
Burlington Veterans Newsletter

Robert C. Hogan, Director
Betty McDonough, Principal Clerk
Veterans Services, 61 Center Street
2001
270-1959/1960

E-Mail Veterans@Burlmass.org

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Pharmacy Assistance

I once again remind all veterans that you do not need to be a combat veteran, or a veteran with a disability to receive care at the VA.

You may be eligible to sign up and receive VA pharmacy privileges. With the high cost of medications and many restrictions, and with the HMO/Health Care crisis, the VA pharmacy may be your best opportunity to get your medications, without paying an arm and a leg.

A simple two page application can be filled out and sent to the VA, along with your separation papers.

There is a \$2.00 co-payment for most of us for each prescription for each 30 day supply. Others might qualify for free medications, depending on your status as a service connected disability, or your financial situation. There is a physical required with a VA doctor.

There are ongoing discussions in Washington about the probability that the co-pay will increase in the near future to as much as \$7.00. We will keep you informed to any changes as they occur.

Applications can be obtained by calling the Burlington Office of Veterans Services at 781-270-1959, or dropping by Room 212 of the Human Services Building at 61 Center Street. You can also obtain an application by calling the VA in Bedford at 781-687-2704.

Massachusetts State Veterans Cemetery

The very first state owned veterans cemetery has been dedicated in Agawam, just west of Springfield. Six years after the first steps were initiated by the Commissioner of Veterans Services, Thomas Hudner, and a farmer named Edward Squazza, a dream has come true. The cemetery is located on 61 acres of land donated to the Commonwealth for its veterans by Mr. Squazza.

Though Edward never served in the military, he always had a deep gratitude in his heart for those who did. Although it was offered to him, Mr. Squazza chose not to accept a special place for his burial in the cemetery. He said, "it's for the veterans, not me".

There is room for approximately 50,000 burials, and so far, 6,000 pre-applications have been received. Unlike the National Cemetery in Bourne, veterans can pre-apply for their burial at both the Agawam Cemetery, and the second cemetery that will be opened in Winchendon in about two years.

Update on Claims for Smoking Related Deaths and Disabilities

On April 6th, a Department of Veterans Affairs announcement finalized restrictions ordered two years ago by Congress. On June 10, 1998, President Clinton signed the *Interstate Surface Transportation Equity Act*, which allowed for the payment of highway construction with funds that otherwise would have been used for smoking related death and disability claims.

The rendering of Military Funeral Honors is a way to show the Nation's deep gratitude to those who, in times of war and peace, have faithfully defended our country.

Military Funeral Honors have always been provided whenever possible. However, the law now mandates the rendering of these honors for eligible veterans when requested by a family member.

Any and all families that request an honor guard for a deceased veteran shall have at least two uniformed members of the Armed Services, one of which shall be from the branch of service of the deceased.

Military Funeral Honors are provided by the Department of Defense at no cost to the family.

The core elements of the Funeral Military Honors Ceremony are: Flag folding, Flag presentation, and Playing of Taps.

Funeral Directors have been furnished with special packets by the Department of Defense with the necessary information.

VA Burial Benefits

A VA Burial allowance is a partial reimbursement of an eligible veteran's burial and funeral costs. In a non-service connected death, the VA may pay \$300 for burial & funeral costs, and \$150 for plot interment.

For service connected deaths, it could be as high as \$1,500. Check with Bob at 781-270-1959 if you have any questions.

Presidential Memorial Certificate

This is a parchment certificate with a calligraphic inscription expressing the Nation's grateful recognition of an honorably discharged, deceased veteran's service in the Armed Forces. The veteran's name is inscribed and the certificate bears the signature of the President.

The family may request a Presidential Memorial Certificate by mailing a request. For more information, contact the Office of Veterans Services.

Names Added to "The Wall"

Six American servicemen's names have been added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC, increasing the number of names on the black granite walls to 58,226.

In addition to the six names added, the status of 28 servicemen will be changed on "The Wall" from missing in action to killed in action.

Concurrent Receipt Debate

Concurrent Receipt refers to the dual receipt of a military retired pay and VA disability.

Presently, a retiree must offset, dollar for dollar, from their retired pay the amount they are receiving in VA Disability Compensation.

There are currently three bills pending in Congress that would eliminate the offset. It has been sent to a study committee, there-by killing it for another year.

Looking for World War – 1 Veterans

The Massachusetts Office of Veterans Services is looking for men and women who served and fought in World War – 1. It is for a whole host of reasons that Commissioner Thomas Kelley is tracking down these patriots, few of whom are still around.

Mr. Kelley wants the privilege and honor of meeting each and every World War – 1 veteran who resides in Massachusetts, and would like to recognize their service to their country.

If you have any information about any World War–1 veterans living in Massachusetts, contact Bob Hogan at 781-270-1959.