



LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS NEWS

"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"

January/February 2018



Lexington, SC.

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At A Glance Calendar January & February

For a list of events in Lexington County for January & February	See page 8 Happenings Around Lexington County
Weekly on Tuesdays in January	Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon
Monday, January 1st	New Year's Day County Offices Closed
Thursday, January 4th	Gaston Outreach
Friday, January 5th	Chapin Outreach
Tuesday, January 9th	County Council Meeting
Friday, January 12th	Batesburg/Leesville Outreach
Saturday, January 13th	Dang-it Doll Workshop For more information, see page 6
Monday, January 15th	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day County Offices Closed
Tuesday, January 23rd	County Council Meeting
Weekly on Tuesdays in February	Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon
Thursday, February 1st	Gaston Outreach
Friday, February 2nd	Groundhog Day Chapin Outreach
Friday, February 9th	Batesburg/Leesville Outreach
Saturday, February 10th	Dang-it Doll Workshop For more information; see page 6
Tuesday, February 13th	County Council Meeting
Wednesday, February 14th	Valentine's Day
Monday February 19th	President's Day County Offices Closed
Tuesday, February 27th	County Council Meeting

From the Director...

As the new year begins, we are continually thankful for the opportunity to serve Veterans. We take great pride in the work we do every day and always want to get it right. The VA made many changes for improvement in 2017 and the road ahead looks brighter than ever before.

I attended many Christmas functions during December at local Veterans service organizations and in the community. It was a joy to meet and greet old and new friends.

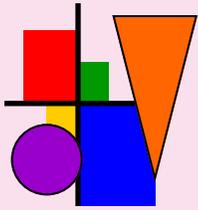
Our new office complex is being built right now. As I type this, the sounds of progress can be heard in the front of our building. We are all excited about this upcoming opportunity to better serve our clients. We hope to be functioning in the new complex mid to late January. We encourage folks to come by for a tour. Please stop by to see your new County VA office!

Happy New Year!
Enjoying the journey,

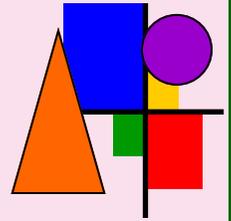


CALENDAR KEY

<p>Purple—Holidays/Special Days</p> <p>Blue—Outreach dates</p> <p>Red—County Offices Closed, No van scheduled and Special Notices</p> <p>Black—Director's appearances in the County</p> <p>Brown—County Council Meetings</p>	<p>Pink—Special Events throughout the County</p> <p>Orange—Director Out of Office</p> <p>Green—Lexington County Veterans Group Meetings</p>
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Rapid Appeals Modernization Program



On August 23, 2017, the President signed into law, the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017, creating a new claims and appeals process for disagreements regarding VA benefits. The new process provides streamlined choices from claimants seeking review of a VA decision. The framework for the new process features three lanes: a Supplemental Claim lane (which provides an opportunity to submit additional evidence), a Higher-Level Review lane (which consists of an entirely new review of the claim by a claims adjudicator with difference of opinion authority), and an Appeal lane (which provides an opportunity to appeal directly to the Board of Veterans' Appeals).

While the law will not be effective for another 18 months, in an effort to provide some of the benefits of the new law's streamlined process, the VA has initiated the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP). This initiative will allow participants the option to have their decisions reviewed in the Higher-Level Review or Supplemental claim lanes, as outlined in the new law. Participation in RAMP is voluntary; however, Veterans can expect to receive a review of the VA's decision on the claim much faster in RAMP than if they remain in the legacy or old appeals process.

The RAMP initiative began on November 1, 2017, and will run until the VA fully implements the new law no earlier than February 2019. You can review a copy of the legislation (Public Law 115-55) online at www.congress.gov.

Which Appeals are eligible for RAMP processing? Your appeal must be for a disability compensation-related claim, and pending in one of the following appeal stages at the time of election:

- * Notice of Disagreement (NOD) has been filed
- * Form 9, Appeal to the Board of Veterans' Appeals (Board), has been filed
- * Certified to the Board (but not activated)
- * On remand from the Board

Compensation-related appeals certified to the Board and "Activated" through formal placement of the Board's docket are excluded and will remain pending in the current appeals process. The Board will have notified you in writing if your appeal has been formally placed on the docket. If you elect to participate in RAMP, the VA will process all eligible appeals under the review lane you select. Veterans who have been waiting the longest in each of the above appeals stages for a resolution of their appeal will receive a letter giving them the opportunity to participate in RAMP first.

Will RAMP be faster than the current process? The VA anticipates the RAMP processing times will be significantly faster than the current appeal processing times. The VA's goal is to process reviews under RAMP in an average of 125 days. Currently, Veterans are waiting an average of three years for a resolution of their appeal. For those appeals that are decided by the Board of Veterans' Appeals, on average, Veterans are waiting an average of six years from filing of their NOD until a decision is issued.

What if I have not received an opt-in letter? The VA is phasing in RAMP by allowing Veterans with the oldest compensation appeals to opt-in first. If you have not received a letter in the mail regarding RAMP, please be assured the VA is still processing your appeal in the current (legacy) appeal process. The VA will notify you once your appeal becomes eligible for processing under RAMP.

As this is a new program with the VA and can be very confusing, we encourage you to contact our office, your Veterans Service Organization or other accredited representative to discuss which option is best for your individual case.

Rollout and Application Process for New Veterans ID Card

The VA has announced that the application process for the national Veterans Identification Card (VIC) is now available for Veterans. Veterans who served in the armed forces, including the reserve components, and who have honorable or general (under honorable conditions) service will be able to apply for the ID card. The VIC will provide proof of military service, and may be accepted by retailers in lieu of the standard DD-214 form to obtain promotional discounts and other services where offered to Veterans. This will provide Veterans with a safer, more convenient and efficient way for Veterans to show proof of service. To request a VIC, Veterans must visit vets.gov and click on "Apply for Printed Veteran ID Card". This section is located at the bottom left of the website. Veterans who apply, should receive the card within 60 days. There is no need to apply for this card if you are retired from the military or enrolled in VA healthcare. For questions or additional help contact their help desk at 1-855-574-7286, Monday through Friday 8am to 8pm EST.

Sample of the Veterans Identification Card (VIC)



Front

Back



The U.S. Department of Treasury, in partnership with the SC State Housing Finance and Development Authority and SC Housing Corp., has made over \$295 million available to help eligible South Carolina homeowners avoid serious first mortgage delinquency and foreclosures.

Qualifications

SC Help is intended to assist borrowers who are facing first mortgage delinquency or possible foreclosure. There is no household income limit, the property must be an owner occupied primary residence, applicants must have a minimum 24 months homeownership history and applicants do NOT have to be delinquent.

How to Apply

Applicants are encouraged to apply electronically at: www.schelp.com. Applicants without the internet may call 1-855-435-7472, toll free number for assistance. There is NO FEE required at any point during the SC HELP process.

January is National Oatmeal Month!



February is National Grapefruit Month!



Medical Expense Reports

For Veterans and Surviving Spouses not receiving the maximum Non-Service Connection Pension or Survivor Benefits, the VA may be able to pay you at a higher rate if you identify expenses the VA considers allowable. Medical and dental expenses paid by you may be deducted from the income the VA counts when determining your benefit entitlement. Any medical or dental expense that you paid for a member of your household (self, spouse, child, etc.) for which you were not reimbursed may also be counted. Expenses may be listed on a **VA Form 21P-8416, Medical Expense Report (MER)**, and submitted anytime for the previous year. For example: Medical Expense Reports for 2016 may be submitted anytime during the calendar year of 2017. Remember you only have until December 31, 2017 to submit 2016 reports.

You can contact our office at 803-785-8400 to schedule an appointment for us to help you complete your 2017 MER.

Reports

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**; you can chat online, or send a text message to **838255** to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Support for deaf and hard of hearing individuals is also available.

IT'S YOUR CALL

GROUNDHOG DAY

February 2, 2018



Direct Deposit

What is the fastest way to enroll or make a change to your Direct Deposit? The fastest way is to call 1-800-827-1000. They will be able to change it over the phone. To enroll you will need to know your routing and account number along with the amount that is being deposited. If you are changing your direct deposit, you will need to know your old routing and account number along with your new information.



Free counseling for war time Veterans & their dependents

The Columbia Vet Center offers a wide range of services to help you make a successful transition from military to civilian life. You have earned these benefits and there is no cost to you or your family members.

Services provided are:

- Individual & group counseling
- Family counseling for military related
- Bereavement counseling for families
- Military sexual trauma
- Outreach & education
- Substance abuse assessment & referral
- Employment assessment & referral
- VBA benefits explanation & referral
- Screening & referral for medical issues

The Columbia Vet Center is located at 1710-A Richland Street, Columbia. Their telephone number is 803-765-9944.



Job Hunting?

The VA medical center and regional office is hiring Veterans.

Visit **USAjobs.com** for more information.



Lexington County Veterans Group



All Honorably Discharged Lexington County Veterans are invited to attend the weekly meetings. The group meets weekly on Tuesdays from 10 am to 12 noon in the auditorium at 605 West Main Street in Lexington. The group meets for Health Issues and PTSD counseling with a licensed counselor.

The Veterans group also participates in various social activities such as group lunches, group dinners with wives/significant other, boat trips on Lake Murray, participation in the Lexington County Veterans parade and other general group tours.



Ladies/Wives meeting every Friday 2 til 4.
Crossroads Counseling Center
130A Whiteford Way
Lexington, SC 29072

For further information, please visit their website at lex-coveteransgroup.com or contact our office at 803-785-8400.

Dang-it Dolls Workshops



Saturday, January 13th and Saturday, February 10th
 from 10am to 3pm at the Cayce Masonic Lodge,
 1701 12th Street, Cayce, SC.

THERE WILL BE NO MEETING IN DECEMBER.

There is something for everyone to do and this is the one place where
THE MORE THE MERRIER
 really counts.

January is
 National
 Blood Donor
 Month!



February is
 National
 Heart
 Month!



HAPPY PRESIDENT'S DAY

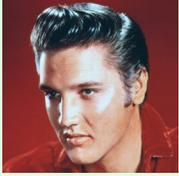


ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Did you know that the following events occurred during the months of January & February?



January 3, 1959 – Alaska was admitted as the 49th state.



January 7, 1714 – A patent was issued for the first typewriter, designed by British inventor Henry Mill.



January 8, 1935 – Elvis Presley was born in Tupelo, Mississippi.



January 11, 1964 – The US Surgeon General declared cigarettes may be hazardous to your health.



January 12, 1991 – Congress authorized use of military force against Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait.



January 15, 1870 – The donkey was first used to symbolize the Democratic Party in America.



January 19, 1809 – Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston, Massachusetts.



January 20, 1945 – Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated to an unprecedented fourth term as the President of the United States.



January 24, 1848 – The California gold rush began.

January 25, 1961 – President John F. Kennedy conducted the first live televised presidential news conference.



January 28, 1915 – The US Coast Guard was created by an Act of Congress, combining the Life Saving Service and the Revenue Cutter Service.



February 3, 1870 – The 15th Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified, guaranteeing the right of citizens to vote, regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.



February 6, 1895 – Legendary baseball player George Herman “Babe” Ruth was born in Baltimore, Maryland.

February 8, 1910 – The Boy Scouts of America was founded by William Boyce in Washington, DC.



February 11, 1847 – American Inventor Thomas Edison was born in Milan, Ohio.



February 17, 1865 – Fort Sumter was returned to the Union after nearly a year and a half under Confederate control.



February 22, 1732 – George Washington was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia.



February 26, 1846 – American frontiersman “Buffalo Bill” Cody was born in Scott County, Indiana.



Happenings Around Lexington County
During the Months of January & February

Saturday, January 27th

Civil War Encampment & Candlelight Tour
Lexington County Museum. 6 to 9pm
For more information contact them @
803-359-8369.



Saturday, February 10th

Murder & Mysteries Walking Tour
Downtown Lexington. Starts at 8pm
For more information contact the
Lexington County Museum @
803-359-8369.



Saturday, February 17th

“Celebrating Lexington County’s
Swiss/German Heritage”
Lexington Municipal Complex. 6 to 10pm
For more information contact the
Lexington County Museum @
803-359-8369.



Lowe’s Expands Support Of The Military With Enhanced Discount

Lowe’s Companies, Inc. recently announced it will expand its military discount program by offering 10 percent off personal purchases every day to current and honorably discharged members of the U.S. Armed Forces. The new program uses a MyLowe’s card for quick identification, is available both in U.S. stores and on Lowe’s.com and offers easy online enrollment. The discount is effective immediately.



“Lowe’s was founded by Carl Buchan, an Army Veteran who wanted to make home building and home improvement affordable for returning GIs and their families,” said Robert A. Niblock, chairman, president and CEO. “The values and leadership instilled through his military service formed the foundation of our company. Enhancing our discount program honors his memory and the commitment servicemen and women and their families make to our country.”

Lowe’s has offered discounts to Veterans and military servicemen and women for more than a decade. Current and former servicemen and women can follow these easy steps to enroll in the discount program:

Visit Lowe’s.com/military and complete a short personal profile. Check the box to receive a free MyLowe’s card.

After the one-time enrollment, U.S. military customers can present their MyLowe’s card at the store cash register, scan their card at self-checkout or sign in to their account at Lowe’s.com and receive the discount. In addition to simple checkout in stores and online shopping, the MyLowe’s card offers free parcel shipping for purchases ordered online with no required minimum purchase. For additional details about the discount, visit Lowe’s.com/military.

List of Common Allowable (Recurring) Medical Expenses for an Initial Claim Application

The list below shows recurring VA allowable medical expenses for the initial claim application for pension benefits. The list is not all-inclusive and must be unreimbursed by insurance. They must be paid for by the applicant and are used to reduce outside income that exceeds the VA income limit.

1. Medicare Part B Premiums
2. Medicare Part D Premiums
3. Insurance Premiums for supplemental medical insurance
4. Home Health Services
5. Assisted Living Facility Services
6. Nursing Home Services
7. Long Term Care Insurance
8. Medical Monitoring Program (like Life Alert)



There is a new number to call for billing issues through the VAMC for any private health care that was fee based out. That number is 1-877-881-7618 9am to 5pm EST.



County Council Needs You!

Veterans are still needed to lead the Pledge of Allegiance at County Council meetings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month. County Council meetings start at 4:30pm, so please be present around 4:15pm.



Contact the office at 803-785-8400, if you are interested.

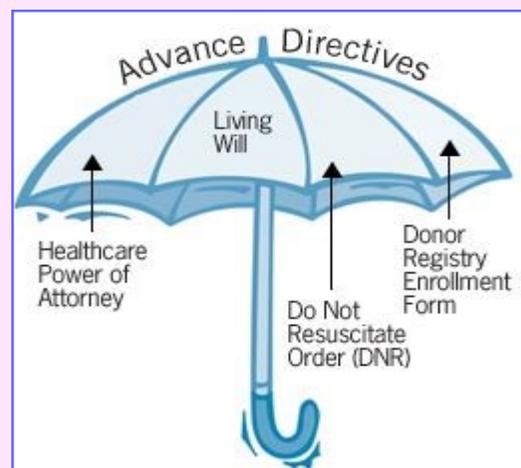
The office would like to thank Adam McCullough, Ed Lundeen, Dennis Cline and Sam Owens. These individuals volunteered their time to say the Pledge of Allegiance during the months of November and December.

THANKS

Did You Know...



Veterans can obtain advance directives through the Dorn VAMC. For more information contact Cheryl Geddings at 776-4000 ext. 4084.



Travel Benefits for VA Healthcare

If you meet the criteria below, you may be eligible for mileage reimbursement or special mode transport in association with obtaining VA health care services.

YOU QUALIFY IF:	YOU QUALIFY FOR SPECIAL MODE TRANSPORTATION (AMBULANCE, WHEELCHAIR VAN ETC.) IF:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. you have a service-connected (SC) rating of 30 percent or more, or 2. you are traveling for treatment of a SC condition, or 3. you receive a VA pension, or 4. your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or 5. you are traveling for a scheduled compensation or pension examination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ your medical condition requires an ambulance or a specially equipped van as determined by a VA clinician, and ◇ you meet one of the eligibility criteria in 1 through 5 above, and ◇ the travel is pre-authorized (authorization is not required for emergencies if a delay would be hazardous to life or health)

Mileage Rates

General Travel

\$0.415 (41.5 cents) per mile

Scheduled appointments qualify for round-trip mileage. Unscheduled visits may be limited to return mileage only.

Deductible

\$3.00 one-way (\$6.00 round trip)

Deductible requirement is subject to a monthly cap of \$18.00. Upon reaching \$18.00 in deductibles or 6 one-way (3 round) trips, whichever comes first in a calendar year, travel payments made for the balance of that particular month will be free of deductible charges.

Waiver of Deductible

A waiver of the deductible will be provided if you are eligible for travel and you:

1. are in receipt of a VA pension or;
2. are a NSC Veteran and your previous year's income does not exceed, or your projected current calendar year's income, in the year of application will not exceed the applicable VA pension rate, or
3. are a SC Veteran and your previous year's income does not exceed, or your projected current calendar year's income, in the year of application will not exceed the applicable national means test income threshold or,
4. are traveling for a scheduled compensation and pension exam

The History of George Washington



George Washington was born on February 22, 1732, at his family's plantation on Pope's Creek in Westmoreland County, in the British colony of Virginia, to Augustine Washington and his second wife, Mary Ball Washington. George, the eldest of six children, spent much of his childhood at Ferry Farm, a plantation near Fredericksburg, Virginia. As a teenager, Washington, who had shown an aptitude for mathematics, became a successful surveyor. His surveying expeditions into the Virginia wilderness earned him enough money to begin acquiring land of his own.

In 1751, Washington made his only trip outside of America, when he travelled to Barbados with his older half-brother Lawrence. Shortly after their arrival, George contracted smallpox. He survived, although the illness left him with permanent facial scars. In 1752, Lawrence died and Washington eventually inherited Lawrence's estate, Mount Vernon, on the Potomac River near Alexandria, Virginia.

In December 1752, Washington, who had no previous military experience, was made a commander of the Virginia militia. He saw action in the French and Indian War and was eventually put in charge of all of Virginia's militia forces. By 1759, Washington had resigned his commission, returned to Mount Vernon and was elected to the Virginia House of Burgesses, where he served until 1774. In January 1759, he married Martha Dandridge Custis, a wealthy widow with two children. Washington became a devoted stepfather to the children, as he and Martha never had any offspring of their own.

In the ensuing years, Washington expanded Mount Vernon from 2,000 acres into an 8,000-acre property with five farms. He grew a variety of crops, including wheat and corn, bred mules and maintained fruit orchards and a successful fishery. He was deeply interested in farming and continually experimented with new crops and methods of land conservation. By the late 1760s, Washington had experienced firsthand the effects of rising taxes imposed on American colonists by the British, and came to believe that it was in the best interests of the colonists to declare independence from England. Washington served as a delegate to the First Continental Congress in 1774 in Philadelphia. By the time the Second Continental Congress convened a year later, the American Revolution had begun in earnest, and Washington was named commander in chief of the Continental Army.

Washington proved to be a better general than military strategist. His strength lay not in his genius on the battlefield but in his ability to keep the struggling colonial army together. His troops were poorly trained and lacked food, ammunition and other supplies (soldiers sometimes even went without shoes in winter). However, Washington was able to give them the direction and motivation to keep going. In October 1781, with the aid of the French (who allied themselves with the colonists over their rivals the British), the Continental forces were able to capture British troops under General Charles Cornwallis in Yorktown, Virginia. This action effectively ended the Revolutionary War and Washington was declared a national hero.

In 1783, Washington, believing he had done his duty, gave up his command of the army and returned to Mount Vernon, intent on resuming his life as a gentleman farmer and family man. However, in 1787, he was asked to attend the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia and head the committee to draft the new constitution. His impressive leadership there convinced the delegates that he was by far the most qualified man to become the nation's first president. The first presidential election was held on January 7, 1789, and Washington won handily. The 57-year-old Washington was inaugurated on April 30, 1789, in New York City.

In 1796, after two terms as president and declining to serve a third term, Washington finally retired. In his farewell address, he urged the new nation to maintain the highest standards domestically and to keep involvement with foreign powers to a minimum. The address is still read each February in the U.S. Senate to commemorate Washington's birthday. Washington returned to Mount Vernon and devoted his attentions to making the plantation as productive as it had been before he became president. More than four decades of public service had aged him, but he was still a commanding figure. In December 1799, he caught a cold after inspecting his properties in the rain. The cold developed into a throat infection and Washington died on the night of December 14 at the age of 67. He was entombed at Mount Vernon, which in 1960 was designated a national historic landmark. Washington left one of the most enduring legacies of any American in history. Known as the "Father of His Country," his face appears on the U.S. dollar bill and quarter, and hundreds of U.S. schools and towns, as well as the nation's capital city, are named for him.



Forever GI Bill

The Harry W. Colmery
Veterans Educational Assistance Act

On August 16, 2017, in Bedminster, New Jersey, President Trump signed into law the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act also known as the “Forever GI Bill,” which will bring significant changes to Veterans education benefits. The law is named after the American Legion national commander who wrote the original GI Bill language in 1944, and will allow more Veterans to use the GI Bill and more time to use it. Some of the changes will go into effect immediately, and some are written to go into effect shortly after.

Some new provisions that go into effect immediately include:

- The 15-year time limitation for using Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits is eliminated for Veterans who left active duty on or after January 1, 2013, and qualifying dependents (Fry children who became eligible on or after January 1, 2013 and all Fry spouses).
- Reservists who had eligibility under the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) and lost it due to the program sunset provision will have that service credited toward the Post-9/11 GI Bill program.
- Certain work-study is permanently authorized; previously it had to be re-approved by Congress every few years.
- The VetSuccess on Campus program will be available to students across the country
- The VA will help Veterans to more clearly identify schools that offer them priority enrollment

The majority of the changes enhance or expand education benefits for Veterans, Service Members, Families and Survivors. Simple breakdowns to a portion of the provisions can be found at www.va.gov/GIBILL/FGIBSummaries.



*“The future doesn’t belong to the
fainthearted;
it belongs to the brave.”*

- Ronald Reagan





LET'S ARM FORCES AGAINST INFLUENZA ...

GET VACCINATED!!

**FLU SHOTS ARE
AVAILABLE!**

**AT ALL DORN PRIMARY CARE CLINICS,
MEDICAL CLINICS, AND CBOCS**

Monday-Friday; 8am-4pm

**WALGREENS IS OFFERING FREE FLU SHOTS
TO VA PATIENTS WITH VA ID CARD AND A
PICTURE I.D.**



GET YOUR FLU SHOT TODAY!

Medical Expense Reports (MER)

For Veterans and Surviving Spouses receiving Non-Service Connection Pension Benefits, the VA may be able to pay you at a higher rate if you identify expenses the VA considers allowable. The higher rate is only paid if you are NOT receiving the maximum benefit from the VA. Medical and dental expenses paid by you may be deductible from the income VA counts when determining your benefit entitlement.

Any medical or dental expenses that you paid for a member of your household (self, spouse, child, etc.) for which you were not reimbursed may also be counted. Below are examples of expenses you should include, if applicable:

• Hospital expenses • Doctor's office fees • Dental fees • Prescription/non-prescription drug costs • Vision care costs • Medical insurance premiums • Monthly Medicare deduction • Nursing home costs • Hearing aid costs • Dental fees • Home health service expenses • Expenses related to transportation to a hospital, doctor, or other medical facility.

These expenses may be listed on a VA form 21P-8416 and submitted anytime for the previous year. For example: Medical Expense Reports for 2016 may be submitted anytime before the end of 2017.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Do not include any expenses for which you were reimbursed. If you receive reimbursement after you have filed a MER, promptly notify the VA office handling your claim.
- If you are not sure whether a particular expense can be allowed, furnish a complete description of the purposes of the payment. The VA will let you know if an expense cannot be allowed.
- You may be asked to verify the amounts you actually paid. Keep all receipts or other documentation of payments for at least three years after the VA makes a decision on your medical expense claim. If you are unable to provide documentation of the claimed medical expenses when asked to do so by the VA, your benefits may be retroactively reduced or terminated.



DID YOU KNOW...



Copies of all of our newsletters can be found on the Lexington County website at lex-co.com/departments/veteransaffairs/newsletters.

The newsletters are listed on the site by year.

News Tidbits from the VA



The new three tier parking garage for the Dorn VAMC is scheduled to begin construction in January.



A home health aide is provided to service connected Veterans rated at 70% or higher. This service is for a total of 16 hours per week. To apply the Veteran must go through his social worker at the VAMC. Unfortunately, this program is no longer available for non-service connected Veterans.



The VAMC Dorn has been awarded \$80 million in construction projects. This includes a new eye clinic, mental health clinic, prosthetic clinic, a Fisher House and several other projects. All construction should break ground next year.



About Our Office

On March 22, 1945 the SC General Assembly adopted a bill creating a VA office in each of the state's 46 counties. The Lexington County VA Director is appointed by the Lexington County delegation. This office is employed by Lexington County; not the Federal VA. The Lexington County Veterans' Affairs Office is an advocate for Veterans and their surviving dependents. We provide the assistance needed in applying for benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs and for VA medical care. The Lexington County VA Office assists former and present members of the US Armed Forces and their dependents in preparing claims. Types of benefits include but not limited to: service connected disabilities and non-service connected pension; death pension benefits; burial; medical care; educational assistance, including vocational rehabilitation; guaranteed home loans; government life insurance and other benefits. We are not trained in Social Security or Department of Defense Benefits but can assist with some of these forms. Our office also provides off-site appointments at three of the County libraries once a month and we can provide home visits on a case by case basis.

There is a new extension for Patient Advocates at Dorn VAMC. The new extension is ext. 6937. To reach a patient advocate call 803-776-4000 ext. 6937. The caller would need to leave a voicemail if the intake person is on the line or with someone. The voicemail will be returned within 48 hours.



There is a new White House VA Hotline that is fully staffed with live agents 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Hotline agents answer inquires, provide directory assistance, document concerns about VA care, benefits and services, and expedite the referral and resolution of those concerns. The hotline can be accessed at 1-855-948-2311.

The VA has a website anyone can access for all VA questions, SEP user guides, regulations, policies, laws and any other VA resources. The website is: www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov.

Website

DID YOU KNOW...

The VA has lifted it's hiring freeze. They are now hiring VSRs and call center employees at VA regional offices and the VAMCs are hiring multiple positions. Please visit www.va.gov/jobs for more information.



There are over 2000 employees at the Dorn VAMC and over 700 employees at the Regional Office.

The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration



Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin



“A Lasting Memento of the Nation’s Thanks!”

Front



Back



Purpose: To recognize, thank and honor United States military veterans who served during the Vietnam War.

Eligibility: Living United States veterans who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time during the period of November 1, 1955 to May 15, 1975, regardless of location, are eligible to receive one lapel pin.

Presentation: These lapel pins will be presented in a dignified manner to each Vietnam veteran during public events held in their communities by Commemorative Partners. Accompanying remarks should reflect the nation’s thanks for their service and sacrifice. In the rare instance when an honoree cannot attend a public event, the pin may be presented during a private ceremony.

Symbolism:

- **Eagle** - The eagle represents courage, honor, and dedicated service to our nation. As one of the most recognizable and notable American symbols, it is emblazoned with distinction on numerous military insignia.
- **Blue Circle** - The color blue matches the canton of the American flag and signifies vigilance, perseverance, and justice. The circle shape and blue color also match the official seal of the Commemoration.
- **Laurel Wreath** - A time-honored symbol representing victory, integrity, and strength.
- **Stripes** - The stripes behind the eagle represent the American flag.
- **Stars** - The six stars represent the six allies who served, sacrificed, and fought alongside one another: Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, and the United States.
- **Message** - “A Grateful Nation Thanks and Honors You” is embossed on the back, closest to the heart of the wearer. Also, the official name of the Commemoration is included to remind each veteran that this is a national initiative, and this lapel pin is the nation’s lasting memento of thanks.

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www.vietnamwar50th.com

You may stop by our office to pick up your commemorative pin.



DID YOU KNOW...

The VAMC Dorn now has a food pantry. Any Veteran in need may participate in the program. He or she must contact Voluntary Services and they will direct you to the food pantry. To contact Voluntary Services call (803) 776-4000 extension 6780.



CLOSINGS...

County offices will be closed on the following dates:

Monday, January 1st - New Year's Day

Monday, January 15th - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Monday, February 19th - President's Day

V.A.L.O.R. PROGRAM

Attorney General Alan Wilson has announced a new program to help Veterans, active duty military and members of the Reserves get free legal help. The program is called V.A.L.O.R., which stands for Veterans, Active/ Reserve Legal Out Reach.

The SC-VALOR program will coordinate existing legal resources for the military and Veterans and find support and fill-in where gaps exist, as well as minimizing duplication of efforts.

The program will consist of free legal clinics held around the state, starting in January, and a referral line to connect Veterans and members of the military with lawyers who will provide free or heavily-discounted legal help for problems too complex to be handled at the clinics. The legal clinics will be able to handle simple legal issues like writing wills and power of attorney documents. But the most common legal issues the SC-VALOR program will handle will be Service Member Civil Relief Act issues. Those can be landlord/tenant or employment issues that come up when a service member is deployed, or a service member who's not receiving lower interest rates when deployed that are required by law.

The first clinic will be Saturday, January 13, 2018 from 9am to 4pm at American Legion Post 34, 524 Heckle Blvd, Rock Hill, SC 29730. The second clinic is scheduled for February in Columbia.

Participants may schedule an appointment in advance of the January 13th clinic by contacting Lt. Jennifer Soldano at jennifer.soldano@sg.sc.gov or Lt. Andrew Holliday at Andrew.holliday@sg.sc.gov.

OUTREACH DATES AND TIMES



Batesburg/Leesville Outreach is the 2nd Friday of the month at the Batesburg/Leesville Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

Chapin Outreach is the 1st Friday of the month at the Chapin Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.



Gaston/Swansea Outreach is the 1st Thursday of the month at the Gaston Library from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.



*Appointments are strongly encouraged.
Call the office at 803-785-8400
to schedule a time.*



Featured Medal:

Global War of Terrorism Expeditionary Medal

The Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal (GWOTEM) is a United States armed forces military award created by George W. Bush on March 12, 2003, by Executive Order 13289. It recognizes those military service members who have deployed overseas in direct service to the War on Terror from September 11, 2001 to a date to be determined. Prior to April 30, 2005, the medal was awarded for service within Iraq and Afghanistan, but has been replaced with the Iraq Campaign Medal and Afghanistan Campaign Medal and now serves primarily as recognition for personnel who have deployed in support of the War on Terror to locations beyond Iraq and Afghanistan.



To be awarded the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, a military service member must perform duty in a deployed status and must participate in designated anti-terrorism operation for a period of either 30 consecutive or 60 non-consecutive days of duty. For those who were engaged in combat, killed, or wounded in the line of the duty the time requirement is waived.

The term "deployed status" indicates either temporary or permanent orders to a duty station outside the borders of the United States of America with such duty being in direct support of anti-terrorism operations. For a service member to receive the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the deployment must also have taken place in a nation which is currently recognized as a base for anti-terrorism operations by the United States Department of Defense.

On April 30, 2005, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal was discontinued for service within Iraq and Afghanistan, such service now being recognized with the Iraq Campaign Medal and Afghanistan Campaign Medal. Personnel who received the GWOTEM for previous service in these two regions may elect to exchange the GWOTEM or retain the original award. In September 2010, a MILPER message re-authorized the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal for Operation New Dawn.

The Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal is a one-time only award. Service stars are not authorized. The Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal may be awarded with the Arrowhead device for qualified soldiers. The Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal may be awarded with the combat operation insignia for qualified sailors assigned to Marine Corps units. The War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal was designed by John Sproston of the Army's Institute of Heraldry.

Coming in the Next Issue...

Legacy Appeals Process, Agent Orange Benefits, & Special Adaptive Housing