



BECKER COUNTY
VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

VSO UPDATE

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

NEWSLETTER DATE NOVEMBER 2007

A FEW WORDS...

I was sitting at my desk trying to think of the best way to get information out to our service organizations and had an "aha" moment. I thought I'd try a newsletter format. Hopefully this will be the first of what will become a quarterly newsletter. Let me know what you think.

We are continuing to see an increase in the number of veterans seeking services. That's a good thing! Because of that increase I am asking for your assistance. There has also been a rise in the number of requests for speaking engagements. When I speak outside normal business hours we have to adjust the number of hours I spend in the office

due to County policy. If you would like me to speak to your organization I am asking that you try to put it on my schedule a month in advance. We will still work to accommodate everyone but any assistance you can provide will be appreciated!

Good news for our returning National Guard veterans. On November 7, the House Veterans' Affairs Committee approved by voice vote a bill (H.R. 3882) that removes the two-year minimum mobilization requirement to allow National Guard members to receive education benefits. If there are any veterans with questions regarding their education benefits they can contact me or Dave

Bellefeuille, the Higher Education Veterans Programs Representative.

It's EVR season! Due to changing requirements we are sending letters out to our pension recipients outlining details that will make the process easier.

If you know of a pension vet that needs assistance or more information please have them contact this office.

It's been a busy year and Mary Lou and I are honored to serve the veterans of Becker County. Please let us know what you think of the newsletter format!

Lauri Brooke
Becker County VSO

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Agent Orange Health Care Update*
- *Governor Pawlenty announces 35 initiatives to support veterans and the military*
- *Pension / EVR season*

AGENT ORANGE AND HEALTH CARE

VAMC-Fargo recently reiterated the following policy: Title 38, and all of the supporting documentation which refers to Agent Orange (herbicides) indicate veterans seeking care for disorders associated with exposure to herbicides

while serving in Vietnam are eligible for placement in Priority Group 6.

VA policy is that veterans whose service indicates they qualify to claim Agent Orange exposure are placed in Priority Group 6 and qualify for the full Medical Benefits

Package. These individuals should not be rejected and should not be denied care.

Service locations that qualify a veteran to claim Agent Orange exposure is being expanded to include service off the shores of Vietnam.

A recent court decision

*"Never in the field
of human conflict,
was so much owed
by so many,
to so few."*

~Sir Winston Churchill



VA
MEDICAL
CENTER
FARGO
1-800-410-9723

AGENT ORANGE AND HEALTH CARE CONT.

mandates that veterans that served off the shores of Vietnam, referred to as "Blue Waters", be given the same consideration as veterans that served in country. Therefore, if a veteran claims Vietnam service and presents evidence that they served in country, on the inland waterways, visitation to the country or service off shore, they will be entered as Agent Orange exposure "Yes" and placed in Priority Group 6 unless they

have attributes that place them in a higher priority group.

The Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal and the various other campaign medals are acceptable evidence. These medals will be shown on the DD 214.

For veterans with eligibility already verified, we submit the change to eligibility at VAMC-Fargo to complete the update of Agent Orange

status. For new entries or veterans whose eligibility is unverified we enter the correct information on the Application for Health Benefits and submit to eligibility.

Note: This only pertains to placement in priority groups, we are still waiting for determination on the Compensation Claims pertaining to "Blue Waters."

GOVERNOR PAWLENTY ANNOUNCES INITIATIVES

Building on his foundation of support for military families and veterans, Governor Pawlenty announced 35 initiatives to provide additional services and assistance for those in the armed forces and for Minnesotans now on active duty. The \$51 million package will be presented to the legislature when it convenes in February 2008.

"We need to say 'thank you' to our veterans not just with our words, but by our actions," Governor Pawlenty said.

The Governor's package includes 15 new initiatives and 20 proposals to continue or expand existing programs and services for veterans and military personnel. A combination of on-going and one-time

funds are proposed to finance the initiatives.

The Governor's 2008 Military and Veterans Support Package includes proposals to expand and enhance veterans services, address tax issues, provide additional education benefits, and advance initiatives on businesses that employ veterans.

\$51 MILLION
PACKAGE
INCLUDES
MILITARY
INCOME
AND
TAX
EXEMPTION

2008 MILITARY & VETERANS SUPPORT PACKAGE

- 100 % Exemption from State Income Tax for Military Pay and Pensions
- LinkVet Linkage Line funding
- Funding for state veterans case workers
- "Support Our Troops" license plate
- State "Navigators"
- State Soldier Assistance Program supplemental Funding
- Veteran Claims Office
- County Veterans Services Office Training Coordinator

2008 MILITARY & VETERANS SUPPORT PACKAGE CONT.

- The Veterans Assistance Office on Campus Program
- Traumatic Brain Injury(TBI)/Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) outreach and education
- Veterans Affairs marketing
- CVSO grant increase
- Funding for the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans (MACV)
- The “Proud to be a Veteran” license plate program
- Secure land for a new state veteran’s cemetery in Northern Minnesota Duluth area
- State enhancement of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program
- Unemployment Insurance costs incurred by employers
- State contracting for businesses owned by members of the military
- Service member Civil Relief Act rules
- Protection of Reservist owned businesses during mobilization
- The Veteran’s Business Assistance Program
- Spouse protection under Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act
- Hiring/training incentive for businesses that employ veterans
- Tuition Reimbursement Program
- Medic Qualifications Bonus
- Expand current law property tax exclusion for homesteads of disabled veterans
- Out-of-state service by National Guard members would be treated in same manner as other Military Reservists regarding an exemption from state income taxation
- Deferment of any special assessment
- Military Voting Package
- Power of Attorney law
- Veteran Sentencing Education
- Establish a Camp Ripley Land Fund
- Amend the Brevet promotion statute
- Increase charitable gambling contributions to Veteran Service Organizations

*“Be convinced
that to be happy
means to be free
and that to be
free means to be
brave. Therefore
do not take
lightly the perils
of war.”
~ Thucydides*



More detailed descriptions of these items can be found at:
www.mdva.state.mn.us/news/2008MilitaryandVeteransSupportPackagePressRelease.pdf

Or

The Becker County Veterans Service Office



BECKER COUNTY
VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

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Mission:

To serve Becker County Veterans and their families with dignity and compassion and to be their principal advocate in ensuring that they receive medical, educational and financial benefits, social support and lasting memorials. As advocates for veterans and their families, we are committed to providing the very best services with an attitude of caring, courtesy and respect.

Vision:

To promote the well-being of veterans and their families through assistance in obtaining medical care, benefits and social support.