

**Veterans Affairs Office  
of Lexington County**



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# VET NEWS

May 2009



**FOR YOUR INFORMATION:**

Due to budgetary constraints, the mailing of our monthly newsletter is on hold until further notice.

This abridged version of the newsletter may be found on our website until normal newsletter distribution resumes.

## MAY OUTREACH PROGRAM DATES

May 5th      9-12    Batesburg-Leesville  
May 12th     9-12    Chapin

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### TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Lexington Main Office:      785-8400  
From Batesburg/Leesville:    332-8400  
From Chapin:                    941-0231

Please note regarding outreach: Appointments are greatly appreciated, but walk-ins will be assisted between appointments. Thank you for helping us better assist you!

## DATES TO REMEMBER:

- May 10th    Mothers Day
- May 11th    Confederate Memorial Day
- \*ALL COUNTY OFFICES CLOSED\***
- May 16th    Armed Forces Day
- May 16th    First Annual Palmetto Patriots Ball—6 PM
- May 25th    Memorial Day
- \*ALL COUNTY OFFICES CLOSED\***



### QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

***“The truth of the matter is that you always know the right thing to do. The hard part is doing it.”***

- Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf

### PLEASE NOTE:

\*\*\*All Lexington County Offices will be **CLOSED** on **May 11th** in observance of **Confederate Memorial Day**, and on **May 25th**, in observance of **Memorial Day**. There will be **no van service on these days.** \*\*\*

# NEW RECORDS SYSTEM PROPOSED FOR VETERANS

*[Taken from news reports]*

WASHINGTON - President Barack Obama promised a more efficient record system to ease delays in health care for wounded veterans, as the government copes with tens of thousands of military personnel injured in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Under the new system, an electronic record would follow a service member in the military and then later in the Veterans Affairs Department's medical system. There is currently a six-month backlog in disability claims at the VA. Because the two agencies have different medical systems, veterans have complained about bureaucratic hurdles and long waits as they enter the VA system.

"Too many wounded warriors go without the care that they need," Obama said. More than 1.6 million troops have deployed in support of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. An estimated 33,000 have been wounded.

## APPLY FOR YOUR DISCHARGE ONLINE

Did you know that you can apply for military records online? Yes you can! Go to the website [www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs](http://www.archives.gov/veterans/evetrecs) and click on "request military records".

Remember to print out the signature page for submission as well. The request will not be fulfilled without submission of the accompanying signature page.



## PROPOSED BUDGET CUTS TARGET MILITARY FUNDING

[Information from [Washington Times article, May 8, 2009](#)]

President Obama has targeted the Department of Defense to absorb more than 80 percent of the cuts he has proposed in next year's budget for discretionary programs. In its "Terminations, Reductions and Savings" booklet, which the administration released Thursday, the White House highlighted the results of the president's line-by-line review of the federal budget.

The administration identified \$11.5 billion in discretionary program terminations and reductions for next year. The Defense Department will take a \$9.4 billion hit, constituting **82 percent** of the cuts. Defense accounts for 49 percent of spending on discretionary programs, which Congress must fund each year. The White House identified a total of \$17 billion in spending cuts. The \$17 billion in total cuts represents less than one-half of 1 percent of the \$3.6 trillion 2010 budget the president proposed in February, and it is less than 1 percent of this year's budget deficit. While defense spending accounts for 19 percent of the federal budget, it would absorb 55 percent of \$17 billion in total cuts.

The defense cuts send "a very clear signal that this administration is not going to be as forceful on national security issues as the previous administration. I think that's pretty clear," said Sen. Saxby Chambliss of Georgia. White House Budget Director Peter R. Orszag rejected the notion that defense was asked to absorb a disproportionate share of the cuts. "Defense spending will increase by 4 percent in 2010," Mr. Orszag said. "But that doesn't answer why the president did not use the same diligence in cutting spending for the rest of the budget" that he used to cut defense, said Brian Riedl, a budget analyst at The Heritage Foundation. Mr. Riedl noted that the total savings of \$17 billion, even in the unlikely event that Congress approved the cuts, "would not reduce spending at all. Because of budget rules, all savings would be re-shifted to other programs." For mandatory programs, which are dominated by entitlements like Social Security and Medicare, the president has proposed \$4 billion in funding terminations next year, 90 percent of which would apply to the student-loan program. However, eliminating "unnecessary subsidies" to lenders that make loans to students would not result in any spending savings over the next decade. "This proposal will save more than \$4 billion annually that will be used to provide Pell Grants to students," the booklet revealed. In fact, the Pell Grant program *itself* would become an entitlement akin to Social Security and Medicare.



The administration is requesting \$130 billion for "overseas contingency operations" in fiscal 2010, including \$65 billion for Afghanistan and \$61 billion for Iraq. A Pentagon summary said the \$130 billion represented the "administration's best estimate of needs at this time," adding that a request for more funding could come later.

When Congress passed its budget resolution last month, the biggest savings it achieved, compared with Mr. Obama's February blueprint, was the elimination of the \$250 billion "place holder" the administration requested for the potential purchase of toxic assets from banks. "Our hope is that it will not be necessary to call upon it," Mr. Orszag said, but the administration will continue to request the \$250 billion as "a precautionary measure."

# WALLAERT RECEIVES BRONZE STAR 66 YEARS AFTER SERVICE

PFC Clarence Wallaert was shot in the hip by a German sniper while fighting against the German Winter Line in Italy Dec. 30, 1943. Wallaert bandaged his own wound and provided 12 hours of automatic rifle support for his Army comrades advancing into the Liri Valley- also known as the "gateway to Rome."

Nearly 66 years later, Wallaert, 86, was awarded the Bronze Star Medal at Scott Air Force Base, Ill., April 14 for his meritorious actions during World War II.



"It was such an awesome and humbling experience..." said retired Air Force Col. Jim Harper, Wallaert's son-in-law. As a result of having Major Gen. Hodge meet with the family and then award his medal," Harper said. "my father-in-law was 'awed' by the ceremony."

**PFC Clarence Wallaert,**  
*above, shakes hands with*  
**Major Gen James L. Hodge**  
at his recent awards ceremony.

The family was unaware until recently that Army regulations authorized the Bronze Star medal for WWII recipients if they had been awarded the Purple Heart and the Combat Infantryman's Badge. Wallaert previously received both decorations and his Bronze Star request was filed March 16.

"I was as happy as I could possibly be to be involved in the recognition of one of our WWII veterans," said Hodge, DDCC commanding general, whose father is also a decorated World War II veteran. "It was close to me personally," he said. "You could certainly see his pride during the ceremony."

Wallaert said that he was surprised by the large crowd at the ceremony. "I was really overwhelmed," Wallaert said. "I was just doing my duty and I didn't expect all the praise."

Wallaert served as a Browning Automatic Rifleman with the Army's K Company, 3rd Battalion, 180th Infantry Regiment, 45th division, from February 1943 until January 1944. Wallaert and Company K received strong combat resistance from the hills of Mount Raimo in Italy, Dec. 30, 1943. The company had just cleared the town of Venafrò and was fighting to move forward and drive German soldiers out of Southern Italy when PFC. Wallaert was wounded, yet continued to provide support for his company.

Before his exceptional actions in Italy, Wallaert served in North Africa and Sicily. After being wounded in Italy he was transferred to a military hospital in Tunisia to recover and was then transferred back to the United States. He was discharged from active service on Dec. 7, 1945. PFC Wallaert married his wife Geraldine on May 1, 1948. The couple has six children.

Of the Bronze Star Award ceremony, Harper said it too would become another memory for his father-in-law. "(The ceremony) became a significant life event for my father-in-law," he said, "and I am sure it is one that will provide him many fond memories throughout his life."

**Bronze Star Recipient**



## HONOR FLIGHT AND DOOLITTLE RAIDERS REUNION MARK SPECIAL WEEK FOR WWII VETERANS

Lou Fowler, 84, a Fountain Inn native, was one of the 90 veterans on the second Honor Flight to the nation's capital, which departed Wednesday, April 15th, 2009. Part of a special week for World War II veterans in Columbia, events also included the Doolittle Raider 67th reunion on Friday, sponsored by the Celebrate Freedom Foundation.



The goal of **Honor Flights SC** is to fly every World War II veteran in the Midlands who has not seen the memorial to Washington for free. There, they will also visit Arlington National Cemetery and the Korean and Vietnam war memorials.



Above, a World War II veteran, here pictured on his way to the WWII Monument in Washington, D.C. On the right is former Senator Bob Dole

The inaugural flight in November took 91 veterans to the memorial. And while there is enough money for flights in April and May — those planes also taking 90 veterans each — funds are still needed for a fall flight. “We have 100 more applications than we have money for flights,” said Bill Dukes, the Columbia restaurateur who chairs Honor Flight S.C.

There are fewer than 3 million World War II veterans left in the United States, he said, and they are dying at a rate of 1,500 per day. “That has created a sense of urgency,” Dukes said. “These veterans are very fragile, and we need to move quickly. We have lost four applicants just recently.”

Each flight booked costs \$50,000. The cost is mitigated by the 45 “guardians” on each flight who pay \$500 for the privilege of serving as escorts and attendants.

But the vast majority of the money has come from individuals and small fundraisers. For instance, Gilbert Middle School students raised \$3,000 for this week's flight, and USC's Alpha Tau Omega raised about \$13,500 from a tennis tournament and through donations from alumni.

“It's to honor our grandparents,” said USC sophomore Michael Reiss, the fraternity's vice president. “They were the ‘Greatest Generation’ because of the sacrifices they made in World War II.”

In addition, USC baseball coach Ray Tanner offered 200 tickets for Honor Flight veterans to the May 15 game between the Gamecocks and USC Upstate. USC football coach Steve Spurrier invited veterans to last Saturday's spring football scrimmage and introduced them just before kickoff.



## HONOR FLIGHT SC

The next scheduled Honor Flight from SC is set for May 27, 2009.

