



BULLETIN

**April
2016**

STATE OF IDAHO

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GOVERNOR

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**To be connected with a VA suicide prevention and mental health professional,
call the toll-free National Suicide Prevention hotline and indicate you are a veteran.
(800) 273-8255**

ALL EMPLOYMENT ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES ARE ADMINISTERED IN A NONDISCRIMINATORY
MANNER IN CONFORMANCE WITH FEDERAL AND STATE EEO AND CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS



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**If you've not already done so, please volunteer to receive the bulletin via email
by emailing Jennel Binsky at
jennel.binsky@veterans.idaho.gov**



CARE & BENEFITS FOR VETERANS STRENGTHENED BY \$182 BILLION VA BUDGET

News Release February 9, 2016

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In his FY 2017 budget, President Obama is proposing \$182.3 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Funding will continue to support the largest transformation in VA history; expand access to timely, high-quality health care and benefits; and advance efforts to end homelessness among veterans. “VA has before it one of the greatest opportunities in its history to transform the way it cares for our veterans who nobly served and sacrificed for our Nation,” said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. “As we work to become a more efficient, effective and responsive, veteran-centric department, we can’t do it alone; we need the help of Congress. This year, the VA submitted over 100 legislative proposals, including 40 new proposals to better serve veterans. Our goal is provide the best care to our veterans while removing obstacles or barriers that prevent them from getting the care they deserve.”

The FY 2017 budget includes \$78.7 billion in discretionary funding, largely for health care and \$103.6 billion for mandatory benefit programs such as disability compensation and pensions. The \$78.7 billion for discretionary spending is \$3.6 billion (4.9%) above the 2016 enacted level, including over \$3.6 billion in medical care collections from health insurers and veteran copayments. The budget also requests \$70 billion, including collections, for the 2018 advance appropriations for medical care, an increase of \$1.5 billion and 2.1% above the 2017 medical care budget request. The request includes \$103.9 billion in 2018 mandatory advance appropriations for Compensation and Pensions, Readjustment Benefits, and Veterans Insurance and Indemnities benefits programs in the Veterans Benefits Administration.

With a medical care budget of \$68.6 billion, including collections, the VA is positioned to continue expanding health care services to its millions of veteran patients. Health care is being provided to over 922,000 veterans who served in Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn/Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) and Operation Freedom’s Sentinel (OFS). Major spending categories within the health care budget are \$12.2 billion for care in the community; \$8.5 billion for long-term care; \$7.8 billion for mental health; \$1.6 billion for homeless veterans; \$1.5 billion for Hepatitis-C treatments; \$725 million for caregivers; \$601 million for spinal cord injuries; and \$284 million for traumatic brain injuries.

The President’s budget ensures care and other benefits are available to veterans when and where they need them. Among the programs that will expand access under the proposed budget are \$12.2 billion for care in the community compared to \$10.5 billion in 2015, a 16% increase; \$1.2 billion in telehealth funding, which helps patients monitor chronic health care conditions and increases access to care, especially in rural and remote locations; \$515 million for health care services specifically designed for women, an increase of 8.5% over the present level; \$836 million for the activation of new and enhanced health care facilities; \$900 million for major and minor construction projects, including funding for seismic corrections, two new cemeteries, and two gravesite expansions; and \$171 million for improved customer service by providing an integrated services delivery platform.

The President’s Budget provides for continued implementation of the Veterans Benefits Administration’s (VBA) robust Transformation Plan—a series of people, process, and technology initiatives—in 2017. This plan will continue to systematically improve the quality and efficiency of claims processing. Major claims transformation initiatives in the budget invest \$323 million to bring leading-edge technology to claims processing, including \$180 million (\$143 million in Information Technology and \$37 million in VBA) to enhance the electronic claims processing system—the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS); and \$143 million for Veterans Claims Intake Program (VCIP) to continue conversion of paper records, such as veterans’ medical records, into electronic images and data in VBMS.

In addition, the President’s budget supports increasing VBA’s workforce to address staffing needs so it can continue to improve the delivery of benefits to veterans. As VBA continues to receive and complete more disability compensation rating claims, the volume of non-rating claims correspondingly increases. The request for \$54 million for 300 additional full-time equivalent employees (FTE) and claims processing support will allow the VBA to provide more timely actions on non-rating claims.

The current appeals process is complicated and ineffective, and veterans on average are waiting about 5 years for a final decision on an appeal that reaches the Board of Veterans’ Appeals, with thousands waiting much longer. The 2017 Budget proposes a Simplified Appeals initiative—legislation and resources—to provide veterans with a simple, fair, and streamlined appeals process in which they would receive a final appeals decision within one year from filing an appeal by 2021. The Budget requests \$156 million and 922 FTE for the Board, an increase of \$46 million and 242 FTE over 2016, as a down payment on a long-term, sustainable plan to improve services to veterans.

The Administration has made the ending of veteran homelessness a national priority. The budget requests \$1.6 billion for programs to prevent or reduce veteran homelessness, including \$300 million for Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) to promote housing stability; \$496 million for the HUD-VASH program, wherein the VA provides case management services for at-risk veterans and their families and HUD provides permanent housing through its Housing Choice Voucher program; and \$247 million in grant and per diem payments that support temporary housing provided by community-based organizations.

The 2017 budget continues the largest Department-wide transformation in the VA’s history through the MyVA initiative, which is changing the VA’s culture, processes, and capabilities to put the needs, expectations, and interests of veterans and their families first. MyVA has developed five objectives fundamental to the transformation of VA: 1) improving the veterans’

experience; 2) improving the employee experience; 3) improving support service excellence; 4) establishing a culture of continuous performance improvement; and 5) enhancing strategic partnerships. To aid in this transformation, the Department established the Veterans Experience Office (VEO). The VEO will represent the voice of veterans and their families in Departmental governance; design and implement customer-centric programs to make interactions with the VA easier; and support the VA's "mission owners" in carrying out MyVA improvements across the system.

The Veterans Choice Act provides \$5 billion to increase veterans' access to health care by hiring more physicians and staff and improving the VA's physical infrastructure. It also provides \$10 billion through 2017 to establish a temporary program (the Veterans Choice Program) to improve access to health care by allowing eligible veterans who meet certain wait-time or distance standards to use eligible health care providers outside of the VA system. In 2017, the VA will use the Choice Act funds in concert with annual appropriations to meet VA staffing and infrastructure needs and expand non-VA care to veterans who are eligible for the Veterans Choice Program. The VA plans to spend \$1.4 billion in 2016 and \$853 million in 2017 to support more than 9,700 new medical care staff hired through the Choice Act; \$980 million in 2016 and \$116 million in 2017 to improve VA facilities.

The budget also includes \$286 million to administer the VA's system of 134 national cemeteries, including additional funding for operations of new cemeteries and the National Shrine program to raise and realign gravesites; \$4.3 billion for information technology (IT), including investments to strengthen cybersecurity, modernize veterans' electronic health records, improve veterans' access to benefits, and enhance the IT infrastructure; and \$125 million for state cemetery grants and state extended care grants. The 2017 budget also requests an additional \$23 million and 100 FTE for the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to enhance oversight and assist the OIG in fulfilling its statutory mission and making recommendations that will help the VA improve the care and services it provides.

The VA operates the largest integrated health care system in the country; the tenth largest life insurance program in the Nation, with \$1.3 trillion in coverage; monthly disability compensation, pensions, and survivors benefits to 5.3 million beneficiaries; educational assistance or vocational rehabilitation benefits and services to nearly 1.2 million students; mortgage guaranties to over 2 million homeowners; and the largest cemetery system in the Nation.

BIG GAME HUNT OFFERED FOR 2 DISABLED VETERANS

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The Idaho Division of Veteran Services will be coordinating an all-expense-paid deer or elk hunt for two disabled veterans in 2016. The purpose of the hunt is to offer disabled veterans an opportunity to participate in a big-game hunt that might otherwise be prevented by the seriousness of their disability.

Tags are provided at no charge to the successful applicant by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game under a special program. The selected veterans may choose antlered or antlerless deer or elk in compliance with established seasons. Specific tag information will be provided to the selected veteran. The hunt will occur on a private ranch in Unit 45, north of Mountain Home, Idaho. Hunt dates will need to be coordinated well in advance, based on established seasons. In most cases, hunts occur in October or early November. Hunters will be expected to provide their own transportation to Mountain Home or Boise. Rustic cabin/bunkhouse accommodations, meals, and on-site transportation and assistance will be provided at the ranch at no cost to the veteran. If the veteran has or requires a medical caregiver, these items will also be provided at no charge for the caregiver. The cabin/bunkhouse is not barrier-free, so hotel accommodations in Mountain Home will be provided if necessary. Hunters will need to make arrangements for their prescription and medical supplies, if any. Hunters will be responsible for their own meat processing and mounting in the event their hunt is successful.

Please fill out the application found on the next two pages of this bulletin or on the Idaho Division of Veterans Services web page at veterans.idaho.gov. Once completed, you can mail it to the Idaho Division of Veterans Services, Attn: Disabled Veterans Deer or Elk Hunt, 351 Collins Road, Boise, ID 83702; fax it to (208) 780-1301; or email it to kevin.wallior@veterans.idaho.gov. **All personal information submitted will be confidential and used only by the selection committee.**

A committee consisting of personnel from Idaho Division of Veterans Services and Idaho veterans will make the final selections. The selected veterans will be notified by the Idaho Division of Veterans Services and will be contacted by the ranch to coordinate hunt dates and other specifics. Applications must be submitted no later than April 29, 2015. If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact Kevin Wallior at (208) 780-1300 or via email at kevin.wallior@veterans.idaho.gov.

DISABLED VETERANS ELK HUNT APPLICATION

PERSONAL DATA

PLEASE PRINT

ALL PERSONAL INFORMATION WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL & USED ONLY BY THE SELECTION COMMITTEE

LAST NAME: _____
FIRST NAME: _____ MIDDLE INITIAL: _____
MAILING ADDRESS: _____
CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____
PHONE NUMBER: _____ CELL PHONE: _____
EMAIL ADDRESS (OPTIONAL): _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT

LAST NAME: _____
FIRST NAME: _____ MIDDLE INITIAL: _____
MAILING ADDRESS: _____
CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____
RELATIONSHIP: _____
PHONE NUMBER: _____ CELL PHONE: _____
EMAIL ADDRESS (OPTIONAL): _____

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

Will you be bringing your own firearm and ammunition?
(If not, a firearm and ammunition will be provided) Yes _____ No _____

Will a caretaker be accompanying you? Yes _____ No _____

Will you want the meat? Yes _____ No _____

Do you have the necessary clothing? Yes _____ No _____

What is your percent of disability? _____ %

Is your disability combat related? Yes _____ No _____

Please describe the nature and extent of your disability: _____

Please describe how and where you received your disability: _____

Do you have a copy of your DD Form 214?
(Please enclose a copy of your DD Form 214)

Yes _____ No _____

Do you have a disability letter from the Department of
Veterans Affairs?
(Please enclose a copy of your disability letter)

Yes _____ No _____

Do you require special meals?

Yes _____ No _____

If so, please list your special meal requirements: _____

Do you have any other special needs?

Yes _____ No _____

Would the extent of your disability require special
transportation during the hunt?
(ATV, wheelchair, crutches, walker, etc.)

Yes _____ No _____

Do you have a medical condition other than your disability
that could be aggravated during the hunt. If so list below.

Yes _____ No _____

WHY I WANT TO ATTEND AN ELK HUNT

Please answer in 200 words or less why you want to attend a big game hunt: _____

By signing below, I waive all liability connected with my participation in the hunt.

Applicant Name (printed): _____

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____

VETERAN'S COPAYMENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR VA HEALTH CARE

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What are your options if you are unable to pay your full copay charges? There are multiple options available to help make paying your current copay charges more affordable, or to eliminate them. You have the right to establish a monthly repayment plan at any time during your enrollment in VA health care if you cannot pay your debt in full. To do so, submit a completed Agreement to Pay Indebtedness (VA Form 1100). Indicate your proposed monthly payment amount in paragraph 1A. Include your first payment with the completed form, making a check or money order payable to "VA" and include the account number and payment stub. You also have the right to request a waiver of part or all of your debt. If the waiver is granted you will not be required to pay the amount waived. To do so, submit an explanation and a completed Financial Status Report (VA Form 5655). Your explanation should include why you are not responsible for the debt and any undue hardship the payment of the debt would cause you. You have the right to request a hearing in connection with your request for a waiver. To do so, submit a written request for hearing with your waiver request. The VA will notify you of the date, time, and place where the hearing will be held. You also have the right to request a compromise. A compromise means you propose a lesser amount as full settlement of the debt. To request a compromise, submit your request in writing to the VA, specifying the dollar amount you are proposing the VA should accept as payment in full, and a completed Financial Status Report (VA Form 5655).

What are your options if your household income has decreased and you will be unable to pay future copay charges? If your gross household income has decreased from the previous income year, you may be eligible for a Hardship Determination which provides future exemption from medical and hospital care copays for a determined period of time. To request a hardship determination, send a letter explaining any financial hardship these charges will cause you and a completed Request for Hardship Determination (VA Form 10-10HS). If your gross household income has decreased, you may be eligible for enrollment in a higher Priority Group which may qualify you for copayment exemption. Submit a completed Health Benefits Renewal (VA Form 10-10EZR).

When does your debt become delinquent? Your balance is considered delinquent if it remains unpaid after the balance due date on your initial billing statement, which is typically thirty (30) days after the statement date. What happens once your bill becomes delinquent? If your bill remains delinquent for ninety (90) days, any current or future VA benefit payments you are entitled to will be reduced or "offset" in order to satisfy the overdue debt. If you fail to make a payment on your debt before it reaches one hundred twenty (120) days delinquent, (150 days from initial billing statement date), accounts without VA benefits available for offset will automatically transfer to the Department of the Treasury Cross-Servicing Program. Once your bill has been referred to Treasury, the VA can no longer accept payments on the debt. You can continue to make payments on any bill that has not been referred to Treasury. If you make a payment online it will be applied to any outstanding balance not at Treasury. If no additional debt exists with the VA, the payment will be applied as a credit balance and refunded after 60 days, unless a refund is requested sooner. To pay a bill that has been referred to Treasury, contact Debt Management Services toll free at (888) 826-3127 between 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday to speak with a representative.

Will you be able to continue receiving health care services if your bill is referred to Treasury? Yes. Your health care services will continue without interruption regardless of whether your bill is referred to Treasury. What happens once your bill is referred to Treasury? The Treasury Cross-Servicing Program consists of a standard collection process, including Treasury Debt Collection, which issues the official Treasury collection letter and attempts to contact you by searching various databases, making telephone calls and sending additional collection letters; Treasury Offset Program (TOP), which identifies debtors in the federal database and will offset (reduce or withhold) any federal payments to pay the debt, including tax refunds, Social Security benefits, military pay, retirement pay, and other federal payments that are not exempt by law or by action of the Secretary of the Treasury; Administrative Wage Garnishment (AWG), which Treasury identifies eligible debtors who have been employed for at least 12 months and will provide appropriate due process and issue notice to the employer to deduct up to 15% of disposable pay each pay period until the debt, including all interest, penalties and costs, is paid in full; and Private Collection Agency (PCA), which once Treasury has exhausted efforts to collect debts internally, accounts are referred to contracted PCAs to make additional attempts to find and contact you by searching various databases, making telephone calls, and sending collection letters.

Why is the VA referring your delinquent debt to the Department of the Treasury? In 1996, due to a steady increase in the amount of delinquent non-tax debt owed to the United States, Congress passed the Debt Collection Improvement Act (DCIA) of 1996. This law centralized the government wide collection of delinquent non-tax debt and gave the Department of the Treasury significant new responsibilities in this area. If Federal agencies are not successful at collecting a debt, they are required under the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act (DATA) of 2014 to refer eligible delinquent non-tax debt to TOP for debt collection action within 120 days.

Will you pay additional fees if your bill is referred to Treasury? Yes. You will incur collection fees from Treasury based upon a percentage of your outstanding bill(s) and length of time outstanding. Treasury charges a 28% fee for debts less than 2 years delinquent and a 30% fee for debts over 2 years delinquent. Treasury collects the fees from each payment made and applies the remaining amount to the debt balance. In the event the debt is recovered through TOP, a fee is charged per transaction. TOP has a tiered fee schedule based on the type of offset e.g. salary, social security.

DATES TO REMEMBER

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- April 6.....United States enters WWI, 1917
- April 23.....United States Army Reserve 98th birthday
- May 8.....Mother’s Day
- May 14Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps founded, 1942
- May 20Armed Forces Day
- May 30Memorial Day – *See the history of Memorial Day at the bottom of this page*
- June 6D-Day – Invasion of Europe, 1944
- June 14.....United States Army birthday
Flag Day
- June 19.....Father’s Day
- June 20.....Army Air Corps is created, 1941

CONVENTION SCHEDULES

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American Legion

- State..... July 14-17, 2016, Moscow, ID
- National.....August 26-September 1, 2016, Cincinnati, OH

AMVETS

- National.....August 7-4, 2016, Sparks, NV

Catholic War Veterans of the United States

- National.....August 2016, Portland, ME

Disabled American Veterans

- State.....May 12-14, 2016, Boise, ID
- National.....July 31-August 3, 2016, Atlanta, GA

Marine Corps League

- Boise, IDMay 12-14, 2016, Boise, ID
- National.....August 7-13, 2016, Tulsa, OK

Military Order of the Purple Heart

- National.....August 9-13, 2016, Norfolk, VA

Veterans of Foreign Wars

- State.....June 12-16, 2016, Lewiston, ID
- National.....July 23-27, 2016, Charlotte, NC

