




**Department of**



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February 27, 2014

## SOUTH CAROLINA NEWS LINE

**A friend is one who has the same enemies.**

### System Worth Saving

The visit scheduled for March 14-15 & 16 at the Dorn Medical VA center has been postponed as well as the Town Hall meeting at Post 6 on March 14. The tentative date is now April 14 same time and same place, Post 6 at 7 p.m. Any further information will be relayed when received. Anyone who would like to let the committee know what you think about your VA health care be known and help improve the quality of care you receive is asked to RSVP to [wkennedy@legion.org](mailto:wkennedy@legion.org) or 202-263-5769.

### Scam Alert

Defense Department officials say scammers are trying to get information and passwords from Army civilians, soldiers, retirees and family members. The scam involves a website called "My Army Benefits," which is nearly identical to the Army's official website called "MyArmyBenefits."

"The primary purpose of the fraudulent site is to collect soldiers' Army Knowledge Online, or AKO, email accounts and passwords, officials said. It also makes the false claim that the U.S. military has granted access to unclaimed and accumulated benefits for active duty soldiers, and that benefits not claimed within the stipulated period will be available for claims after 60 months," according to information released by the Department of Defense. Soldiers, Army civilians, retirees and family members are strongly cautioned to ignore the website, do not log into the website and to immediately delete suspicious emails without answering them. If you have accessed the website from a government computer or system, you should contact your local information

assurance office. The scam site is called “My Army Benefits” and the most recent URL for it was <http://www.usmilitarybenefit.org>. Again, the DOD says this site is not affiliated with the U.S. Army.

### New VA ID Card

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced the phased roll out of newly designed, more secure Veteran Health Identification Cards. The new cards are distinguished by additional security features and will have a different look and feel. In addition to being more secure, the card has been transformed into a Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC). Similar to a typical health insurance card, the VHIC displays the Veteran’s Member ID, a new unique identifier, as well as a Plan ID, reflecting the Veteran’s enrollment in VA health care. “VA is committed to providing high quality health care while ensuring the personal security of Veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “These new identification cards are an important step forward in protecting our nation’s heroes from identity theft and other personal crimes.”

The VHIC is personalized to display the emblem of the Veteran’s branch of service. It also provides features that make it easier to use, such as the addition of “VA” in Braille to help visually impaired Veterans, and the printing of VA phone numbers and emergency care instructions on the cards.

The card replaces the Veteran Identification Card (VIC), which was introduced in 2004. As part of a phased rollout, starting this month, the card will only be offered to newly enrolled and other Veterans who have not been issued a VIC. Then, in early April, VA will begin a three month effort to automatically issue the more secure VHIC to current VIC cardholders. VA recommends Veterans safeguard their VIC as they would a credit card, and cut up or shred the card once it is replaced. While not required to receive VA health care, all enrolled Veterans are encouraged to get a VHIC.

Enrolled Veterans can get more information about the VHIC by visiting their VA medical facility enrollment coordinator or the website [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhic](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhic), calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visiting their local VA health care facility. Veterans who are not enrolled in the VA health care system can apply for enrollment at any time by visiting [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll), Calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visiting their local VA health care facility.

### Agent Orange

The American Legion has announced its support for extending Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits eligibility to veterans who were exposed to aircraft that had previously sprayed Agent Orange over Vietnam. The Legion’s support is based on a study published Feb. 21 in the scientific journal Environmental Research: “Post-Vietnam Military Herbicide Exposures in UC-123 Agent Orange Spray Aircraft.” The study reports that environmental testing of such aircraft revealed traces of dioxin levels above Department of Defense (DoD) standards for maximum permissible exposure to poisonous chemicals. U.S. Air Force and VA policies do not currently recognize “dried residues” of herbicide and dioxin as harmful. Based on recent surface wipes and airborne concentration tests, occupational health researchers have concluded that inhalation, ingestion, and skin absorption of dioxin and Agent Orange occurred in crews who came in contact with the spray aircraft after the Vietnam War. “The Legion is committed to ensuring that veterans receive the benefits they deserve,” American

Legion National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger said. “We will work with Congress and the VA to promptly designate C-123K aircraft as Agent Orange exposure sites, thereby qualifying veterans who worked with these planes to be eligible for Agent Orange-related benefits.” According to Dr. Jeanne Mager Stellman, Professor at Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health, the study “should provide the evidence needed for post-Vietnam veterans to receive the same health treatment as in-country veterans. They need and deserve it.” Stellman is senior author of the study. The American Legion and Stellman worked together in the early 1980s to prove that adverse health conditions among Vietnam War veterans were linked to Agent Orange exposure, establishing a link that authorizes VA compensation and health care for those veterans.

In 1983, the Legion sponsored an independent study by Columbia University that established the effects of exposure to Agent Orange on Vietnam War veterans. Congress received the results of the “American Legion-Columbia University Study of Vietnam-era Veterans” in 1989.

The Legion and Stellman have continued to fight for changes that include, in a 2010 decision, ischemic heart disease, Parkinson’s disease and B-cell leukemia among conditions presumed to be connected to Agent Orange. The Legion has also fought to expand eligibility beyond those who served only with “boots on the ground” during the Vietnam War, including “blue-water” veterans exposed to the defoliant on U.S. Navy vessels and U.S. Air Force crews who handled it. In August 2012, the Legion passed [Resolution 128](#) to mitigate legal problems for the more than 1,500 veterans who must prove they suffer health problems associated with herbicide exposure.

### National Cmdr. Visit

All Post Commanders, Adjutants and Legionnaires are invited to meet and greet the National Commander of The American Legion at a gathering on March 4, 2014 at the Clarion Hotel, 1615 Gervais St., Columbia starting at 9 a.m. in the Magnolia Room.

### Legislative Corner

On February 15, President Obama enacted **Public Law (P.L.) 113-82**, which would partially reverse language in last year’s budget law that sought to reduce cost-of-living adjustments for retired military members. The new law passed the House on February 12 by a vote of 326-90, and was subsequently approved the next day by the Senate by a vote of 95-3. [Further details on the new law can be found in last week’s Legislative Division update.] [[Resolutions 29- and 58-2012, 25-2013 Spring](#)]

Since February 3, more than 1,600 veterans have taken The American Legion online survey for those suffering from traumatic brain injury (TBI) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The survey is part of the Legion's continuing research on the two mental health issues that, together, affect more than a half-million veterans.

In 2010, the Legion created a committee to study treatments used for TBI and PTSD by the private sector, the Department of Defense (DOD), and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The committee's report (<http://www.legion.org/veteranshealthcare/217116/legion-releases-report-tbi-and-ptsd>) “The War Within,” was issued last September and distributed to Congress, senior VA and DOD leadership, and the White House.

To take the survey, go to: <http://surveys.questionpro.com/a/t/AKtnPZQqKR>. The online survey runs through February 28. [[Resolutions 285-2012 and 26-2013 Spring](#)]

### **2015 Post Data Form**

Last week, the above form was mailed to each post for completion and returning to Department by April 15, 2014. This form is used by us and National for renewal notices when sent as well as correct any addresses and for any dues changes. It is imperative that these be completed as soon as possible and returned to us by the above date so any changes can be made to our and National's records. Your cooperation in the matter will be greatly appreciated.

### **2013 Enhancements**

Just a note to remind all that the 2013 enhancements are due in department no later than April 30, 2014 in order for the post to be considered in good standing and to participate in the 2014 Department Convention and any of the programs of the Department of South Carolina. At this time there are only 14 posts that need to pay the 2012 enhancement. Please check to see if your post has paid on the 2013 amount due and encourage the responsible officers to do such. It will be greatly appreciated.

### **SSA Disability Claims Processing**

Beginning on March 17, 2014 the Social Security Administration will start a new process to expedite disability claims of veterans who have a compensation rating of 100 percent permanent and total (P&T) by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. Please share this exciting news with your members, colleagues, and other interested parties. For more information visit SSA website at [www.socialsecurity.gov/pgm/disability-pt.htm](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pgm/disability-pt.htm).

### **Auxiliary Event**

American Legion Auxiliary Unit #215 will be hosting a St. Patrick's Days Fund raiser with proceeds to be used for Girls State Delegates. The event will be held Friday night, March 14, 2014 from 9 p.m. to 12 midnight at 2432 Chappelle St., Columbia, SC. Cost \$5.00. FMI contact Louise Williams at 754-5093.

### **What's Happening**

**March 1, Saturday – State Oratorical Contest @ 10 a.m.** Clarion Hotel, 1615 Gervais St., Columbia

**March 2-6, Sunday thru Thursday - National Commander's Official Visit**

**March 7 thru March 10 – National Vice Commander's Visit**

**March 10, Monday – Veterans Fair @ 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.,** Brookland Baptist Church Health and Wellness Center, 1066 Sunset Blvd., West Columbia. FMI: visit [www.joewilson.house.gov/veteransfair](http://www.joewilson.house.gov/veteransfair) or 803-939-0041.

**Post Officer Lists**

**District Commanders Please Note:** This means also that even though you may have the same officers in the same positions for the 2013-2014 year, you should also submit a listing to department. Also, for those that have email addresses, please indicate that on the listing. Your assistance and attention to this matter will be greatly appreciated. The following is a listing of the posts. If they are in your district, please contact them and request they submit the information as soon as possible. This information is as of today, 12/19/2013.

**District #1** – Posts #79, #142, #174, #217

**District #2** – Posts #136, #145,

**District #3** – Post #231

**District #6** – Post #126

**District #8** – Posts #21, #105, #128

**District #10** – Posts #24, #70

**District #11** – Post #63

**District #12** – Posts #60, #74, #80, #92, #213 (The blank form is on the website to be used if needed.)

**District #13** – Posts #51, #67, #113

**District #14** – Post #100

**District #15** – Posts #77, #153, #154, #168, #169, #232

**District #17** – Posts #35, #202

**District #18** – Posts #47, #118, #266

**District #19** – Posts #8, #114

**District #20** – Posts #64, #78, #156

**LIT AD&D FREE**

Just a reminder of the free \$1,000 to the Legionnaire AD&D insurance available thru the LIT. Last year the program was expanded to cover up to \$5,000.00 free insurance IF you were travelling on official Legion business and were killed or had a dismemberment as a result of an accident. Official business would be travelling to or from a meeting either at the Post, District or Department (conference or convention). All the Legionnaire has to do is apply for it and is not automatic. I do not know of any family who could not use the additional funds at a time of necessity due to the loss of a loved one. In reviewing just what members of posts that are participating in the program, it is very eye opening that many, many members have not enrolled in this program.

To enroll all that is required is complete the application or call toll free 1-800-235-6943 with your membership number.

Proud to Serve

Lloyd  
Dept. Adjutant