

**VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE
OF LEXINGTON COUNTY**



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VET NEWS

October 2006

SOME LEXINGTON COUNTY VAN PASSENGER RULES

To better coordinate the available van drivers, we are asking you to schedule your Dorn VA Medical Center appointments **between the hours of 9:00 am. to 2:00 pm., Monday, Wednesday, or Thursday.**

The van driver is only permitted to stop the van for rest stops and/or emergencies, or to pick up and discharge passengers at designated pick-up points.

Passengers should not ask the driver to make side trips to take care of personal business.

“We don’t want them just coming in and getting interviews,” Smith said. “We want them to be prepared for an interview, know how to dress for the interview, know how to present a resume, and then basically, hopefully, get a job from that.”

For more information about this event or other upcoming Hiring Heroes events, contact Karen Hannah, the Hiring Heroes program manager, at: 1-888-363-4872 or by e-mailing her at karen.hannah@cpms.osd.mil.

DATES TO REMEMBER

3rd-6th	County Veterans Affairs Staff Training (office will be open but no claims filed)
11 th	Columbus Day
24 th	United Nations Day (US)
29 th	Daylight Savings Time ends

PROGRAM HELPS WOUNDED VETS FIND JOBS

American Forces Press Service | Samantha L. Quigley | August 29, 2006: Washington D.C. - Severely injured servicemembers and their spouses are seeing doors open to meaningful civilian careers, thanks to a partnership between the Defense Department and the private sector.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense, DoD’s Military Severely Injured Center and Military.com -- a private organization that provides information and serves as a networking hub for current and former military people, defense workers and their families -- are co-sponsors of “Hiring Heroes.” Hiring Heroes helps connect service-members with DoD and other federal agencies, as well as civilian companies, with significant positions to fill.

LOCAL BOY SCOUTS HELPING TO SEND SOME HOLIDAY CHEER

The Midlands Chapter of the Blue Star Mothers of America is announcing a partnership with the Indian Waters Boy Scout Council to send popcorn to our service members away from home over the holidays. When ordering your popcorn this year, the scouts will be asking you to purchase an additional tin to be sent to our deployed troops. The Blue Star Mothers will be shipping the popcorn as part of their Christmas “WE CARE” packages.

In addition to the popcorn, Blue Star would like to encourage your church, civic organization, school or you as an individual to donate snack items, entertainment items and especially cards and letters to be included in their packages. A list of items can be found on the website. www.bluestarmotherssc.com.

**ADDRESSES FOR YOUR LOVED ONE
CURRENTLY DEPLOYED CAN BE SENT TO
INFO@BLUESTARMOTHERSSC.COM OR MAILED
TO PO BOX 2364, LEXINGTON SC 29071 TO
HAVE THEM ADDED TO THEIR MAILING LIST.**

LEXINGTON COUNTY VETERAN'S PARADE

The annual Lexington County Veteran's Parade will be Sunday, November 5, 2006 at 2:30 p.m. (no entry fee). Route will come down North Lake Drive from Lexington Elementary School to the Veterans Monument on South Lake Drive.

COME HELP HONOR OUR VETERANS!!

Grand Marshalls: Tuskegee Airmen Association.

Sponsored by: Lexington County Employee Committee, American Legion Post 7, VFW Post 8738, Lexington County Veterans Affairs, and Town of Lexington.

Contact Sharon Willis at 785-8121 or 237-9617 (after 5 p.m.), Gary Baker or Barbara O'Connor at 785-8400 or Bob Hall at 785-8349.



Volunteer drivers are still needed to transport disabled veterans to and from the Dorn VA Medical Center. If you are interested, come by the Veterans Affairs Office and pick up an application. All applicants must pass a physical and take a TB test at the Dorn VA Hospital to become a certified driver. Call Gary Baker at 785-8401 for more information.

VIETNAM SERVICE MEDAL AND ARMED FORCES EXPEDITIONARY MEDAL (Viet Nam)

The Vietnam Service Medal was awarded to members of the Armed Forces of the United States serving in Vietnam and contiguous waters or air space after July 3, 1965 and before March 28, 1973. The eligibility requirements are:

- (a) Attached to or regularly serving for one or more days with an organization participating in or directly supporting ground (military) operations.
- (b) Attached to or regularly serving for one or more days aboard a naval vessel directly supporting military operations.
- (c) Actually participate as a crew member in one or more aerial flights directly supporting military operations.
- (d) Serve on temporary duty for 30 consecutive days or 60 nonconsecutive days. These time limitations may be waived for personnel participating in actual combat operations.

Department of Defense Manual of Military Decorations and Awards (DoD 1348.33-M), September 1996, at C6.6, pages 50-52. See United States vs. Verdine, 41 C.M.R. 584, 586 (1969) (U.S. Army Court of Military Review takes judicial notice of criteria for award of Vietnam Service Medal).

It is clear that the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (AFEM) for Viet Nam, is an equivalent award to the Vietnam Service Medal. The AFEM for Viet Nam was awarded as a result of a veteran's Vietnam service before the Vietnam Service Medal was authorized (the beginning date for receipt of the Vietnam Service Medal is July 3, 1965). The interchangeable nature of the AFEM for Viet Nam and the Vietnam Service Medal is demonstrated in the Department of Defense's Manual of Military Decorations and Awards, which states that those who received the AFEM for Vietnam service could not also be issued the Vietnam Service Medal. In addition, service members could elect to receive the Vietnam Service Medal instead of the AFEM. The Department of Defense's manual states:

C6.5.1.6. Election of the AFEM or Vietnam Service Medal. Service members who earned the AFEM for service in Vietnam between July 1, 1958 and July 3, 1965, may elect to receive the Vietnam Service Medal instead of the AFEM. However, no service member may be issued both medals for service in Vietnam.

Department of Defense Manual of Military Decorations and Awards (DoD 1348.33-M), September 1996, at C6.5.1.6., page 50.

Accordingly, in view of the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims decision in *Haas vs. Nicholson*, the receipt of the equivalent award to the Vietnam Service Medal should entitle a veteran to the presumption of service in Vietnam.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR VIETNAM WALL REPLICA EXHIBITION

The Blue Star Mothers need volunteers to help at the **Vietnam Traveling Wall** exhibition in Columbia, SC on October 27, 28 & 29, 2006. If you can spare an hour or more on any of these dates, call Ann Ricard at: 803-356-3599.

The traveling, ¾ scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is 240 feet long, eight feet high, and contains the names of more than 58,000 Americans who died or are missing in Vietnam. All names etched on "The Wall" will be read throughout the three-day exhibition in 20-minute intervals.

**AMERICAN LEGION URGES MISUSE
OF TAXPAYER DOLLARS IN ATTACKS
ON VETERANS MEMORIALS,
RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS**

August 3, 2006

The nation's largest veterans organization called on the U.S. Senate to pass the "Veterans' Memorials, Boy Scouts, Public Seals, and Other Public Expressions of Religion Protection Act of 2006."

The Senate bill (S. 3696), would amend all federal laws with fee-shifting provisions, including the Civil Rights Attorney Fees Act, 42 U.S. Code 1988 and the Equal Access to Justice Act. It would eliminate the authority of judges to award taxpayer-paid attorney fees to the ACLU, or other organizations, in lawsuits brought under the Establishment Clause of the Constitution against veterans memorials, the Boy Scouts, or the public display of the Ten Commandments or other symbols of American history and religious heritage.

The American Legion has fought for passage of this reform legislation since the ACLU sued the Mojave Desert WWI Veterans Memorial and obtained a federal judge's order to destroy the solitary cross at that veterans' memorial, and then sought and received some \$63,000 from that same judge as an attorney fee award—although neither the ACLU nor its plaintiff, Frank Buono, retired former Assistant Superintendent of the Mojave Desert Preserve, had any actual attorney fees. The \$63,000 went directly into ACLU coffers as profit.

Most Americans remain unaware that the ACLU and other organizations have been reaping millions of dollars in taxpayer-paid profits in lawsuits against veterans memorials, the Boy Scouts, the public display of the Ten Commandments and other symbols of our American heritage. The American Legion is conducting an "educate and activate" campaign to advise taxpayers of this abuse and urge them to contact both their representatives and senators to pass these laws to fix the problem once and for all. (*The Connector*, American Legion Department of South Carolina: Vol. 2, Issue 8, August 2006, p. 13)

**VFW CALLS LAWMAKERS
OUT OF TOUCH WITH WAR**

WASHINGTON (August 18, 2006) -- The national commander of the nation's largest organization of combat veterans is calling the impending decision by the U.S. Congress to slash the budget of a government traumatic brain injury research center one of the worst possible decisions any lawmaker could make during a time of war.

"You either take care of the troops or you don't," said Jim Mueller, commander-in-chief of the 2.4 million-member

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. and its Auxiliaries. "This proposal to halve the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center's budget clearly indicates that the Congress is out of touch with the realities and consequences of war."

In June, the U.S. House of Representatives approved cutting \$7 million from the Brain Injury Center's budget as part of the larger 2007 National Defense Authorization Bill. The center, which is located at nearby Walter Reed Army Medical Center, had asked for \$19 million for the new fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1. Their current 2006 budget is \$14 million. The U.S. Senate is expected to vote on their version of the \$468 billion defense bill after Labor Day. The Senate version also reduces the center's budget to \$7 million.

"It is absolutely inexcusable that lawmakers would slash funding during a time of war for a research center that is earning its keep by addressing the exact types of injuries our troops are suffering," exclaimed Mueller, who will introduce a resolution at the upcoming 107th VFW National Convention to urge the government to increase its services

to disabled veterans with traumatic brain injuries.

"More than 12,000 servicemen and women have been exposed to horrendous explosions in Iraq and Afghanistan that have caused more than half of our casualties. Better tactics, body armor and battlefield medicine are saving more lives, but there's no safety net that's practical or employable that can prevent fragile human bodies from suffering traumatic and oftentimes lifelong injuries," he said.

"This entire war on terrorism is being carried on the backs of our brave servicemen and women, and no one else in America --- except for their families who remain strong at home --- is sacrificing so much and is asking for so little in return," said Mueller, a Vietnam veteran from O'Fallon, Mo.

"For our nation's lawmakers to deny advance research that our military has earned with their blood, and for those same lawmakers to espouse patriotism and 'Support the Troops' rhetoric from the podium this election year, is shameful, hypocritical, and ignorant," he said. "This research center is an investment in the future potential of traumatically disabled soldiers. It is not an expense."

Mueller is now urging all Americans to contact their representatives and senators and tell them to increase the research center's budget to \$19 million before the Senate and House consolidate their respective defense bills into one recommendation for the president's signature.

For a list of Senators by state:

http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

For a listing of House members by Zip Code:

<http://www.house.gov/writerep>

2006 ACTS THAT AFFECT

COUNTIES IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Property Tax Exemption and Sales Tax Changes – Part I

Beginning June 1, 2007, the statewide sales tax rate will increase by one percent for a total of six percent. That increased rate will not apply to food (defined as unprepared food which may be purchased with food stamps), accommodations, or any item subject to a sales tax cap. [SC Code §12-36-1110.]

Beginning October 1, 2006, the statewide sales tax rate on food will drop to three percent. The Board of Economic Advisors is to estimate the amount of revenue the Education Improvement Act (EIA) Fund does not receive due to the decrease in the tax rate on food. That amount will be transferred from the State general fund to the EIA Fund. [SC Code §12-36-910] This reduction does not affect any local option sales tax.

The General Assembly also grants a complete state sales tax exemption for the two days following Thanksgiving, November 24 and 25, 2006. This sales tax holiday does not apply to local option sales taxes or the accommodations tax. [Part I, Section E of H. 4449.] This is a one-time sales tax holiday in addition to the existing sales tax holiday for school shopping.

ACT NO. 386 R.389, S.1245

Section 33. This section amends §12-37-250(D) to delete the age requirement of 50 years for a surviving spouse to receive the homestead exemption from real property taxes. The surviving spouse shall continue to receive the homestead exemption so long as the spouse remains unmarried and the dwelling place is utilized as the permanent home and legal residence of the spouse.

commemorative Freedom Ornament™, which will benefit U.S. military men and women serving in more than 177 countries, and their families.

The Freedom side of this handsome, full-color ornament, features Archibald Willard's famous painting of the Spirit of '76,' which was painted for the Nation's Centennial exposition in Philadelphia in 1876. The Liberty side depicts Edward Moran's renowned painting of the unveiling of the Statue of Liberty on October 28, 1886.

"This is not just a holiday ornament. Rather, it is an ornament for patriotic Americans to display year-round in support of our Armed Forces and their families," said Foundation President Nicholas Cretan, who hopes the Freedom Ornament will become an annual collectible.

Cretan said for every ornament purchased, a Freedom Ornament will also be given to a member of the U.S. military. Proceeds will benefit the American Legion, The Fisher House Foundation and the Veterans of Foreign Wars Foundation's "Unmet Needs Fund" which supplies critical financial aid to military families when members of their family are on active duty.

"The proceeds from the sale of this ornament will go a long way in helping the VFW's Unmet Needs program fulfill its mission of helping those who deserve it most, our service members and their families," said Veterans of Foreign Wars Commander-in-Chief, James R. Muller.

The 2006 Freedom Ornament is priced at \$9.95 each, plus \$2.95 shipping and handling. Order at www.freedomornament.com.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, The Spirit of Liberty Foundation has been committed to sharing the Spirit of Liberty with America by creating high-profile educational programs to reinforce the meaning and symbolism of the Statue of Liberty and American icons of Liberty and Freedom for all our citizens and the world.



The Spirit of Liberty Foundation, a non-profit organization has released the first annual

DFAS REMINDS CUSTOMERS TO UPDATE PAY ACCOUNT STATUS

(Aug. 17, 2006)

The Defense Accounting and Finance Service (DFAS) reminds all military retirees and annuitants to review their retirement or annuitant pay account status to ensure all information is up-to-date.

DFAS relies on current personal information to provide the highest level of customer service. Officials emphasize that it's imperative that retirees notify the agency as soon as possible about any change in marital or family status, beneficiaries, mailing address and bank account information.

This ensures that the individual's retirement pay is processed correctly and on time. If beneficiary information needs to be updated, customers can access the new Designation of Beneficiary form on-line at:

<http://www.dod.mil/dfas/retiredpay/beneficiarycard.html>.

Changes to much of a retiree's pay account can be made via [myPay](#) or by calling the Retired/Annuitant Pay Customer Service Center at 1-800-321-1080. Retirees may also send an e-mail via [myPay](#) or by regular mail to:

DFAS
U. S. Military Retirement Pay
P. O. Box 7130
London, KY 40742-7130

Using [myPay](#) is the most convenient and timely way to self-service a retiree's account.

Any account changes must be completed and submitted by the end of November 2006 in order to be effective for the end-of-year processing (1099R's, RAS's, etc.). This includes both retired and annuitant pay accounts.

THE FINAL INSPECTION

The soldier stood and faced God, Which must always
come to pass.
He hoped his shoes were shining, Just as brightly as his
brass.

“Step forward now, you soldier, How shall I deal with
you?
Have you always turned the other cheek? To My
Church have you been true?”

The soldier squared his shoulders and said, “No, Lord, I
guess I ain't.
Because those of us who carry guns, Can't always be a
saint.

I've had to work most Sundays, And at times my talk
was tough.
And sometimes I've been violent, Because the world
is awfully rough.

But, I never took a penny, That wasn't mine to keep...
Though I worked a lot of overtime
When the bills got just too steep.

And I never passed a cry for help, Though at times I
shook with fear.
And sometimes, God, forgive me,
I've wept unmanly tears.

I know I don't deserve a place, Among the people
here.
They never wanted me around,
Except to calm their fears.

If you've a place here for me, Lord, It needn't be
so grand. I never
expected or had too much, But if you don't,
I'll understand.

There was a silence all around the throne. Where
the saints had often trod.
As the soldier waited quietly, For the judgment
of his God.

“Step forward now, you soldier, You've born your
burdens well.
Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets, You've done
your time in Hell.”

(Author unknown)

IDENTITY OF GULF WAR SYNDROME DISMISSED

The unexplained symptoms that afflict thousands of Gulf War veterans don't constitute a single illness, a federally funded study concludes.

Even though U.S. and foreign veterans of the 1991 war report more symptoms of illness than do soldiers who didn't serve in the Persian Gulf, there is no such thing as Gulf War syndrome, according to the Veterans Affairs-sponsored report released Tuesday, September 12th, 2006. Nearly 30 percent of all those who served in the brief war have reported problems.

The report did find evidence of an elevated risk of the rare nerve disease amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also called Lou Gehrig's disease, among Gulf War veterans. They also face an increased risk of anxiety disorders, depression and substance abuse, it said.

Tuesday's report is the latest in the important series that the VA will rely on to determine whether Gulf War veterans are eligible for special disability benefits. (*State Newspaper*, Sept. 13, 2006, A9)

MILITARY GROUP WANTS MORE TUITION WAIVERS

(*State newspaper*, August 23, 2006)

Local members of the Military Order of the Purple Heart want the Legislature to change a law providing college-bound children of some medal recipients free tuition at state-supported colleges and technical schools.

The law does not cover children of all veterans who have received the world's oldest military decoration.

The benefit is offered to the children of recipients who have either been discharged or retired from military service, but does not cover those who are still on active duty. The benefit also applies only to wartime veterans.

Phil Butler, director of the State Office of Veterans Affairs, said the program is a tuition

waiver—not a scholarship—and is not based on financial need. There is no exchange of dollars.

The waiver is offered to medal recipient's children up to 26 years old. The student must be in "good standing" with the school and may be pursuing any type of undergraduate degree.

Also covered are children of military members who were killed or missing in action, a prisoner of war, permanently disabled, and a Medal of Honor recipient.

Through May, 2006, 360 people have taken advantage of the law since it went into effect in June 2001.

The Purple Heart is awarded to service members wounded "by an instrument of war in the hands of the enemy" or posthumously to the next of kin of those killed in action.

No one is sure how many children of Purple Heart recipients are eligible for the tuition waiver. That's because there are no records of recipients in past wars, including the Vietnam War, said William Bacon, national adjutant of the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

The organization estimates about 30,000 South Carolinians have received the medal, Bacon said.

For an application or more information about tuition benefits for children of Purple Heart recipients and other veterans:

Lexington County Veterans Affairs: 803-785-8400

State Office of Veterans' Affairs on line:

www.govoepp.state.sc.us.va. Applications are available on line.

Governor's Office, Division of Veterans' Affairs:
803-255-4255



INCOME-REPLACEMENT PROGRAM FOR MOBILIZED RESERVISTS, GUARD MEMBERS

The Defense Department has kicked off a program to help prevent activated reservists and National Guard members from facing financial hardships.

The Reserve Income Replacement Program will pay eligible National Guard and reserve members mobilized for extended or frequent periods the difference between their monthly civilian pre-mobilization income and their current total monthly military compensation.

“RIRP is designed to assist mobilized Guard and reserve members that are experiencing a loss of income while mobilized,” said Tom Bush, principal director of manpower and reserve affairs for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

Program payments are not automatic. Guard and reserve members must apply through their service personnel offices.

To qualify for RIRP, servicemembers must:

- Be serving on active duty in an involuntary status and have completed 18 continuous months of involuntary active duty, or
- Have completed 24 cumulative months of involuntary active duty within the last 60 months, or
- Be serving on involuntary active duty for a period of 180 days or more that starts within six months of separation from a previous period on involuntary active duty for at least 180 days. The authority for RIRP will expire December 31, 2008. (*The SCANG News*, September 2006, p. 11)

LEXINGTON COUNTY COMMUNITY MINOR HOME REPAIR PROGRAM

The purpose of the Minor Home Repair Program is to help maintain Lexington County homes for long-term livability and help our communities remain stable and healthy. The program offers assistance to eligible homeowners to make minor repairs to their homes.

The program can provide up to \$5,000 in assistance for eligible minor repairs.

The program assists residents of unincorporated Lexington County only. This program is not available within city limits of any town.

To be considered for the Minor Home Repair program you must meet certain criteria. These include:

- The head of the house or spouse must be:
 - 62 years or older,
 - Disabled, OR
 - US Veteran
- Total annual household income limits:

1 in household:	\$33,950
2 in household:	\$38,800
3 in household:	\$43,650
4 in household:	\$48,500
5 in household:	\$52,400
6 in household:	\$56,250
7 in household:	\$60,150
8 in household:	\$64,000

Repairs can only be made on:

1. Single-family detached (stick-built)
 2. Manufactured homes
- Must be on a permanent foundation
 - Must be 20 years old or less
 - Homeowner must own the land on which the manufactured home is located.
3. Only owner-occupied residences are eligible (no rental houses)

If you own the property for 24 months after repairs are completed, you will not be required to repay the funds provided. If the property is sold before the 24 month period expires, you will be required to repay the full amount of assistance. This will be enforced through a lien placed on the property at the time repair work is completed.

To be considered for this program, call (803) 785-8121 or go by and pick up the application form at 212 South Lake Drive, Lexington, SC 29072 in the Administration Building.

DORN PATIENT & MEDICAL CARE “WISH LIST”

- Palliative Care/Hospice unit monetary donations
- Funds to make soft pillows for hospitalized patients
- Flags for Avenue of Flags Memorial Park (\$25 each)
- “Comfort item” kits for new patients: \$1.53 each
- New small & medium size sweat suits & new underwear
- New sweat suits & underwear for female patients
- Funds for Social Work Emergency fund
- Funds for patient coffee service
- Funds for Dorn Oncology Outreach to Veterans with cancer for lodging, meals and transportation
- Funds for recreational activities
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VA’s 75th ANNIVERSARY

During the VA’s 75th anniversary year, it reached an important milestone in another way. The agency guaranteed its 18 millionth home loan as part of a program that has

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OCTOBER OUTREACH PROGRAM

October 3rd	8-12	Batesburg-Leesville
October 10th	9-12	Chapin
October 17th	8-12	Swansea

TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Lexington Main Office: 785-8400

VA's Diamond Jubilee year also saw major progress on our commitment to expand the national cemetery system. America is saying its final farewell to the generation that fought and won World War II, with more than 1,000 veterans from that war dying every day. To meet those needs,

8400
0231