

Did You Know?

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That each year our Legion Service Officers from all of our State Departments meet in Washington, D.C. for training? For three days they are furnished with a wealth of information from The National Veterans Legal Services Program and Department of Veterans Affairs including the Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration and the National Cemetery Administration. This training is sponsored by the American Legion VA&R Washington office. Following that most of us also attend the annual DC conference. Here are some of the highlights:

® eBenefits is a computer based program that allows veterans to access their records and print out from the comfort of their home or office various VA letters that they may need. Last year veterans requested over 1.4 million Civil Service Preference letters.

® To insure separating active duty personnel are fully informed about their VA benefits TAP (Transitional Assistance Program) attendance is now mandatory. Last Fiscal Year 1.8 million attended these programs.

® To speed up the VA claims process exams are being contracted out. Last year there were 1.2 million of these and as a result claims processing has been reduced dramatically.

® For veterans born between 1945-1965 over 4% may have Hepatitis C. With new drugs 95%+ can be cured. Veterans using the VA Health Care system should ask their doctor for a one time screening for Hep. C.

® Camp Lejeune contaminated drinking water regulations become effective March 14th of this year. If you have one of the listed conditions or your spouse died from one of them you should file your claim now. For the complete list see the VA's press release at <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2853>

® Throughout the country our Department Service Officers helped 800,000 veterans last year with their various VA benefits.

® Some medications prescribed for a veteran's Service-connected condition can cause tinnitus (noise/buzzing/ringing) in the ears. If this occurs the vet can file for Secondary Service-connected for that new condition.

® In that same vein when a veteran suddenly gets diagnosed with a serious illness e.g. cancer, heart problems, ALS, etc. this could lead to chronic depression. If this happens the vet can file for Secondary Service-connected for that.

® Medicare now requires doctors who give annual exams to seniors to screen for depression or anxiety.

® After a vet's case is denied at the Board of Veterans Appeals the vet can take his or her case up to the next level which is the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (CAVC). Last year 3,000 veterans went that route.

® A recent decision at the CAVC may affect thousands of veterans who were eligible for VA care but were taken to a local ER and ended up having to pay some of that cost. Stay tuned as the VA may appeal that decision to a higher court.

® If a vet's claim is denied due to loss of his service treatment records and they are later found (even 30 or 40 years later) the VA must go back to the original date of claim and review it all over.

® And finally, of all the National Veterans Service Organizations the American Legion is the largest.