



Manuel Schneidmiller Post 154, Inc.

Rathdrum Idaho

Newsletter

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Email: rathdrum154@gmail.com

Website: Rathdrumpost154.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RathdrumAmericanLegion>

Mailing Address: PO Box 1116, Rathdrum ID

Meeting at: Lions Club 16114 N. Meyer Rd Rathdrum

Editor: Jean Bledsoe



American Legion Post 154 Mission Statement

The American Legion Post 154 is a patriotic veterans organization devoted to mutual helpfulness to support Veterans and the Community at large. We are committed to mentoring and sponsorship of youth programs, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting a strong national security, and continued devotion to our fellow service members, veterans, and their families in our communities. Our success depends entirely on active membership, participation and volunteerism. This organization belongs to the people it serves and the community in which it thrives.

Commander:

Well Legion Family, here we come to another month gone. I hope all our Legion members are safe and healthy. We had a very busy September with the Honor Guard pulling the heaviest load. Great Job Honor Guard! They are always looking for new members. Please help them out if you can. We also conducted our first 9/11 ceremony in front of the Rathdrum City Hall. It was a great ceremony with a stupendous turnout. Thanks to all the committee members for a great job!

Please take the time and thank those veterans as they come home from another war that is over. Many of our members remember how it was when they came home from the war. These veterans need to be with other vets that know what they are going through on being back home. We at the Legion are there for those veterans.

Membership is what makes our Post great. It would be great to achieve 100% again this year. Renew early.

Please take a minute and read through this information. It may help the next time someone asks you "Why Join?"

Honestly the reason to join is the pride in serving other veterans and serving our community. At each meeting the preamble of the American Legion constitution is read by all members. This sums it up nicely: For God and country we associate ourselves together for the following purposes:

To uphold and defend the constitution of the United States of America;

To maintain law and order;

To foster and perpetuate a 100% Americanism;

To preserve the memories and incidents of all wars.

To inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state, and nation;

To combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses;

To make right the master of might;

To promote peace and goodwill on earth;

To safeguard and transmit to posterity the principals of justice, freedom and democracy;

To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.

Benefits of Membership

Assisting Others

The more we give, the happier we feel. Volunteering increases self-confidence. You are doing good for others and the community, which provides a natural sense of accomplishment. Your role as a volunteer can also give you a sense of pride and identity.

Americanism

Americanism is an ideology, or "belief" in devotion, loyalty, or allegiance to the United States of America, or to its flag, traditions, customs, culture, symbols, institutions, or form of government. In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, "Americanism is a question of spirit, conviction, and purpose, not of creed or birthplace."

Monthly Magazine

Our nation's leaders speak directly to citizens on the pages of The American Legion Magazine. The Legion's organizational goals are promoted using the words of talented writers, professional journalists, and world leaders.

A Powerful Force in our Nation's Capital

The American Legion is the nation's most influential, effective and dependable advocate of veteran affairs fighting for better active-duty pay, improved housing for active-duty families and helping to ensure that the VA's medical system can properly care for veterans. (cont. below)

VA Benefit Assistance

Your membership helps support Department Service Officers nationwide who assist veterans in preparing claims and obtaining their full military healthcare benefits through the VA.

Discounts

Your membership gives you and your family practical, money-saving discounts that can easily save you many times the cost of your annual membership dues. Remember to stay safe, take care of each other, check on your fellow veterans, and do whatever you feel it takes to stay healthy!

For God and Country. - Dee Sasse, Commander



A new incentive program that can earn money for each Post has been announced by Jinny Cash, the new Dept. of Idaho Commander, and the Dept. Membership Committee. Each Post must reach 100% of their membership goal, set by the Department, by January 31, 2022, based on the size of our Post. The Department has set our goal at 142 members for 2021, if we reach this number the Department will send us a check for \$400.00 (**100% Post size 126-300 members= \$400.00**). I hope each of you will renew as early as you can so we will reach our goal before January 31, 2022.

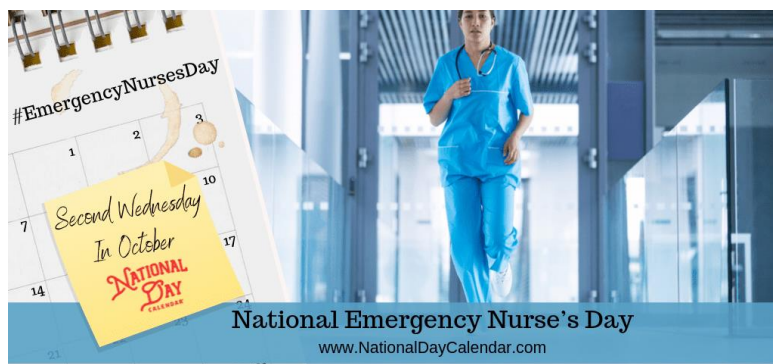
Our renewal drive is moving along at a steady pace! As of September 10th, our membership is at 71 paid members for 2022. This places us at 50% of our goal, with our total membership goal set at retaining 142.

Remember membership is everyone's responsibility.

Once again, I highly recommend your use of the On-Line Renewal feature. It's fast and easy. Go to legion.org, click renewals. Make sure you have your ID card and credit card available for this transaction. You can still mail your check to the post but keep in mind it takes nine days to process these compared to 24 hours.

If you haven't done so already, take an extra minute and go to Mylegion.org and sign up for this section.

- Bill Kinder, 1st Vice Commander, Membership Chairman



Finance Officer:

We ended the month of August with income of \$940.27 (primarily income from membership renewals - \$585). Other income items included Shirt Sales (\$151), Hat Sales (\$51) and Honor Guard donations (\$90). Expenses for the month were \$1,462.55 (primarily membership expenses of \$506.97). Other expenses included \$502 for the purchase of Legion Shirts (for resale), \$180.38 for Post operations, \$100 for the Post Picnic, \$100 for our Classroom Adoption Program and \$73.60 for supplies for the Honor Guard. Net income was a negative \$522.68 for the months. Our Capital Reserves totaled \$\$65,280.72 at the end of August. The reserves are invested in three one-year CD's which are laddered over a six-month period, and in a money market account. - Len Crosby, Finance Officer



Legislative Chairman:

H.R. 4571 – Women Veterans Health: H.R. 4571, the Supporting Expanded Review for Veterans in Combat Environments (SERVICE) Act of 2021, would revise the VA's standards for mammography screenings to include those veterans who have served in locations known to have been associated with toxic exposures. The bill would expand eligibility for these life-saving screenings beyond the commonly advised age and risk scope to encompass those who have served in specific locations and timeframes, including Iraq, Afghanistan, and areas of Southwest Asia, as well as other areas where U.S. military forces utilized burn pits. It also requires a report to Congress comparing the rates of breast cancer among troops deployed to areas with known exposures with service members not deployed to those locations and to the civilian population.

Defense Department research reports indicate that women who have served in the military have an elevated risk for breast cancer compared to their non-veteran peers. Nearly half of the growing demographic of women veterans is under age 45, and after almost two decades of war many will have had exposure to various airborne or other toxic hazards during service including a milieu of toxins associated with exposure to burn pits.

While VA historically outperforms the private sector in providing breast health screenings for women, this bill will bolster those efforts ever further. Better screening and early detection, especially among those with known risk factors, can help save lives. (cont. below)

Who can get an additional vaccine dose: The CDC now recommends a third vaccine dose for certain groups of people with weakened immune systems who received either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. Data shows that these groups of people are more at risk of serious, long-term illness from COVID-19. They may benefit from a third dose to make sure they have enough protection against COVID-19.

Note: At this time, the VA is offering additional vaccine doses only for people with weakened immune systems. We're not offering booster shots. Starting in mid-September, the CDC is expected to recommend a booster shot for anyone who received either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. When that begins, you should be able to get a booster shot 8 months after you received your second dose.

You may be able to get a third dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccine if any of these descriptions are true for you:

- You currently receive cancer treatment for tumors or cancers of the blood
- You have advanced HIV (meaning you have a low CD4 cell count) or you have HIV and aren't on treatment at this time
- You received an organ transplant and take medicine to suppress your immune system
- You received a stem cell transplant within the past 2 years or are taking post-transplant medicine to suppress your immune system
- A health care provider has diagnosed you with a moderate-to-severe primary immunodeficiency (like DiGeorge or Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)
- You currently take high-dose corticosteroids or other medicines that may suppress your immune system

If your condition or medication isn't on this list and you think you have a moderately to severely weakened immune system, contact your health care provider. They can tell you if you can get a third vaccine dose at this time. If you received the Janssen (J&J) COVID-19 vaccine, the CDC doesn't recommend another dose at this time.

What to know before you get a third vaccine dose: You need to get the same vaccine for all 3 doses. You should get your third dose at least 28 days after your second dose. You don't need to get your third dose at the same facility where you got your first 2 doses.

Not all VA health facilities have both Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna right now. And facilities may offer different vaccines at different times. Confirm that the facility has the vaccine you need before you schedule an appointment for your third dose. And bring your vaccine record card with you when you come in so we can record your third dose.

How to get your third vaccine dose at VA if you're eligible: If you're a Veteran who receives health care through VA

If you're eligible for a third vaccine dose based on the information in your VA health record, we'll contact you when we have a vaccine for you. This may take some time. If we don't contact you, you can call or send a secure message to your VA health care team. They can tell you if you can get a third dose at this time and help you schedule an appointment.

If you don't receive health care through VA, but you got your first 2 doses at VA: If you're eligible for a third vaccine dose, you may be able to get your third dose at VA. Visit your local VA facility's website or call to find out. You can also contact your primary health care provider or a location that provides COVID-19 vaccines in your community. [Find a COVID-19 vaccine near you at vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov)

Senate Bill 2172 addressing Homeless Veterans: Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jon Tester (MT) introduced comprehensive legislation—S. 2172, the Building Solutions for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness Act of 2021, to strengthen and expand services to veterans who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless. Specifically, the bill would: (cont. below)



- Adjust grants awarded by the VA for comprehensive homeless service programs;
- Increase the maximum rates of per diem payments provided by the VA;
- Create a program to provide services to assist veterans with navigating housing and health care resources;
- Create a grant program for homeless veterans that coordinates alcohol and substance use disorder recovery services;
- Increase and extend the appropriations for homeless veterans re-integration programs;
- Require the Comptroller General of the United States to provide a report on the availability of affordable housing for veterans who have participated in any program administered by the Homeless Programs Office of the VA; and
- Create two pilot grant programs to care for elderly homeless veterans and improve public transportation services for veterans.

Many veterans experience homelessness due to conditions stemming from military service, including post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries. Homeless veterans also have a higher prevalence of mental health issues, and are at greater risk for suicide.

Dog Training Pilot Program Becomes Law: President Biden signed into law VFW-supported [H.R. 1448](#), *the PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act*. This legislation will establish a 5-year pilot program on dog training therapy for veterans diagnosed with PTSD and require VA to provide service dogs for those veterans, including veterinary insurance. In recent congressional statements for the record submitted to both the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs, advocates of the program noted that studies and anecdotal evidence indicate veterans diagnosed with PTSD who have service dogs experience increased participation in social settings and overall satisfaction with life.

- Len Crosby, Legislative Chairman

Chaplain's Pew:



Submitted by Helen Kinder, Chaplain

Service Officer:

What is Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance? Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI) is life insurance for Veterans who received a service-connected disability rating from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The basic program is commonly called "RH Insurance." It insures eligible Veterans for up to \$10,000 of coverage. If you are totally disabled and have basic S-DVI coverage, you may be eligible for a premium waiver. If it is granted, you may be eligible to apply for additional coverage up to \$30,000 under the Supplemental S-DVI program. Premiums for this program cannot be waived.

Who is Eligible? You are eligible for S-DVI if all of the following are true:

- You were released from active duty under other than dishonorable conditions on or after April 25, 1951.
- You were rated for a service-connected disability (even if only 0%).
- You are in good health except for any service-connected conditions.
- You apply within 2 years from the date VA notifies you of your grant of a new service-connected disability. Note: Ratings of Individual Unemployability or increases in previously rated conditions are not considered grants of "new" service-connected conditions under S-DVI. You must receive a rating for a new condition not previously rated by the VA.
- Your basic coverage premiums were waived due to total disability.
- You apply within one year of being notified of the waiver.
- You are under 65 years of age.

Here are a few reminders about applying for coverage:

- It is your responsibility to apply by the time limit. This remains true even if you do not receive an application in the mail.
- Your VA rating for a service-connected disability does not automatically qualify you for a premium waiver. This remains true even if your rating is 100 percent. To qualify for a premium waiver, you must be unable to maintain substantially gainful employment for six consecutive months prior to age 65 or have certain severe conditions, regardless of employment status.

How Much Does it Cost?

The cost varies based on:

- Age
- Type of plan (term or permanent)
- Amount of coverage
- How Can You Apply for S-DVI? Use the following forms to apply:
- Apply online: <https://www.insurance.va.gov/Sdvi/AreYouEligible/e8590a76-2ea0-41f7-a949-00c92f24c3d1>.
- You can also apply for S-DVI with VA Form 29-4364. (<https://www.benefits.va.gov/INSURANCE/forms/29-4364.pdf> Apply for a total disability waiver of S-DVI premiums with VA Form 29-357. (<https://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-29-357-ARE.pdf>)
- You will be provided an application for Supplemental S-DVI upon approval for waiver of premiums as long as you are under age 65. For more information, call 800-669-8477 or visit <https://www.benefits.va.gov/insurancereviously> rated by VA. - Ruth Aresvik, Service Officer



Training Officer: Buddy Check

At its core, The American Legion is an organization by, for, and about veterans of our United States.

As Legionnaires, our most sacred responsibility is to look out for each other and our fellow veterans.

Veterans and their families need to know they are not alone. They may be isolated from society due to public health concerns or other conditions. They may be struggling with disability, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder or simple loneliness.

“Buddy Check” is not a membership drive or attempt to solicit participation in, or donations for, American Legion programs, it is solely a health and welfare check or offer of assistance.

Our Post made Buddy Checks in March and it is time to do so again.

Some of our member calls found people who were just happy to hear from another member. Some located veterans who needed more help like medical and financial. This is where our Service Officer Ruth Aresvik steps in. She will be able to help the veteran start the process of applying for VA benefits.

Each of us can help a fellow veteran, just be willing to make a call. Maybe they’re dealing with a new medical issue or a newly diagnosed condition. Maybe they just need to know someone cares enough about them to pick up a phone and visit for a few minutes. That could mean so much to someone who is feeling friendless and isolated or just overwhelmed with life. All you have to do is call Helen or Bill Kinder at 208-772-7736. Tell them which week in October you are most available to make a few calls. They will get you a list and sample script (though you’ll probably find you don’t need it after the first call). The list is usually about 10 people. My experience has been that a good portion of people on my list don’t answer unfamiliar numbers, so I leave a quick message identifying myself and asking how they are and if they need anything. I leave my contact information for them. Many return my call just to thank me for checking on them. A few have needed some help with something, and I’ve been able to direct them or arrange something. One of our members desperately needed a wheelchair ramp. We had no idea they were having a problem. But we were able to arrange to get a ramp to them right away. And the nice thing is, we have a system already in place to help. If a veteran needs something you are unable to help with, just call our Chaplain, Helen Kinder, or Service Officer Ruth Aresvik. They will know who to call from there. Here is a sample of how a call might go.

“Hi Jack. This is Jean from your American Legion post. We’re just calling all our members to check in on everyone and see how you’re doing. We want to make sure you have what you need.”

“Hi Jean. Well Jolene and I aren’t going out these days, except for medical appointments. Our daughter has been helping us out with groceries and whatnot, but she’s had to go out of town for a few weeks.”

“Well Jack, can we pick up some groceries for you? We’d be happy to do that.”

“That would be real nice. I think my wife has been keeping a list. She’s pretty organized that way.”

“Jack, how about if I arrange to get that list in the next day or so and help you out? Is there anything you need immediately?”

“No, I think we’re good for a few days.”

“Okay. Then expect a call tomorrow or the next day from one of us at the legion and we’ll get that taken care of for you.”

Buddy Checks are not difficult. They don’t take too much time. And they feel good!

We are trying to get these Buddy Check calls made during October. Which week during the month can you carve out a little time to help? Please call Helen or Bill Kinder at 208-772-7736 or email them at hlkinder41@gmail.com.

Give us a hand checking on our members this month. - Jean Bledsoe, Training Officer



Toxic Exposure:

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs on Monday created a fast-track to disability compensation for certain veterans who developed asthma, rhinitis or sinusitis because of their exposure to burn pits during overseas deployments.

The VA announced it will now process disability claims for those conditions on a presumptive basis, which lowers the amount of evidence that veterans must provide in order to receive benefits.

The change applies to veterans who served from Aug. 2, 1990, to now in the Southwest Asia theater of operations, which includes Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and the airspace above these locations.

It also applies to veterans who served in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Syria or Djibouti from Sept. 19, 2001, to now. To qualify, the conditions must have manifested within 10 years of a veteran's deployment.

The change comes [after VA Secretary Denis McDonough initiated a federal rulemaking process May 27](#) to consider creating a fast-track to health care and disability compensation for some veterans suffering from respiratory illnesses. During the review process, the VA concluded there was sufficient evidence linking the three conditions to airborne toxins that service members breathed during the deployments.

"Through this process, I determined that the evidence provided was sufficient to establish presumptions of service connection for these three respiratory conditions," McDonough said in a statement Monday.

"This is the right decision, and VA will continue to use a holistic approach in determining toxic exposure presumptives moving forward." - Submitted by Jean Bledsoe, Post 154 Member



Post 154 Honor Guard:

Our Honor Guard is very active. They march in parades, present the colors at ceremonies, and most importantly, provide a rifle salute to honor Veterans at their funerals. However, more members are always needed to serve in this capacity. If you are interested in participating in this very fulfilling activity, contact Todd Halvorson at keltod11@gmail.com or by phone at 509-226-5355.

From Aug 26 to Sep 23:

This month the Honor Guard provided rifle salutes for 15 veterans, twelve US Army veterans, three US Navy veterans, two US Air Force veterans, and one US Marine veteran. Each memorial service requires between 3 and 8 volunteers. The Honor Guard also participated in the 9/11 Ceremony held in Rathdrum. This month required fifty-seven (57) volunteers, and they logged in 201 volunteer hours. Once a month the Honor Guard travels to the Washington State Veterans Cemetery and provides rifle salutes for any requests made by veteran families for services that day and there were four ceremonies this month that are included in the above totals. Idaho veterans are interred there as well. These statistics run monthly from the Membership Meeting a month ago to the last Membership Meeting - Bryan Bledoe, Honor Guard Member

POW/MIA Recoveries & Burials - Reported SEP 01 thru 15, 2021

“Keeping the Promise”, “Fulfill their Trust” and “No one left behind” are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century as of FEB 2019 are: World War II 73,025 of which over 41,000 are presumed to be lost at sea, Korean War 7665, Vietnam War 1589

(i. e. VN-1,246, Laos-288, Cambodia-48, & Peoples Republic of China territorial waters-7), Cold War 111, Iraq and other conflicts 5. Over 600 Defense Department men and women -- both military and civilian - work in organizations around the world as part of DoD's personnel recovery and personnel accounting communities. They are all dedicated to the single mission of finding and bringing our missing personnel home.

For a listing of all missing or unaccounted for personnel to date refer to <http://www.dpaa.mil> and click on 'Our Missing'. Refer to <https://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories> for a listing and details of the 141 accounted for in 2005. If you wish to provide information about an American missing in action from any conflict or have an inquiry about MIAs, contact:

- Mail: Public Affairs Office, 2300 Defense Pentagon, Washington, D. C. 20301-2300, Attn: External Affairs Call: Phone: (703) 699-1420
- Message: Fill out form on <http://www.dpaa.mil/Contact/ContactUs.aspx>



Family members seeking more information about missing loved ones may also call the following Service Casualty Offices: U. S. Air Force (800) 531-5501, U. S. Army (800) 892-2490, U. S. Marine Corps (800) 847-1597, U. S. Navy (800) 443-9298, or U. S. Department of State (202) 647-5470. The names, photos, and details of the below listed MIA/POW's which have been recovered, identified, and/or scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin are listed on the following sites:

- <https://www.vfw.org/actioncorpsweekly>
- <http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/News-Releases>
- <http://www.thepatriotspage.com/Recovered.htm>
- <http://www.pow-miafamilies.org>
- <https://www.pownetwork.org/bios/b/b012.htm>
- <http://www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces>

To read the rest of the article and be introduced to recovered MIAs who are coming home for interment go [HERE](#).

[Source: <http://www.dpaa.mil> | September 2021] - Submitted by Jean Bledsoe, Editor

Did you know...?

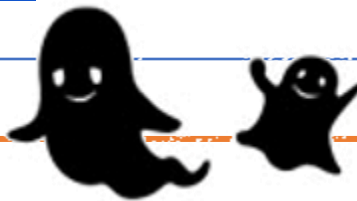
Here is just a quick follow-up to last month's introduction to the booklet on preparing for death.
Military.com | By Jim Absher

It's something none of us want to think about: our demise. What will happen after we're gone? Will we have a big funeral? Will anybody show up?

If you want to have a big funeral and a fancy tombstone in a nice cemetery, it will cost a lot. That's OK. You're a veteran; the Department of Veterans Affairs <<http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits>> will pay. Right?

Well ... not so fast.

Go to https://www.military.com/benefits/burial-and-memorial/will-va-pay-your-funeral-answer-may-surprise-you.html?ESRC=mr_210816.nl for additional information on estimated death care costs and Veterans death benefits.



Mark Your Calendar:

October 6th - Reception at Templin's Red Lion for crew of the USS Idaho 6-8 PM see page 15 for details

October 7th - Start of Operation Enduring Freedom (2001)

October 7th - Reception in Lewiston for crew of the USS Idaho 6-8 PM see page 15 for details

October 8th - National Heros Day & National Emergency Nurse's Day

October 11th - Columbus Day

October 13th - US Navy 243rd Birthday

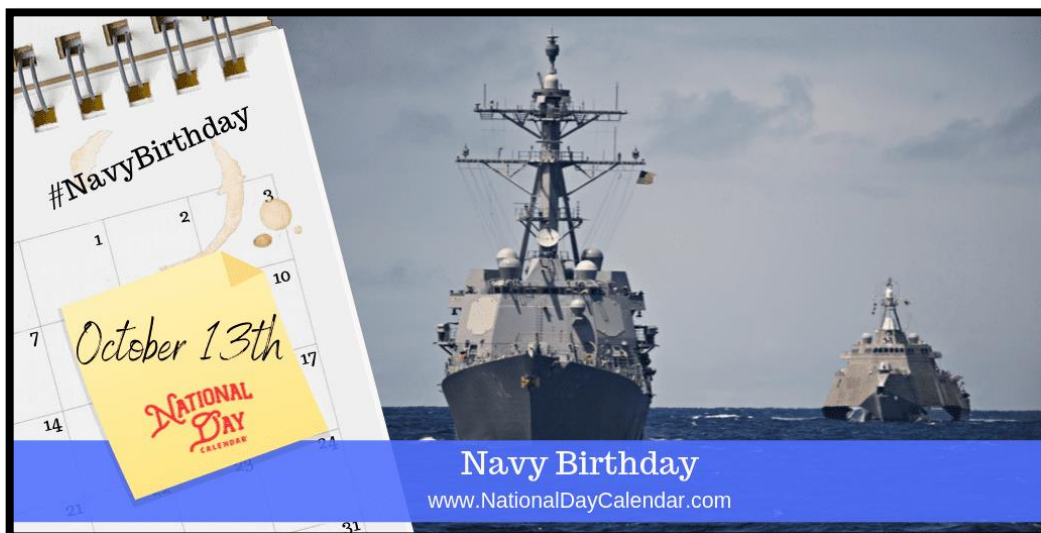
October 14th - Post 154 Executive Committee Meeting at Lions Club @ 6 pm

October 23rd - Beirut Bombing (1983) 241 service members killed

October 25th - Grenada Invasion

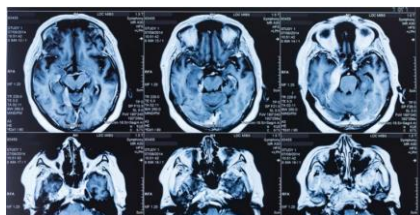
October 28th - Post 154 Membership Meeting at Lions Club @ 6 pm - watch for email with latest on potluck and meeting.

October 31st - Halloween



A Healthier You:

A Pill for Curing PTSD?



As reported September 7 by Patrick Tucker for *Defense One*, a new company, with funding from the U.S. Army, may have found the secret to treating PTSD with a pill or some other direct form of medicine. Dr. Jennifer Perusini, founder of Neurovation Labs, says PTSD has a unique biomarker called GluA1. It's a protein that is part of a glutamate receptor system, which helps memory formation. But trauma can also spur the creation of GluA1. In 2014, during experiments for her doctoral thesis, she found rats subjected to traumatic experiences had more GluA1. They also experienced anxiety and symptoms associated with PTSD, even when they weren't experiencing threatening noises and lights. Blocking the protein removed the anxiety, but the rats still displayed a healthy reaction to new frightening stimuli. That's key because it's important to retain the ability to be scared by actual threats. [Read More...](#) - Submitted by Jean Bledsoe



Bits & Pieces

- The first McDonald's drive-through was created in 1975 in Sierra Vista, Arizona, near Fort Huachuca, a military installation, to serve military members who were not permitted to get out of their cars off-post while wearing fatigues. - Paula Atwood
- Veterans Benefits Could See a Big Cost-Of-Living Boost Later This Year
As reported September 21 by Leo Shane III for Military Times, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act passed unanimously in the House on Monday and without objection in the Senate earlier in the summer. It now heads to the White House, where President Joe Biden is expected to sign it into law in the coming days. The legislation ties the cost-of-living boost for veterans benefits to the planned increase in Social Security benefits. Although the Social Security boost is automatic each year, lawmakers must approve the veterans benefits increase annually. [Read More...](#)
- Also, please remember to send your volunteer hours to Len Crosby so he can compile them. These include hours devoted to Veterans, Youth, Honor Guard and Community. His email is: crosbylenmary@frontier.com

Retiree Annual COLAs



Update 05: Could Congress Again Come for Yours

Congress has an enduring history of tapping into COLA at the expense of your retired pay, and it could very well happen again. As we inch toward what could be the largest growth in COLA since 1982, when it came in at 7.4%, we remain guarded as to any current attempts by Congress to reduce, in any fashion, the legislated protections of the purchasing power of retired pay, survivor and veteran benefits, and

Social Security. We have many reasons to be wary of such covert efforts. The history of COLA attacks is well documented. With projected CPI increases leading to a COLA that might top 6%, the significance of this annual adjustment warrants a close look on two fronts:

- As noted above, Congress could channel some of the increase into their efforts to control outlays in response to the growing national debt.
- The high COLA holds broad personal implications -- after all, the increase is tied directly to inflation, which results in higher costs across the board, including your TRICARE benefits.

Thankfully The Military Coalition (TMC) have a long history of watching out for our service members, their families, and survivors especially when it comes to ensuring protection from inflation. In fact, landmark legislation in 1985 served as the impetus to create TMC and established a blueprint of how leadership and followership can be leveraged to change a law before it has a chance to degrade or eliminate or reduce a service-earned entitlement.

This particular assault on COLA started with the passing of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act, otherwise known as 1985 Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act. At the heart of this legislation was the suspension of automatic, indexed increases such as those tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Congress enacted a five-year halt to COLA increases in federal outlays with exceptions for Social Security, veterans' benefits, and some other programs – but not for military retiree pay. President Ronald Reagan signed this legislation Dec. 12, 1985.

Treating retirees as non-veterans was unacceptable to two particular leaders who organized other likeminded advocates to overturn this legislation. Thus became TMC, founded by Col. George F. Henrikus, Jr., USAF (Ret), from The Retired Officers Association (now the Military Officers Association of America) and Sgt. Maj. C.A. "Mack" McKinney, USMC (Ret), from the Non Commissioned Officers Association. TROA and NCOA joined 14 others to form The Military Coalition and fight to reverse the legislation omitting military retirees from the exemptions protecting COLA:

- Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)
- Association of Military Surgeons of the United States (AMSUS)
- Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service (COA)
- Fleet Reserve Association (FRA)
- Marine Corps Reserve Officers Association (MCRA)
- National Association for Uniformed Services/Society of Military Widows (NAUS/SMW)
- National Military Family Association (NMFA)
- Naval Enlisted Reserve Association (NERA)
- Naval Reserve Association (NRA)
- Reserve Officers Association of the United States (ROA)
- The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA)

- U.S. Army Warrant Officers Association (USAWOA)
- U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association (CPOA)
- U.S. Coast Guard Chief Warrant and Warrant Officers Association (CWOA)

How did the coalition tackle this beast of a project, getting a brand-new law reversed? First, the people making up this new coalition came to the table with years and decades of experience. Of note, Robert W. Nolan, the senior registered lobbyist with the Fleet Reserve Association and a retired Navy chief petty officer, leveraged his 25 years' experience on the Hill to guide and fuel the efforts. Paramount was the need to stay on message and rely on their strength of 1.3 million active, reserve, and retired members among those associations.

The coalition inundated Congress with 50,000 mailgrams highlighting the projected 22.5% lifetime loss in pay, and the overall inequity of treating retirees as though they were not veterans. The coalition went public at the National Press Club to gain wide awareness of the COLA disparities. Its members and staff visited over 60 Senators and other key leaders on the Hill – and even held a breakfast to honor the cosponsors and supporters. (MOAA – then TROA – kept its members up to date on these activities via The Retired Officer magazine; the information above came from an article in the September 1988 issue by the late Col. Paul Arcari, USAF (Ret), then-deputy director of Legislative Affairs. The strength of the message, delivered by an organized body of experienced representatives from our uniformed services communities representing over a million constituents, carried the day; President Reagan signed legislation Oct. 21, 1986, exempting all federal government civilians and military from cuts to their COLA increases.

The 1985-86 legislative cycle was far from the last time elected officials have looked to decrease your earned COLA to cover other budget gaps. Today, the coalition has 35 associations, representing nearly 5.5 million members, families, and survivors continuing its work to defend the buying power of your benefits. Membership in these organizations along with supporting their legislative efforts by contacting our senators and representatives about issues of concern is critical. When was the last time you communicated with your legislator about veteran benefits? [Source: MOAA Newsletter | Dan Merry | September 01, 2021] - Submitted by Jean Bledsoe, Editor



Meet Crew Members of the USS Idaho October 6th and 7th, 2021

For the first time in over 100 years, the U S Navy is naming a vessel after Idaho. The **USS Idaho**, SSN 799, is a fast attack submarine being built in Connecticut.

The Commanding Officer, **Commander Nicholas Meyers**, and 5 crew members are visiting Idaho and will be at:

**Templin's Red Lion Inn,
414 1st Street Post Falls, ID
on October 6th from 6-8 pm.**

In addition, a similar reception will be held at:

**Hells Canyon Grand Hotel,
621 21st St, Lewiston, ID
on October 7th, also from 6-8 pm.**

Both receptions are open to the public.

Commander Meyers will provide introductory remarks, then he and the crew members will be available for questions.

This is a celebration of Idaho's long-standing relationship with the Navy from the Farragut Naval Training Center (now Farragut State Park) and Acoustic Research Detachment in Bayview, the Naval Reactors Facility near Arco, the Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) at the University of Idaho as well as several other facilities state wide.

The receptions are hosted by the USS Idaho Commissioning Foundation. For more information on the USS Idaho and the state's military history, please visit www.ssn799.org.



USS IDAHO Crest



Commissioning Foundation Crest