



# LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERANS NEWS

*"Serving those who served and sacrificed for America"*

May/June 2016



Lexington, SC.

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**At A Glance Calendar  
May/June**

Weekly on Tuesdays in May	Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon
Thursday, May 5th	Gaston Outreach Holocaust Remembrance Day
Friday, May 6th	Chapin Outreach
Sunday, May 8th	Mother's Day
Tuesday, May 10th	Confederate Memorial Day County Offices Closed
Wednesday, May 11th	County Council Meeting (Special Date)
Thursday, May 12th through Saturday, May 14th	SC Poultry Festival in Batesburg/Leesville
Friday, May 13th	Batesburg/Leesville Outreach
Sunday, May 15th through Friday, May 20th	National Association of County Veteran Affairs Officers in Myrtle Beach
Saturday, May 21st	Armed Forces Day
Tuesday, May 24th	County Council Meeting
Monday, May 30th	Memorial Day County Offices Closed
Weekly on Tuesdays in June	Lexington County Veterans Group Meeting from 10am to 12 noon
Thursday, June 2nd	Gaston Outreach
Friday, June 3rd	Chapin Outreach
Friday, June 10th	Batesburg/Leesville Outreach
Saturday, June 11th	Dang-it Dolls Workshop in Cayce
Monday, June 13th through Friday, June 18th	Director on vacation
Tuesday, June 14th	Flag Day
Sunday, June 19th	Father's Day
Monday, June 20th	Summer Begins
Tuesday, June 21st	County Council Meeting
Monday, June 27th through Friday, July 1st	Director on vacation
Tuesday, June 28th	County Council Meeting

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


**From the Director...**

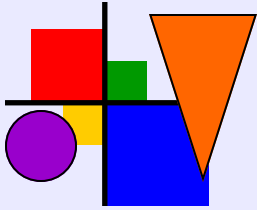
As the weather heats up the South in preparation for a hot, sultry summer, we should be reminded Memorial Day is in May. It is one day set aside to honor and memorialize those who gave their very lives for our freedom. It is the least we can do to remember them and their sacrifice and the sacrifice of their family. This issue has some local Memorial Day events and I encourage you to attend one. The State newspaper and the Lexington County Chronicle normally have a more extensive listing as Memorial Day draws near. Please honor Memorial Day anyway you can.

We have been advised by County leadership that the building our office is located in is scheduled to be renovated later this year. This means that the VA office will be re-located after this renovation. Our office will move to the front of the building as a result and will come complete with new offices, a conference room and other amenities that we presently do not have. We are excited about this new office and look forward to occupying it around June 2017. As the renovations occur, we will continue to provide the high quality service that you have come to expect and deserve. The renovations will not affect our levels of service nor our office hours. Please stay tuned for more details on the renovations of the Auxiliary Administration Building.

As summer approaches please remember our children will be out and about on bicycles and mopeds.

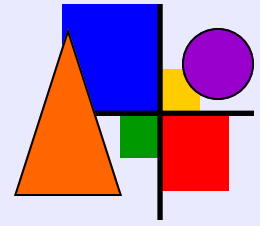
***It is an honor to serve Lexington County!***



# Pension Benefits

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The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has two types of pension programs: Non-service connected pension (NSCP) which is for Veterans and Survivors pension (also called death pension) for surviving spouses and un-remarried children (certain criteria apply/see below). Both pension benefits help Veterans and their families cope with financial challenges by providing supplemental income. Pension benefits are tax-free monetary benefits payable to low-income Veterans, surviving spouses and certain un-remarried children.

## ***Pension for Veterans***

### **Eligibility**

Generally, a Veteran must have at least 90 days of continuous active duty service, with at least one day during a wartime period (see below for wartime periods) to qualify for a VA Pension. If you entered active duty after September 7, 1980, generally you must have served at least 24 months or the full period for which you were called or ordered to active duty (with some exceptions), with at least one day during a wartime period, and was discharged from service under other than dishonorable conditions. In addition to meeting minimum service requirements, the Veteran must be:

1. Age 65 or older, OR
2. Totally and permanently disabled, OR
3. A patient in a nursing home receiving skilled nursing care, OR
4. Receiving Social Security Disability Insurance, OR
5. Receiving Supplemental Security Income

### **Income Requirements**

The VA uses your total family income and net worth to determine if you meet the income requirements for the benefit. Your yearly family income must be less than the amount set by Congress to qualify for the NSCP benefit. Currently, the 2016 amount for NSCP is \$12,868/year for a single Veteran and \$16,851/year for a Veteran and spouse. Since this benefit is for low income Veterans, the net worth should be below \$80,000.

### **Additional Veteran Pension Allowances**

Veterans who are eligible for VA pension and are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person, may be eligible for an additional monetary payment. If the Veteran's spouse needs aid and attendance, the costs of their care may also be used to lower the combined income and grant benefits.

## ***Survivors Pension***

### **Eligibility**

The deceased Veteran must have met the following service requirements:

1. For service on or before September 7, 1980, the Veteran must have served at least 90 days of continuous active military service, with at least one day during a war time period.(see below for wartime periods)
2. If he or she entered active duty after September 7, 1980, generally he or she must have served at least 24 months or the full period for which called or ordered to active duty with at least one day during a war time period.
3. Was discharged from service under other than dishonorable conditions.
4. Must be married to the Veteran at the time of their death and be un-remarried since their death.

Continued on page 4

## **Pension Benefits continued from page 3**

While an un-remarried spouse is eligible at any age, a child of a deceased wartime Veteran must be:

1. Under 18, OR
2. Under age 23 if attending a VA-approved school, OR
3. Permanently incapable of self-support due to a disability before age 18

### **Income Requirements**

The VA uses your total family income and net worth to determine if you meet the income requirements for the benefit. Your yearly family income must be less than the amount set by Congress to qualify for the survivors benefit. Currently, the 2016 amount for survivors pension is \$8,630/year for a surviving spouse and \$11,296/year for a surviving spouse with one dependent. Since this benefit is for low income families, the net worth should be below \$80,000.

### **Additional Survivors Pension Allowances**

Surviving spouses or un-remarried children who are eligible for survivors pension and are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person may be eligible for an additional monetary payment.

### ***Housebound/Aid and Attendance Benefits***

**These benefits are paid in addition to monthly pension, and they are not paid without eligibility to pension benefits first.** Since Aid and Attendance and Housebound allowances increase the pension amount, people who are not eligible for a basic pension due to excessive income may be eligible for pension at these increased rates. A Veteran or surviving spouse may not receive Aid and Attendance benefits and Housebound benefits at the same time. The current 2016 amounts for Housebound are \$15,725/year for a single Veteran; \$19,710/year for a Veteran and spouse; \$10,548/year for a surviving spouse; and \$13,209/year for a surviving spouse with one dependent. The 2016 rates for Aid and Attendance are \$21,466/year for a single Veteran; \$25,448 for a Veteran and spouse; \$13,794/year for a surviving spouse; and \$16,456 for a surviving spouse with one dependent.

The *Housebound* increased monthly pension amount may be added to your monthly pension amount when you are substantially confined to your immediate premises because of permanent disability.

The *Aid & Attendance (A&A)* increased monthly pension amount may be added to your monthly pension amount if you meet one of the following conditions:

1. You require the aid of another person in order to perform personal functions required in everyday living, such as bathing, feeding, dressing, attending to the wants of nature, adjusting prosthetic devices, or protecting yourself from the hazards of your daily environment
2. You are bedridden, in that your disability or disabilities requires that you remain in bed apart from any prescribed course of convalescence or treatment
3. You are a patient in a nursing home due to mental or physical incapacity
4. Your eyesight is limited to a corrected 5/200 visual acuity or less in both eyes; or concentric contraction of the visual field to 5 degrees or less

To apply for increased pension based on Housebound or A&A payments, you will need to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's report, that validates the need for an increased benefit or complete VA Form 21-2680 "Examination for Housebound Status or Permanent Need For Regular Aid and Attendance".

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# IMPORTANT DAV VAN INFORMATION CHANGES

**The van runs on certain Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays taking Veterans to appointments at DORN VAMC for their scheduled appointments between 9am and 1pm.**



**If you need to schedule a ride on the DAV van, please call the office for dates and space availability.**

## **WE ARE STILL LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEER VAN DRIVERS!!!**

**We have added new volunteer drivers and currently have five drivers.  
We are still looking for more drivers.**



**If you are 18 or older or know someone who may be interested in volunteering to drive the DAV van at least one day a month, please contact the office at 803-785-8400.**

# The History of the Homestead Act

Signed into law on May 20, 1862, by President Abraham Lincoln, the Homestead Act opened up settlement in the western United States, allowing any American adult, 21 or older, male or female, including freed slaves, to put in a claim for up to 160 free acres of federal land. The law took effect on January 1, 1863.



After the southern states had seceded, homestead legislation was high on the Republican agenda. The Homestead Act of 1862 provided that any adult citizen (or person intending to become a citizen) who headed a family could qualify for a grant of 160 acres of public land. Claimants were required to “improve” the plot by building a dwelling and cultivating the land. After five years on the land, the original filer was entitled to the property, free and clear, except for a small registration fee. The title could also be acquired after only a six month residency and trivial improvements, provided the claimant paid the government \$1.25 per acre. After the Civil War, Union soldiers could deduct the time they had served from the residency requirements. By the end of the Civil War, 15,000 homestead claims had been established, and more followed in the postwar years. Eventually, 1.6 million individual claims would be approved; nearly ten percent of all government held property for a total of 420,000 square miles of territory.



The first claim under the Homestead Act was made by Daniel Freeman for a farm in Nebraska on January 1, 1863. Today, Freeman’s homestead continues to stand as the Homestead National Monument near Beatrice, Nebraska. Freeman lived on and worked the land until his death on December 30, 1908. His wife Agnes continued to live on the homestead until shortly before her death in 1931. In 1936, by an act of the United States Congress, the site of Freeman's homestead was recognized as the "first" homestead in the United States when it was designated as the Homestead National Monument of America.

The law did not provide the new beginning for urban slum dwellers that some had hoped. Few laborers and farmers could afford to build a farm or acquire the necessary tools, seed, and livestock. In the end, most of those who purchased land under the act came from areas quite close to their new homesteads (Iowans moved to Nebraska, Minnesotans to South Dakota, and so on). Unfortunately, the act was framed so ambiguously that it seemed to invite fraud, and early modifications by Congress only compounded the problem. Most of the land went to speculators, cattlemen, miners, lumbermen, and railroads. Of some 500 million acres dispersed by the General Land Office between 1862 and 1894, only 80 million acres went to homesteaders.

By the end of the 19th century, over 570 million acres remained open to settlement, but very little of this was usable for agriculture. As the Frontier moved west onto the arid Great Plains, the amount of land a homesteader was allowed to claim was increased to 640 acres. In Wyoming, Montana, and Colorado homesteading cut into the access of the large ranches to the public domain where hundreds of thousands of cattle grazed upon the open range, a practice called free grazing. The ranchers fought back by themselves (or their cowboys) homesteading prime spots which gave access to water. At times tensions escalated into violence or conflicts called range wars.



Homestead farmers, who claimed some 270 million acres over the years, became the agricultural producers to the nation as a whole. Additionally, strong communities with a commitment to social values, education, and personal responsibility were spawned throughout the territories covered by the Homestead lands. The economic, agricultural, and social stability generated by the Homestead Act was utterly inconceivable in other times and places -- and formed a large part of the foundation of American prosperity in the 20th century. The Homestead Act remained in effect for more than 100 years. The final claim under the Homestead Act, for 80 acres in southeastern Alaska, was approved in 1988.

# Veterans Identification Cards

What is a Veterans Identification Card or Proof of Service Card and how do you get one? The Veterans Identification Card Act 2015 (Public Law 114-31) was enacted on July 20, 2015. The Department of Veterans Affairs is drafting regulations that will allow the VA to implement and enforce the legislation. However, this is a lengthy process that requires time for a public comment period as well as approval from the Office of Management and Budget. The rule making process is expected to take 12 months or more. The VA is also in the process of developing procedures and policies to implement the VA ID card program. The VA currently estimates the program will be implemented in 2017.

In the meantime, the VA continues to provide a Veterans Identification Card (VIC) for Veterans to use at VA medical facilities. The VIC will be issued only to Veterans who are eligible for VA medical benefits and only for the purpose of identification and check-in for VA medical appointments. The new card protects personal privacy by not showing social security numbers or dates of birth on the front of the cards. The VA has Service Connected (SC), POW and Purple Heart indicators on the new VIC. Veterans who have been awarded service-connected status after their VIC has been issued or SC status is not properly documented on their card, will need to present their letter showing their SC rating to the eligibility clerk at the local VA Medical Center where they obtain treatment. After verification, the eligibility clerk will submit a request to National Card Management Directory System for a new card to be issued to the Veteran. Once a Veteran has his or her picture taken for the new card at the VA medical facility, the card will be mailed to the Veteran at the address that has been provided. To ensure that a Veteran receives the new VIC card, the Veteran should verify that the VA has the correct address on file. If the U.S. Postal Service cannot deliver the card, it will be returned to the facility at which the card was requested. The card will then be held in a secure location at the facility for 90 days. If the card is not picked up within the 90-day period, the card will be destroyed.

With regard to the use of Veteran ID cards for store discounts, please note: The VA identification card, once available will allow Veterans to demonstrate proof of service for discounts at private restaurants and businesses.

It should be noted that the identification card is different from a Veteran Health Identification card or a DOD Uniformed Services or Retiree ID card. As such, the VA identification cards cannot be used as proof of eligibility to any federal benefits and does not grant access to military installations.

When available, Veterans will be able to request an ID card from the VA for a fee. The VA is currently making plans to implement the new law in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible while protecting Veterans' personal information.

In the meantime, Veterans who would like an identification card that displays their military service do not have to wait until the VA implements the new law. You have several options:

- You can access and print a free Veterans identification card through the joint VA/DOD web portal; eBenefits. This paper identification card serves as proof of honorable service in the Uniformed Services, as defined in laws about the Department of Defense. Veterans can get a free eBenefits account by going to [www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/homepage).

- Your driver's license or state identification card can carry a Veteran designation. This option is currently



available in 49 states, along with Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. The VA expects the 50th state, Washington, to offer this service in August 2017. Veterans wanting more information should contact their state department of motor vehicles or state department of Veterans Affairs at [www.va.gov/statedva.htm](http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm)

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# ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Did you know that the following events occurred during the months of May/June?



**May 1, 1707** - Great Britain was formed from a union between England and Scotland.

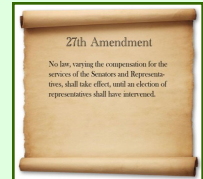


**May 4, 1494** - Christopher Columbus discovered Jamaica during his second journey of exploration in the New World.



**May 5, 1961** - Alan Shepard became the first American in space.

**May 7, 1992** - The 27th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, prohibiting Congress from giving itself pay raises.

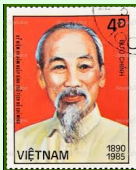


**May 12, 1820** - British nurse and public health activist Florence Nightingale was born in Florence, Italy.

**May 17, 1875** - The first Kentucky Derby horse race took place at Churchill Downs in Louisville.



**May 19, 1890** - Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh was born in the central Vietnamese village of Kim Lien (as Nguyen That Thanh).



**May 20, 1862** - President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act opening millions of acres of government owned land in the west to "homesteaders".



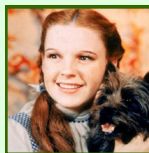
**May 27, 1837** - Legendary Wild West figure Wild Bill Hickok was born in Troy Grove, Illinois.

**May 30, 1783** - The *Pennsylvania Evening Post* became the first daily newspaper published in America.



**June 1, 1926** - Marilyn Monroe was born in Los Angeles (as Norma Jean Mortensen).

**June 4, 1989** - The Chinese government ordered its troops to open fire on unarmed protesters in Tiananmen Square in Beijing.



**June 10, 1922** - Judy Garland was born in Grand Rapids, Minnesota (as Frances Gumm).

**June 11, 1923** - American football coach Vince Lombardi was born in Brooklyn, New York.



**June 14, 1922** - Warren G. Harding became the first U.S. President to broadcast a message over the radio.



**June 18, 1983** - Dr. Sally Ride became the first American woman in space.

**June 20, 1782** - The U.S. Congress officially adopted the Great Seal of the United States of America.



**June 24, 1895** - Boxing champ Jack Dempsey was born in Manassa, Colorado.



**June 28, 1919** - The signing of the Treaty of Versailles formally ended World War I.







### Same-Sex Spousal Benefits

On June 26, 2015, the Supreme Court held in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that the 14th Amendment of the

U.S. Constitution requires a state to license a marriage between two people of the same sex and to recognize a marriage between two people of the same sex when their marriage was lawfully licensed and performed out-of-state. Accordingly, the VA now recognizes all same-sex marriages without regard to a Veteran's state of residence. Formal guidance implementing *Obergefell* was issued to claims processors on October 22, 2015.

#### Eligibility Requirements

The VA offers a variety of benefits and services that depend on "spouse" and "surviving spouse" status. The VA will generally accept a claimant's statement that he or she is married. This same procedure applies no matter if the claimant is asserting that he/she is in an opposite-sex marriage or a same-sex marriage.

The VA is dedicated to serving all eligible service members, Veterans and their families and providing them the benefits they have earned. We encourage all Veterans in same-sex marriages who believe they are entitled to benefits (including those whose claims were previously denied on a ground related to their marriage) to promptly apply for benefits. For additional information, updated guidance, and instructions on how to re-apply, please visit <http://www.va.gov/opa/marriage/>.

### Pension Benefits continued from page 4

#### Eligible Wartime Periods

Under current law, the VA recognizes the following wartime periods to determine eligibility for VA Pension benefits:

1. Mexican Border Period (May 9, 1916 – April 5, 1917 for Veterans who served in Mexico, on its borders, or adjacent waters)
2. World War I (April 6, 1917 – November 11, 1918)
3. World War II (December 7, 1941 – December 31, 1946)
4. Korean conflict (June 27, 1950 – January 31, 1955)
5. Vietnam era (February 28, 1961 – May 7, 1975 for Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during that period; otherwise August 5, 1964 – May 7, 1975)
6. Gulf War (August 2, 1990 – through a future date to be set by law or Presidential Proclamation)

#### How To Apply

To apply for Veterans Pension, you can download and complete VA Form 21-527EZ, "Application for Pension" from the VA website. To apply for Survivors Pension, you can download and complete VA Form 21-534EZ, "Application for DIC, death pension, and/or accrued benefits" from the VA website. That website is: [www.va.gov/forms](http://www.va.gov/forms). You may also contact our office directly and we can mail, fax, or email you a packet on the specific benefit. This packet includes all the forms needed to submit the claim, along with a checklist of all supporting documentation for the claim.

### Job Hunting?

The VA medical center and regional office is hiring Veterans.

Visit [USAjobs.com](http://USAjobs.com) for more information.



Confidential chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://VeteransCrisisLine.net) or text to 838255

## Support Matters.



 **Veterans Crisis Line**  
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

Confidential help for Veterans and their families



## MAY IS MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH!

## JUNE IS PTSD AWARENESS MONTH!

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER



**MAY IS  
NATIONAL  
BBQ  
MONTH!**



**JUNE IS  
NATIONAL  
CANDY  
MONTH!**



**American  
Red Cross**

**Emergency  
Communication  
Services**

Serving active duty service members and their families, DoD civilians and families serving overseas, National Guard and Reserves, and veterans.

**1-877-272-7337**

**C-123 Aircraft Agent Orange Exposure Claims**



Any Air Force Veteran or Air Force Reservist who was assigned to one of the affected Reserve or active duty units as a ground, flight, or medical crew member on a contaminated aircraft and later developed a disability that has been linked to Agent Orange exposure should file a claim. VA has information indicating that few Air Force units (active duty and Reserve) had one or more of the contaminated aircraft during the period 1969 through 1986 (depending upon unit of assignment). VA compiled a list of these units and the dates on which they had the aircraft, which is publicly available at: [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/locations/residue-c123-aircraft/index.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/locations/residue-c123-aircraft/index.asp).

**Are You in NEED of Home Repairs?**



**Weatherization Assistance Program...Working in your Community**

*'Making Communities Stronger, One Family at a time!'*

Obtain needed repairs to your home through grant programs. The Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation & Weatherization Program is available to make repairs for low-medium income homeowners. Available to Veterans or Active Duty Members of any branch of the US military that are currently serving, have served, or their surviving spouse.

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS**

**INCOME GUIDELINES:**

Must identify and verify all sources of income for each household member. Verification of income must be within 90 days of submission.

**STATEMENT FROM FINANCIAL INSTITUTION:**

Must submit last two (2) months of bank statements for all accounts.

**PROPERTY TAX:**

Must be paid current.

**OWN OR BUYING A HOME:**

Must have thirty (30) days ownership.

**COPY OF DEED:**

Must be registered and recorded.

**DD 214:**

Or other proof of service.

Contact Capital Rehab Management (Joyce Pue) at 803.661.5772 (O) or 803.261.5772 (C)



## Dang-it Dolls Workshops

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR**

*There will be no meeting in May.*

Saturday, June 11th, from 10am to 3pm  
at the Cayce Masonic Lodge,  
1701 12th Street, Cayce, SC.

*There will be no meetings in July or August.*



There is something for everyone  
to do and this is the one place  
where

**THE MORE THE MERRIER**  
really counts.

## **FLU SHOTS**

Seasonal flu shots are now available for all registered and enrolled Veterans at DORN VA hospital.



Veterans can receive the flu shot during their regularly scheduled Primary Care or Specialty Care appointments or Primary Care Walk-in visits. Walk-ins are accepted Monday through Friday (except for Federal Holidays) between the hours of 8am to 4pm.

*Walgreens*



Veterans may also obtain their flu shot at any Walgreens location. The Veteran must show their VA medical ID card.

## **Lexington County Veterans Group**



**\*\*There has been a permanent change in the meeting time \*\***

All 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.

*For further information, please contact the Lexington County Veterans Affairs Office at 803-785-8400.*

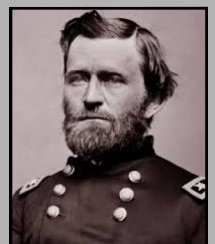


Attention Commanders of Veterans Service Organizations in Lexington County, our office is looking for a contact name and number for all American Legion post, DAV chapters, VFW's, etc. Please contact our office with this information.



*"Although a soldier  
by profession,  
I have never felt any sort of  
fondness for war,  
and I have never advocated it,  
except as a means  
of peace."*

*Ulysses S. Grant*



# Appeal versus Reconsideration

Often Veterans become upset with a VA rating decision, see the appellate rights and opt for filing a Notice of Disagreement (NOD). This will typically invoke a long and arduous appeals process. Appeals within the VA system often last 2-6 years, not including BVA remands.

A much easier way to continuously prosecute claims is by filing for reconsideration of a prior VA decision. Typically, claimants have one year from the date of notification of a VA decision to either file an appeal or request reconsideration of the prior decision with new and material evidence. This is evidence which has not previously been considered and may serve to overturn prior decisions.

If new and material evidence is received within the appellate period for any decision which has not become final, VA must consider this new and material evidence as having been filed in connection with the claim, which was pending at the beginning of the appeal period.



Generally, claimant's are unaware of the evidence required for a favorable decision, however, a proper VA Rating Decision should provide adequate reasons and basis for the denial of any condition. Within a VA Rating Decision there should be discussion of evidence considered in the service medical records, the evidence submitted, and findings of any VA examination to include rationale of the examiner as to why or why not a nexus opinion is given in regard to service connection.

Equally, the most common reason for a denial is not for lack of in-service treatment, or evidence of a current disability, but the medical opinion relating that condition to service.

Generally, service connection requires (1) evidence of an in-service injury, disease, or event, which was caused, incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, (2) a current chronic or disabling condition, and (3) a competent medical opinion relating the two to service.

If the claimant can overcome a VA medical opinion with a competent, medical opinion, which is as equally thorough or greater in probative value than that of a VA examiner, then the claim should be reconsidered and granted. This can be accomplished by asking for reconsideration of the prior decision, and effective dates should be assigned accordingly. This technique can win cases in a much faster fashion than electing to file an appeal, which in the end will require the same type of evidence for a claimant to prevail.



# Falling Behind in Your Mortgage/ Worried about Foreclosure?

## SOUTH CAROLINA LEGAL SERVICES

SC HELP- approved Housing Processing Agency

### MAY BE ABLE TO HELP AT NO COST

Homeowners worried about foreclosure due to reduction in income caused by unemployment or underemployment, reduction in self-employment income, death of a spouse, catastrophic medical expenses or divorce May Be Eligible for one or more of the following programs administered by SC HELP:

#### MONTHLY PAYMENT ASSISTANCE :

pays mortgage up to \$36,000 or 24 months whichever comes first while homeowner is seeking employment and a return to self-sustainability

#### DIRECT LOAN "CATCH UP" ASSISTANCE:

pays up to \$36,000 on past due mortgage to bring current; provided, homeowner can now maintain pay monthly payments

•MPA & DLA are both 5 year forgivable loans if you continue to reside in property



#### COMBINATION OF MONTHLY AND DIRECT ASSISTANCE:

pays past due mortgage up to \$25,000 and makes monthly payments for a combined total of \$36,000

#### TRANSITION ASSISTANCE FOR DEED-IN-LIEU OR SHORT-SALE:

provides \$5,000 grant to help transition families from homeownership to rental housing if:

1. Application with SC HELP completed FIRST
2. Permission for short-sale or deed-in-lieu of foreclosure granted by mortgage company
3. Money distributed AFTER execution of deed completed

#### HOW TO APPLY

### South Carolina Legal Services:

1 888 257 1988

Or

1 855 435 7472

Apply online at

[www.SCHELP.gov](http://www.SCHELP.gov)



South Carolina  
Legal Services

Balancing the Scales of Justice

Andrea E. Loney, Esquire  
Executive Director  
2109 Bull Street, P.O. Box 1445, Columbia, SC29201  
Email: [andrealoney@sclegal.org](mailto:andrealoney@sclegal.org)  
Fax: 803-744-4191  
[www.sclegal.org](http://www.sclegal.org)

SC HELP  
Mortgage help for homeowners.



## South Carolina Legal Services

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2109 Bull Street | P.O. Box 1445 | Columbia, South Carolina 29201  
Email: [andrealoney@sclegal.org](mailto:andrealoney@sclegal.org) Fax: (803) 799-9420  
[www.sclegal.org](http://www.sclegal.org) | [www.lawhelp.org/sc](http://www.lawhelp.org/sc) | [www.probono.net/sc](http://www.probono.net/sc)



South Carolina Homeownership  
and Employment Lending Program

300-C Outlet Pointe Boulevard  
Columbia, South Carolina 29210  
[www.scmortgagehelp.com](http://www.scmortgagehelp.com)

### Pre-Registration Information

South Carolina Homeownership and Employment Lending Program have been awarded \$295,431,200 in funding from the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Hardest Hit Fund to help homeowners avoid foreclosure. South Carolina Legal Services will help you gather and submit the documents to apply for mortgage assistance.

1. Full name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Complete Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_
3. Email Address \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Cell phone Number \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you or the co-borrower own and live in the property as a primary residence? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Was your original first mortgage amount less than \$729,750? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the name of your mortgage company? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Is your mortgage current or delinquent? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Are you or the co-borrower unemployed? \_\_\_\_\_
9. If yes, are you getting unemployment compensation? \_\_\_\_\_
10. If you are no longer getting unemployment compensation, when did it stop? \_\_\_\_\_
11. If still employed, please give your anticipated date of termination or reduction in hours? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Have you or the co-borrower had a significant reduction in your income? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Why was the income reduced? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Are you able to complete an online application? \_\_\_\_\_

### How to Apply:

Fax this Form to: 803 799 9420  
Call:  
SOUTH CAROLINA LEGAL SERVICES  
1 888 257 1988  
Or  
855 HELP 4 SC  
Submit an application at  
[www.SCHelp.com](http://www.SCHelp.com)



**"MILITARY MOMS PRAYER"**

Give me the greatness  
of heart to see,  
The difference between duty  
and his love for me.  
Give me understanding,  
so that I may know,  
When duty calls him,  
he must go.  
Give me a task to do each day,  
To fill the time when he's away.  
When he's in a foreign land,  
Keep him safe in your  
loving hand.  
And Lord, when duty  
is in the field,  
Please protect him  
and be his shield.  
And Lord, when deployment  
is so long,  
Please stay with me  
and keep me strong.

## **VA ANNOUNCES COMMUNITY CARE CALL CENTER TO HELP VETERANS WITH CHOICE PROGRAM BILLING ISSUES**

Veterans can now work directly with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to resolve debt collection issues resulting from inappropriate or delayed Choice Program billing. In step with MyVA's efforts to modernize VA's customer-focused, Veteran-centered services capabilities, a Community Care Call Center has been set up for Veterans experiencing adverse credit reporting or debt collection resulting from inappropriately billed Choice Program claims. Veterans experiencing these problems can call 1-877-881-7618 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Time) for assistance. The new call center will work to resolve instances of improper Veteran billing and assist community care medical providers with delayed payments. The VA staff are also trained and ready to work with the medical providers to expunge adverse credit reporting on Veterans resulting from delayed payments to providers. The VA is urging Veterans to continue to work with their VA primary care team to obtain necessary health care services regardless of adverse credit reporting or debt collection activity. The VA acknowledges that delayed payments and inappropriately billed claims are unacceptable and have caused stress for Veterans and providers alike. For more details about the Veterans Choice Program and VA's progress, visit: [www.va.gov/opa/choiceact](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact). Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program can call 1-866-606-8198 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Eastern Time) to find out more about the program, confirm their eligibility and schedule an appointment.

## County Council Needs You!

Veterans are 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.

## KOREAN WAR COMMEMORATION MEDAL



These medals were given out to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of the Korean war. The medal was commissioned and made by the South Korean government as a

sign of appreciation and thanks for American soldiers. The lanyard of the medal depicts the flags of all the nations involved in the war and the medal itself contains a piece of the wire from the DMZ.

Do you know of a Korean War Veteran in Lexington County that hasn't received a Korean War Commemoration medal? If so, please have them contact or come by our office. If the Veteran is deceased, this medal can also be awarded to the surviving spouse.

Our office has 18 medals remaining to award, so it is first come first served.

### 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 10a.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.*

### 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.





# Memorial Day Happenings

**9am Memorial Day Ceremony at Fort Jackson Cemetery. For more information contact the cemetery @ 866-577-5248.**

**10am Memorial Day Ceremony at Fort Jackson Headquarters. This includes a 21 gun salute. For more information contact Fort Jackson Army Community Service @ 803-751-5256.**

**10am Memorial Day Program at Caughman-Harman Funeral Home in Lexington. For more information contact the funeral home @ 803-359-6118.**

## Combat Veterans Get Telephonic Health Care Application Option

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it is amending its enrollment regulations to allow Veterans to complete applications for enrollment in VA health care by telephone without the need for a signed paper application. The change is effective immediately for Combat Veterans and will be effective July 5, 2016, for all Veterans. This phased implementation accelerates the VA's effort to enroll all Combat Veterans with pending applications as part of its ongoing Veterans Enrollment Rework Project. The VA is working to complete the review and rework of all pending health enrollment records for living and deceased Veterans this summer. By adding this telephone application option to the VA's regulations, the VA will now offer three ways to enroll. This change provides Veterans an even more convenient way to apply for enrollment, in addition to the paper VA Form 10-10EZ and online enrollment application process. For more information, Veterans can contact the Health Eligibility Center Enrollment and Eligibility Division toll free at 1-855-488-8440.

## WWI Memorial Design Selected

The World War I Centennial Commission announced the winning design for a new national memorial. "The Weight of Sacrifice," created by 25 year-old Joe Weishaar, a 2013 University of Arkansas graduate who now works in Chicago, and New York-based sculptor Sabin Howard. The design was selected out of five finalists from 350 total entries.

The design met the challenge of creating a concept to appropriately honor the service and sacrifice of the nearly 5 million Americans who served, and the more than 116,000 who died. The new national memorial is hoped to be dedicated on Veterans Day 2018, the centennial of the end of "The Great War."

It will be built a block away from the White House in Pershing Park, and include the existing statue of Army Gen. John J. "Blackjack" Pershing, commander of American Expeditionary Forces.



Mark your calendar...

County offices will be closed on the following dates:

Tuesday, May 10th - Confederate Memorial Day

Monday, May 30th - Memorial Day



Did you know that there are 2,560 people employed at the VA hospital?

The MyHealthVet office has moved to the main facility. The office is now located in Building 100A, Room 1D104, which is directly across the hall from the elevators to the eye clinic and directly adjacent to the White and Blue team area. For more information, call (803) 695-6783.



During fiscal year 2015, between Dorn VAMC and its seven community-based outpatient clinics, 82,177 Veterans were treated. This is an increase of 4.9% compared to the previous year.

The new Anderson clinic opened on March 18th. The new clinic is located at 3030 North Highway 81 in Anderson. This 44,000 square foot community-based outpatient clinic replaced the old clinic.

The new three-story parking garage for DORN should be completed sometime in 2017. The garage, which will be located behind the main hospital (Building 100) and directly adjacent to Building 106, is expected to support more than 400 vehicles. The unfortunate side is that during construction Dorn will actually lose about 100 spaces, which will make parking even more of a challenge. During construction, Veterans are encouraged to arrive for their scheduled appointments at least one hour prior as parking will be at a premium.



## Lawyers 4 Vets

Lawyers 4 Vets connects lower income Veterans living at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines with local attorneys who provide one-on-one pro bono legal advice or representation. Lawyers 4 Vets will assist Veterans by appointment only with:

1. Obtaining identification (Social Security, South Carolina ID, birth certificates, etc).
2. Child support and visitation issues in South Carolina.
3. Expungements and pardons in SC.
4. Consumer protection.
5. Simple wills and healthcare power of attorney.



Veterans seeking information about the clinic should call 1-877-289-6000.



### Veterans ID Cards continued from page 7



• Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care can obtain a free Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC). For more information, please go to [www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vhic/index.asp](http://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vhic/index.asp).

• Veterans who have retired from military service can receive an identification card from DOD. For information on obtaining or renewing such a card, please contact your nearest DOD identification card facility. You can find the location of these facilities through this link: [www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/appj/site](http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/rsl/appj/site).



## VA Announces New Rules Regarding Service Animals in VA Facilities

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) announced that it has revised its regulation regarding the presence of animals on VA property. The updated regulation will ensure VA practices remain consistent with applicable federal law. It will also assist individuals entering VA facilities in developing a clear and consistent understanding of the criteria governing facility access for service animals.

"As I have traveled to VA facilities throughout the country, I have heard from many Veterans about what a vital role their service animals play in their lives," said Secretary of Veterans' Affairs Robert A. McDonald. "The revised regulation will ensure Veterans and employees have clear guidance regarding the presence of service animals in our facilities. VA remains committed to ensuring America's Veterans have access to the health care benefits for which they are eligible."



Under the revised regulation, only dogs that are individually trained to perform work or tasks on behalf of an individual with a disability will be considered service animals. Other animals will not be permitted in VA facilities, unless expressly allowed as an exception under the regulation for activities such as animal-assisted therapy or for other reasons such as law enforcement purposes. The regulation further confirms that service animals may access VA property subject to the same terms that govern the admission of the public to VA property, and may be restricted from certain areas on VA properties to ensure that patient care, patient safety, and infection control standards are not compromised.

## **NEW**

## **SOUTH CAROLINA POW MEDAL**

South Carolina Veterans who were prisoners of war during a war time period are eligible to receive a new special state POW medal for their time in captivity. The POW medal was created by the Legislature in a June 2014 law that authorizes the Governor to present the award to South Carolina residents who are on federal



POW lists. Any former POW who received an honorable discharge and is a South Carolina citizen can apply for the medal. Former prisoners from WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, or other conflicts are also eligible. Surviving spouses or descendants can also apply for the medal once.

If you live in Lexington County or know someone who does and they meet the above requirements, please call the Lexington County VA office at 803-785-8400 with their name and contact information.

***Don't miss the SC Poultry Festival  
May 12th through 14th, in Batesburg/Leesville.  
For more information visit their website  
at [SCpoultryfestival.com](http://SCpoultryfestival.com).***



For basic information and questions,  
please check out our webpage at  
[www.lex-co.sc.gov/departments/DeptRZ/va/Pages/index.aspx](http://www.lex-co.sc.gov/departments/DeptRZ/va/Pages/index.aspx)  
A list of the Veterans Service Organizations in Lexington County  
and copies of the newsletter are also on our webpage.

# Financial aid. College applications. Choosing a major.

It can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be.

Whether you need help applying for financial aid, completing college applications, or just some helpful guidance, Midlands Technical College's Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) staff is ready to assist you.

## What is EOC?

EOC provides counseling and information on college admissions to qualified individuals who want to begin or continue a college education. The program also provides in-depth financial aid information and assistance. EOC collaborates with various agencies in Fairfield and Lexington counties to provide services.

## What are some of the services EOC provides?

- › College Admissions Counseling
- › College Transfer Assistance
- › Financial Aid Assistance and Counseling
- › Financial Decision Making Assistance
- › GED Referral Assistance
- › Homeless and Foster Youth Educational Assistance
- › Military and Veteran Referral Services
- › Ex-Offender Referral Services

## Am I eligible for EOC assistance?

Many area residents are eligible for assistance. Please contact EOC to discuss your eligibility.

## How do I apply for the program?

Please call 803.822.3749 or 1.800.922.8038 ext. 3749 to schedule an appointment.

## Where will I go for my appointment?

EOC's main office is on the MTC Airport Campus in Lexington Hall Room 170; its other office is located on the MTC Beltline Campus, Student Center, Room 227. EOC also offers regularly scheduled hours at numerous outreach sites in Fairfield and Lexington counties.



Disclaimer: Although the EOC staff is employed by Midlands Technical College, they do not recruit participants for the college. As an EOC participant, you can receive assistance in applying to any continuing education program, college, and/or university. If you have a disability requiring special accommodations, please contact MTC EOC.

For more information, please call 803.822.3749 or 1.800.922.8038 ext. 3749,  
or visit [MIDLANDSTECH.EDU/eoc](http://MIDLANDSTECH.EDU/eoc)

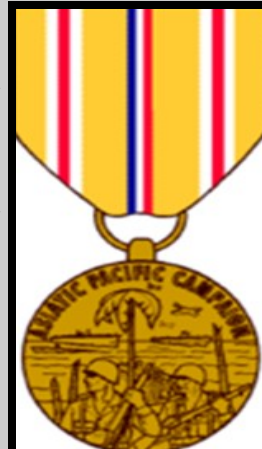
## ***Featured Medal:***

# **Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal**

The Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal is a military award of the Second World War. It was awarded to any member of the United States Military who served in the Pacific Theater from 1941 to 1945 and was created on November 6, 1942 by Executive Order 9265 issued by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The medal was designed by Thomas Hudson Jones. The reverse side was designed by Adolph Alexander Weinman and is the same design as used on the reverse of the European-African-Middle Eastern and American Campaign Medals.

There were 21 Army and 48 Navy/Marine official campaigns of the Pacific Theater, denoted on the service ribbon by campaign stars; some construction battalion units issued the medal with Arabic numerals. The Arrowhead device is authorized for those campaigns which involved participation in amphibious assault landings. The Fleet Marine Force Combat Operation Insignia is also authorized for wear on the medal for Sailors who participated in combat while assigned to the Marine Corps. The flag colors of Japan and the United States are visible in the ribbon.

The Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal was first issued as a service ribbon in 1942. A full medal was authorized in 1947, the first of which was presented to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur. The European Theater equivalent of the medal was known as the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal.



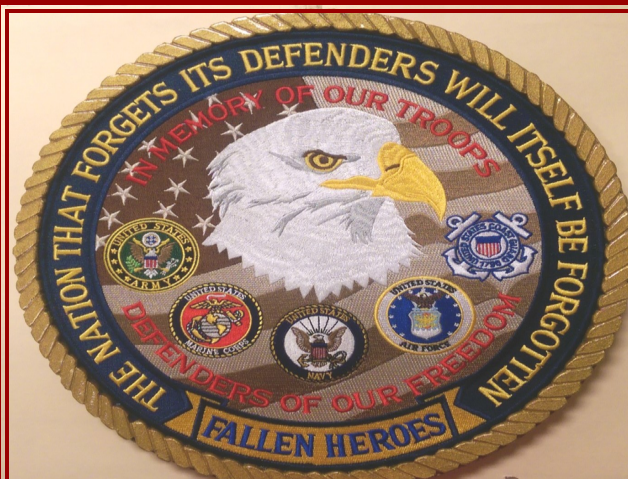
Picture of Medal and Ribbon.

**The VA has a new 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](http://www.knowva.ebenefits.va.gov).**

**Website**

## **About Our Office**

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 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 disability 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 forms.



***Coming in the Next Issue...***

***Survivor Benefits,  
Individual Unemployability (IU)  
and VA Home Loans.***