



**COUNTY OF ROCKLAND
VETERANS SERVICE
AGENCY NEWSLETTER**

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR FROM JERRY DONNELLAN

As of this writing, Congress has passed a Bill that would cut veterans' retirement. Obviously, I think this is obnoxious. If cuts need to be made, perhaps Congress should think about their own salaries. First of all, how many veterans are there? When I came to this office in the late 1980s, [R.C. Veterans Service Agency] there were 30,000 veterans in Rockland County. That number has dropped to half that amount. Also, 75% of our veterans are senior citizens. The median age of the World War II veteran is 93. The Korean veteran is 87. The Vietnam veteran is 67. The average lifespan of the American male veteran is 75, so if you believe the statistics, World War II and Korean veterans are gone. We, the Vietnam veterans have eight years left. So how much money is Congress really going to save and for how long? Whereas, if we could guarantee that in eight years 75% of the House and Senate would be gone, now that might be a shot at savings. Or is it the fact that the number of veterans has fallen and therefore, their voting power has dropped, so their sacrifice to this country is no longer significant in the halls of Washington?

LAW GIVES VETERANS A BREAK

Journal News (www.lohud.com) article by Cara Matthews – 12/26/2013

A new state law allows school districts to grant property-tax exemptions to eligible veterans, who until now have only been able to get breaks on municipal tax bills. School districts have to hold a public hearing and adopt a resolution before they can provide the exemptions. They can also adopt a local law to include Gold Star parents — those who lost a child who was serving in the military — as qualified homeowners, provided the property is their primary residence. Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed the legislation last week, and it took effect immediately. It adds school districts to existing law that allows municipal governments to give exemptions to veterans. "I definitely think it's a good idea, especially today with folks coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan in a county such as Rockland, where the taxes are as high as they are," said Jerry Donnellan, Director of the Rockland County Veterans Service Agency. "We are losing a lot of these veterans moving out of the area to places that are more affordable." For further information, contact Jerry at (845) 638-5244. To read more, view this link: <http://www.lohud.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013312260068>

COUNTY EXECUTIVE ED DAY

This coming Friday, January 3rd, the monthly RockVets Radio Show will air on WRCR 1300 AM dial starting just after the 10:00 a.m. newsbreak. You can also listen to the show live online at www.wrcr.com. This month's guest will be Rockland's recently elected County Executive, Ed Day. If you have questions you'd like to ask our new County Executive or have other news to share with the veteran or military community, please call in to the show. The call-in number is (845) 362-0013.

COLA INCREASE ON VA BENEFITS

Veterans, their families and survivors receiving disability compensation and pension benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs will receive a 1.5 percent cost-of-living increase in their monthly payments beginning Jan. 1, 2014. For Veterans without dependents, the new compensation rates will range from \$130.94 monthly for a disability rated at 10 percent to \$2,858.24 monthly for 100 percent. The full rates are available on the Internet at www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/rates-index.asp.

SENATE DEMS BLOCK AMENDMENT TO RESTORE VETERAN BENEFITS BY CLOSING ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT WELFARE LOOPHOLE

By *Caroline May, The Daily Caller*

Senate Republicans were unable to stop military pension cuts when Senate Democrats blocked a vote on an amendment to prevent the cuts by closing a welfare loophole for illegal immigrants. The two-year budget deal brokered by Senate Budget Committee Chairwoman Patty Murray and House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan, would cut military pensions by \$6 billion over ten years, leaving some Senate Republicans scrambling to stop the cuts. To read more, view this link:

<http://nation.foxnews.com/2013/12/18/senate-dems-side-illegal-immigrants-over-veterans>

JERRY'S RESPONSE TO ABOVE ARTICLE

In response to the above news, here are some comments from Jerry Donnellan:

"The bottom line is there are more immigrants, legal or otherwise, than there are veterans. As always, it comes down to votes. Since I came to this office 25 years ago, the number of vets in this County has dropped in half, and the immigrant population has gone the other way. There was a time when, to run for Congress, it was almost a prerequisite to be a veteran. Once the politicians see they can get away with it, it will continue, and veterans' benefits will begin to disappear.

They say after Vietnam it was bad, but these guys are going to have it worse. All of the yellow ribbons, and positive media, is lip service. Two wars, 12 years, have we seen one campus protest? In the 60's not a day went by without one. Yeah, they hated us, but at least there was some emotion in it, and they were close to us because there were so many of us. Further, they thought we were crazy - they may have been right on that one! We no longer go to war as a country, we send our volunteer military to do our fighting for us, because after all, they asked to join the military, not like us draftees." Jerry

MESOTHELIOMA GUIDE FOR VETERANS

Veterans make up the largest group of people diagnosed with mesothelioma. Before asbestos was regulated, it was one of the cheapest, most convenient insulating materials suitable in many military applications. This resulted in countless veterans being exposed to asbestos. Veterans who served full-time are entitled to medical benefits and disability compensation. For further information and to view the mesothelioma guide, view this link:

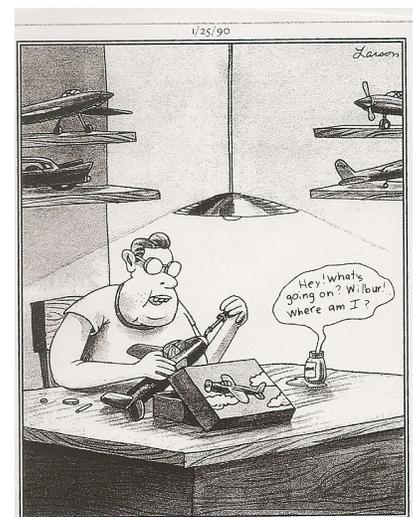
www.MesotheliomaGuide.com

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS EMBEDDED IN VA ISSUED ID CARDS

You may have come across this youtube video about Social Security numbers being embedded in VA issued Veterans ID Cards:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiRa_A_UptM

While it is true that social security numbers are embedded in the VA card, we recommend that you continue to carry and use the card, with the caution that you treat it as you would if you were giving out your social security number. The original VA card had your social security number written on the face of the card, so the VA revised that and encrypted your number to put it in the bar code, rather than displaying it on the card itself. This was a great improvement. But as you know, the VA uses social security numbers to identify you as a veteran. Therefore, use the card when needed, but be aware that it does contain your social security number.



Jimmy meets Mr. Ed.

BOCES MEDITATION CLASSES AT NYACK LEGION POST

Edward Gray, from BOCES, will offer 8 weekly meditation classes beginning on 6 January from 6-7 PM at the Nyack American Legion Post, designed to help alleviate stresses that you may be experiencing. These are the same classes as offered by the BOCES Adult Education program but will be tailored specifically for veterans (or family members) who would like to participate. This program has been clinically tested and proved to be effective in relieving stress and the symptoms of PTSD. Mr. Gray highlighted the fact that these sessions have no philosophical element and require no physical activity other than deep breathing.

There is a limit of 40 attendees and we are extending an invitation to any veteran in Rockland County who would like to attend. Anyone interested in attending should contact Anthony DelRegno, (845) 608-2389 or email delregnoa@aol.com to sign up. There is no cost to attend.

COUNTY EXECUTIVE C. SCOTT VANDERHOEF



In this photo, Jerry Donnellan presents former County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef with a NY Vets glass cup, in recognition of the 575,000 veterans who are now receiving healthcare at national VA out-patient clinics. The first of these clinics, with Scott's support, was established right here in Rockland County and now treats more than 6,000 local Rockland County veterans. For further information call the veterans' health clinic at (845) 634-8942. They are located at 345 North Main Street in New City, New York 10956 or see link:

http://www.hudsonvalley.va.gov/locations/New_City_Community_Clinic.asp

CAREGIVER FOR LOCAL DISABLED OR ELDERLY VETERAN

Cathy Strunk is a life-long Pearl River resident. She is available as a caregiver for disabled or elderly veterans that need assistance. Cathy has been helping disabled and elderly people for the past 15 years by assisting them with shopping, transporting to doctor appointments, meal preparation, personal care, etc. She can provide excellent professional and personal references for your review. If you can use Cathy's services, you can contact her at 845-653-2604 or via e-mail: emimaxbud@yahoo.com.

MAN GETS 28 YEARS FOR VETS' SCAM

(Reuters) - A man convicted of running a fake charity for U.S. Navy veterans that raised nearly \$100 million from donors across the United States, was sentenced to 28 years in prison on Monday by an Ohio judge.

John Donald Cody, 67, known by his alias Bobby Thompson, was convicted by a Cuyahoga County jury in November on 23 counts, including identity fraud and using a false name in a scam that spanned 40 states. Prosecutors said Cody ran the U.S. Navy Veterans Association (USNVA), a bogus charity headquartered in Tampa, Florida. Authorities charged him as Thompson, but later said he was Cody, a Harvard-trained lawyer and former member of the U.S. Army's military intelligence unit.

To read the entire story, view this link:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/16/us-usa-ohio-charityfraud-idUSBRE9BF0Y220131216>



No matter when they served, Veterans may be eligible for benefits and health care from VA. Explore these and other VA benefits at VA.gov/Explore.

R.C. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FREE OR LOW-COST PROGRAMS OFFERED

The Rockland County Department of Health is offering free or low-cost programs to the Rockland community. Call (845) 364-2501 to reserve your spot in the classes. Some of the classes include:

- **Better Choices, Better Health**
Learn ways to manage your ongoing health conditions. Next class begins on January 8th in Congers or February 28th in Pearl River.
- **Living Well With Diabetes**
Learn to manage your diabetes and prevent complications. Their next free six-session begins on January 27th in Sparkill or February 6th in Suffern.
- **Diabetes Prevention Program**
This free, highly successful program will help you prevent diabetes. You learn how to improve your food choices and lose weight, increase your physical activity level and learn coping skills to maintain weight loss. The next program begins on January 28th in Pomona.
- **Lose to Win Weight Loss Program**
Learn effective ways to lose weight and maintain your weight loss. Our next low-cost eight-session program begins on January 30th in Spring Valley.
- **A Matter of Balance**
Learn to improve your balance and reduce falls. The next free eight-session program begins on April 21st in West Nyack.
- **Put It Out Rockland**
Get help to successfully quit smoking. One-on-one or group sessions are offered and low-cost nicotine patches are available, that can double your chances of success on the program.

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION FOR VETERANS

From time to time we hear of a job being available. Employers often want to hire veterans for these positions. If you're in the market for a job or career change, get in touch with us. While we may or may not have a definite employment opportunity at the time, we do have other information that can be of use, such as education benefits or other benefits that you have earned as a veteran. So get in touch with us at the R.C. Veterans Service Agency, 20 Squadron Blvd., Suite 480, New City, New York 10956, telephone number (845) 638-5244. Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

In the meantime, check out this link to Resources for Veterans through the Federal Job Center:
<http://jobcenter.usa.gov/resources-for-veterans>

VETS' REP IN ROCKLAND

Our Department of Labor Veterans' Representative is Natalie Hernandez. If you are in the market for employment possibilities or a career change, contact Natalie at 845-356-5429, or via e-mail at: Natalie.Hernandez@labor.ny.gov or on twitter at NatDOLVetRep.

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY UPDATE - VA ADDS FIVE TBI RELATED ILLNESSES

Some Veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI) who are diagnosed with any of five other ailments will have an easier path to receive additional disability pay under new regulations developed by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The new regulation, which takes effect 30 days from 16 DEC, impacts some Veterans living with TBI who also have Parkinson's disease, certain types of dementia, depression, unprovoked seizures or certain diseases of the hypothalamus and pituitary glands. "We decide Veterans' disability claims based on the best science available," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "As scientific knowledge advances, VA will expand its programs to ensure Veterans receive the care and benefits they've earned and deserve." This regulation stems from a report of the National Academy of Sciences, Institute of Medicine (IOM) regarding the association between TBI and the five diagnosable illnesses. The IOM report, *Gulf War and Health, Volume 7: Long-Term Consequences of Traumatic Brain Injury*, found "sufficient evidence" to link moderate or severe levels of TBI with the five ailments. The new regulations, printed in the Federal Register, say that if certain Veterans with service connected TBI also have one of the five illnesses, then the second illness will also be considered as service connected for the calculation of VA disability compensation. Eligibility for expanded benefits will depend upon the severity of the TBI and the time between the injury causing the TBI and the onset of the second illness. However, Veterans can still file a claim to establish direct service-connection for these ailments even if they do not meet the time and severity standards in the new regulation. Veterans who have questions or who wish to file new disability claims may use the eBenefits website, available at <http://www.eBenefits.va.gov/ebenefits> or call the Rockland County Veterans Service Agency to file a claim or to speak with a veterans' counselor. The office number is 845-638-5244.

GOLDEN GLOVES BOXING MATCH AND VVA #333

On Saturday, February 1st, 2014, the New York Daily News will once again present their annual boxing matches. The event will be held at the St. Lawrence Center in Sloatsburg, New York. Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter #333, will present the Color Guard. The Chapter will also run a 50/50, and have a donation area set up for wounded warriors who are disabled with spinal cord injuries and amputees. For further information, contact VVA Chapter President Bruce McClintock at bmclintock36@gmail.com.

STUDY SHOWS MYOCARDIAL ISCHEMIA LINK TO PTSD

[Source: Cardiology Today | J.H. Turner | 15 Dec 2013

Patients with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were more likely to have myocardial ischemia on exercise treadmill testing than those without the disorder in a recent prospective cohort study. In the *Mind Your Heart Study*, researchers evaluated data collected from 663 participants treated on an outpatient basis at two Veterans Affairs Medical Centers (VAMCs) in California between 2008 and 2010. Incidence of myocardial ischemia (reduced blood flow to the heart) was compared between patients with and without symptoms of PTSD as indicated by the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale. Evidence of ischemia was determined via exercise treadmill testing. PTSD was observed in 35% of the cohort, including 210 patients with full PTSD and 20 with partial PTSD. Myocardial ischemia on testing was observed in 17% of patients with PTSD compared with 10% of those without a significant association between ischemia and PTSD remained after adjustment for factors that included age, sex, history of cardiovascular disease CVD, obesity, sleep quality, depression and the presence of traditional cardiac risk factors. Exclusion of patients with prior CVD did not eliminate the significance of this association. The use of continuous PTSD symptom score as the predictor of ischemia also yielded a significant association with myocardial ischemia.



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We would like to keep you up-to-date on events and matters of interest to veterans and will be sending these newsletters regularly. If at any time you no longer wish to receive them, please send a note to

info@rockvets.com. Your e-mail address will immediately be deleted from our newsletter mailing list. If you find any of this information useful, please pass it along to others.

ROCKVETS - ON THE INTERNET AND AIRWAVES

You can find information, useful links, and view our webpage at www.rockvets.com. Previous copies of our newsletters are also available on our website at: www.rockvets.com/newsletters. You can e-mail us at: info@rockvets.com or on our facebook page: www.facebook.com/rockvets.

On the first Friday of each month, just after the 10:00 a.m. news-break, RockVets has a live call-in talk show on Rockland County's local radio station – WRCR 1300 AM. We encourage you to call-in and ask any questions you may have relating to veterans or the military. This is also a good opportunity to promote any upcoming events for your organization that would be of interest to the veteran/military community. The call-in number is 845.362.0013. The show is also live on the internet at: www.wrcr.com. So please listen in, and call if you have questions or information to share.

The next radio broadcast will be on Friday, January 3rd, 2014 right after the 10:00 a.m. newsbreak. Once again we appreciate the support of the Marine Corps League - Rockland County Detachment.

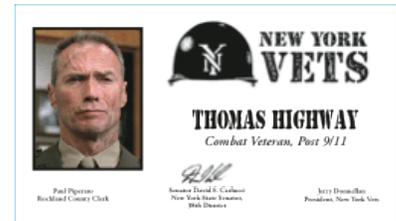
So that we can keep you up to date on as much information as possible, we have included links to many articles so you may read further about those items. At the time the newsletter is sent to you, the links are all working well. If the links do not work for you, just cut and paste the address into your browser and that should bring you to the correct article, or you can do a search for the article on the web. Providing the information in this newsletter does not necessarily constitute our endorsement or opinion.

If you have information that can benefit the military and veteran community, or would like the community to know about an event your group is hosting, please send it to us so we can publish it in the next newsletter: info@rockvets.com.

HAPPY NEW YEAR...WISHING YOU ALL THE BEST FOR 2014!

[And coming soon...]

**NY Vets ID Card for Post 9/11
Combat Veterans**



**VETERANS SERVICE
AGENCY OF ROCKLAND**

If you plan to come to the Veterans Service Agency office, please call to make an appointment so we can give you the time you need - 845.638.5244.

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**WE ARE HERE TO CARE FOR
YOU WHO HAVE WORN THE
UNIFORM – NO MATTER WHERE
OR WHEN YOU SERVED.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR
SERVICE.**