




**Department of**



**South Carolina**  
**The American Legion**  
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May 1, 2014

## SOUTH CAROLINA NEWS LINE

**Progress is impossible without change and those who can't  
change their minds can't change anything.**

### VA Secret List

The Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in Phoenix has been keeping a secret list of patients with long-delayed appointments, a practice which has been linked to the deaths of at least 40 veterans, according to an April 23 report by CNN. The secret list kept by the Phoenix Veterans Affairs Health Care System was part of a cover-up created by VA managers to hide the fact that more than 1,400 veterans were forced to wait many months to see a doctor, according to CNN's interview with a retired VA doctor, Sam Foote, who worked at the facility for 24 years. American Legion National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger said if the allegations are true, the secret list in Phoenix "is one of the most abhorrent acts ever committed in VA history." The American Legion is meeting with top VA Central Office officials in Washington today to discuss the issue and the department's response to it.

Dellinger is sending a team of American Legion experts to Phoenix next month to give local veterans a chance to discuss the quality of their VA health care. The team, part of the Legion's System Worth Saving Task Force, will also conduct a two-day site visit to the Phoenix medical center where they will interview administrators, medical staff and patients. Dr. Foote told CNN that the Phoenix hospital also maintains a "sham" list that it shares with VA's Central Office in Washington, which falsely indicates Phoenix has been providing timely appointments for its patients. "If this is all true, it is a new low in a string of breakdowns at VA medical centers – Columbia, S.C.; Augusta, Ga.; Jackson, Miss.; the list goes on – that have caused the needless deaths of individuals who served this country with honor," Dellinger said. "We're going to find out what happened in Phoenix," he added. "We are going to find out who was responsible for this secret list and if they are still working for VA. These preventable deaths keep mounting, and yet we see not a single VA manager being held

accountable. The American Legion will work with Congress and the VA Central Office to find out exactly what has been happening, and why. It is not sufficient for VA to simply say it's going to try to do better next time, without holding people accountable."

The CNN report only fuels criticism about the department's reputation for a lack of accountability among senior leadership, Dellinger said. "Preventable deaths, construction delays, cost overruns, gaming the system, over-medicating our veterans – where does it all end? This issue must be addressed at every level."

### 2015 Post Data Forms

The following posts have not sent in their 2015 Post Data Forms to Department. This information is truly needed for both the Department of South Carolina and National. The closing date is April 25, 2014.

**District #1:** #174, #215

**District #2:** #136, #145, #241

**District #4:** #41

**District #5:** #270

**District #6:** #126

**District #7:** #91, #253

**District #8:** #105

**District #9:** #43, #201

**District #10:** #70, #129

**District #11:** #16, #17, #63, #203

**District #12:** #53, #74, #80, #94, #134, #213

**District #13:** #14, #44, #51, #163, #184

**District #14:** #230

**District #15:** #154, #232

**District #16:** #185

**District #17:** #29, #68, #140, #175, #202

**District #18:** #5, #73, #85, #118, #144, #249, #266

**District #20:** #64

### 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 11 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.

### More VA News

*Legion attends meeting with VA in Washington that produces no explanation for hospital's secret list*

American Legion officials met with a top Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) official in Washington on April 24 to address allegations made against the VA medical center in Phoenix, and how the department is responding to them. Specifically, CNN reported April 23 that the Phoenix facility has been keeping a secret list of patients long-overdue for medical exams, which has been linked to at least 40 preventable deaths at the facility. The report also said the list was kept secret to conceal appointment delays.

Thomas G. Lynch, M.D., VA's assistant deputy under secretary for health for clinical operations, responded to questions posed by Peter Gaytan, the Legion's executive director; Jacob Gadd, the Legion's deputy director for

health; and other attendees. Lynch offered no useful answers. When asked about the Phoenix facility's secret list, he said it was created because some VA employees didn't use electronic wait-list software correctly. "Answers like that don't increase our confidence that VA understands the terrible problems in Phoenix," said Daniel M. Dellinger, the Legion's national commander. "The fact that this secret list was maintained for quite some time, and that VA's Central Office knew nothing about it, is bad enough. But for Dr. Lynch to mask it as some kind of human error with software is inexcusable."

On April 24, the Washington Free Beacon reported that the Phoenix facility's director, Sharon Helman, received a \$9,345 bonus last year, in addition to her base salary of \$169,000. When Helman's name came up at the meeting, it was explained that she had only been at her job for 18 months and, since her arrival, the current average wait-time for appointments at the VA facility had reportedly fallen to 55 days – down from more than 100 days, but still far from VA's goal of 10-14 days. "Again, VA dodged the question," Dellinger said. "Dr. Lynch needed to tell us why a VA administrator deserves any kind of bonus – or a job, for that matter – when she is the person who authorized the use of a secret list that is linked to the deaths of at least 40 patients." According to internal emails obtained by CNN, Helman was aware of the secret list and even defended its use.

Preventable deaths at the Phoenix VA facility and its secret list have caught the attention of Capitol Hill. Arizona Sens. John McCain and Jeff Flake have asked the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs to conduct a hearing on allegations of patient neglect at the Phoenix medical center. The committee's chair, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., responded on April 24, announcing that a hearing will be held after VA's Office of Inspector General completes its own independent investigation, which is under way.

**Veterans Memorial  
Day Golf  
Tournament**

Golf Tournament will be held at the Tara Golf Course, 300 Country Club Drive, Savannah Lakes Village, McCormick, South Carolina 5/26/2014. Shotgun start at 10 a.m. Please arrive one hour early so you can be paired with your sponsors. **Thirty-two veterans will be sponsored by community members.** Each foursome will consist of one sponsored veteran and three community sponsors for a total of 32 teams. All veterans will be treated to lunch. All veterans not participating in the Memorial Day tournament may play either at Monticello golf course or after the tournament at Tara for member prices. **Volunteers welcome.** Sponsored by McCormick County Veterans Affairs and SLV. Hold-in-one car sponsored by Quality Nissan. FMI, participants and volunteers please contact one of the following: Bob McIntosh, SLV Golf Director (864)391-4175, Gary Shafer, Coordinator (210) 391-5522 or Tara Clubhouse [csmith@slv-sc.com](mailto:csmith@slv-sc.com) (864) 391-4115.

**What's Happening**

**May 3, Saturday – District 1 @Batesburg-Leesville Post #61, 10 a.m., 200 S. Hendrix St.**  
**May 3, Saturday – District 3 @Greenville Post #3, 430 N. Main Street, 10 a.m.**  
**May 3, Saturday – District 10 @Laurens Post #25, 206 Calhoun St., 10 a.m.**  
**May 3, Saturday – District 18 @Latta #266, Latta Community Center, Elections 12 noon.**  
**May 10, Saturday – District 4 @Little River Post #186, 4285 Pine Drive, 12 noon.**

## Post Officer Listings

**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 #13** – Posts #51, #67, #113

**District #2** – Posts #136, #145,

**District #14** – Post #100

**District #3** – Post #231

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

**District #6** – Post #126

**District #17** – Posts #35, #202

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

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

**District #10** – Posts #24, #70

**District #19** – Posts #8, #114

**District #11** – Post #63

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

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

## 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.**

## Home Depot News

The Home Depot Foundation added \$3.9 million in grants to organizations across the country that address veterans' housing needs. The recent round of grants brings the Foundation's financial contributions to the issue of \$65.7 million since launching its mission in the spring of 2011 of ensuring every veteran has a safe place to call home. To date, donations made by The Home Depot Foundation have impacted more than 10,200 units of veterans' housing. Some of the project funding included:

- \$1.7 million to nonprofits to repair or construct 323 units of permanent supportive housing for veterans, including 225 units that serve veterans with families.
- \$800,000 to nonprofits that will provide transitional housing to 131 homeless veterans.

- \$400,000 to a nonprofit organization that offers 58 women veterans and their families a permanent supportive housing solution.
- \$875,000 to provide critical home repairs and maintenance to 126 single-family homes owned by veterans and their families.

Proud to Serve

Lloyd H. Woods  
Department Adjutant