medical treatment in nearby facilities. The foundation recently made headlines for offering to pay for the emergency military death benefits that were temporarily suspended during the government shutdown.

"This is our mission," Fisher said. "Look at us; we've been successful in this country. We've taken a lot from this country, it's given us a lot, [and] it's time to give back."

Fisher also discussed his family's second foundation, the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund, which has provided state-of-the-art rehabilitation facilities for veterans recovering from war-inflicted wounds, with special emphasis given to those suffering from TBI.

"It's a difficult wound, it's the unseen wound. When you get wounded in the arm or leg, even if you lose an arm or leg we can see that, so we know you have to fix it, but this you can't see," he said.

# Military Family Appreciation Month History

Each year the President signs a proclamation declaring November Military Family Month. Last year President Obama said that our nation owes "each day of security and freedom that we enjoy to the members of our Armed Forces and their families. Behind our brave service men and women, there are family members and loved ones who share in their sacrifice and provide unending support."



Commitment and the many contributions they make every day in support of the military and our nation. Efforts to recognize the sacrifices of the military family by Active, Guard, and Reserve leaders are being joined and supported by DoD organizations to include the Army Air Force Exchange Service, Defense Commissary Agency, and others.

This annual proclamation marks the beginning of a month-long celebration of the Military Family in which the Department of Defense and the nation will honor the commitment and sacrifices made by the families of the nation's service members.

Community leaders, businesses, and military bases and posts are teaming up to recognize military families through special events such as: open houses, fun runs, family fun nights, and community dinners; discounts at MWR facilities, local business and sporting events; and special recognitions during community activities throughout the month of November.

Throughout the month of November, military families serving around the world are honored through a variety of observances and recognized for their

Contact your local MWR or Family Services offices to learn more about events scheduled in your area.

ON THE 11TH HOUR OF THE 11TH DAY OF THE 11TH MONTH OF 1918, AN ARMISTICE, OR TEMPORARY CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES, WAS DECLARED BETWEEN THE ALLIED NATIONS AND GERMANY IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR, THEN KNOWN AS "THE GREAT WAR." COMMEMORATED AS ARMISTICE DAY BEGINNING THE FOLLOWING YEAR, NOVEMBER 11TH BECAME A LEGAL FEDERAL HOLIDAY IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1938. IN THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR II AND THE KOREAN WAR, ARMISTICE DAY BECAME VETERANS DAY, A HOLIDAY DEDICATED TO AMERICAN VETERANS OF ALL WARS.



IN THE UNITED STATES, AN OFFICIAL WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY IS HELD EACH VETERANS DAY AT THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN IN ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY, WHILE PARADES AND OTHER CELEBRATIONS ARE HELD IN STATES AROUND THE COUNTRY. VETERANS DAY IS NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH MEMORIAL DAY-A COMMON MISUNDERSTANDING, ACCORDING TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS. MEMORIAL DAY (THE FOURTH MONDAY IN MAY) HONORS AMERICAN SERVICE MEMBERS WHO DIED IN SERVICE TO THEIR COUNTRY OR AS A RESULT OF INJURIES INCURRED DURING BATTLE, WHILE VETERANS DAY PAYS TRIBUTE TO ALL AMERICAN VETERANS-LIVING OR DEAD-BUT ESPECIALLY GIVES THANKS TO LIVING VETERANS WHO SERVED THEIR COUNTRY HONORABLY DURING WAR OR PEACETIME.