

# Did You Know?

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That your Department Newsletter serves many purposes. We hear from our leadership and learn what is going on throughout the state with our Legion family. Articles update us on our Americanism, Children and Youth and National Defense programs. And we hear what is new in the area of veterans' benefits. If you were to go on the internet to <http://thomas.loc.gov/> and type in the search word VETERAN you would find over 450 current bills in Congress. Of course most of these will never become the law of the land but some do pass and will have a direct impact on our fellow comrades. With this in mind your Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation (VA&R) office in Chicago uses the Department Newsletter as a forum to get the word out when there is an important change. This month we would like to highlight three recent changes.

1) **PRIORITY GROUP EIGHT VETERANS:** As of July 1<sup>st</sup>. of this year the means test thresholds for veteran's household incomes was increased by 10%. If you were denied because your income was too high you can have the VA hospital reconsider your case and you might now qualify. You can contact your nearest VA hospital or use the online VA Enrollment Calculator at <http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/apps/enrollmentcalculator/> Also, don't forget any veteran with a service-connected disability of 10% or more and those veterans who received a Purple Heart can still qualify for enrollment under the old criteria.

2) **GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM STATE BONUS:** Illinois Governor Quinn signed into law a bill compensating Illinois veterans for their service during the Global War on Terrorism. Veterans must have been residents of Illinois for at least a year preceding active service, honorably discharged and received at least one of two medals awarded for service in the Global War on Terrorism. The bonus is \$100.00 and applications must be made through the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs. To find your local service office call them at 1-800-437-9824 or go to <http://www.veterans.illinois.gov/> .

3) **INCREASED COMPENSATION FOR CERTAIN VETERANS RATED 100% SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABLED DUE TO INDIVIDUAL UNEMPLOYABILITY:**  
Many veterans don't qualify for a straight 100% rating but receive payments at that rate because they are unable to work due to their injuries. For instance a veteran may be rated 70% for a heart condition or 60% for the residuals of lung cancer from Agent Orange. Because these conditions prevent them from holding a gainful job the VA pays them at the 100% rate. Our Washington VA&R staff recently had a case go before the Court of Appeals on Veterans Claims and a new interpretation of an existing regulation is now in effect. In most cases veterans who receive individual unemployability and have other service-related conditions which add up to 60% can possibly get an additional \$300+. This benefit is called Special Monthly Compensation (SMC) and is somewhat technical. I urge any veteran who thinks they might qualify to contact me for further assistance.