



Idaho Division of  
**VETERANS  
SERVICES**

*Caring for  
America's  
Heroes*

# **BULLETIN**

**January**

**2021**

# STATE OF IDAHO

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To be connected with a VA suicide prevention and mental health professional,  
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**(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



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

From Bill's Desk.....	3-4
Go Green and Get the Bulletin Via Email.....	4
VA Launches Single Access Point to All CA Contact Centers .....	5
100% Service Connected Disabled Veterans Tax Benefit .....	5
Phase-Out of the SBP-DIC Offset Frequently Asked Questions .....	6-8
SBP-DIC Offset Estimate Letter Explainer .....	9
TRICARE Select Enrollment Fees Frequently Asked Questions .....	10-12
VA Guarantees More than 1 Million Home Loans in Record Year.....	12
VA Administers Over 146,000 Covid-19 Vaccine Doses as of January .....	12
VA Expands Telehealth Services During Covid-19 for Older, Rural, & Homeless Veterans .....	13
VA Resumes Overpayment Notifications while Continuing Relief Options for Veterans .....	13
Dates to Remember.....	14
Convention Dates .....	14
The History of President's Day.....	14
DAV Van Contacts To and From VA Medical Centers.....	15

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## FROM BILL'S DESK

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I hope everyone had a great holiday season (or at least the best summer possible under the ongoing Covid-19 issues) and ready to tackle the new year! Here are some of the issues ongoing within the Idaho Division of Veterans Services and the VA.

The Idaho Division of Veterans Services now has a new Interim Chief Administrator, as Marv Hagedorn has retired from the position. We wish Marv Fairwinds and Following Seas and the best of luck with his future endeavors. We also welcome the new Interim Chief Administrator, Pete Koehler. Pete is a 21-Year Retired Army Lieutenant Colonel (Armor Officer) and spent many years as a schoolteacher, Principal, and Superintendent, as well as having served on the Idaho State Department of Education. Pete will serve in this position until a permanent replacement has been named. Welcome Aboard!

The Boise VA Regional Office is open to the public and the previous Covid-19 screening requirement has ended. Veterans and family members still need to wear a mask prior to entering the building and will be asked not to come into the building if you are experiencing and cold or flu-like symptoms. There is currently construction taking place at the VA Regional Office, as a second floor is being added to the building. The new floor will house the VA Medical Center's telehealth team that supports the entire Northwest.

The VA Boise VA Medical Center (and I am sure that most others are as well) has begun providing Covid-19 vaccinations. To be eligible, a veteran must be enrolled in the VA Medical Care System and assigned to a Primary Care Team and fall into one of the current Priority Group Categories (this will change very fast and will be a moving target). The current priority veterans to receive vaccinations are those over the age of 75, be in receipt of chemotherapy, or have received an organ transplant. If you feel you are in one of the top Priority Groups, call the Boise VAMC Covid-19 Clinic at (208) 422-1499. As more vaccines become available, the Priority Group Requirements will change.

Flu Shots can also be obtained for veterans enrolled at VA Medical Care at any Walgreens Pharmacies by showing them your VA Medical Enrollment Card. It is highly recommended that everyone receives their flu shot this year.

The VA's Debt Management Center has begun collecting debts owed to the VA beginning January 1, 2021. As a reminder, if you receive a new Debt Management Letter informing you of a debt and you want to request a waiver of the debt due to severe financial hardship, you must request a waiver of the debt with a completed VA Form 5655 (Financial Status Report) and provide an explanation why you do not feel you are responsible for the debt. The request must then be submitted to the VA's Debt Management Center within 30 days of the first notification. If you do so, the VA will not begin collecting the debt until after a determination has been made on the request for the waiver of the debt. You can still request a waiver after the first 30-days, but the Debt Management Center will begin recoupment on the date listed on the letter.

Beginning January 1, 2021, the Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) Increase of 1.3% went into effect for all Federal Benefit payments to include the VA and Social Security Awards.

Beginning December 16, 2020, the VA launched the new Single Access Point to all VA contact Center. This means regardless of what questions or services that you are calling for (benefit or medical), veterans are to call 1-800-MyVA411 or 1-800-698-2411.

Due to Covid-19, the National Personnel Records Center located in St Louis, MO is closed except for emergencies. As such, they will only work emergency requests associated with medical treatment, burials, and homeless veterans trying to gain admittance to a homeless shelter. They are asking to refrain from submitting non-emergency requests for this such as replacement medals, requests for administrative corrections or copies of DD-214s until they return to pre-Covid staffing levels.

Since I have been discussing Covid-related issues, I mentioned this in the last bulletin, but still need everyone's help. We are being contacted by surviving spouses regarding VA Survivor and Burial Benefits due to recently passed veterans. Many have death certificates showing the veteran passed from Covid-19 or Covid-Pneumonia, and nothing else. In order for a surviving spouse to be eligible to receive Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) based on a service-connected cause of death, the veteran's service-connected condition must be listed on the death certificate as the cause of death or as a contributing cause of death. For example, if a veteran has coronary artery disease and/or Parkinson's disease, one of those issues must be listed on the death certificate. Ask whomever is completing/signing the death certificate if they will list the service connected conditions as a contributing cause of death so the surviving spouse can receive the DIC award and/or the \$2,000 service connected burial benefit.

The 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) has been approved, which included the addition of three new conditions to be added to the approved herbicide exposure conditions associated with Vietnam service, service on ship within 12 nautical miles of the Vietnam coastline, service on the Korean DMZ from 1968-1971, served along the perimeters of an airbase in Thailand during the Vietnam War or served on a flight/ground crew for C-123 Aircraft until 1986. The three new conditions are Bladder Cancer, Hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism/Parkinson-like symptoms. The VA still has to release the rules of how and when they will adjudicate claims (to include survivor benefits) similar to how the Blue Water Agent Orange claims were handled. If a veteran previously filed for one of these conditions and was denied, do not do anything else until the rules have been released. At that time, we can file a VA Form 21-0995 (Supplemental Claim) for those previously denied

issues. If a veteran has never filed for those conditions, you should file an Intent to File to protect the earliest possible date of claim. Please note Hypertension (high blood pressure) was not included as an herbicide presumptive condition on the NDAA.

As mentioned in the last Bulletin, the Veterans Health Administration/Mission Act Expanded Caregiver Program went into effect on October 1, 2020. The expansion of the Caregiver Program will apply to veterans who discharged from the military prior to May 7, 1975 (in two years will include all veterans). The veteran must be seriously injured/ill with a single or combined VA service connected disability rating of 70% or higher, must complete a VA form 10-10CG, go through a physical evaluation, have medical statements from their doctor stating they need a caregiver to assist them due to their disability/disease/condition, have a home visit by the VAMC's Caregiver Office, and be approved by the VAMC Caregiver Program. The Caregiver can be a spouse, family member, or anyone over the age of 18 that resides with and takes care of the veteran. If approved, there are 3 different levels of stipends the Caregiver can be paid. I am unsure the actual monetary amounts. Please keep in mind, this is a VA Medical Center benefit and not applied for through the VA Regional Office/Veterans Benefits Administration.

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service website, DFAS.mil, states they have mailed individual letters with estimates of how the first phase of the SBP-DIC Offset Phased Elimination (effective January 1, 2021) will affect your SBP pay. Letters were mailed in early December. Please do not call their Customer Care Center for your estimate. \*\*Please note the change in the law does NOT affect the amount of DIC you receive from the VA. You should continue to receive your normal DIC amount from the VA.\*\* Please see their webpage "SBP-DIC News" for information on the status of the implementation of this new law. Based on the NDAA, Spouse SBP annuitants who are subject to the DIC offset may see the first change in the SBP annuity payment they receive on February 1, 2021.

This year, the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Veterans Service has released its new VFW Guide for Post Service Officers online and free of charge. It can be found on their website, [www.vfw.org/NVS](http://www.vfw.org/NVS), and includes four different sections. If you are eligible for VFW Membership (or for the VFW Auxiliary) and not yet a member, you can join the VFW while on their website. As a reminder, Post Service Officers are not to complete and submit claims to the VA. The Post Service Officer guide is there as a quick reference to explain to a veteran/surviving spouse as to what benefits are available and then refer them to an accredited Veteran Service Officer.

The second Idaho State Veteran's Cemetery located in Blackfoot, ID is now operational and conducting internments. If you have questions or would like to schedule an internment, please call 208-701-7161.

As we are now into 2021, if you are service connected by the VA at 100% or receiving Individual Unemployability, you must apply/reapply for the 2021 100% Service Connected Property Tax Benefit. I am including the current Fact Sheet from the Idaho Tax Commission, but you must have a VA Benefit Letter dated on or after January 1, 2021, showing you are rated 100% or receiving Individual Unemployability. You can print the letter from your VA.gov account, receive one from the Boise VA Regional Office's Public Contact Team, request one by calling the VA at 1-800-MyVA411 or 1-800-698-2411, or you can contact one of our State Veterans Service Office locations and we will submit the request to the VA. The new award letter must be submitted to the County Assessor's Office before April 15, 2021, to receive the \$1,320 property tax reduction on your December 2021 bill.

The State of Idaho had Vietnam War Commemorative Books created to distribute to all Vietnam veterans within the State of Idaho. If you have not received one, please contact one of our State Service Officer locations and we will assist in providing the book to you.

Another reminder that ALL honorably discharged veterans are now permitted to use the Online Military Exchange to purchase items with no taxes charged and free shipping. Log into [www.shopmyexchange.com](http://www.shopmyexchange.com) for more information. Also, as of January 1, 2020, all veterans who have a VA Medical Enrollment Card that says "Service Connected Disability" or "Purple Heart" in the corner of the card are permitted on any Department of Defense installation to use the Commissary, Exchange, and MWR activities. If there are any questions, please feel free to contact our offices and have a Safe 2021!

## **GO GREEN AND GET THE BULLETIN VIA EMAIL**

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In our continual effort to reduce costs and lessen our "ecological footprint," the Office of Veterans Advocacy is again asking for your help. In order to reduce printing and mailing costs, as well as the amount of paper used, we are asking you to volunteer to receive the bulletin via email.

The bulletin will arrive in your in-box every quarter as a PDF document, which will allow to you forward or print and disseminate as many copies as you like. In addition to receiving the quarterly bulletin, you will also receive our annual Veterans Resource Directory via email.

If you can help us with our goal of reducing costs and the saving paper, please sign up at [veterans.idaho.gov/listserv](http://veterans.idaho.gov/listserv) or you can email [listserv.admin@veterans.idaho.gov](mailto:listserv.admin@veterans.idaho.gov). And don't forget you can always view and print the Bulletin and Resource Directory by visiting our website at [www.veterans.idaho.gov](http://www.veterans.idaho.gov).

## **VA LAUNCHES SINGLE ACCESS POINT TO ALL VA CONTACT CENTERS**

**Press Release, December 16, 2020**

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The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the formal launch of 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411), a single access point to all VA contact centers. The number is available 24 hours-a-day, 365 days-a-year to serve veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors.

Responding to veteran feedback on the challenges of knowing the right number for VA assistance, 1-800-MyVA411, serves all members of the veteran community seeking information or help. Veterans and their families can still reach the Veterans Crisis Line directly at 1-800-273-8255 and pressing 1, or by texting 838255. The White House VA Hotline is also still available at 855-948-2311 for veterans and their families to share compliments and concerns. "1-800-MyVA411 is always the right number to reach VA and is a great example of the department's customer service strategy in action," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "1-800-MyVA411 provides easy access to specialized contact centers as well as an option to immediately talk to a live agent."

When dialing 1-800-MyVA411, callers have the option of pressing 0 to be immediately connected with a customer service agent to answer questions or provide a warm-handoff to the appropriate VA expert. During the pilot phase from October 1<sup>st</sup> - September 31<sup>st</sup>, 1-800-MyVA411 connected more than 1.3 million callers with VA contact centers and experts.

1-800-MyVA411 provides information on:

- COVID-19 updates.
- Health care eligibility and enrollment.
- VA benefits, such as disability, compensation and pension, education programs, caregiver support, insurance, home loans, and burial headstones and markers among others.
- The nearest VA medical centers, benefits offices or cemeteries to Veterans, VA Medical Center operational updates and connection to VA Medical Center operators.
- Directory assistance and technical support for [www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov).

Debt and payment options.

## **100% SERVICE CONNECTED DISABLED VETERANS TAX BENEFIT**

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The Veterans Property Tax Reduction benefit reduces property taxes for qualified 100% service-connected disabled veterans. If you qualify, the property taxes on your home and up to one acre of land may be reduced by as much as \$1,320. The program doesn't have an income limit. Once granted, a surviving spouse can use this benefit, but it isn't transferable to a new property after the death of the qualifying veteran. Please note the benefits won't reduce solid waste, irrigation, or other fees charged by government entities.

You may qualify for Veterans Property Tax Reduction in 2021 if both of these apply:

- You are recognized as a 100% service-connected disabled veteran or receive 100% compensation due to individual unemployability by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as of January 1, 2021.
- You owned and lived in a home in Idaho that was your primary residence before April 15, 2021.
  - The property must have a current homeowner's exemption.
  - The home can be a mobile home.

You could qualify if you lived in a care facility or nursing home. Contact your county assessor's office for information.

To apply, contact your county assessor for an application, obtain a current letter from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs confirming your 100% service-connected disability rating or your 100% compensation due to individual unemployability as of January 1, 2021, then complete the application. The assessor's office will help you if needed. You must file the application with your assessor's office between January 1 and April 15, 2021. Please note this benefit isn't automatically renewed. You must apply and qualify each year. If approved, your benefit will appear on your December 2021 property tax bill.

You may also qualify and apply for the Property Tax Deferral. This program defers the taxes on the home and up to one acre of land for qualified individuals. The deferred taxes become a lien on the property and have to be repaid to the state of Idaho. There's an income limit for this program. Contact your county assessor for more program information and an application.

## PHASE-OUT OF THE SBP-DIC OFFSET FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 modified the law that requires an offset of Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments for surviving spouses who are also entitled to Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Under the previous law, a surviving spouse who receives DIC is subject to a dollar-for-dollar reduction of SBP payments, which can result in SBP being either partially or fully offset. The repeal will phase-in the reduction of this offset beginning on January 1, 2021, and culminating with elimination of the offset in its entirety on January 1, 2023. For the remainder of calendar year 2020, surviving spouses remain subject to the existing dollar-for-dollar offset of SBP payments by the amount of DIC paid by the VA. After January 1, 2021, survivors subject to the “SBP-DIC Offset” will potentially see a change in their SBP payments. Many surviving beneficiaries, current service members, and retirees have questions about the impact of this change. The most frequently asked questions are answered below.

**Who will be impacted by the repeal of the SBP-DIC offset?** This change affects surviving spouses who are, or who will become in the future, eligible for both Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments, and who were previously subject to a full or partial SBP-DIC offset. The law also impacts the children of service members who died while on active duty or inactive duty, in the line of duty, who are currently receiving SBP payments because the surviving spouse chose the optional child annuity. It does not impact surviving spouses who receive only SBP but not DIC. It also does not impact spouses who are in receipt of DIC-only, either because SBP was declined by the service member at retirement or because the service member was a disabled veteran who was not also a retiree. It is important to note that this change does not impact any retirees or surviving spouses if SBP coverage was previously declined, and does not create opportunities for new enrollment in SBP for retirees who previously declined coverage.

**Does every widow/widower of a service member who dies in the line of duty get SBP?** In most cases, a surviving widow or widower whose spouse dies on active or inactive duty in the line of duty on or after September 10, 2001, and who remains unmarried prior to age 55 qualifies for a Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity. The only exception would be in situations in which a former spouse of the service member had been awarded SBP as a result of a divorce court order and the necessary former spouse SBP election was registered prior to the death of the service member. Survivors of members who died in the line of duty prior to September 10, 2001, are not eligible to receive SBP. Certain surviving spouses of members who died in the line of duty on or after October 7, 2001, were eligible to transfer the SBP annuity to a dependent child, which is referred to as an “Optional Child Annuity.”

**If I was not subject to the DIC-SBP offset before, does this change affect me?** Most likely not. The change only impacts those surviving spouses who were previously subject to the SBP-DIC offset, and those surviving spouses and children of members who died in the line of duty if the spouse chose to transfer the SBP benefit to a child or children. This law does not create new beneficiaries nor change the eligibility criteria for SBP or DIC.

**What if I got remarried, will I still get the SBP benefit?** Section 622 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 did not change the eligibility requirements for the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP). If a surviving spouse remarries prior to age 55, he or she is ineligible to continue receiving SBP. If he or she remarries after turning age 55, that spouse does remain eligible to continue receiving the SBP annuity. Note that rules for remarriage differ under the Department of Veterans Affairs Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) program.

**Will I lose Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) at a certain age?** No, SBP is a life-long benefit for spouses. Eligibility does not depend on the age of surviving spouse. Unless the surviving spouse re-marries before the age of 55, he or she will not lose eligibility. Re-marrying after turning age 55 will not cause the survivor to lose eligibility for SBP.

**When I retired my spouse and I declined coverage because I’m totally disabled and we knew my spouse would get Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) when I died and Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) would be offset. Will she now be eligible for SBP?** No, an election to decline or reduce coverage at retirement is irrevocable, regardless of rationale. Section 622 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 does not authorize retirees who previously declined or elected reduced coverage (such as electing child-only coverage at retirement) to re-enroll or change their level of coverage.

**I used to participate in the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) but I withdrew when I was rated as totally disabled by the Department of Veterans Affairs. How does this change affect me?** Section 622 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 does not restore Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) enrollment for any retiree who previously voluntarily withdrew. Withdrawal from SBP remains in effect as long as the retiree who withdrew is rated totally disabled. If the retiree’s rating is later reduced below “totally disabled,” SBP coverage can be reinstated, but only if the retiree requests it within one year of the effective date of the reduction of the VA disability rating.

**My spouse declined Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) when he retired. I am receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from VA now because he died of a service-connected issue. Will I now receive SBP also?** No, declining SBP at retirement is an irrevocable decision. Section 622 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 does not grant the authority to reinstate SBP coverage if it was previously declined at retirement.

**When will the change go into effect?** Section 622 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 was signed into law on December 20, 2019; however, the actual adjustments to Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments for those affected by the change will begin in 2021. The legislation phases in the repeal of the SBP-DIC offset from 2021 to 2023. Survivors subject to the SBP-DIC offset will remain offset dollar-for-dollar in 2020.

**When will I see an increase in my Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments?** Section 622 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 phases in the elimination of the SBP-DIC offset in the following way: In 2020, surviving spouses will continue to have their SBP offset by the full amount of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) they receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs. In 2021, SBP will be reduced by no more than two-thirds of the amount of DIC rather than by the entire amount of DIC, even though eligible surviving spouses will continue to receive the full amount of DIC. In 2022, SBP will be reduced by no more than one-third of the amount of DIC received. In 2023, the SBP-DIC offset will be eliminated in total, so that surviving spouses eligible for both programs will receive both SBP and DIC in full, effective January 1 (paid as of February 1).

**Why can't I receive the full Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) benefit starting this year?** Section 622 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 does not authorize any change to the calculation of the SBP-DIC offset prior to January 1, 2021.

**When will I start receiving benefits in full?** Eligible survivors will start receiving Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments in full, without offset, beginning with their January 2023 entitlement, which will be paid on February 1, 2023.

**Does any form, document, or supporting statement need to be submitted to take advantage of these increased Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments? If yes, when is the cutoff date?** No, the increase in benefits will occur automatically for surviving spouses subject to the SBP-DIC offset. All surviving spouses subject to the offset will have their benefit recalculated for the month of January 2021, which they will receive on February 1, 2021. We would encourage you to ensure your contact and bank account information is updated through the Defense Finance and Accounting Service's self-service portal, myPay.

**If a person becomes a surviving spouse this year, would that person automatically start to receive both Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits?** First, in order to be eligible for both benefits the current or former military member must either have retired – and elected to participate in SBP – or died in the line of duty. If retired, he or she must also have died of a service-connected disability for the surviving spouse to be eligible for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). Less than 10% of surviving spouses qualify under both programs. In 2020, all new surviving spouses remain subject to the SBP-DIC offset if eligible under both programs. Those survivors will receive only the amount of SBP in excess of the amount of DIC they receive. Beginning in 2021, new surviving spouses will receive the same increase in benefits as existing survivors.

**How much will the average survivor get?** Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity payments can vary for each beneficiary because they are based on a number of factors such as retirement date, length of service, pay grade, and disability rating of the sponsor. There is no set amount, so each surviving spouse's current and future SBP payments could be quite different. We recommend reaching out to a financial counselor or retirement services office on your local installation to discuss individual amounts.

**I am currently subject to the SBP-DIC offset. Will I definitely get an increase?** Yes, eventually, although not all survivors will see an increase in the first year. It is possible that if your Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments are currently less than two-thirds of the amount of Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC), you may not see an increase in 2021. For example, if you currently receive \$1,500 from the VA for DIC, but your gross SBP before offset is only \$800, you would not see an increase in 2021 other than the normal annual cost of living adjustment (COLA). This is because your SBP amount, \$800, is still less than the amount of DIC that would be subject to offset, which in this example would be \$1,000 (i.e., \$1,000 is two-thirds of the \$1,500 DIC). Eventually, though, you will see an increase as the SBP-DIC offset is further reduced in 2022 and then completely eliminated in 2023.

**Now that the offset is being eliminated, will there be any back pay for the years we didn't get Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments we paid for?** No, Section 622 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 does not authorize back payments. Surviving spouses of retirees who were subject to the SBP-DIC offset received either a partial or full refund of premiums to account for the reduced SBP payments.

**I received a Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) premium refund once I started getting both SBP and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), will I have to pay it back?** No, if you previously received a refund of SBP premiums due to the SBP-DIC offset, you will not have to pay back that refund because of this change in the law.



**What is the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA)?** The Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) is a payment made to surviving spouses subject to the SBP-DIC offset that partially restores some of the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) amount that is offset. SSIA is a set amount established by Congress and adjusted each year by a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA), if applicable. The SSIA rate for 2020 is \$323 per month. Surviving spouses subject to the SBP-DIC offset will continue to receive SSIA, up to the amount that is reduced from their SBP payment (i.e., until the offset is fully-repealed in 2023).

**Will the Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) be phased out?** Eligible survivors will continue to receive SSIA, up to the prescribed maximum amount (\$323 per month for 2020) or the amount of SBP that is offset due to DIC, whichever is less. SSIA will no longer be paid once the SBP-DIC offset is fully eliminated in 2023 and surviving spouses receive the full amount of SBP and DIC concurrently, without offset.

**The National Defense Authority Act for Fiscal Year 2020 repealed the authority for optional annuities for dependent children. What does this mean?** When a currently-serving member dies in the line of duty on active or inactive duty, the surviving spouse has the option, in consultation with the Secretary of the Military Department, to choose to have the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuity paid directly to a dependent child rather than to receive the benefit for him or herself. This allows the surviving spouse to receive Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) from the Department of VA in full without it affecting the SBP payments. SBP paid to the child or children of the deceased service member is not offset by DIC. This provision is only allowed in situations in which the member died on active or inactive duty, in the line of duty, after October 7, 2001. While it remains in effect for now, on January 1, 2023, this option will go away in accordance with Section 622 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020. Further, those annuities that were directed to a child rather than a surviving spouse will automatically revert to the surviving spouse, if he or she is still eligible, on January 1, 2023.

**I chose the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) optional child annuity when my spouse died on active duty. Will I now receive the SBP benefit?** Not yet, but you will eventually. If your child is the designated SBP beneficiary, he or she will continue receiving the SBP payments until the SBP-DIC offset is fully eliminated in 2023. As long as you did not remarry prior to age 55, the annuity will revert to you as the surviving spouse on January 1, 2023. If your child or children lose eligibility because he or she reaches age 18 (or age 22 if a full-time student) prior to January 1, 2023, the annuity will be suspended until January 1, 2023, at which time it will revert to you.

**I gave the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) to my child when my spouse died in the line of duty while still in military service, but she is no longer eligible because she is too old. What happens now?** The annuity remains suspended until January 1, 2023, at which point it will revert to you. If you previously chose to transfer the SBP annuity to your child or children, and your child or children are no longer eligible for SBP, the SBP benefit will be restored to you, as the surviving spouse, beginning on January 1, 2023, as long as you did not remarry prior to age 55.

**I previously chose the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) child annuity when my spouse died on active duty. What do I need to do to ensure the payment comes back to me instead of my child?** You will be contacted by the appropriate military service prior to the annuity reverting to you as the surviving spouse on January 1, 2023. You do not need to do anything yet, although we would encourage you to ensure your contact information and bank's direct deposit information is correctly updated through the Defense Finance and Accounting Service's myPay website.

**When my spouse retired from the military, he elected child-only Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP). Does this mean I will now get the SBP instead of my child?** No, the child remains the designated beneficiary for SBP. Section 622 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 does not impact SBP Child-Only or Special Needs Trust (SNT) elections made by retirees and their spouses at retirement. Spouse eligibility is not restored because the election of child-only or SNT coverage at retirement was irrevocable. The section of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 that discusses restoring eligibility to spouses refers only to certain situations in which the surviving spouses chose to transfer the benefit to a child following the death of a military member on active or inactive duty, in the line of duty, after October 7, 2001.

**I am a retiree who elected spouse and child Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) coverage? How will this change in the law affect that coverage?** This change in the law does not affect spouse and child SBP elections made by retirees. If the elected coverage was for spouse and child, the child (if under age 18 or age 22 if a full-time student) will only become eligible for SBP if the spouse loses eligibility, for example a surviving spouse remarries before age 55 or the spouse passes away.

**I would like to learn more, where can I go?** The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) has created this webpage to share information about the elimination of the SBP-DIC offset: [www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/survivors/SBP-DIC-News](http://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/survivors/SBP-DIC-News). Additionally, you can contact Military One Source at (800) 342-9647 or find other counseling options through the Military One Source website.

# SBP-DIC Offset Elimination - 2021 Phase One

## Estimate Letter Explainer

**A-2021 Gross SBP Annuity Estimate** = the estimated SBP annuity amount you would receive **if there was no offset**. Includes increases due to COLAs from the date your annuity started through January of 2021.

**B-2021 DIC OFFSET AMOUNT Estimate** = the estimated amount of DIC that will be **deducted** (offset) from your gross SBP annuity. In 2021, this **offset is 2/3** of your full DIC amount. **THIS IS NOT THE AMOUNT OF YOUR DIC PAYMENT.**

Your *pre-estimates* are listed below:

A-2021 Gross SBP annuity - estimate: \$\$\$

B-2021 DIC **offset amount** (amount of DIC that will be deducted from your gross SBP annuity) - estimate: \$\$\$

C-2021 SBP annuity payment **after DIC offset** - estimate (before taxes): \$\$\$

D-2021 SSIA payment – estimate: \$\$\$

**C-2021 SBP Annuity Payment after DIC Offset** = the estimated SBP annuity payment you will receive on February 1, 2021.

**D-2021 SSIA Payment** = the estimated Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA) payment you will receive on February 1, 2021.

- January 2021 payments = Line C + Line **D** Full DIC Amount from the VA
- No eligible spouse will receive less money in 2021 than they currently receive.
- The change in the law **does NOT affect** the amount of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) you receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). You should **continue to receive your normal, full DIC amount from the VA.**
- Your **pre-estimates for 2021** in the letter are **ONLY for Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments** made by the Department of Defense (DoD) via the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS).
- There is **no change in 2021 for active duty/line of duty surviving spouses who chose the “optional child annuity.”** The payment amount to the eligible active duty/line of duty surviving spouse when the SBP payment reverts in 2023 will be approximately the same SBP payment amount that the child or children received in 2020 plus applicable Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs). You will not receive a letter in 2020 or 2021; look for additional information in 2022.
- For a full explanation of the three phases of the SBP-DIC Offset Phased Elimination, please see our **new DFAS Survivor SBP Newsletter**: [www.dfas.mil/survivornews](http://www.dfas.mil/survivornews)
- The Survivor Benefit Plan laws and regulations are complex. To see a full range of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), see our **SBP-DIC News webpage**: [www.dfas.mil/sbpdicnews](http://www.dfas.mil/sbpdicnews)

SBP = Department of Defense (DoD) Survivor Benefit Plan

DFAS = Defense Finance and Accounting Service; the DoD agency that processes Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) payments

SSIA = DoD Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance

DIC = Dependency and Indemnity Compensation paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

COLA = Cost of Living Adjustment

## TRICARE SELECT ENROLLMENT FEES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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**I was told I have to pay an enrollment fee for TRICARE Select. I didn't before. Is this true?** Yes. Starting January 1, 2021, TRICARE Select Group A - If you or your sponsor's initial enlistment or appointment occurred before January 1, 2018, you are in Group A. retired enrollees must pay TRICARE Select enrollment fees.

**I thought TRICARE Select was free. Now I have to pay an enrollment fee. Why?** Section 701 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year October 1 - September 30, 2017 (NDAA-17) made major changes to the TRICARE program by:

- Terminating TRICARE Standard and establishing TRICARE Select.
- Requiring beneficiaries to elect enrollment in a TRICARE plan to keep TRICARE coverage (purchased care coverage). Per TRICARE policy, you may enroll in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select during TRICARE Open Season or within 90-days of having a Qualifying Life Event.
- Requiring a monthly enrollment fee payment.

**Who makes up Group A or Group B?** You're in Group A if your initial enlistment or appointment or that of your uniformed services sponsor began before January 1, 2018. You're in Group B if your initial enlistment or appointment or that of your uniformed services sponsor began after January 1, 2018.

**I'm active duty. If my spouse decides to enroll in TRICARE Select, does my spouse have to pay the enrollment fee?** No. The following beneficiaries don't have to pay the TRICARE Select Group A enrollment fees:

- Active duty family members (includes transitional survivors).
- Survivors of members who died while on active duty.
- Medically retired service members and their eligible family members.

**How much is the TRICARE Select Group A enrollment fee?** The fee is \$12.50 per month or \$150 annually for an individual plan, or \$25 per month or \$300 annually for a family plan. The following beneficiaries don't have to pay the fee:

- Active duty family members (includes transitional survivors).
- Survivors of members who died while on active duty.
- Medically retired service members and their eligible family members

**I'm retired military, Group A, and enrolled in TRICARE Select. Is the catastrophic cap for Group A changing?** Yes. TRICARE Select Group A retiree catastrophic cap increases from \$3,000 to \$3,500 starting January 2021. It will continue to be \$1,000 for active duty families (includes transitional survivors), and \$3,000 for survivors of service members who died while on active duty or medically retired service members and their families.

**My child just turned 23 and is still a full-time college student. I know they aged out of regular TRICARE coverage. My child is going to enroll in a TRICARE Young Adult (TYA) plan. Do they only pay \$150.00 per month to enroll in TRICARE Select?** No. Since your child is no longer eligible for regular TRICARE benefits, they must enroll in TYA and pay the monthly TYA premiums.

**I'm retired military, Group A, and already TRICARE Select. I heard I have to pay an annual enrollment fee. When do I have to pay and can I just pay it all at once?** Based on the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (NDAA-17), you must establish a method of payment for TRICARE Select enrollment fees in 2020 for coverage in 2021. You can call your regional or overseas contractor now to set up payment. You pay enrollments fees by monthly allotment, if feasible; recurring monthly electronic payment, which may include recurring credit or debit card payment if your retired pay isn't enough to cover the amount of the monthly fee; or one time annual or quarterly payments may be arranged but isn't encouraged. Note: Unremarried former spouses aren't able to pay by allotment. They must contact their TRICARE contractor to set up monthly recurring fee payments by electronic funds transfer. This can include bank withdrawals, or credit or debit card payments. You can set up payment now.

**I'm a Group A survivor whose sponsor died while on active duty. I have TRICARE Select. How do I pay my enrollment fees?** As long as you show as a survivor in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). You must register in DEERS to get TRICARE.

**I'm an unremarried former spouse and am in Group A. I have TRICARE Select. How do I pay my enrollment fees?** You have to contact your TRICARE contractor to set up monthly recurring fee payments by electronic funds transfer. This can include electronic bank withdrawals, or credit or debit card payments. You can set up payment now.

**I'm a TRICARE Select enrollee and considered Group A. I have employer-sponsored health insurance and TRICARE Select. Do I have to pay the TRICARE Select enrollment fee to keep TRICARE as second payer?** Yes. Failure to enroll or pay required fees results in you losing all TRICARE health care benefits. You would only be able to get care at a military hospital or clinic if space is available, or get drugs from a military pharmacy.

**I'm a Group B TRICARE Select enrollee. Are my fees changing?** You'll have up to 180 days after December 31, 2020, to contact the contractor and pay all enrollment fees back to January 1, 2021, and set up your enrollment fee payment by monthly allotment, if feasible; recurring electronic payment. This may include recurring credit or debit card payment if your retired pay isn't enough to cover the amount of the monthly fee; or a one time annual or quarterly payments, which isn't encouraged. Note: Unremarried former spouses aren't able to pay by allotment. They must contact their TRICARE contractor to set up monthly recurring fee payments by electronic funds transfer. This can include bank withdrawals or credit or debit card payments. You can set up payment now. Failure to take action will cause you to be direct care only. This means you'll only be able to get health care at a military hospital or clinic if space is available and only use a military pharmacy. You won't be able to enroll in a TRICARE plan until the next TRICARE Open Season, or if you or a family member has a Qualifying Life Event.

**I'm TRICARE For Life (TFL). Do I have to pay the TRICARE Select enrollment fee?** No. This fee doesn't apply to TRICARE For Life beneficiaries.

**I'm a retired Group A beneficiary. My family has TRICARE Prime. My spouse wants to enroll in TRICARE Select. Do I have to pay two enrollment fees?** Yes. You have to pay the TRICARE Prime enrollment fee (single or family) and the TRICARE Select enrollment fee for your spouse.

**Does the TRICARE Select enrollment fee affect my TRICARE Prime coverage?** No. This change only applies to Group A retirees who are enrolled in TRICARE Select.

**Will my TRICARE Select annual deductibles and copayments also increase?** TRICARE Select deductible, copayments, and cost-shares are subject to review and updating each calendar year. Possible changes are based on the retiree cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). COLA changes usually come out in October of each year. Visit [www.tricare.mil/comparecosts](http://www.tricare.mil/comparecosts) to stay up-to-date on your costs.

**Do the TRICARE Select Group A enrollment fees apply to the annual catastrophic cap?** Yes. These enrollment fees apply to the annual catastrophic cap.

**Can TRICARE Select enrollment fees be taken out pre-taxed? Can you use your current Health Savings Account card to pay this?** No, you can't use your current Health Savings Account (HSA) to pay your TRICARE Select fees. TRICARE doesn't meet the minimum annual deductible requirements for a High Deductible Health Insurance Plan (HDHP). It also doesn't meet HSA criteria as "other health insurance. Health insurance you have in addition to TRICARE, such as Medicare or an employer-sponsored health insurance. TRICARE supplements don't qualify as "other health insurance.""

**I recently retired and am a Group A beneficiary. I thought I would have free health care for the rest of life. Why am I told I have to pay for a TRICARE plan or I won't have medical care?** TRICARE is a benefit offered to those who qualify based on their military service and elect to enroll in a TRICARE health plan. Section 701 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (NDAA-17) made major changes to the TRICARE program by:

- Terminating TRICARE Standard and establishing TRICARE Select.
- Requiring beneficiaries to elect enrollment in a TRICARE plan to keep TRICARE coverage (purchased care coverage).
- Requires a monthly enrollment fee payment due by Jan. 1, 2021.

Section 702 of NDAA 2020 requires fee payment by allotment for retirees and their families, "where feasible."

As a retired service member, your entitlement is care at a military hospital or clinic if space is available and at a military pharmacy. Failure to take action may result in loss of TRICARE coverage.

**Will TRICARE be sending letters to beneficiaries impacted by this change?** Yes. Letters were sent to homes if someone showed enrolled in TRICARE Select. It explained the upcoming change and encouraged beneficiaries to call their TRICARE contractor during TRICARE Open Season to set up their enrollment fee payment. However, you can set up your automatic payments now. You don't need to wait for TRICARE Open Season to begin to do this. There will be additional educational and outreach efforts as the year passes.

**I received a letter in the mail telling me I'm enrolled in TRICARE Select and have to pay an enrollment fee for coverage starting January 1, 2021. I'm enrolled in TRICARE For Life (TFL). Why am I getting this letter?** TRICARE sent you a letter because someone in your household showed enrolled in TRICARE Select (formerly TRICARE Standard). If this is right, the sponsor must take action to set up automatic enrollment fee payments. If no one in your household is enrolled in TRICARE Select, disregard the letter. This change doesn't apply to you if you have Medicare Part A and Part B due to age or disability and are covered by TRICARE For Life.

**I'm a Group A retiree enrolled in TRICARE Select. I understand I have to pay enrollment fees for my coverage to start January 1, 2021, or lose my TRICARE coverage. I want to pay my enrollment fees from my retiree pay check. What do I need to do?** To pay your TRICARE Select enrollment fees by allotment, call your regional or overseas contractor now to set it up. Call before November 20, 2020, for your allotment to start by January 1, 2021. If you wait until after November 20, you may have to pay for one or more months to avoid a break in coverage.

**I'm the spouse of a deceased retired service member and I am enrolled in TRICARE Select. I understand that as a survivor, I don't have to pay the new TRICARE Select enrollment fee. Is that right?** No. Survivors of regular deceased retired service members are required to pay the TRICARE Select enrollment fee. You are only exempt from paying the TRICARE Select enrollment fee if you are an active duty family member (this includes transitional survivors); you are a survivor of an active duty deceased service member; or you are a medically retired service member or family member.

## **VA GUARANTEES MORE THAN 1 MILLION HOME LOANS IN RECORD YEAR** **Press Release, October 28, 2020**

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The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it achieved a record year in its home loan program, by guaranteeing more than 1.2 million home loans in fiscal year 2020, totaling more than \$363 billion, to help veterans afford homeownership. This record loan volume equates to approximately 3,200 loans per day and represents the most home loans guaranteed in a single year in the history of the program.

Established as part of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, or "G.I. Bill," the VA Home Loan Program's mission is to help veterans purchase and retain their homes. This includes the opportunity to refinance home loans under favorable loan terms. "Accomplishing what our employees and lenders have achieved in 2020 would've been unimaginable years ago, let alone when this program was first created more than 75 years ago," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "VA has now backed more than 25 million home loans since the program's inception and this record is indicative of the level of support we provide veterans in helping them attain the American dream."

VA-guaranteed loans are made by private lenders. The VA's guaranty effectively eliminates the need for a down payment, helping veterans afford home ownership. Veterans must meet eligibility requirements and qualify for the loan amount based on their credit and income. The VA encourages veterans to explore VA home loan options by approaching various lenders to compare loan costs and interest rates.

The VA advocates for veterans by limiting fees that lenders can charge and monitoring for unscrupulous lending practices. The VA's advocacy, along with its minimum property requirements and flexible and sensible credit standards, help protect veterans' and taxpayers' interests. Additionally, the VA has the authority to intervene if a veteran has trouble making mortgage payments. The VA can work directly with the veteran and the mortgage company to seek a mutually beneficial resolution and avoid foreclosure, whenever possible. Through such loan servicing efforts, the VA assisted almost 120,000 borrowers avoid foreclosure in fiscal year 2020. These actions saved taxpayers over \$3.4 billion in avoided claim payments.

In response to the COVID-19 national emergency, the VA continues to provide new ways to assist veterans. Borrowers who are experiencing a financial hardship due to COVID-19 can contact their mortgage company directly or call 877-827-3702 to speak with a VA home loan specialist. Eligible veterans can obtain a certificate of eligibility (COE) for VA home loan benefits through eBenefits or by contacting their preferred lender.

## **VA ADMINISTERS OVER 146,000 COVID-19 VACCINE DOSES AS OF JANUARY** **Press Release, January 5, 2021**

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The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it has administered initial COVID-19 vaccine doses to more than 14,000 Veterans at high risk of getting COVID-19 infection, and more than 132,000 health care employees as of January 4<sup>th</sup>. In accordance with the VA's COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan, the department started vaccination efforts at 37 initial VA medical centers, following the Food and Drug Administration's December 11<sup>th</sup> decision to issue an Emergency Use Authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine.

The 37 initial sites to first receive the vaccine were selected based on several factors, including having the capacity to store the vaccine at extremely cold temperatures and the ability to offer high-throughput vaccination. Shortly after, the VA included 128 additional sites to the original list. To date, the list of sites has grown to 195 VA facilities spread out across the country with more being added. "This is a massive undertaking that is happening at rapid pace," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "This week, the initial 37 sites that received the first limited Pfizer-BioNTech allocations are beginning to administer the second dose."

The second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine should be administered 21-days after the first vaccination while the second Moderna dose should be administered 28-days after the first. The VA began administering Moderna the week of December 21, 2020. Both vaccines require two doses for maximum efficacy. The VA's ultimate goal is to offer COVID-19 vaccinations to all veterans and employees who want to be vaccinated. As vaccine supplies increase, the VA care teams will reach out to eligible veterans to schedule vaccinations.

## **VA EXPANDS TELEHEALTH SERVICES DURING COVID-19 FOR OLDER, RURAL, & HOMELESS VETERANS**

**Press Release, January 6, 2021**

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The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced its Digital Divide Consult has helped more than 12,000 veterans obtain internet access or a video-capable device for their health care needs. As part of the program, VA providers refer veterans to a VA social worker, who determines eligibility for various programs to assist with getting the internet service or technology needed for VA telehealth — ensuring older veterans, those living in rural areas, and veterans who are homeless or in temporary housing have the opportunity to participate.

According to the Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association, veterans with lower incomes, more severe disabilities, and more chronic conditions are more likely to use virtual care during the pandemic; but veterans older than 45 and veterans who are homeless or who live in rural areas are less likely to use video care. The Digital Divide Consult provides a solution for these veterans to access video care when needed. “The pandemic has tested VA’s workforce like never before, and innovations like the Digital Divide Consult highlight the ingenuity and resilience that have been hallmarks of the department’s successful response to this national emergency,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “As our virtual care infrastructure continually improves, so does the quality and accessibility of veterans’ care.”

The VA’s Digital Divide Consult and other initiatives are prime reasons the use of telehealth services by veterans continues to rise. In mid-November, a total of 196,116 telehealth video visits to veterans in their homes or other off-site locations were completed over a seven-day period, representing a 1,653% increase in weekly VA Video Connect visits since the end of February. The number of video appointments held per day peaked at more than 41,000.

To further enable Veterans to participate in telehealth, VA facilities are establishing test-call services to support veterans ahead of their first video visit. Additionally, the VA is partnering with Microsoft’s Airband initiative to educate veterans on essential digital skills. The VA intends to update the Digital Divide Consult as opportunities for future broadband and device discounts become available.

## **VA RESUMES OVERPAYMENT NOTIFICATIONS WHILE CONTINUING RELIEF OPTIONS FOR VETERANS**

**Press Release, December 30, 2020**

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The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced its nationwide plan to resume mailing notification letters to veterans, for benefit overpayments placed in suspension from April 3, 2020, through January 1, 2021. The collection of these overpayments was deferred to provide financial relief to veterans due to the COVID-19 pandemic. “VA recognizes veterans and beneficiaries may still experience financial distress from COVID-19, and it will continue to offer enhanced relief options for impacted veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “These include extending repayment plans, waivers, compromises, and temporary hardship suspensions. Most importantly, the department will pause collections through October 2021 for veterans who remain in financial hardship and request relief.”

Veterans and beneficiaries with questions regarding benefit overpayments may submit requests or call (800) 827-0648. Call volume is generally lower Tuesday – Friday. For health care co-payment debts, veterans should contact the Health Resource Center at (866) 400-1238 or [www.pay.gov](http://www.pay.gov) for payments.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

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January 1 .....	New Year's Day
January 18.....	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February 2 .....	Groundhog Day
	Army Nurse Corp created, 1901
February 8 .....	Boy Scouts of America founded, 1910
February 14 .....	Valentine's Day
February 15 .....	President's Day – <i>See the history of President's Day at the bottom of this page</i>
March 3.....	Star Spangled Banner made the U.S. National Anthem, 1931
March 12.....	Girl Scouts of America founded, 1912
March 16.....	U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY founded, 1802
March 17.....	St. Patrick's Day

## CONVENTION SCHEDULES

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### American Legion

- Mid-Winter ..... To be determined
- State ..... To be determined
- National..... To be determined

### AMVETS

- National..... To be determined

### Disabled American Veterans

- Mid-Winter ..... To be determined
- State ..... To be determined
- National..... To be determined

### Marine Corps League

- National..... To be determined

### Military Order of the Purple Heart

- National..... To be determined

### Veterans of Foreign Wars

- Mid Winter ..... To be determined
- State ..... To be determined
- National..... To be determined

### Vietnam Veterans of America

- National..... To be determined

## THE HISTORY OF PRESIDENTS DAY

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The original version of the holiday was in commemoration of George Washington's birthday in 1796 (the last full year of his presidency). Washington, according to the calendar that has been used since at least the mid-18th century, was born on February 22, 1732. According to the old style calendar in use back then, however, he was born on February 11<sup>th</sup>. At least in 1796, many Americans celebrated his birthday on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, while others marked the occasion on the 11<sup>th</sup> instead.

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Washington's Birthday had taken firm root in the American experience as a bona fide national holiday. Its traditions included Birthnight Balls in various regions, speeches and receptions given by prominent public figures, and a lot of revelry in taverns throughout the land. Then along came Abraham Lincoln, another revered president and fellow February baby, born on the 12<sup>th</sup> of the month. The first formal observance of his birthday took place in 1865, the year after his assassination, when both houses of Congress gathered for a memorial address. While Lincoln's Birthday did not become a federal holiday like George Washington's, it did become a legal holiday in several states.

In 1968, legislation (HR 15951) was enacted that affected several federal holidays. One of these was Washington's Birthday, the observation of which was shifted to the third Monday in February each year, whether or not it fell on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. This act, which took effect in 1971, was designed to simplify the yearly calendar of holidays and give federal employees some standard three-day weekends in the process.

Apparently, while the holiday in February is still officially known as Washington's Birthday (at least according to the Office of Personnel Management), it has become popularly (and, perhaps in some cases at the state level, legally) known as "President's Day." This has made the third Monday in February a day for honoring both Washington and Lincoln, as well as all the other men who have served as president.

**DAV VAN CONTACTS TO AND FROM VA MEDICAL CENTERS**

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**BOISE & SURROUNDING AREA TO BOISE VAMC**

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

For the schedule or an appointment, call Jim Rossette at the Boise VA Medical Center (208) 422-1000 ext. 7555.

**LEWISTON & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC**

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

For the schedule or an appointment, call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

**LIBBY & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC**

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

For the schedule or an appointment, Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

**COEUR D'ALENE & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC**

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

For the schedule or an appointment, Call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

**SANDPOINT & SURROUNDING AREA TO SPOKANE VAMC**

All appointments for rides must be made 72 hours in advance.

For the schedule or an appointment, call the DAV Transportation Office at the Spokane VA Medical Center (800) 325-7940.

**LEWISTON TO WALLA WALLA VAMC**

**Thursdays:** Walla Walla VA Medical Center Van. 8:00 a.m. departure from the CBOC at 1630 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Building 2.

Arrives at Walla Walla at 10:00 a.m. Departs Walla Walla at 1:30 p.m. Arrives Lewiston at 3:30 p.m.

**If your appointment runs past the departure time of 1:30, there is no alternative for returning to Lewiston.**

**POCATELLO, IDAHO FALLS, & SURROUNDING ARE TO SALT LAKE CITY VAMC**

All appointments for rides should be made 72 hours in advance.

For the schedule or an appointment, call the VTS/DAV Transportation Office at (800) 613-4012 ext. 2003 or 1027.

