



COUNTY OF ROCKLAND
VETERANS SERVICE
AGENCY NEWSLETTER

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DOWN-SIZING OUR MILITARY

The bodies aren't even cold and the talk has already started about downsizing the Military. Usually Washington has the good taste to at least wait until the war is over before it starts this dance. I understand we won't need an army the size that it is right now if we can stay out of war. But as we know, and as the old Greek Plato said, "Only the dead have seen the end of war." Up until now he has been right.

We have to be careful when a drawdown like this starts, so as not to cause collateral damage – a word that the military has taught us to understand. Along with the drawdown there will be base closings. Not that West Point would be one of them but why don't we take it as an example since it's in our neighborhood. A large percent of the people that staff West Point are civilians and not military...even the MPs that used to be at the gate have been replaced by private security firms. They would all be put out of work. The Mom-and-Pop shops and small businesses in Highland Falls would take a hard hit, and particularly in this economy, many would close. The hotels and motels that depend on the Point would go the same way. Churches, synagogues, deliveries, bread, eggs, newspapers, you name it, it's all going to get hit and that's going to cost other jobs.

Other collateral damage would be the retired military who tend to live around bases so that they can access the PX and Commissary and more importantly, medical treatment. If we lose Keller Army Hospital, the one at West Point, where are they going to pick up the slack? Not only do they work for the military, but in an emergency they will take care of civilians. What if you have a car wreck on the ice coming around Storm King Mountain? Going south, I guess Nyack or Good Sam would be the next best bet... I'm not sure what is going north. But for someone in

critical condition, those extra minutes could kill them. Most bases have hospitals and many of them are far larger than West Point. Yes, I'm sure we're going to have to cut, but let's do that cutting with a scalpel and not a chain saw, and let's give the grunts the first shot at the other jobs in special ops and cyber warfare since they've already been trained. And let us make sure that the money goes at least partially into Defense and not into some black hole in Foggy Bottom.

Let's hope our friends in D.C. aren't eyeing these dollars to put into Healthcare. Sure, I want to see people have healthcare, but why do we have to take healthcare from hundreds of thousands of people to give it to other people who don't have it? I guess it's one of D.C.'s Ten Commandments, that is, when you begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel, it's time to buy a new tunnel. Jerry

VA DESTRUCTION OF PATIENT MEDICAL RECORDS MAY BE ILLEGAL

Posted on February 27, 2014 by [Donnie La Curan](#) in [Veteran News](#)
<http://www.veteransresources.org/2014/02/va-destruction-patient-medical-records-may-illegal/>

Recent investigative reporting with The Daily Caller and [Washington Examiner](#) has exposed further dysfunction and mismanagement at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), detailing the Los Angeles VA hospital's practice of intentionally destroying veterans' medical meeting requests in order to reduce a backlog of overdue medical appointments—a potentially illegal practice that proves the need for greater accountability at the department, a leading veterans' advocacy organization said today.

On February 24, The Daily Caller reported, based on interviews with a whistleblowing former VA employee, [how department officials had destroyed patient medical records](#) in order to reduce the size of the backlog of benefits claims. But a review of VA guidelines on the management of patient records by Concerned Veterans for America (CVA) reveals that VA employees could find themselves criminally liable for secretly destroying medical records.

Specifically, the language under "[Retention and disposal](#)" in the VA's guidance on patient medical records dictates that such records are to be maintained for 75 years, reading as follows:
In accordance with the records disposition authority approved by the Archivist of the United States, paper records and information stored on electronic storage media are maintained for 75 years after the last episode of patient care then destroyed/deleted.

Darin Selnick, former special assistant to the VA secretary and CVA's top VA advisor, said that the "rules are set in place to prevent abuse and fraud," and warned that destroying records could result in penalties for VA employees involved in the destruction.

CVA has played an aggressive watchdog role in chronicling the VA's rampant bureaucratic dysfunction, which has resulted in a massive backlog of veterans' benefits claims and poor care to VA patients. But the latest revelations detailing the destruction of patient records paints a troubling portrait of just how far the VA bureaucracy will go to salvage its tarnished image. "The collapse of the VA's service mission over the last several years has been troubling for veterans, their families and for all Americans who care about the men and women who have served our nation in uniform," said Pete Hegseth, CEO of Concerned Veterans for America. "However, the revelation that VA employees destroyed patient records in an effort to make their numbers look better is deeply alarming, and suggests a failure of professionalism, integrity and ethics. It also raises troubling questions: just how widespread is this practice, and what effect has it had on veterans' care? They deserve an answer.

VA DESTRUCTION OF MEDICAL RECORDS

Article continues:

"Given the Obama administration's resistance to reforming this broken department, it is imperative that Congress step up to demand accountability—now," Hegseth concluded.

CVA has endorsed the VA Management Accountability Act of 2014, legislation sponsored by Rep. Jeff Miller (R-Fla.) and Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) to empower the VA secretary to fire senior executive employees who fail to perform. The revelation that VA employees were destroying patient records, Hegseth said, strengthens the case that accountability is long overdue at the nation's second largest federal department.

For more information, please contact Matt Schuck at 703-307-1981 or via e-mail at mschuck@cv4a.org.

Concerned Veterans for America is a non-partisan, non-profit, 501(c)(4) organization that advocates for policies that will preserve the freedom and liberty we and our families so proudly fought and sacrificed to defend.

SOURCE: Concerned Veterans for America
<http://www.veteransresources.org/2014/02/va-destruction-patient-medical-records-may-illegal/>

VA ANNOUNCES ROLLOUT OF SECURE VETERAN HEALTH IDENTIFICATION CARDS

February 20, 2014 by [Donnie La Curan](#) in [Veteran News](#)
<http://www.veteransresources.org/2014/02/va-announces-rollout-secure-veteran-health-identification-cards/6>

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the phased roll out of newly designed, more secure Veteran Health Identification Cards. The new cards are distinguished by additional security features and will have a different look and feel.

In addition to being more secure, the card has been transformed into a Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC). Similar to a typical health insurance card, the VHIC displays the Veteran's Member ID, a new unique identifier, as well as a Plan ID, reflecting the Veteran's enrollment in VA health care.

The VHIC is personalized to display the emblem of the Veteran's branch of service. It also provides features that make it easier to use, such as the addition of "VA" in Braille to help visually impaired Veterans, and the printing of VA phone numbers and emergency care instructions on the cards.

The card replaces the Veteran Identification Card (VIC), which was introduced in 2004. As part of a phased rollout, starting this month, the card will only be offered to newly enrolled and other Veterans who have not been issued a VIC. Then, in early April, VA will begin a three-month effort to automatically issue the more secure VHIC to current VIC cardholders. VA recommends Veterans safeguard their VIC as they would a credit card, and cut up or shred the card once it is replaced. While not required to receive VA health care, all enrolled Veterans are encouraged to get a VHIC.

Enrolled Veterans can get more information about the VHIC by visiting their VA medical facility enrollment coordinator or the website www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhic, calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visiting their local VA health care facility. Veterans who are not enrolled in the VA health care system can apply for enrollment at any time by visiting www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll, Calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visiting their local VA health care facility.

HONOR FLIGHT

The next Honor Flight leaves on **Saturday April 26, 2014**

For further information, contact Becky via e-mail:

becky01126@hotmail.com

Hudson Valley Honor Flight (HVHF) is the local chapter of the Honor Flight Network which "Honors American Veterans" for all their sacrifices by transporting these heroes to Washington, D.C. to visit their memorials at no cost to them. HVHF currently serves: Orange, Ulster, Sullivan, Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Dutchess, and Pike Counties. First priority is given to World War II veterans but terminally ill veterans from other wars will also be considered. HVHF plans two charter flights per year and plan to continue their mission for years to come and eventually take ALL veterans from other wars on future flights. This amazing one-day trip has a unique itinerary designed to give veterans the complete Honor Flight experience to show appreciation and gratitude for all of their sacrifices. For further information on how to donate or participate, call 845-391-0076 or visit their website at: www.HVHonorFlight.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND NEWS

VIETNAM AT 50 – STARS AND STRIPES MAGAZINE

In this continuing series, *Stars and Stripes* looks back at the Vietnam War and the cultural changes that surrounded it. With contributions from the men and women who were there, they will examine how the war was prosecuted, how it changed our military and foreign policy thinking, and how America viewed itself then and now. See this link to the article in *Stars and Stripes* magazine:

<http://www.stripes.com/news/special-reports/vietnam-at-50>

VIETNAM MEMORIES – STORIES LEFT AT THE WALL

Starting on Monday, March 3rd, 2014 Vietnam Veterans Chapter #333 will present their educational program, **Vietnam Memories, Stories Left At The Wall**. This will be at Felix Festa Middle School (30 Parrott Road, West Nyack, NY 10994.) On Monday, March 3rd, there will be two assemblies: period 2 at 9:52 - 10:37 and period 5 at 12:19 - 1:04. This is an interactive assembly giving the children a perspective of the Vietnam War, ERA, loss and healing. From **March 4 to March 11** the museum presentation will be set up in the school Library.

BOB HOPE DIVISION TO VISIT VA NURSING HOME

A group of Veterans known as the Bob Hope Division will visit the VA Nursing Home on Saturday March 29, 2014 at 1230hrs. During this event they will conduct a Casino Royal at the Nursing home for the patients. There will be 6 table games and horse racing for the patients. They need dealers, cashiers, and people to aid the patients while they gamble. The nursing home is located at: 2090 Albany Road, (Route 9) Montrose, New York 10548. For further information contact Chip Hayes via e-mail: chip1440@lawyer.com

ANNUAL WOMEN VETERANS' LUNCHEON

All are cordially invited to attend the Annual Women Veterans' Luncheon. It will be held on April 12, 2014 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Suffern, New York 10901 from 1:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The luncheon is \$25.00 per person and tickets are now available. Contact Anngela or Nancy Vasser-Cooper at 845-596-6267. All proceeds to benefit Women Veterans Association of Hudson Valley, Inc. Visit them at: anngcoop@aol.com or facebook: [womenveteranshv](https://www.facebook.com/womenveteranshv).

TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE

There is a movement afoot to name the new Tappan Zee Bridge in honor of Purple Heart recipients. If you are in favor of this, please write to your legislative representatives.

FREE YOGA CLASSES FOR VETERANS

Monthly Free YOGA Classes – next one is Monday, March 17th, then April 21st from 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. Union Arts Center 2 Union Street, Sparkill, NY First Floor. Continues every 3rd Monday of each month.

YOGA with Ed Brown – 5:30-6:30 *Retired NYC firefighter*
The "bars" energy technique – 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Contact: Wendy Lee at sistermoon10976@gmail.com
Telephone: 845-548-4962
or Christine at: accessyourexcellence@gmail.com
Telephone: 845-825-2361

IN THE HEIGHTS - MUSICAL

Ramapo High School has an upcoming production of the musical, *In the Heights* and veterans are invited to attend free of charge. For further information, contact Cindy through e-mail at: wisegirl1955@yahoo.com

UPCOMING EVENTS AND NEWS

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH – FREEDOM AWARD PRESENTED



Dr. Katherine Ward has been selected as this year's Freedom Award recipient. Pictured in the photo are Ed Day, Rockland County Executive, Dr. Katherine Ward, and Jerry Donnellan.

Dr. Ward was raised in Nyack, New York. She graduated from Nyack High School in 1983 and was Class Valedictorian. She graduated from the State University of Albany and received her podiatry degree from

the New York College of Podiatric Medicine. Dr. Ward completed her surgical residency at Catholic Medical Center in Queens. She then pursued further training at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. and served as a Captain in the U.S. Army Medical Service Corps during the Gulf War, Somalia and Bosnian campaigns. She is the former Chief of Podiatry of Walter Reed Army Medical Center, as well as Chief of Podiatry at Fort Hood, Texas. After her honorable discharge in 1995, she taught at the New York College of Podiatric Medicine as an Associate Professor for 9 years, while growing her private practice in Rockland County. She enjoys a long and trusted reputation in Rockland County for the past 18 years, committed to the highest level of patient care.

In addition to her clinical podiatric practice, Dr. Ward serves on the South Orangetown School District PTA and Wellness Committee, as well as the Rockland County School Health and Wellness Coalition. She also serves as the President of the Board of Visitors at the NY State Veterans Nursing Home at Montrose, where she help ensure quality care for all veterans. She is also a Rockland County PBA Surgeon, assisting police officers with their foot problems and injuries. She resides in Blauvelt with her husband and two children.

WEST POINT CAREER EXPO

Join Army Community Service (ACS) at the West Point Club on Tuesday, March 11 from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. for the West Point Career Expo. This event is open to all U.S. Military Members, Veterans, and Military Spouses. This is your opportunity to meet with top companies to discuss career options, and speak with top colleges and universities on how to advance your career. This event is open to the public and free for job seekers. For more information, contact the Employment Readiness Program Manager at (845) 938-5658. Visit the website at: <http://www.westpointmwr.com>

WEST POINT ANNUAL RACE 5K/10K

Save the Date, the annual West Point 5K/10K is being held on Saturday, May 10th at Buffalo Soldier Field. 5K and 10K start at 8:30 a.m. and Youth Fun Run kicks off at 8:45 a.m. Starting March 1st, registration will be available on [active.com](http://www.westpointmwr.com), open to the public. For details, call 938-4690 or visit the website: <http://www.westpointmwr.com>

ROCKLAND COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CLASSES

Be a healthier you in 2014! Sign up for free and low-cost programs offered by the Rockland County Department of Health. For further information or to sign up for classes, call Ronda at 845-364-2501.

Living Well with Diabetes: This free six-session workshop series will help you: understand diabetes and learn how to prevent complications; keep track of your blood sugar; eat healthy; be more physically active; learn relaxation techniques to cope with stress; and take charge of your health. Our next workshop series begin April 7 in Sparkill or April 24 in Suffern. Call 364-2501 to reserve your spot.

Diabetes Prevention Program: This free, highly successful 16-week 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. Call 364-2501 to see when our next program is starting.

Better Choices Better Health: Managing Ongoing Health Conditions: Do you have a chronic health condition that is stopping you from living your life to its fullest? If yes, then join us at this free six-session workshop series. We will help you gain the skills you need to better manage your ongoing health conditions and improve the quality of your life. You'll feel more in control of your health! Call 364-2501 to see when our next workshop series is starting.

A Matter of Balance: Our free fall-prevention program can help you learn to reduce your fear and risk of falling, increase your activity levels, make changes to reduce the risk of falls, and learn simple exercises to increase strength and balance. Call 364-2501 to see when our next program is starting. We are looking for volunteers to teach A Matter of Balance classes. Free training is provided. Our next eight-session training begins April 23 in Pomona. Call 364-3839 for more information.

Put It Out Rockland Quit Smoking Program: Our award winning, highly successful program offers a series of one-on-one, or group, quit smoking sessions with a quit smoking specialist and low-cost nicotine replacement products (for those medically eligible) to double your chances of being successful. Call 364-2651 or visit www.putitoutrockland.com to get help to quit. A group class is starting March 3 in Nanuet. Call Pam Rose at 627-9860 for more information and to register.

Lose to Win Weight Loss Program: Ready to lose weight? Join the Lose to Win Weight Loss Program - an eight-week series that uses the latest guidelines to help you lose weight safely and successfully, offered for a small fee through Nyack Hospital. Call 364-2501 to see when the next program is starting.

ROCKLAND COUNTY SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED

There is a \$500.00 scholarship available for veterans, offered by Leadership Rockland. For further information, contact RBAAdmin@LR.org

The Rockland Community Foundation also has a list of scholarships available to the general public, mainly for high school seniors. Applications are now available. For further information, contact The Rockland Community Foundation at: info@rocklandgives.org

Applicants must be residents of Rockland County and meet specific criteria set forth by the individual scholarships. To learn more, or to download an application, visit www.rocklandgives.org.

Apply now! Deadlines are as follows:

- Judith H. Trust scholarship – deadline is April 2
- Chazen Spirit of Rockland and -
- Welles Remy Crowther scholarships - April 30
- Auerbach/Goldberg scholarship - May 7
- Gallagher Scholarship - April 30
- Forge Ahead - May 7
- Strack Scholarship - June 2



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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, March 7th, 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.

VETS REP IN ROCKLAND

If you are in the market for employment possibilities or a career change, contact Natalie 845-356-5429, or via e-mail:

Natalie.Hernandez@labor.ny.gov or on twitter at NatDOLVetRep.

**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.**