



Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

April 2011



Major General Deborah Ashenurst, the first female Adjutant General in Ohio history, delivers the keynote address at a recent Women's History Month celebration sponsored by the Ohio Department of Veterans Services.



Questions about veterans benefits?

Call 1-877-OHIOVET
(1-877-644-6838)

Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services e-newsletter! We intend it to be a key source of information about issues of interest to our community of veterans in Ohio.

We thank you for your service to our country. Because you're a veteran, you've earned a number of benefits that you may not be aware of. Most of these benefits originate at the federal level with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Based on the time you served, you may be eligible for compensation for injuries, health care, educational assistance, home loans or many other benefits. There are also a number of state benefits available to Ohio veterans, to include the Ohio Veterans Bonus as well as direct financial assistance from the county to veterans in need.

The place to find out what you've earned and to apply is your county veterans service office. You can locate yours in the interactive map on our department home page <http://dvs.ohio.gov> or by calling 1-877-OHIO-VET (1-877-644-6838).

We will continue to provide you this newsletter each month. We hope it's of value to you and your family.

Ohio Veterans Bonus...

Are you an Ohio resident who served honorably in the military during the period Aug. 2, 1990 through March 3, 1991, or since Oct. 7, 2001? If the answer is yes, you may be eligible to receive the Ohio Veterans Bonus.

The bonus continues a tradition of bonuses to Ohio veterans that dates back to the Civil War. The payment is \$100 a month to veterans who served during the eligible periods in the Persian Gulf theater, or in the Iraq or Afghanistan theaters, up to a maximum of \$1,000. For veterans who served in other parts of the world during these times, the payment is \$50 a month up to a \$500 maximum. Veterans who were medically discharged as a result of combat service can receive \$1,000, regardless of how much time they spent in theater, plus up to \$500 for months of service elsewhere. Family members of those killed in action or who died from disease as a result of their in-theater service can receive a bonus of \$5,000 plus whatever the service member was eligible for, up to a total of \$6,500.

So far, the program has paid over \$25 million to more than 30,000 Ohio veterans and families.



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Application instructions and a list of the documentation required is at: <https://veteransbonus.ohio.gov/>. For more information, call 1-877-OHIO-VET (1-877-644-6838) or visit your county veterans service office.

Stop –Loss Compensation Application Period Extended...

Service members and veterans who experienced an involuntary extension of their military service contract – commonly known as “stop-loss” – now have until April 8 to apply for special retroactive pay as compensation for that extension, the Department of Defense announced March 21.

President Obama signed a continuing resolution March 18 that included continued funding the program through April 8.

This special pay was created to compensate service members for hardships encountered due to involuntary service extensions between Sept. 11, 2001 and Sept. 30, 2009. Eligible persons, or their beneficiaries, may submit a claim to their respective military services to receive the benefit of \$500 for each full or partial month served in a stop-loss status.

To apply for stop-loss pay or for more information, including requirements for the application and links to different military services, go to: <http://www.defense.gov/stoploss>.

Purple Heart Criteria Revised...

The U.S. Army is revising the criteria for award of the Purple Heart in cases of concussions, a change which could open the award of the medal to many more veterans of the current conflicts. The exact criteria are not yet published, nor are the application procedures. The Department of Veterans Services will notify the Ohio veterans community as soon as more information is available.

Health Care for Veterans in Post-Incarceration Status...

The VA is extending health care to eligible veterans in halfway houses and other temporary, post-incarceration housing under a new program that's aimed at cutting back on repeat offenses.

A long-standing rule had barred VA from providing health care to veterans when another government agency had an obligation to provide it, and this included inmates of prisons and jails.

The rule is now changed to allow the VA to provide health care to those veterans who are in halfway houses and other temporary, post-incarceration housing. A study done in 2008 by the Urban Institute found that good health care during the first months of community reentry played a key role in easing the adjustment and reducing repeat offenses.



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About 29,000-56,000 veterans are released annually from state and federal prisons, and at least 90,000 veterans are released each year from city and county jails, according to the Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Looking for Work...

The men and women who have served in the military have unique abilities and skill sets that are often of great value to employers, but it can be tough to make the connections needed for an effective transition to the civilian job market. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services offers specific assistance to veterans, including the top career fields in Ohio and the top veteran-friendly employers. Information and assistance is available at:

<http://my.ohiomeansjobs.monster.com/VetCenter/Home.aspx>.

Veteran's Resource and Information Fair...

Veterans and active military in southwest Ohio are invited to a Resource and Information Fair scheduled for Thursday, April 21, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Building 305 Multi-Purpose Room on the Dayton Veterans Medical Center campus. The event, sponsored by the AMVETS Career Centers, offers veterans the opportunity to discover the resources and services available to veterans that may create barriers to employment. Those with questions about the fair can call (937) 253-7042, extension 1454.

Women Who Have Served...

Over 60,000 Ohio women have made the selfless sacrifices necessary in military service to protect and defend this nation. The Ohio Department of Veterans Services is committed to locating, connecting and advocating for this group of veterans. Many women, just like their male counterparts, are unaware of the benefits that they've earned. In recognition of the contributions of women in uniform, the department is joining with the VA and the VA Healthcare System of Ohio Network to host the fourth statewide Women Veterans Conference on October 8, 2011 in Columbus. If you are interested in volunteering to help in outreach efforts for women veterans please call (614) 752-8941. For more information about women veterans in Ohio, go to: http://dvs.ohio.gov/committees/women_veterans_advisory_committee.aspx.



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Agent Orange Exposure Period Extended for Korea...

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has recognized for several years now that veterans who were exposed to the herbicide Agent Orange in Vietnam and other locations could be eligible for benefits from contracting certain diseases. The VA recently extended the period of service in Korea that qualifies for benefits. Veterans who served between April 1, 1968 and Aug. 31, 1971 in a unit that the VA and the Department of Defense determine operated in or near the DMZ in Korea are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange. Previously, the presumed exposure for Korea was extended only to veterans who served in such units between April 1968 and July 1969.

What this means is that eligible veterans who have certain illnesses that the VA presumes are due to Agent Orange exposure do not have to prove a service connection to their illness. This in turn speeds up the application process for benefits.

The VA has determined that diseases such as B-cell leukemia, diabetes type 2, hodgkin's disease, and ischemic heart disease are associated with Agent Orange exposure. Eligible veterans could receive compensation and health care benefits, and the survivors of deceased veterans may qualify for survivor's benefits.

For more information on Agent Orange and VA benefits, go to:

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/>.

Scam Alert...

The Ohio Adjutant General has issued a warning to all veterans and those currently serving in the military about a scam in which an organization that claims to be working with the VA is attempting to gather personal information.

The organization calls itself Veterans Affairs Services (VAS) and provides benefit and general information on the VA on its web site – but then also gathers personal information on the veterans who visit it.

The VAS is not affiliated with the VA in any way, and veterans, service members and their families are warned against providing any personal information to the organization. One tipoff is the web site name itself, www.vaservices.org. The real VA web site is www.va.gov/; note that the "VA services" are not found in the web address, and it ends in "gov." Other sites may have similar-appearing names, but they are not the official government site. If approached or called by VAS or a similar organization, the VA advises to not offer them any personal information concerning yourself or other veterans, and to hang up the phone. The VA does not randomly call veterans, and it doesn't ask veterans for information that it already has; it also does not conduct official business or not ask for personal information via e-mail.

The National Guard Bureau has also requested the Department of Defense to inform all military installations of this impostor organization.



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Caregivers...

The VA is increasing its support to caregivers with a new, toll-free telephone line for the caregivers of veterans of all eras. The number for the National Caregiver Support Line is 1-855-260-3274.

Launched Feb. 1, the VA says this number is the primary resource and referral center to assist caregivers, veterans and others who are seeking caregiver information.

The support line provides information about new caregiver benefits, referrals to local caregiver support coordinators, and emotional support to those concerned with their ability to provide care to their loved ones who are veterans.

The line is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m., Eastern time, and Saturday from 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., Eastern time. Licensed VA social workers and health technicians staff the support line.

The VA also features a web page, <http://www.caregiver.va.gov>, that has general information about other caregiver support programs available through VA and the community.

Tax Time is Here...

Once again, the time to file annual tax returns is upon us. This year's federal and state deadline is April 18. But if you are currently serving in any military component, or are in a retired military status, Ohio has some very important tax benefits.

The military income of state residents who are active military but stationed outside Ohio is not taxable for either state income or school district income tax. National Guard and Reserve members who perform duty of 30 days or more outside Ohio are also exempt from state income and school district income tax on their military income for that period. Military retirees and their survivors are also not taxed on their pensions by the state or school districts, and federal civil service retirees are exempt on the amount of their pension that is attributable to military service.

Additionally, anyone who received an Ohio Veterans Bonus for service during the period of the Persian Gulf War or since Oct. 7, 2001 is exempt from both federal and state taxes.

The Ohio Department of Taxation has additional information and answers to common questions at: http://tax.ohio.gov/divisions/ohio_individual/individual/military_tax_provisions.stm.