

Veterans News And Views

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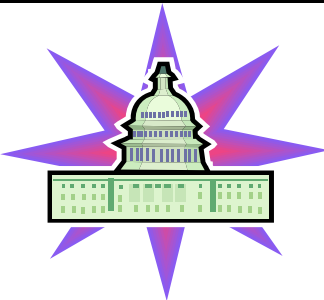
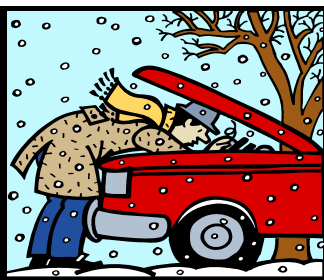


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I **REALLY** Hate Winter !!!!!



WELCOME TO 2008

As the new year begins, we find ourselves still involved in the war on Terrorism, war in Iraq, and have the North Koreans trying to make nice and the Iranians still rattling their sabers.



As veterans, we all hoped that the conflicts we were involved in would be the last, and that our children and grandchildren could come to know a different world than the one we faced.

Now, yet another generation of Americans has been called forward to defend our freedoms, and our way of life. At the time of this writing, they have done themselves proud, as the generations before them did.



These are different times from the ones that we faced in our youth. More confusing in many ways. We have an all volunteer force, have had since the late 70's. Yet these remarkable young men and women have come forward, just as we did, to do what is needed. This is where I think we differ from so many other countries. Americans have always been willing to do whatever was necessary to defend not only our country, but also any other freedom loving peoples. It is what sets us apart from the rest of the world. We have our faults, we have our foibles, we periodically do things that we as a nation are not proud of, yet we as a people endure.

I wonder what the founding fathers would think of our country today? I believe that they would be proud of how we have grown as a nation, despite our many differences.

As the new year begins, let us take the time this year to enjoy the freedoms that we, and our forefathers fought so hard to preserve, and that this generation continues to defend.

GOD BLESS AMERICA

Legislative Challenges

During the current session of the Wisconsin Legislature, there will be a number of veterans' related issues to come before them. Some, presented by generally well-meaning Legislators, lack input from those the bills are supposed to help.

I have for years, as Legislative Chair for the CVSO Association, and as the American Legion Legislative Chair, tried to convince these people that if they asked the opinion of the veterans' com-

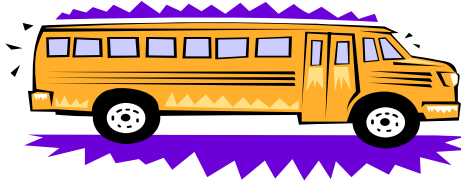
munity BEFORE they draft legislation, they might get a bill that everyone can stand behind. Needless to say, my advice has fallen on deaf ears more than once.

That doesn't mean we should stop trying!

Don't be quiet about them! Let your elected representatives know how you feel. Even if they don't ask up-front, that doesn't mean that anything is a "done-deal".

YOUTH GOVERNMENT DAY

Mark it on your calendars NOW!



The annual **American Legion Youth and Government Day** will be held

on **Wednesday March 5, 2008.**

This annual event is a great opportunity to show a select group of High School students, from all of the area High Schools, the functioning of our County's Government.

We generally start the day at the County Administration Center (Old Courthouse) where the young people have the opportunity to sit with their County Supervisors during an actual session of the County Board. They then get a tour of some of the other offices in the Administration Center, before we provide them lunch.

Following lunch, the young people are transported to the Justice Center and given a tour of the County Jail, the Morgue, and then are taken up to one of the Court Rooms for a mock trial.

We can use all of the help that we can get. We generally ask other veterans to come and assist with keeping the groups of young people together, and moving on schedule.

Usually, every High School in the county participates, so come join us, and we can get you hooked up with a group from your part of the county.

SEE YOU THERE !!!



ANNUAL SALUTE TO THE LEGISLATURE

The annual salute to the legislature is scheduled for Wednesday February 20, 2008.

The event will be held in the same location as last year, that is the Mazona Terrace.

You can use this opportunity to meet with your elected State Officials earlier in the day, IF, you call and schedule an appointment with them

The "official" program begins at 4:00

P.M. with speeches by several dignitaries, usually including the Governor, as well as several members of the Assembly and Senate.

Hor-devours follows, with a cash bar.

Here's your chance to come out and talk face-to-face with your elected representatives, and make sure they understand your concerns. Our County has usually had a good turn out, but that doesn't mean that there isn't room for more!

The event has been ongoing since 1991

COME JOIN US !!!

VA Medical Center News

The VA continues with a schedule of co-payments. Currently, if you are subject to the co-pay, which is based on your family income and assets (you and your spouse). The schedule calls for a "sliding scale" based on the level of treatment received. For the normal doctor visit, you will pay \$15.00, more advanced tests, and some specialty visits, the cost is \$50.00.



The co-pay on medications is set at \$8.00 for a 30 day supply of each medication.

If you haven't signed up for the VA Healthcare System yet, it is still open to veterans, who's combined household income is below \$43,000 per year for a married veteran, and \$37,000 per year for a single veteran.

Recent changes in staffing at VAMC Milwaukee have dropped the waiting time from time of application to time of your first appointment significantly. Vets are typically being scheduled for their first appointment within 2-3 months. Service Connected Veterans much faster! **HAVE YOU ENROLLED YET ???**

WDVA PROGRAM CHANGES

On January 9, 2004, Secretary John Scocos called a meeting of all the Veterans Service Organizations here in the State of Wisconsin.

This first "Stakeholders Conference" was an opportunity for WDVA to "lay all the cards on the table" regarding the current health of the Veterans Trust Fund.

Due to the prevailing financial market at that time, with its very low interest rates, and a State law requiring WDVA to invest any "cash" it may have on hand in the state's investment pool, the trust fund was and still is losing money at a very unhealthy clip.

There is no one at fault here, it is just a matter of market timing, that no one has a "crystal ball" to predict. The Trust Fund has been self sufficient for a number of years, due to higher interest rates and good loan volume.

Everyone has to realize that "business as usual" is not possible in the current economic environment.

WDVA in conjunction with the CVSO Association, and other interested service organizations, took a long hard look at all of the current WDVA benefits programs. Everything was placed on the table for review.

During the current biennium budget cycle, WDVA is receiving minimal support from tax dollars (GPR) and is utilizing the Trust Fund to fill the void. Contrary to what a good number of people think, the Trust Fund is a prime example of veterans helping veterans. It is the veteran who takes out and repays the loans that keep the Trust Fund alive. It is also the veteran, who uses the grants from the Trust Fund.

Since the initial conference, a number of programs

have been modified or curtailed. WDVA, and the VSO's have had little success in getting GPR funding to help slow the drain on the Trust Fund.

The Trust Fund also pays a large portion of the operational budget for the Veterans Museum, something that the Legislature promised years ago to "fully support".

The Trust Fund also pays all of the salaries for the WDVA Employees.

If you have an opportunity to speak with your elected representatives, you might ask him/her where that promise went.



The next Stake-Holders Conference is to be held in conjunction with the annual Salute to the Legislature. The Stakeholders Conference will start at 12:00 P.M. on February 20th, 2008.

This is an excellent opportunity to get educated on the current status of the Trust Fund, as well as WDVA's plans for the future.

County Happenings

I continue to get phone calls regarding phone or mail solicitations from organizations purporting to want to help our troops. Not all of these organizations are entirely effective in delivering the services they supposedly offer. It's your money, but before you donate to any organization you are not already aware of, please check them out.

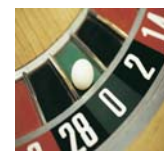
If you can not get the information to verify the organization, then by all means, give me a call, and I will research them, to see if they are on the up-and-up.



The **Rose-Harms Post 355**, American Legion, will be holding their annual Las Vegas Night on Saturday February 16, 2008, starting at 7:00 P.M. This is their major fund-raiser for the year.



If you have never been, you've been missing a really great time. Please join them for a night of great fun, great prizes and great camaraderie.



OZAUKEE COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

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Located in the "Justice Center"
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**County Veterans
Service Office**

Serving Those Who Served America

*We're on the Web
www.co.ozaukee.wi.us*

TAPS

The following comrades have passed away since our last newsletter:

Norman Schuette; Ellwood Nehrbass; Donald Seyfert; George Gantner;
Jack Fidler; Raymond Kindschy; Robert Lobiamico; Roman Gonwa;
William Bley; Robert Hoffman; Henry Russart; Paul Hackbarth;
Arthur Schmidt; Harold Klimke; Elmer Rossman; Francis Hilgart;
Jerome Czinsky; Harvey Bruening; George Thompson; Chadwick Hubbell;
Leonard Wudi; Floyd Roegner; Joseph Bienlein; Harry Lucas;
William Brey; John Schellpfeffer;
Terry Cotrell; Emmons Schmit;
Robert Clapham; Daniel Misun;
Eldor Bastness; Leonard Lacy;
Raymond Kultgen; Harry Canfield
and Gene Nader.

May they rest in Peace



A Parting Thought

Erosion of Veterans' Benefits

There is hardly a day that goes by when I don't receive a call from a disgruntled veteran or family member over the lack of benefits to help the aging veterans population. A good deal of these "changes" have occurred during the last 10-12 years.

Here are the hard facts; If you do not have a service connected disability for which you are receiving compensation payments, or are not receiving a VA pension, then don't look to the VA for burial monies or long term care (nursing home).

If you do not meet the above criteria, you are entitled to a flag and a government marker and/or burial in a State Veterans Cemetery. The only National Cemetery in our area (Woods) is full.

Long Term care is provided by the VA ONLY if you have service connected disabilities rated at 70% or

higher. The State of Wisconsin does operate a very excellent nursing home (though they prefer the term "retirement home") at King in Waupaca County. There is an "assisted living center" in Union Grove as well as a Nursing home.

Neither of these facilities is any less expensive than a locally available nursing home, though the "perks" and "freebies" associated with living in them is significant.

Congress establishes the rules that the federal VA lives by. If you want to vent your spleen at some one, I suggest you aim there! If enough people complain on a given subject, Congress does listen!

SEE YOU AROUND THE COUNTY !!!

Ken

