

Bugle Blasts

June 2021
Volume 12 Number 12



Vienna VA 22181

Cell: 703-861-0726 Email: bugleblasts@gmail.com

This Newsletter is dedicated to serving and former members of the Armed Forces of the United States and to their families and friends.

Do what's right, no matter what the cost. It always costs. Do what's right anyway.

Editor/Publisher/s Notes – Mike Berger

If you know others who may enjoy the BB please forward it to them. If you wish to be removed from the distribution list

please advise by email, and **please let me know if your email address changes – email “bounces” are deleted.**

Military Times launches new online obituary platform – source Military Times

Military Times has launched a new platform for creating and publishing obituaries for veterans and to memorialize their individual stories for family, friends and future generations. The Military Times obituary pages will offer a unique opportunity to share a veteran's story across the military community and ensure it reaches many of the current and former members of the units that veterans have served with.

Publishing an online obit is a service that Military Times will offer free of charge. Friends and families will also have the option of paying additional fees to include the obituary in either their print magazines or on social media, where it can be targeted to the specific parts of the military community, either to a particular city and geographical region or to the military service

or professional community in which the veteran was an active member while in uniform.

All of the obituaries will also be compiled in a searchable database on the websites. The new veteran obituary section will be affiliated with the Military Times Hall of Valor, which is the single largest database of military honors and awards in the world. The new veteran obituary section will become part of the Military Times Military Honor channel. Sections currently part of the Military Honor area include: Salute to Veterans, Military Appreciation Month, Service Members of the Year, Honor the Fallen, and Hall of Valor special content topics.

To submit obituaries go to obits.militarytimes.com.

VA Is Now Offering Walk-In Vaccinations Nationwide – source Military.com

All VA facilities that administer coronavirus vaccines are accepting walk-ins for all veterans, spouses and caregivers, regardless of whether they otherwise qualify for VA care, the agency announced. "VA encourages those who wish to get their COVID-19 vaccine without an appointment to check the walk-in hours and requirements at their local facility," Acting VA Under Secretary for Health Richard Stone said in a statement. However, there may be wait times associated with walk-ins. "Individuals taking advantage of walk-in vaccinations may need to wait for the vaccine to be prepared and will be screened when entering the facility," Stone added.

VA has played a key role in the national effort to vaccinate as many Americans as possible ahead of President Joe

Biden's target goal of the country returning to relative normalcy by the 4th of July. The department had fully vaccinated 2,724,782 people, including 2.4 million veterans, as of early May. There are about 9 million veterans enrolled in VA care, but there are 18 million total U.S. veterans, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Biden signed into law the Save Lives Act in late March, expanding the VA's legal authority to vaccinate all veterans, their spouses, caregivers and some beneficiaries regardless of their VA enrollment status. The department credits the new law with 60,000 additional people getting vaccinated. VA says masks are mandatory at its facilities, and those seeking vaccines should check their local clinics for their hours of operation.

Calendar and Upcoming Events

June 2021

Great Outdoors and Accordion Month

- 1 – Dare Day
- 6 – D-Day WW2
- 9 – Donald Duck Day
- 14 – Army Birthday and Flag Day
- 18 – Go Fishing Day
- 20 – Father's and Ice Cream Soda Day
- 22 – Chocolate Éclair Day
- 28 – Paul Bunyan Day



July 2021

Hotdog, Ice Cream & Watermelon Month

- 1 – Canada Day
- 4 – Independence Day
- 7 – Father-daughter take a walk Day
- 10 – Teddy Bear Picnic Day
- 13 – Fool's Paradise Day
- 17 – World Emoji Day
- 24 – Tell an old joke Day
- 30 – Father-in-law Day

Money-Saving Challenges to Try – source money.usnews.com

If you find saving money a challenge, maybe the problem is that you're not actually challenging yourself. Maybe you should take on a money-saving challenge – a sort of game to inspire you to save money. If you don't save money, it may not be for a lack of money. It may be that you simply haven't trained yourself to get into the habit of saving. So, if you're looking to save, consider these money-saving challenges:

52-Week Savings Challenge Simply decide you're going to save \$1 a week or \$2 or \$5. Something manageable is the key, and preferably something meaningful. If you save \$5 a week, you'd have \$260 at the end of the year, but you probably won't feel that much satisfaction. However, if you manage to save \$100 a week, you'd have \$5,200, which could pay for a vacation or holiday gifts or serve as an emergency fund. Or be creative and save \$1 the first week, \$2 the second, \$3 the third and so forth, and you'll have \$1,378 by the end of the year.

"No Spend" Challenge Pick a weekend or a week and you spend no money except for paying bills. The idea is to save some money by not spending.

Pantry Challenge This is a contest in which you declare you won't buy any food until you've exhausted all the possibilities from your refrigerator and pantry. As long as the food is not expired, this is your chance to consume what you've already bought and save money for a few days or weeks.

The 'Keep All the Change' Challenge Any time you receive change or find loose change in your house, put it in a jar. Do this for a year, and see how much you have at the end.

Holiday Gift Challenge Open a holiday interest-bearing savings account at your bank or credit union for any weekly amount, and when December arrives, you have money for the holidays.

National Desert Storm War Memorial approved concept unveiled – source ndswm.org and Military Times

The National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial is a new national monument to be built at the National Mall in Washington D.C. The goal is to break ground on the Memorial in 2021, the 30th Anniversary of Operation Desert Storm. The National Desert Storm and Desert Shield War Memorial Act - Authorizes the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association to establish a commemorative work on federal land in the District of Columbia to commemorate and honor those who, as members of the Armed Forces, served on active duty in support of Operation Desert Storm or Operation Desert Shield.

Construction of the Memorial is led by the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association, a 501(c)3 organization in Washington, D.C. The association is led by a Board of Directors comprised of veterans who served during Operation Desert Storm.

Did you know?

Although dandelions are vilified by the "lawn care" industry as weeds, they are the first food in the Spring of our disappearing bees and a mainstay of bouquets picked by children for their mothers. Dandelions also are an important source of

365-Day Nickel-Saving Challenge On the first day put a nickel in a jar. The next day put 10 cents into the jar. The third day, 15 cents, and so forth. On day 365 you'll deposit \$18.40 into the jar and you'll have saved \$3,339.75.

'No Eating Out for a Month' Challenge In 2019, Bureau of Labor Statistics found the average household spent \$3,526 on dining out. Using that logic, if you don't eat out in any given month, you might save \$293. This could be the easiest challenge – or the hardest, if you order a lot of takeout.

Weather Wednesday Money Challenge Every Wednesday put money in your savings place tied to the highest temperature in your town. If in August it is 110 degrees you put in \$110. In the dead of winter and its only 17 degrees, you save \$17. If it's -3 you could take out three bucks or put nothing in. All things considered you'll save quite a bit over a year.

'Trim 1% of Your Salary' Challenge Do the math and figure out what 1% of your take home income is and save that amount. 1% is manageable, so it's not so painful that you're miserable. If you can only cut half a percent you're still better off.

'Kick a Bad Habit' Money Challenge Do you smoke? Drink a lot of soda? Go out for coffee every day? There are degrees of bad habits of course. Going out for a coffee every day isn't anywhere in the neighborhood of smoking, but still, you may consume excess calories in your daily coffee drink if it contains sugary syrup and whipped cream.

Whatever the habit you wish you could drop, this could be a good time to tell yourself you're going to finally end a pattern of behavior – and save money at the same time by not buying coffee or cigarettes. But arguably if you kick your habit at the end of the month, you should do something fun with the cash you saved to reward yourself for all of your hard work. Just as long as the reward isn't, you know, a blended coffee drink or pack of cigarettes.

The design - a stone, sand-colored sweeping left hook around an elevated pool of water - symbolizes the left hook that U.S.-led coalition forces, coming out of Saudi Arabia, used to sweep into southern Iraq and Kuwait, outflanking Iraqi troops. The concept was approved by the Commission of Fine Arts and unveiled at a ceremony in Fredericksburg, Texas, at the site of one the partners of the Association. Some details may change, but the basic structure and overall look of the memorial will fit into the concept that's been approved by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

The final design will include "detailing quotes, fonts, images, bronze sculptures and carvings," according to a statement provided by the Association.

food for some birds...finches, for example, disappear from feeders when dandelions go to seed. Dandelions are a sign of a safe, nontoxic lawn for your family, wildlife, and pets.

Health Alert: COVID Scam Warning – source HHS OIG

Scammers are using telemarketing calls, text messages, social media platforms, and door-to-door visits to perpetrate COVID-19-related scams. Fraudsters are offering COVID-19 tests, HHS grants, and Medicare prescription cards in exchange for personal details, including Medicare information.

However, these services are unapproved and illegitimate.

These scammers use the coronavirus pandemic to benefit themselves, and beneficiaries face potential harm. The personal information collected can be used to fraudulently bill federal health care programs and commit medical identity theft.

Protect Yourself

- Be cautious of COVID-19 survey scams. Do not give your personal, medical, or financial information to anyone claiming to offer money or gifts in exchange for your participation in a COVID-19 vaccine survey.
- Be mindful of how you dispose of COVID-19 materials such as syringes, vials, vial container boxes, vaccination record cards, and shipment or tracking records. Improper disposal of these items could be used by bad actors to commit fraud.
- Offers to purchase COVID-19 vaccination cards are scams. Valid proof of COVID-19 vaccination can only be provided to individuals by legitimate providers administering vaccines.
- Photos of COVID-19 vaccination cards should not be shared on social media. Posting content that includes your

date of birth, health care details or other personally identifiable information can be used to steal your identity.

- Be vigilant and protect yourself from potential fraud concerning COVID-19 vaccines. You will not be asked for money to enhance your ranking for vaccine eligibility. Government and state officials will not call you to obtain personal information in order to receive the vaccine.
- Beneficiaries should be cautious of unsolicited requests for their personal, medical, and financial information. Medicare will not call beneficiaries to offer COVID-19 related products, services, or benefit review.
- Be suspicious of any unexpected calls or visitors offering COVID-19 tests or supplies. If you receive a suspicious call, hang up immediately.
- Do not respond to, or open hyperlinks in, text messages about COVID-19 from unknown individuals.
- Ignore offers or advertisements for COVID-19 testing or treatments on social media sites. If you make an appointment for a COVID-19 test online, make sure the location is an official testing site.
- Do not give your personal or financial information to anyone claiming to offer HHS grants related to COVID-19.
- Be aware of scammers pretending to be COVID-19 contact tracers. Legitimate contact tracers will never ask for your Medicare number, financial information, or attempt to set up a COVID-19 test for you and collect payment information for the test.
- If you suspect COVID-19 health care fraud, report it immediately online or call 800-HHS-TIPS (800-447-8477).

DoD Fraud, Waste, & Abuse – Source Stars and Stripes

KABUL, Afghanistan - Six former employees of a U.S. government contractor have been charged with fraudulently recruiting unqualified linguists to work alongside U.S. troops in Afghanistan, putting American forces at greater risk while lining their own pockets, U.S. officials said. The former recruiters - identified as **Mezghan Anwari, Abdul Latifi, Mahjoba Raofi, Laila Anwari, Rafi Anwari and Zarghona Alizai** - are accused of endangering American troops and military operations in Afghanistan, the Justice Department said. The group knowingly recruited linguists who lacked even minimum language proficiency in Dari or Pashto, two of the main languages spoken in Afghanistan, fraudulently making it seem that they were competent so that they would be hired.

The grand jury indictment, which was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, “alleges serious crimes that threatened to put American troops at greater risk in a combat zone,” Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John Sopko said. The accused, who sometimes arranged for more qualified linguists to stand in during oral proficiency tests for the unskilled can-

didates they had recruited — and sometimes stepped in themselves to impersonate the recruits — were paid bonuses worth several thousand dollars depending on how far their candidates got in the recruitment process, the statement said. They have been charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and between two and six counts of fraud each and face up to 20 years in prison for each count. They were due to appear in court in May.



“The defendants in this case allegedly engaged in an expansive conspiracy to enrich themselves at the expense of American soldiers and military operations in Afghanistan,” Acting Assistant Attorney General Nicholas L. McQuaid, of the Justice Department’s Criminal Division, said in the statement. “We are committed to holding accountable those who undermine the integrity of the procurement process and potentially jeopardize the United States’ mission overseas.” The recruiters worked a decade ago for an Arlington, Va. based contractor that had a contract worth more than \$700 million to provide military operations support services, the indictment said. The indictment didn’t specify if the unqualified linguists were ever sent to Afghanistan.

More National Guard Members Now Can Get a VA Home Loan. Here's How – source Military.com

With no down payment required, flexible credit guidelines and limits on closing costs and fees, the VA home loan is a popular financing option for veterans and active-duty service members, including National Guard members.

But in the past, Guard troops were only [eligible for the VA loan](#) after six years of honorable service, following 90 consecutive days of service or after being discharged from active duty for a service-related disability.

New legislation signed into law in January expands eligibility for Guard members and cuts the required days of service. That means tens of thousands more Guard members, including many who performed COVID-19 emergency-related duties, will qualify for the VA-backed mortgages, according to John Goheen, director of communications for the National Guard Association of the United States. “It was clear that there was a gap between the benefits we provide active personnel and the benefits we provide Guard personnel,” Goheen said. “Congress recognized this gap and has been trying to fix it.”

In addition to the COVID-19 response, the new law makes it possible to qualify for VA loans based on other missions on U.S. soil, he said. To qualify, the Title 32 duty must have been performed under Section 316, 502, 503, 504 or 505, and the Guard member also must have completed a minimum of 90 service days, including 30 in a row. “We have not been deploying as many people overseas at the same rate we were a few years ago,” Goheen said. “Consequently, many Guard soldiers have not been able to qualify for a VA loan. Clearly, this new law is a reward for those who have responded to COVID-19 missions as well as the civil unrest of last summer and the mission at the Capitol in January.”

The new law is retroactive, meaning Guard members who served years ago but meet the new criteria may now be able to tap into the VA loan benefit, said Chris Birk, vice president at Columbia, Missouri-based Veterans United Home Loans. “For decades, there wasn’t any kind of early access to the benefit for Guard members mobilized under Title 32 orders, which are common during large disasters and other state-level emergencies,” Birk said. “Now, tens of thousands

Military Tradition

The new post commander was making his first inspection and came upon two soldiers guarding a bench. He asked why they were guarding it. The senior soldier replied, “We don’t know sir. The last commander told us to do so, and so we do. We believe it is some sort of regimental tradition.”

The new commander called his immediate predecessor and asked him why he wanted guards on that particular bench. “I don’t know,” he said, “the previous commander had guards on it and I kept up the tradition.”

of Guard members helping on the front lines of the pandemic will likely gain VA loan eligibility much sooner.” Ryan Leahy, inside sales manager at Mortgage Network in Danvers, Massachusetts, said a VA loan is among the sweetest perks offered to vets and active-duty military. “A lender typically requires 20% down to avoid mortgage insurance, but that’s not the case with the VA loan, which is truly a no-money-down mortgage,” Leahy said.

By contrast, FHA loans and conventional loans require at least 3.5% to 5% down, and borrowers of both loans typically have to pay for mortgage insurance. For a conventional loan, meaning a mortgage that’s eligible to be backed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, a buyer typically needs to put down 20% to escape paying for mortgage insurance. VA loans tend to be more forgiving with the approval process, the interest rates are competitive and the VA limits what closing costs can be charged on a VA loan, making it much more affordable, Leahy said. One disadvantage to a VA loan is that the government assesses a one-time funding fee that equals 0.5% to 3.6% of the borrowed amount, a fee that usually is financed back into the loan amount. “Another con is that, in a competitive purchase market like we have right now, it may be tougher to get an offer accepted with a VA mortgage,” said Leahy.

Per Birk, of Veterans United, more than 1,200 lenders – including banks, mortgage companies and credit unions -- made at least one VA loan last year, but only a relative handful of lenders specialize in these loans. He recommends shopping around carefully and choosing a lender experienced in VA loans. Additionally, remember that a VA loan isn’t your only option. “Given current interest rates, I would suggest that any borrower, National Guard members included, do their homework and look for the best mortgage financing offer available,” said Anne Anderson, a professor of finance at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro. “Many banks and lenders offer VA loans, but they may actually have other loan packages that provide comparable benefits to borrowers.”

The new commander tracked down several more past commanders, all of whom gave basically the same reason for the guards.

Finally he located an elderly retired General who had commanded the post thirty years prior, and asked him if he would please tell him more about the bench and the guards. “What?,” exclaimed the General, “Are you telling me that paint still isn’t dry?”

Republicans demand briefing on veterans' records backlog – source rollcall.com

A group of House Republicans have demanded a briefing from National Archives chief David Ferriero on how he intends to eliminate a backlog born out of the coronavirus pandemic that could force some veterans to wait up to two years for certain benefits. The NPRC, where many of these paper records are stored, shut down in March 2020. The building has sat empty, with employees working remotely.

Meanwhile, records requests, most of which require someone to physically search for documents, piled up. The backlog has grown to more than 499,000 requests, a spokesperson for the National Archives told Roll Call, and will take 18 to 24 months to clear once the center is staffed at full capacity. In May, Republicans on the House Oversight and Reform Committee and the Veterans' Affairs Committee took issue with the NPRC's "lack of planning" that led to the backlog, the lack of a plan to get employees back into the office and the confusion surrounding the center's use of \$15 million in emergency appropriations from Congress in December 2020.

The records are key to unlocking veterans' benefits. "Our military men and women and their families deserve far better than these delays. NPRC must clean up its act, address the backlog immediately, and give these families and Congress

an explanation and timeline for fixing it," Oversight panel ranking member James R. Comer, R-Ky., said.

Rep. Mike Bost of Illinois, agreed. "Veterans need answers," Bost said in an email. "The NPRC serves a vital function. Congress has provided the resources the NPRC needs to safely resume normal operations. It is unacceptable that we continue to receive mixed messages about when veterans will have timely access to their records. I hope Archivist Ferriero will fix this as soon as possible."

This is not the first time that Congress has raised questions in an issue that is gaining traction on both sides of the aisle. In an April letter to President Joe Biden, Reps. Warren Davidson, R-Ohio, Deborah K. Ross, D-N.C., and Bost, along with 182 other lawmakers, requested a high-level intervention by the administration to address the backlog. At the time, a spokesperson for the National Archives said the \$15 million was being used to modernize the center's operations. That includes digitizing documents and standing up a new call center that can be staffed remotely.

But lawmakers feel that the responses from the National Archives were inadequate. Now, House Republicans are asking for a briefing from Ferriero, and an explanation for how he intends to address the growing backlog.

VA Will Reexamine Agent Orange Claims It Previously Denied – source Military.com

VA will reexamine compensation claims from veterans exposed to Agent Orange while serving in the waters off Vietnam during the Vietnam War. All claims that were previously denied will be automatically reviewed to determine whether affected veterans are now eligible to receive compensation benefits as a result of their exposure to the herbicide.

In November 2020, a district court ordered VA to review any previously denied compensation claims related to Agent Orange exposure for so-called "Blue Water veterans," who served aboard ships in the territorial waters of Vietnam. Originally, these veterans were denied benefits, while those who served on inland and coastal waters, along with those serving on land in Vietnam and some other nations, were eligible for benefits. However, numerous court rulings and changes to the law finally made Blue Water veterans eligible

for compensation benefits for illnesses caused by exposure to the herbicide. Children of veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange may also suffer health issues, and may be eligible for VA benefits.

Originally, VA said Blue Water veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and whose claims were denied due to their service not being in a qualifying location would have to file a new claim. However, in an about-face, the department has now said veterans do not need to file a new claim.

All Agent Orange compensation claims that were originally disallowed because the veteran's service was not in a qualifying location will be automatically reviewed by VA to determine eligibility based on the new law. VA has said that approximately 62,000 veterans or survivors may be eligible for the expanded benefit.

VA Lung Cancer Care - Early Screening Saves Lives | New SBRT Treatment - source Vantage Point

The VA Partnership to increase Access to Lung Screening, or VA-PALS, saves lives by catching lung cancer early when it was still treatable. The study, the VA Lung Cancer Surgery Or Stereotactic Radiotherapy (VALOR) clinical trial, compares two treatments for lung cancer – surgery vs. targeted radiation. Investigators hope to find out which treatment results in a better five-year survival rate for stage 1 non-small cell lung cancer. Study locations include VA medical centers: Long Beach; Bay Pines, Atlanta, Hines, Indianapolis, Minneapolis, Durham, Pittsburgh, Houston, Texas; and Richmond. Investigators aim to enroll 670 participants.

Historically, surgery has been the standard for treatment; however, surgery can be physically taxing, especially for those who are elderly. Given that the average age of diagno-

sis for lung cancer is about 70, age can be a significant factor in patient survival. A newer FDA-approved treatment - stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT) delivers high-dose X-rays to cancer cells. In frail or elderly patients, the therapy is easier to tolerate than surgery. Both surgery and SBRT can cure stage 1 non-small cell lung cancer. But no large studies have compared the effectiveness of these two therapies in patients who are healthy enough to get surgery. VA researchers aim to collect data that will help physicians choose the most effective treatment for each patient.

Tricare/CHAMPUS Fraud - source DOJ

San Diego, CA - Joserodel Zavala Candelario was sentenced to 36 months in prison for participation in two health care fraud schemes, and for concealing income received from those multi-million dollar schemes. Candelario was a licensed chiropractor and owner of Candelario Chiropractic and R.I.S.E. Wellness Center which operated at multiple locations in the Southern California. In January, he defendant pleaded guilty to three-counts charging Conspiracy, Conspiracy to Commit Health Care Fraud, and False Statement on Tax Return. Between 2012 and July 2016, Candelario carried out a scheme to defraud Medicare and TRICARE out of millions of dollars using physical therapy codes to bill for supposed therapy services performed on patients by non-licensed individuals. As a result, patients receiving substandard care, all so Candelario could bill Medicare and TRICARE.

Candelario and his co-conspirators told patients that RISE Wellness offered an “integrated” approach to wellness, to convince patients to accept physical therapy, acupuncture, chiropractic, and diagnostic services. So he could fraudulently bill for non-covered services and collect as much money as possible from the benefit programs. Candelario specifically targeted TRICARE beneficiaries as patients, despite knowing TRICARE did not cover many of the services rendered.

Once patients came in, the defendant pushed staff to conduct diagnostic tests on every patient, regardless of medical necessity, to increase billing and payment, and demanded staff meet quotas for the minimum number of diagnostic tests, and recommendations for durable medical equipment, massages and other services, regardless of whether patients needed the items and services. He imposed quotas for the minimum number of patients with specific types of insurance coverage, e.g., “60 Tricare patients per day,” regardless of whether those patients needed treatments.

For example, on June 2014, Candelario instructed a staff member, “I need you to do 5 axonii [diagnostic tests] a day no matter what from now on.” The following month he texted, “OK team you are receiving 2 new diagnostic testing devices this month. I need 20 patients to be tested on each one this month no matter What [sic].” Then, knowing TRICARE and Medicare did not pay for chiropractic, acupuncture, massages, and other services, mischaracterized those services as physical therapy in bills submitted to TRICARE and Medicare. To increase billing and payment, the defendant pushed the schedulers to cram in as many as 50 patients per day for each provider. He complained when staff fell short of this goal, noting, on June 11, 2015, certain “front desk issues” including: “No [one] has called any pa-

tients to fill empty slots in provider schedules or grab patients in lobbies to put into provider schedules.”

Candelario fired or marginalized staff who disagreed with his efforts to prescribe, recommend, provide, or bill in a manner primarily intended to increase the billing and payments, and contrary to Medicare and

Tricare rules and the medical need of the patients. Chiropractors were “not allowed to treat” patients unless they first prescribed X-rays and other diagnostic tests. If a patient failed to show up for an appointment, Candelario directed staff to bill the benefit program for the visit, even though no service had been provided. He and the co-conspirators submitted at least \$7,260,327.20 in false and fraudulent bills to TRICARE and Medicare. Of those, TRICARE paid \$3,450,596.43 and Medicare paid \$37,843.04.

In addition, between March 2012 and November 2015, Candelario carried on an unlawful cross-referral scheme in which he received new Workers’ Compensation (WC) patients for RISE Wellness. In return he agreed to meet a quota for the “value” of ancillary services he was expected to prescribe for each patient sent by the co-conspirators, with a “value” set by the conspirators. As part of the scheme, Candelario, who could function as a WC primary care provider, dictated the same treatment plan for all WC patients, regardless of individual medical needs, so he could fraudulently bill WC insurers. The defendant admitted he violated his duty of honest services to his patients. He received approximately 529 new WC patients and he submitted approximately \$6,605,364 in bills to insurers for services rendered. Of those billed amounts, he was paid \$771,000 by WC insurers

In addition to fleecing taxpayer-funded government programs Candelario failed to pay his fair share of taxes on the funds he fraudulently took, resulting in \$505,000 in tax losses just for tax year 2013. Judge Bashant credited the rehabilitative efforts the defendant has made since his conviction to improve his circumstances. Statements in sentencing papers and in court reflect that the defendant has been teaching as an adjunct instructor at West Coast University, Canyon College, Santa Ana College, Orange Coast College, and National University, in such topics as human anatomy, human physiology, biology, Medical Ethics and Medical Billing. But in aggravation, the Court noted that Candelario “put profits over the medical needs of patients,” which warranted punishment.

A hearing to address forfeiture and restitution was held in May. The United States was seeking restitution of \$3,450,596.43 to TRICARE, \$37,843.04 to Medicare, and a personal money money judgment of \$1,300,899.63.



National Coalition For Men v. Selective Service System – source The Hill

The Biden administration has asked the Supreme Court to decline to hear a lawsuit alleging that America's all-male military draft amounts to unconstitutional discrimination on the basis of sex. In a 26-page brief, the Department of Justice urged the justices to turn down the petition because lawmakers are “actively considering” the scope of the national registration requirement, noting that the court previously said the issue was better suited to Congress than judges. At issue in the case is whether an all-male draft remains legally sound after the Defense Department in 2013 lifted the ban on women serving in combat roles.

Military conditions have changed dramatically since the court upheld the draft law in a 1981 decision in the case of *Rostker v. Goldberg*. The court ruled 6-3 that the Military Selective Service Act's male-only requirement was justified because of women's exclusion from combat roles. Petitioners

in the current case, backed by the American Civil Liberties Union, argue that the elimination of sex-based barriers in the military without a concurrent broadening of the draft to include women created unjustified sex-based discrimination against men. The justices are likely to discuss the petition — as well as the Biden administration's opposition to them hearing the case — at a private conference in coming weeks or months. Four or more justices must agree to hear the dispute for a petition to be granted.

A federal judge in Houston ruled in 2019 for the challengers, two men and a group called the National Coalition for Men. A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit reversed that ruling last year, prompting the challengers appeal to the Supreme Court. The case is *National Coalition For Men v. Selective Service System*, No. 20-928.

Drug Companies Trick to Keep Prices High – TSCL Weekly Update

A new report suggests that “product hopping” - a practice by drug companies to extend their patents on profitable drugs - costs American consumers and the U.S. health care system billions of dollars each year. The report looked at five prescription drugs and found that drug companies slightly alter the formulas in those drugs, allowing them to extend their patents on the new formulations, and delay the move to the generic drug marketplace. This, of course, keeps the costs of those drugs much higher than if a generic version were available.

That is only one of the issues involved with high drug prices, and the drug companies aren't the only issue. According to the lobbying arm of the major drug companies, in 2018, nearly half of the money spent on brand medicines went to some business other than the research companies that discover and manufacture medicines. Those include pharmacy benefit managers, insurers, hospitals and others in the biopharmaceutical supply chain. Meanwhile, a greater share of the cost of medicine has shifted onto patients.

Biden Proposes \$8.5 Billion Increase in VA Budget – source Stars and Stripes

President Biden is proposing an \$8.5 billion boost for VA under his 2022 budget plan. The plan would increase domestic spending by 16% overall, bringing total discretionary spending for 2022 to \$113.1 billion. Biden prioritized veteran homelessness, suicide prevention and caregiver support. “The discretionary request ensures that all of America's veterans, receive the care they have earned,” the budget states. Congress will have the final say on the federal budget. Included in the plan are:

- The allocation of \$97.5 billion to VA health care, an increase of \$7.6 billion from 2021. The money includes boosts to women's health and mental health.
- A significant increase – about 75% – to VA's suicide prevention efforts. The budget for these efforts would total \$542 million, about \$230 million more than in 2021. This includes funding to increase the capacity of the Veterans Crisis Line, which is a suicide prevention hotline for veterans and their families.
- It boosts programs for homeless veterans by 4.4% from 2021 to “further the administration's goal of achieving a systematic end to veteran homelessness.”
- Allocation of \$40.3 million to hire 334 new claims processors to work on disability compensation claims. Hundreds of thousands of veterans are waiting for their earned benefits because of a backlog of compensation and pension exam requests that grew during the coronavirus pandemic. The new processors would work specifically on claims for Vietnam War veterans affected by bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson's-like symptoms. Those conditions

were added this year to a list of illnesses presumed to be caused by Agent Orange.

- An increase for medical and prosthetic research and for VA's Office of Health Equity, which aims to eliminate health disparities based on race, gender, and other demographics.
- A new initiative funded in the proposal would establish a partnership between VA and Department of Labor to create a program to help veterans shift to careers in clean energy.

Biden's proposal for the VA continues a pattern of increases for the department that lasted throughout the administrations of former Presidents Obama and Trump. The agency's budget has increased consistently since the beginning of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. In 2009, the VA operated on a total budget of \$90 billion. Under Trump, the agency's yearly budget surpassed \$200 billion, including mandatory and discretionary spending. Biden's plan for the VA consists of \$113.1 billion in discretionary spending. The administration has not yet released estimates about mandatory spending, but in previous years it has totaled over \$130 billion. More details about Biden's budget plan are expected to be released in the following weeks. Fiscal 2022 starts October 1

Lawmakers propose \$200 million for new Guard quick reaction force to aid Capitol security – source Military Times

The District of Columbia Air National Guard would receive \$200 million to set up a quick reaction force (QRF) prepared to respond to any violence or threats on Capitol Hill under a \$1.9 billion security supplemental unveiled by House leaders. The package also includes nearly \$521 million for unanticipated pay and operations cost for the still-ongoing Guard deployment to protect Congress in the wake of the attack on the Capitol building in January. Those reimbursement costs nearly match the amount of money in the measure for future grounds security projects around the Capitol complex, to include retractable fencing designed to prevent a large surge of

The QRF could be staffed with Guardsmen on three-month rotations to the national Capitol region. On Jan. 6, hundreds of supporters of former President Trump forced their way into the Capitol building in an attempt to disrupt certification of last November's presidential election results. Five people died as a result of the violence. In the following weeks, nearly 26,000 National Guard troops were mobilized to provide security before and after the Jan. 20 inauguration of President Biden. About 2,200 National Guard troops are still supporting the Capitol mission, Capt. Chelsi B. Johnson, a D.C. National Guard spokeswoman, told Military Times. The Capitol Police have not requested the Guard to stay past May 23, she said. "Once the mission concludes, the D.C. National Guard will return to normal operations and the out-of-state Guard members will return to their home station," said Johnson.

However, a security review conducted earlier this year recommended a military QRF for future threat

events where Capitol Police resources may not be enough. The supplemental proposes "a ground force equivalent of the 113th Wing within the District of Columbia Air National Guard at Joint Base Andrews, which defends National Capital Region airspace." No further details were provided. It is not clear if such a force would be staffed by individuals whose permanent residence is in the region or by rotations of troops from around the country.

The National Guard deployment has become increasingly controversial in recent months, with numerous Republican lawmakers complaining that the force remains stationed around the Capitol even though no credible threats to the campus have been made public for months. Much of the campus also remains restricted to the public due to ongoing pandemic prevention efforts. "It would be inappropriate for us to comment on matters of pending legislation," said Wayne Hall, a spokesman for the National Guard Bureau.

In a statement, House Appropriations Committee Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., said she hopes the supplemental plan can be adopted quickly. "The Jan. 6 insurrection caused tragic loss of life and many injuries, while leaving behind widespread physical damage to the Capitol Complex and emotional trauma for members, congressional employees, and the Capitol Police," she said. "This emergency supplemental appropriation addresses the direct costs of the insurrection and strengthens Capitol security for the future." Lawmakers are expected to consider the measure over the next few weeks.

West Point Cadets Caught Cheating Must Repeat a Year – source Associated Press

Most of the 73 West Point cadets accused in the biggest cheating scandal in decades at the U.S. Military Academy are being required to repeat a year, and eight were expelled, academy officials said Friday.

The cadets were accused of cheating on an online freshman calculus exam in May while students were studying remotely because of the coronavirus pandemic. An investigation was launched after instructors noticed irregularities in answers. All but one were freshmen, or plebes, in a class of 1,200. The other was a sophomore.

Cadets at the centuries-old officer training academy on the Hudson River are bound by an honor code that they "will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do." The cheating scandal is the biggest at West Point since 1976 and preceded the tightening of an academy policy that spared many cadets in this case from being kicked out. West Point said that of the 73 cases investigated by the cadet honor committee, six cadets resigned during the investigation, four were acquitted by a board of their peers, and two cases were dropped due to insufficient evidence. Most of the cadets, 51, were "turned back" one full year after admitting to cheating, and two were turned back six months. Those cadets are under probation until graduation.

Lt. Gen. Darryl A. Williams, West Point's superintendent, personally adjudicated each case. "The tenets of honorable living remain immutable, and the outcomes of our leader development system remain the same, to graduate Army officers that live honorably, lead honorably and demonstrate excellence," Williams said in a prepared release. "West Point must be the gold standard for developing Army officers. We demand nothing less than impeccable character from our graduates." Eight cadets were removed from the academy. Of those, three accepted the chance to take part in an "academy mentorship program" that allows them to reapply to the academy after serving for up to a year as an enlisted soldier.

The academy also said it will end its 6-year-old "willful admission process," which was used by 55 cadets and is designed to protect cadets who promptly admit to wrongdoing from being kicked out. Officials determined the process was not meeting its goal of increasing self-reporting and decreasing toleration for violations of the honor code. West Point said that 52 of the cadets were athletes, but none of the guilty cadets are currently representing the academy on teams. The 1976 scandal involved 153 upperclassmen who resigned or were expelled for cheating on an electrical engineering exam. More than 90 of those caught cheating were reinstated and allowed to graduate.

Female Vets Twice As Likely As Males to Suffer PTSD and Heart Disease - source: Military.com

A recent study in the Journal of the American Medical Association reports that female veterans with PTSD are more than twice as likely as male veterans to suffer from ischemic heart disease than those without PTSD. The study examined nearly 400,000 female veterans, of which nearly one-third suffered from PTSD. The results of that study reflected that female veterans suffering from PTSD were 44% more likely to have the debilitating heart disease than their fellow veterans who did not have PTSD. A similar study done in 2017 found that male veterans suffering from PTSD were 18% more likely to suffer from heart disease than their fellow veterans who did not have PTSD.

PTSD can affect women and men in different ways. Women with PTSD are more likely to feel depressed and anxious, while men with PTSD are more likely to have problems with alcohol or drugs. However, while both women and men who experience PTSD may develop physical health problems, the severity and preponderance of those symptoms also differ between the sexes. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, between 11% and 20% of modern-day veterans suffer from PTSD. According to the American Heart Association,

ischemic heart disease refers to problems caused by narrowing of the arteries. That results in less blood and oxygen reaching the heart muscle and ultimately can lead to a heart attack.

As with men, the most common symptom of a heart attack in women is chest pain or discomfort. But women are somewhat more likely than men to experience some of the other common symptoms, particularly shortness of breath, nausea/vomiting and back or jaw pain. Ischemic heart disease is also known as coronary artery disease or coronary heart disease. Often, ischemic heart disease has no symptoms and can lead to a heart attack with no prior warning. Despite advances in prevention and treatment, cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death worldwide. In the U.S., one in four deaths is caused by heart disease. The study further found that female veterans who suffered from PTSD at relatively young ages, especially those under 40 years old, were at greater risk for heart disease.

The authors of the study recommend that physicians closely monitor patients with PTSD for coronary and related diseases as a result of their findings.

Air Travel is Back, and So Are Scammers – source BBB Scam Alert

With the COVID-19 vaccines rolling out, travel is coming back. That's great news for summer vacation plans... and scammers. BBB Scam Tracker is receiving reports of con artists creating fake airline ticket booking sites or customer service numbers. If you are buying airfare, use caution and double check the URL or phone number before providing your credit card information.

How the Scam Works

- While doing an online search for cheap flights, you come across what seems like a great deal with a major airline. You book the flight—either through the website or by calling a customer support number—and receive a confirmation message. However, when you look more closely at the email, you notice that you never actually received your ticket.
- In another version of this scam, you book a flight on a travel website offering deals on airfare. You pay with your credit card like normal. But shortly after making the payment, you receive a call from the company saying that there's been a sudden price increase or an extra charge to finalize your booking. This is something a legitimate company would never do!
- In either case, you call the airline to follow up about your flight. After talking to an agent, you find that they have no record of your booking. It turns out you accidentally purchased tickets through a scam website or a phony customer service number.

Protect yourself from this scam:

- Do your research. If you come across a company you haven't dealt with before, research it before making any purchases. Look on BBB.org for reviews and feedback from previous customers.
- Double check the URL before you enter personal and payment information. It can be easy to click on a sponsored ad or imposter website without noticing. Before you enter any sensitive information, double check that you are on the right website and that the link is secure. (Secure links start with "https://" and include a lock icon on the purchase page. Learn more at [BBB.org/BBBSecure](https://www.bbb.org/BBBSecure).)
- Make online purchases with your credit card. Fraudulent charges made on a credit card can usually be disputed, whereas that might not be the case with other payment methods. Unfortunately, there is no way to get back the personal information you may have shared.

For More Information

For ways to protect yourself from travel scams, go to [BBB.org/TravelScam](https://www.bbb.org/TravelScam). Read more about customer service number scams. If you've spotted a scam (whether or not you've lost money), report it to [BBB.org/ScamTracker](https://www.bbb.org/ScamTracker). Your report can help others avoid falling victim to scams. Find more information about scams and how to avoid them at [BBB.org/AvoidScams](https://www.bbb.org/AvoidScams).

Student Scams: Scammers Extort Cheating Students – BBB Scam Alert

College and high school students who hire “tutors” to complete class assignments are finding themselves victims of extortion cons.

How the Scam Works - You search online for a tutoring company that can help by doing the work for you. Victims report paying a couple hundred dollars for “help” with assignments for math and technology classes. As soon as you pay up, instead of helping you, the company demands more money. They may claim it’s for “additional research” or make another excuse. When you refuse to pay, the “tutors” send threatening emails or texts claiming they will contact your school and expose you as a cheater.

Tips to avoid a homework helper con - Hiring someone to complete your school assignments is cheating. But if you want to hire a legitimate tutor, follow these tips: Ask for referrals. Asking friends, family, and teachers if they have any recommendations. Some schools offer Honor Society students as free or reduced-cost tutors. Check references. Ask the tutor or tutoring service for references, and contact them. It’s best to speak to at least three. Ask about their experience and what sort of results they saw. Decide availability and rates up front. While tutors may charge extra for additional sessions before a big test, this should all be discussed and negotiated upfront. Last minute surprises and demands are signs of a less-than-scrupulous business.

More Fraud, Waste and Abuse – source Michigan.gov | Dept. of Attorney General

Lansing, MI -- Another suspect in a scheme to defraud VA and Michigan Department of Treasury out of nearly half a million dollars has been formally charged, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel announced. The Attorney General's enforcement operation was conducted in close collaboration with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Inspector General. **Sophia J. Quill**, 60, was arraigned in front of Judge Mark A. McConnell of the Wayne County 18th District Court over Zoom. The charges include:

- One count of Conducting a Criminal Enterprise, a felony punishable by up to 20 years' imprisonment, \$100,000 fine and forfeiture of proceeds and items used during the crime;
- Four counts of False Pretenses \$50,000-\$100,000, a felony punishable by 15 years' imprisonment, \$25,000 fine or three times the value of the money or property involved, whichever is greater;
- Two counts of False Pretenses \$20,000-\$50,000, a felony punishable by 15 years' imprisonment, \$15,000 fine or three

times the value of the money or property involved, whichever is greater; and

- Two counts of False Pretenses \$1,000-\$20,000, a felony punishable by 5 years' imprisonment, \$10,000 fine or three times the value of the money or property involved, whichever is greater.

She is charged as a Fourth Habitual Offender, meaning Quill is facing a maximum term of life imprisonment if convicted of any of the charges. Quill and her co-conspirator **Melissa Flores**, who was arraigned last year, allegedly created aliases and obtained or created fraudulent documents to make it appear that they were heirs to various individuals who died. Between 2013 and 2019, it is alleged that Quill and Flores defrauded VA out of more than \$430,000 and the Michigan Department of Treasury out of more than \$40,000. Quill's son Steven Decker, who was also arraigned last year, allegedly received proceeds from the scheme and used some of the money to conceal property used to conduct the fraud.

And Finally .

News of the Weird

Bright Ideas – Eric Dion Warren, 50, was sentenced to federal prison in Lubbock, Texas, after pleading guilty to robbing a bank and using a BMW he was test-driving as his getaway car. The Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported that, according to court documents, Warren drove to the AIM Bank in Wolforth, on June 7, 2019, handed the teller a note demanding \$10,000 in small bills and showed what appeared to be a handgun. The teller complied, and Warren headed back to the dealership where he pulled out \$3,000 as the down payment on the car he had been driving. As Warren finalized the deal, the dealership received a call about the bank robbery and the connection was made. Warren was given the maximum sentence of 20 years.

o-o-O-o-o-

Schemes –. Police in Naples, Florida, are looking for a woman identified only as "Rosalia," a self-described witch who is suspected of swindling more than \$100,000 from at

least 10 victims. Authorities were first alerted to the scam when a man called to report that Rosalia had disappeared with \$29,500 of his money, according to a police report. The man said he had responded to a flyer advertising Rosalia's "witchcraft services," WBBH-TV reported. She allegedly told the man she saw something "dark" in his future and gave him three eggs to put under his bed as he slept. When he brought them back the next day, she waved the eggs over his head and face, then opened them to reveal one filled with blood, one with needles and a third with worms, according to the report. She instructed the man to bring her all the money he had so she could bless it and multiply it at her temple in Fort Myers, promising to return it the next day, police said, but Rosalia hasn't been seen since. Police have identified more victims in the course of their ongoing investigation.