

# ODAG-VA Newsletter

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ADJUTANT GENERAL – VETERANS AFFAIRS

February 2016



## Veterans Who Accept Separation Pay Can't Receive VA Compensation

Under federal law, until Veterans pay back their involuntary separation pay, they can have their VA disability compensation withheld.

In the last five years, the VA has withheld more than \$401 million in disability compensation from 24,988 Veterans, with \$261 million scheduled to be withheld from future benefits.

The department's public affairs office provided these figures:

Separation Type	Number of Veterans	Total Recoupment Amount	Total Amount Withheld	Total Recoupment remaining
Involuntary Separation	23,440	\$575,955,239.55	\$377,486,654.22	\$198,468,585.33
Voluntary Separation	1,548	\$86,038,065.06	\$23,710,778.71	\$62,327,286.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,998</b>	<b>\$661,993,304.61</b>	<b>\$401,197,432.93</b>	<b>\$260,795,871.68</b>

### Contact ODAG-VA:

-Phone: 717-861-8910  
-Toll free: 1-800-547-2838  
-Fax: 717-861-8589

### Follow/Like/Visit the PA Dept. of Military & Veterans Affairs:

[www.dmva.pa.gov](http://www.dmva.pa.gov)  
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### Delaware Valley Veterans' Home:

[www.dvvh.pa.gov](http://www.dvvh.pa.gov)

### Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center:

[www.gmvc.pa.gov](http://www.gmvc.pa.gov)

### Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home:

[www.hvh.pa.gov](http://www.hvh.pa.gov)

### Pennsylvania Soldiers' and Sailors' Home:

[www.pssh.pa.gov](http://www.pssh.pa.gov)

### Southeastern Veterans' Center:

[www.sevc.pa.gov](http://www.sevc.pa.gov)

### Southwestern Veterans' Center:

[www.swvc.pa.gov](http://www.swvc.pa.gov)

The reason for this is due to [10 USC 1174](#), a federal law precluding duplication of benefits. The law requires that the VA recoup military separation benefits paid by the Department of Defense in cases where a Veteran is subsequently awarded VA compensation, explained Terry Jemison, another spokesperson for the VA.

VA disability benefits can be withheld if a Veteran receives readjustment pay, non-disability severance pay, separation pay, reservist involuntary separation pay, special separation benefits, voluntary separation pay, or disability severance pay.



The VA is required to withhold some or all of a Veteran's monthly compensation until this recoupment is complete. The process can take years, and for some Veterans, their benefits are still being withheld long after they've spent their separation pay.

## Southwestern Veterans' Center Receives Donation

The Southwestern Veterans' Center (SWVC) residents were pleasantly surprised by Jeremy Feldbush's unexpected generosity. Mr. Feldbush donated 179 Christmas gifts for the residents.

Mr. Feldbush is the owner of NEIE Medical Waste Services in Blairsville, PA. He is also a disabled Army Veteran who was injured and blinded while serving with the 75th Rangers Regiment in Iraq.

Jeremy has wanted to help Veterans his entire life. Through a connection with Mark Smith of the American Legion Riders, and the knowledge of his work with the SWVC Jeremy decided that the SWVC was the perfect place for him to donate.

His kindness is greatly appreciated!



## Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center Receives Donations For Residents

Take a look at all the gifts donated for the residents of Gino J. Merli Veterans' Center! Rolling Thunder Chapter 3 contributed and helped pass out the gifts on Christmas Eve. Other organizations that donated include: [Boscov's](#); North Pocono Middle School 6th graders; Milford Valley Quilters Guild; St. Nicholas Orthodox Church; GCU Lodge 945 and the St. Michael Byzantine Catholic Church; [Marywood University](#) Student Veterans; [Tobyhanna Army Depot](#); and [AT&T](#). Thank you to everyone for your support !



## Pennsylvania Veterans' Memorial Replica

Help support the Pennsylvania Veterans' Memorial by purchasing a replica, specially created by Sheila's. Each item has been individually approved and numbered for authenticity. The front of the replica features a 3-D rendering of the memorial as a 3/4 view seen from the air. The back side has an inscription quoting the memorial's purpose, as stated in the law that established the memorial, the



artist's signature, and a stamped number showing authenticity.

These replicas make fine gifts for that special Veteran in your life, or serve as a memento of your visit to the memorial. To order a replica, fill out the [order form](#) and return it with your payment to the address on the form.

One hundred percent of the purchase price goes to the PA Veterans' Memorial Fund to help maintain this elaborate structure for generations to come.

## Real Estate Tax Exemption Program

The program provides real estate tax exemption for any honorably discharged veteran who is 100% disabled, is a resident of the Commonwealth and has a financial need.

You must also have served during an established war service and have an honorable discharge.

For more information watch this [video](#).

## Amputee and Paralyzed Veterans Pension

Did you know that the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs offers \$150 per month for eligible Veterans through our Amputee and Paralyzed Veterans Pension.

For more information watch this [video](#).

## DMVA Announces Veterans' Trust Fund Grant Funding Opportunities

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) has announced the availability of up to \$550,000 in competitive grants from the Veterans' Trust Fund (VTF).

"The goal of the Veterans' Trust Fund is to build and expand partnerships with charitable organizations, veterans service organizations and county directors of veterans affairs," said Brig. Gen. Jerry G. Beck Jr., deputy adjutant general for veterans affairs. "By awarding these grants in specific areas of emphasis, we can ensure that organizations who serve our veterans will be able to continue their good work."

Grants will be considered in the following areas:

- Up to \$400,000 in competitive grants to veterans service organizations and 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations with a mission of serving Pennsylvania veterans, focusing on four areas of emphasis: homelessness, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), employment and workforce development initiatives, and other programs or services that address newly identified, unmet or emerging needs of veterans and their families.
- Up to \$150,000 in competitive grants to County Directors of Veterans Affairs or the Pennsylvania Association of County Directors of Veterans' Affairs, focusing on three areas of emphasis: veteran outreach initiatives, veterans' court initiatives, and other programs or services that address newly identified, unmet or emerging needs of veterans and their families.

Since the VTF was established in 2012, more than \$830,000 has been awarded in competitive grants.

"The source of funds in the Veterans' Trust Fund has grown significantly thanks to Pennsylvanians who have voluntarily made a \$3 donation when applying for or renewing their driver's license or photo ID and renewing a motor vehicle registration, as well as proceeds from the sale of the Honoring our Veterans license plates for cars and motorcycles," Beck added.

Grant information can be found at [www.vtf.pa.gov](http://www.vtf.pa.gov). Grant applications must be received at DMVA by 4 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on Friday, Feb. 5, 2016. Late submissions will be administratively rejected without review.

DMVA is authorized to solicit and accept donations to the VTF on behalf of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Tax-deductible donations to the VTF can be made to: PA Veterans' Trust Fund, Bldg. 0-47 Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville, PA 17003.

## Raytheon Offers Scholarship To Veterans

Raytheon is committed to encouraging today's Veterans through continued education. They are supporting a generation of professionals who understand the importance of leadership, discipline and perseverance and also working to inspire their children to become tomorrow's drivers of technology and innovation.

Raytheon has partnered with Student Veterans to reach their career goals.

Student Veterans pursuing undergraduate or graduate degrees in engineering related fields are invited to apply for the Raytheon-SVA Scholarship. Qualifying applicants who have demonstrated leadership in their local communities and are pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree in Engineering or Cyber/Network Security are invited to apply.

Five \$10,000 scholarships will be awarded, with applications being accepted through April 4, 2016 at <http://studentveterans.org>

## Defense Department Announces Results of Military Decorations and Awards Review

The Department of Defense announced the results of its year-long review of the military decorations and awards program to ensure continued appropriate recognition of the service, sacrifices, and actions of its service members while maintaining the historical legacy of the awards program.

The department's review focused on combat and valor recognition utilizing lessons learned over 14 years of combat operations. Among the key changes was:

- Implementation of new goals and processes to improve timeliness of the Medal of Honor and other valor awards;
- Standardization of the meaning and use of the "V" device as a valor-only device to ensure unambiguous and distinctive recognition for preeminent acts of combat valor;

- Creation of a new combat device (e.g., "C" device) to distinctly recognize those service members performing meritoriously under the most arduous combat conditions;
- Adoption of a common definition of Meritorious Service Under Combat Conditions to determine eligibility for personal combat awards; and
- Introduction of an "R" remote impacts device to recognize service members who use remote technology to directly impact combat operations.

The complete list of changes to the military decorations and awards program can be found at:

<http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/Military-Decorations-and-Awards-Review-Results.pdf>. These changes will be implemented over the next 12 months.

## Governor Wolf Announces Extension of Persian Gulf Conflict Veterans Benefit

Governor Tom Wolf announced that the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) is once again accepting applications for the Persian Gulf Conflict Veterans Benefit Program thanks to an amendment to legislation that extends the application deadline to Aug. 31, 2018.

"Since April 2008, we have compensated more than 11,500 veterans for their service and sacrifice in the Persian Gulf Conflict," Governor Wolf said. "Our hope is to reach all of those veterans eligible for this program and ensure they receive all benefits entitled to them."

The bonus pays \$75 per month for qualifying, active-duty service members, up to a \$525 maximum. For personnel whose death was related to illness or injury received in the line of duty in Operations Desert Shield or Desert Storm, there is an additional \$5,000 available to the surviving family. Service members who were declared prisoners of war may also be eligible for an additional \$5,000.

In each case, the service member must have:

- Served with the U.S. Armed Forces, a reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces or the Pennsylvania National Guard.
- Served on active duty in the Persian Gulf Theater of Operations during the period from August 2, 1990 until August 31, 1991, and received the Southwest Asia Service Medal.
- Been a legal resident of Pennsylvania at the time of active duty service.
- Been discharged from active duty under honorable conditions, if not currently on active duty.
- Received the Southwest Asia Service Medal.

Individuals who received a bonus or similar compensation from any other state are not eligible for the Pennsylvania program. The deadline for applying for benefits under the program extension is Aug. 31, 2018.

For detailed instructions on how to apply, visit [www.persiangulfbonus.pa.gov](http://www.persiangulfbonus.pa.gov).

# Chester County Housing Project For At-Risk Veterans Breaks Ground

A housing project for at-risk veterans, the first of its kind in Chester County, broke ground recently.

The 48 apartments will be located on 3795 Schuylkill Road, with a renovation of the historic Whitehall Inn.

At least 50 veterans will be [housed](#) in the new structure.

Mission First Housing Group will construct a new addition that will create permanent housing, along with the addition.

The building will also include a community room and fitness facilities, as well as a computer room. The Whitehall will have a live-in property superintendent and on-site supportive services to link veterans to community-based supports.

Mission First is developing The Whitehall in response to a local need to provide permanent supportive housing for at-risk veterans and a national effort to end veterans homelessness.

Planning for the Whitehall began in the summer of 2012 when Mission First met with representatives of the Coatesville VA Medical Center (CVAMC) to discuss the



development of veterans housing in Chester County.

CVAMC indicated that many veterans prefer to live in the company of other veterans who have shared similar life experiences.

The funding for The Whitehall comes from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, Riverside Capital Equity Partners, Citizens Bank and The Home Depot Foundation.

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U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

## 1 CONVERSATION

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## Lucinda Blevins gets Legion of Honor

Lucinda Blevins, an employee of the Franklin County Department of Veterans Affairs, has been recognized for her service to local veterans.

County commissioner Robert Thomas on Tuesday presented the Legion of Honor to Blevins on behalf of the Chapel of the Four Chaplains.

The award recognizes people giving unconditionally to the community, nation and humanity without regard to race, religion, or creed as exemplified by the Four Chaplains. The chapel is named in honor of four Army chaplains - a Jew, a Catholic and two Protestants -- who comforted soldiers aboard the torpedoed S.S. Dorchester on Feb. 3, 1943, near Greenland and who forced their own lifejackets on soldiers who had none.

Blevins has worked in the county veterans department for 22 years.

Only recently did the county add a



third person to the department. Blevins served as interim director for the department between directors Bob Harris and Justin Slep. In recent years the department has secured more than \$2 million in benefits annually for veterans.

The Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs regularly recognizes Franklin County for its efforts.

Thomas and Harris are previous Legion of Honor recipients

## Butler County To Host 1,000 Veteran March

Butler County Veterans Services Office will be hosting a 1,000 Veteran March at 6:30 p.m., on June 14, 2016, to benefit the Butler County Veterans in Need Fund.

Cost of the event is \$10 which includes a T-Shirt and gift bag.

All Veterans must register by May 1, 2016, at the Butler County Veterans Services Office or by calling 724-284-5352

## County Director 2016 Annual Training Dates Have Been Set

Mark your calendars now! The 2016 annual training for County Directors of Veteran' Affairs and their staff will take place the week of September 13-16, 2016 at the Park Inn by Radisson, Harrisburg West, located in Mechanicsburg, PA.

Registration instructions will be announced in May.