Office of Tribal Government Relations
Newsletter ~ July 2013

Welcome from the VA OTGR Director

Greetings and welcome to the July edition of our VA Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR) National Monthly Newsletter.

This month brought commemoration observances of the 60th anniversary of the Korean War Armistice. We heard stories of Korean War Veterans and their families traveling great distances to participate in ceremonies held here in our Nation's Capital. Hearing these stories inspires and reminds us of the important role our Veterans play in our country's history. As we pause to reflect on the sacrifice and service of our Korean War Veterans, we take this opportunity to extend, to this generation of Veterans, and to all generations of Veterans, our enduring gratitude.

As we enjoy the longer days of summer sunshine, our team is again on the go, visiting with tribal leadership, Veterans, State Directors of Veterans Affairs and service providers working to strengthen the network of intergovernmental relationships across Indian Country. Here in Washington, D.C. VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki was represented by VA's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, John Garcia, accompanied by the Veteran's Health Administration Director of the Office of Health Equity, Dr. Uchenna Uchendu at the recent inaugural meeting of the White House Council on Native American Affairs. The Council launches President Obama's national policy initiative to make federal agencies work more collaboratively and effectively with federally recognized tribes to advance their vital economic and social priorities. We understand that federal agencies are engaged in positive and innovative work with tribal communities and we are looking forward to seeing positive results with the convening of the new council.

VA's Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, Dr. Tommy Sowers traveled to the Midwest earlier in the month and met with leadership and representatives from the Prairie Band Potawatomi and Kickapoo Tribes of Kansas to listen and to better understand concerns and priorities of Veterans from the local tribal communities. Assistant Secretary Sowers and tribal officials also toured a local Consolidated Mail Order Pharmacy (CMOP) hub which processes mail order prescriptions to Veterans. This tour was of particular interest as an increasing number of tribal health programs are meeting with VA to establish reimbursement agreements for direct health care services offered to Veterans by local tribal health facilities. The tour offered an opportunity to gain a better first hand understanding of one of VA's key business processes in alleviating travel time and increasing access to VA services. Meanwhile a little further north of Kansas in North Dakota, Peter Vicaire participated in a Tribal Flag Honoring Ceremony hosted by the VA Fargo Health Care system. Tribal leadership and Congressional representatives were on hand to participate in the event.

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Over in the Northwest, Terry Bentley participated in the Gathering of Warriors, sponsored by the Native Wellness Institute and hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. The purpose of the gathering was to offer resources, benefits coordination, healthcare services, and provide opportunities for healing, networking and honoring our Veterans for their service to our country. Key VA offices and partners participated, including: Veterans Health Administration Portland; Veterans Benefits Administration Portland Regional Office; Salem Vet Center; the National Cemetery Administration Willamette National Cemetery and the Oregon State Department of Veterans Affairs. Approximately 200 Veterans and family members participated in the event.

Back here in on the Eastern side of the country, we participated in an American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIAN) Listening Session facilitated by the Social Security Administration held at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of the American Indian. We are also busy planning the Veterans Track agenda for the upcoming National Indian Health Board's 30th Annual Consumer Conference to be held in Traverse City, Michigan August 26-29, 2013. Check out the agenda at www.nihb.org or www.va.gov/tribalgovernment. We are coordinating another year (our second collaborating with NIHB) of informative and interactive workshops focused on providing training on the array of services and programs available to our Veterans and their families. The VA Medical Center in Battle Creek, MI as well as national VA program offices have been great partners in dedicating resources and trainers to the Veterans Track.

We hope to see you in at NIHB in Michigan, or at one of our upcoming VA/OTGR Veterans Training Summits. We are also always just a phone call or click away via email: www.tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov. The contact information for the VA OTGR team is available on the VA tribal government website: www.va.gov/tribalgovernment. Please share feedback, suggestions and newsletter content with us. We look forward to meeting with and hearing from you.

Warm Regards and Happy Reading - Stephanie

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National Congress of American Indians

National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) and Improperly Held Taxes from Reservation-Domiciled Servicemembers (Now Veterans)

On June 26th, 2013, NCAI passed a resolution urging the United States Congress to restore improperly withheld taxes from reservation-domiciled American Indian Servicemembers, now Veterans. Twenty-six states illegally withheld these monies for up to twenty-four years (1977-2001). That resolution can be found here on the NCAI website. For more information on this issue, contact Peter Vicaire at Peter.Vicaire@va.gov.

JUSTICE CENTER
The Council of State Governments
Collaborative Approaches to Public Safety

Justice Center: Council of State Governments

Follow the link provided below for information on helping Veterans reenter tribal communities. "Reentry into tribal communities presents unique challenges because of the ways in which local, state, federal, and tribal criminal justice systems intersect in Indian Country. Federally recognized Indian Tribes have long had the authority to maintain their own criminal justice mechanisms to ensure public safety and resolve conflicts between community members. This authority extends to law enforcement and community supervision, but also impacts other fields important to reentry success. Because of the distinctive ways in which all these systems must work together, reentry within tribal communities merits special attention." http://csgjusticecenter.org/reentry/issue-areas/tribal-affairs/

American Indians and the Civil War

Check out this new book from the National Park Services – and thanks to Jo Ann Schedler of the Stockbridge–Munsee Tribe who contributed a chapter to the book and alerted me to its existence. Here's the description from the website, which can be found here. "*American Indians and the Civil War* NEW! *In a war that freed enslaved African Americans, most Indian people fought to stay free in a land once theirs alone. A crucial part of the Civil War story is that more than 20,000 American Indians fought on both sides of the conflict. Many who fought thought they'd be able to protect their lands, instead, federal Indian policy became more perverse during the war, eventually leading to Westward expansion and the devastation of Native peoples.*"

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Dr. Dickerson, Inupiaq (UCLA)

Indian Country TODAY MEDIA NETWORK.com

Traditional Based Practices for American Indians/Alaska Native with SUDs

Daniel Dickerson, D.O., M.P.H., *Inupiaq*, is an addiction psychiatrist and Assistant Research Psychiatrist at UCLA, Integrated Substance Abuse Programs (ISAP). He also provides psychiatric and substance abuse services at United American Indian Involvement (UAII) in Los Angeles. He focuses his research on substance abuse and HIV among American Indians/Alaska Natives and on the development of culturally relevant substance abuse treatments for American Indians/Alaska Natives. He is the Principal Investigator on an R-21 National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded research grant, "Drum-Assisted Recovery Therapy for Native Americans (DARTNA)," a substance abuse treatment program utilizing drumming for Native Americans; a Co-Principal Investigator on an R-01 NIH-funded grant, "Motivational Interviewing and Culture for Urban Native American Youth (MICUNAY)" which is an alcohol and drug prevention research project for urban Native Americans; and "Strengthening the Circle," a research project focusing on the development of an HIV prevention program for urban Native Americans.

Go to the following link to watch a webinar on traditional-based practices and their utilization as substance abuse treatment for American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/ANs). The webinar discusses:
• The potential value of research to demonstrate effectiveness of AI/AN traditional-based practices; "Drum-Assisted Recovery Therapy for Native Americans (DARTNA)"; research study review
• Barriers to conducting research investigating traditional-based Practices; Strategies to conduct research traditional-based treatments for; AI/ANs with substance use disorders.

There will be an online seminar on August 14. This is an online training. There is **no cost** to attend, and no need to preregister. Free CME/CEU credit will be offered. **Date and Time - Wednesday, August 14, 2013:** 3 pm to 4 pm Eastern; 2 pm to 5 pm; Central; 1 pm to 2 pm Mountain; 12 pm to 1 pm Pacific; 11 am to 12 pm Alaska; **How to Connect:** 1. Go to: http://ihs.adobeconnect.com/drum; 2. Select "Enter as a Guest" 3. Enter your name (First and Last) in the name field. 4. Enter the room passcode: **drum;** 5. Press the "Enter Room" Button. Also, check out the Indian Country Today story.

Casting Call/Paid Commercial Opportunity

Are you an American Indian Veteran who uses USAA Insurance and wants to be in a commercial? If so, check out the message below from a casting director: "*Hello, My name is Josh Temple and I work for Dan Bell Casting based out of Los Angeles. We cast national commercials and documentary projects. We are working on a new project for USAA Insurance. We are searching for veterans throughout the US who are members of USAA to feature in this commercial. This is a paid project and will focus on military families and their stories. We are aware that veterans of Native American descent have courageously served in all branches of the military during conflict operations all over the world. I'm reaching out to you with the hopes that you can point us in the right direction in getting in touch with veterans and their families interested in participating in this project. I would love to chat with you more about the details when you have a moment. You can reach me at 619-471-5888. I look forward to hearing from you!*"

VA Tribal Consultation Report

Part of our office's mandate is to implement VA's Tribal Consultation Policy. You can now read the recently completed reports from our OTGR website, under the heading, "2012 VA Tribal Consultation Reports" at: **http://www.va.gov/tribalgovernment/#**. If, for whatever reason, you can't access them, just drop me a line at Peter.Vicaire@va.gov and I'd be happy to send a copy your way via email.

U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Appropriations Summary: Native American Veteran Rental Assistance Pilot Program

$75 million for 10,000 new HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers for homeless veterans and $3 million for a rental assistance pilot program for Native American veterans living on reservations or tribal lands who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. While HUD-VASH has helped reduce veteran homelessness by 17 percent since 2009, there are still an estimated 60,000 homeless veterans. These resources will support the goal of ultimately ending homelessness among veterans. Check out the Senate Website for more information.

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VA Announces $300 Million in New Grants to Help End Veterans' Homelessness Initiative Targets 120, 000 Homeless and At-Risk Vets and Families

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced today the award of nearly $300 million in grants that will help approximately 120,000 homeless and at-risk Veterans and their families. The grants have been awarded to 319 community agencies in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

"With these grants, we are strengthening our partnership with community non-profits across the country to provide Veterans and their families with hope, a home, and a future," said Shinseki. "The work of Supportive Services for Veteran Families program grantees has already helped us prevent and end homelessness among tens of thousands of homeless Veterans and their families, but as long as a single Veteran lives on our streets, we have work to do."

Under the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, VA is awarding grants to private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives that provide services to very low-income Veteran families living in -- or transitioning to -- permanent housing. The SSVF program supports VA's efforts to prevent at-risk Veterans from becoming homeless and rapidly re-house those who have recently fallen into homelessness.

Thanks to the SSVF grants, those community organizations will provide a range of services that promote housing stability and play a key role in connecting Veterans and their family members to VA services such as mental health care and other benefits. Community-based groups can offer temporary financial assistance on behalf of Veterans for rent payments, utility payments, security deposits and moving costs.

This is the third year SSVF grants have helped Veterans and their families find or remain in their homes. Last year, VA provided about $100 million to assist approximately 50,000 Veterans and family members.

In 2009, President Obama and Secretary Shinseki announced the federal government's goal to end Veterans' homelessness in 2015.

The grants are intended to help accomplish that goal. According to the 2012 Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness, homelessness among Veterans has declined 17.2 percent since 2009. Through the homeless Veterans initiative, VA committed over $1 billion in fiscal year 2013 to strengthen programs that prevent and end homelessness among Veterans. VA provides a range of services to homeless Veterans, including health care, job training, and education.

More information about VA's homeless programs is available at www.va.gov/homeless. Details about the Supportive Services for Veteran Families program are online at www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf.asp.

VA Grants ($50,000) Will Expand Transportation in Highly Rural Areas – Veterans to Have Easier Access to Health Care

WASHINGTON – Veterans will have improved access to health care under a Department of Veterans Affairs initiative that supports new transportation services for those living in highly rural areas.

VA began accepting applications this month for grants to help state Veterans Service Agencies and Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) [**and Tribal entities**] operate or contract for transportation services to transport Veterans to VA medical centers and other facilities that provide VA care. A new regulation establishes the program that will administer these grants. Transportation will be provided at no cost to Veterans.

"VA wants to be sure that all Veterans, including those who live in rural and remote areas, can receive the health care they have earned through service to our country," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "State Veterans Agencies and VSOs will now be able to employ innovative approaches to transportation services for Veterans in our highly rural areas. The end results will include better service and better health care for Veterans."

VSOs and State Veterans Service Agencies may apply for grants up to $50,000 to fund transportation of Veterans to and from VA medical centers and other facilities that provide VA care. If specified in the application, the services may be provided under agreements with contractors, such as private bus or van companies.

A highly rural area is defined as a county or counties with a population of fewer than seven persons per square mile. Many highly rural areas are found in the western and southwestern United States but at least half of the states have at least one highly rural area.

One of Secretary Shinseki's top three priorities is increasing access to VA care and services for Veterans wherever they live. VA is expanding access in a three-pronged effort that includes facilities, programs and technology. Veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan are eligible for an extended period of eligibility for health care for 5 years after they have left the service. For more information, please see the Federal Register.

Post-9/11 GI Bill Celebrates Fourth Anniversary
Nearly 1 Million Veterans, Servicemembers and Families Benefit

WASHINGTON (July 29, 2013) – Thursday, August 1, marks the fourth anniversary of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. VA has issued approximately $30 billion in Post 9/11 GI-Bill benefit payments since its inception in August 2009 and helped nearly 1 million Servicemembers, Veterans, and their families pursue their education.

"The Post-9/11 GI Bill has helped many of our Nation's Veterans pursue their education and successfully transition to civilian life," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We're proud that the Department of Veterans Affairs can administer this important benefit that makes such a big difference in the lives of nearly a million Veterans and their families."

The Post-9/11 GI Bill is the most extensive educational assistance program since the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the GI Bill, was signed into law.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides comprehensive educational support through tuition, books and housing allowance to people with at least 90 days of total service after September 10, 2001, or people discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days.

Approved training under the Post-9/11 GI Bill includes graduate and undergraduate degrees, vocational and technical training, on-the-job training, flight training, correspondence training, licensing and

national testing programs, entrepreneurship training, and tutorial assistance.

VA is now processing benefit payments for currently enrolled students in an average of seven days, largely as a result of VA's ongoing transformation to electronic claims processing. The delivery of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits has been automated and processing time cut in half through implementation of VA's Long Term Solution, an end-to-end claims processing system that uses rules-based, industry-standard technologies.

"Since the end of World War II, GI Bill programs have shaped and changed the lives of Veterans, Servicemembers, their families and their survivors by helping them reach their educational and employment goals," said Allison A. Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits. "That is still true today."

In April 2012, President Obama signed Executive Order 13607 which established the Principles of Excellence, offering guidelines that promote student success under the program and ensure accurate information about institutions and their courses. Over 6,000 educational and training institutions have agreed to comply with these principles.

"The Principles of Excellence, further strengthened by Public Law 112-249, provide future student Veterans with greater consumer education" said Michael Dakduk, executive director of Student Veterans of America. "It is extremely important to have the right tools and information before making a decision on a post-secondary credential, degree program, or institution of higher learning."

VA is working with schools, community organizations and other partners to ensure beneficiaries have all the information they need to use their education benefits, including:

- Education plans for all military and Veteran education beneficiaries;
- A designated point of contact for academic and financial advice at each school; and
- An end to fraudulent and aggressive recruiting techniques and misrepresentation.

This summer, VA is launching new tools to help beneficiaries learn more about their vocational aptitudes and select an education institution.

- The 'Factors to Consider When Choosing a School' guide offers future students steps to take when researching, choosing, and attending a school.
- CareerScope® is a free, new tool featured on http://www.gibill.va.gov that measures a student's aptitude and interests through a self-administered online test, identifying potential career paths.
- The new GI Bill® Comparison Tool allows students to research and compare schools, including key indicators like average student loan debt and graduation rates.

"We will continue to work hard to improve VA's benefits delivery process for Post-9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries and to ensure that Veterans and their families have the tools they need to choose the right education institution to help them build a foundation for the future," Hickey added. For more information on the Post-9/11 GI Bill and other Veteran education programs, visit http://www.gibill.va.gov.

Administration Renews Commitment to American Indians and Alaska Natives

Final policy makes an exemption from the shared responsibility payment available to individuals eligible for IHS services.

The Affordable Care Act permanently reauthorizes the Indian Health Care Improvement Act, provides new opportunities for health insurance coverage, eliminates cost sharing such as copays and deductibles, and provides special monthly enrollment periods for members of federally recognized tribes who enroll in health plans offered through the Health Insurance Marketplace.

Today, the Obama administration issued a final rule allowing all American Indians and Alaska Natives who are eligible to receive services from an Indian health care provider to receive an exemption from the shared responsibility payment if they do not maintain minimum essential coverage under the Affordable Care Act. Prior to development of the final rule, only a portion of the American Indian and Alaska Native population – members of federally recognized tribes – would have access to an exemption from the requirement to maintain minimum essential coverage under the law. The final rule reflects comments and feedback received from Indian Country through rulemaking and the tribal consultation process.

"The administration is taking steps to honor our historical commitment to the rights of American Indians and Alaska Natives and ensure that individuals protected under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act benefit from the special provisions in the Affordable Care Act," said Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. "Today, we continue to fulfill our responsibility to consult and work with tribal communities."
Today's final rule adds a hardship exemption category for American Indians and Alaska Natives who are eligible to receive services through an Indian health care provider, such as the Indian Health Service (IHS) or tribally-operated facilities and Urban Indian clinics. "We appreciate our tribal partners who advocated to ensure that all American Indians and Alaska Natives eligible for IHS can receive an exemption from the penalty for not having insurance coverage," said IHS Director Dr. Yvette Roubideaux. As a result of this final regulation, all American Indians and Alaska Natives who are eligible to receive services from an Indian health care provider will have access to an exemption from the shared responsibility payment. The final rule is available here: https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection

FEMA RELEASES FISCAL YEAR 2013 CONTINUING TRAINING GRANT FUNDING TOTALING MORE THAN $7.8 MILLION TO INCREASE PREPAREDNESS

FEMA

WASHINGTON — The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) today released the Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for the Continuing Training Grant (CTG) program totaling more than $7.8 million. The CTG will help strengthen national preparedness and provide specialized training to help first responders, homeland security/emergency management officials, and citizens to prepare them for all types of disasters.

The highly competitive FY 2013 CTG program grants will be awarded to state and local (including rural communities), tribal entities, nonprofit national associations and organizations; nonprofit higher education institutions; and non-profits. Non-profits can include community and faith-based organizations or entities with existing programs that develop high priority national homeland security training needs. Multi-state and multi-jurisdictional applicants are strongly encouraged to collaborate and apply with states and

jurisdictions that have similar homeland security strategies and approaches.

The FY 2013 CTG program has two parts: Part A funding priorities focuses on five areas: Medical Readiness and Immediate Emergency Victim Care at Mass Casualty Events; Countering Violent Extremism (CVE); Hazardous Materials and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD); Emergency Management Leadership; and Cyber security. The Part B funding priorities for the CTG program are for rural communities and focuses on: Isolation/Quarantine; and Environmental Health. The grants will be announced directly to eligible applicants through grants.gov by the end of FY 2013. The period of performance for the FY 2013 CTG program is for 36 months. Applications for the FY 2013 CTG program FOA can be found at www.grants.gov. Applications must be completed and submitted through FEMA's Non-Disaster (ND) grants system located at http://portal.fema.gov by Aug. 16, 2013. FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders and ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Military Sexual Trauma

VA Services for Military Sexual Trauma:
Help
Hope
Healing

Every VA facility has a designated MST Coordinator who serves as a point person for MST-related issues. The best source of information about sexual trauma-specific treatment in the area, MST Coordinators can assist Veterans in finding and accessing VA services and programs at their facility or elsewhere. They may also be aware of state and federal benefits and community resources that might be helpful. The complete, nationwide listing of MST Coordinators can be found here.

Military → Civilian: Connecting Veterans and Their Families with Civilian Career Opportunities, Both Stateside and Overseas

MILITARY → CIVILIAN
Connecting Veterans and Their Families with Civilian Career Opportunities, Both Stateside and Overseas

Check out this free service in helping Veterans find jobs.

"We work to connect military veterans and their families seeking civilian jobs with companies who have open career opportunities. If you or anyone in your network is looking for work either stateside or overseas, I

encourage you to check out the job posts in the Careers Directory of my site http://www.military-civilian.com. All career postings are free to view, with no login required, and you can submit your resume directly there. You can also sign up for our Hot Jobs newsletter or RSS feeds to get all our job posts straight to your inbox, or join our Hot Jobs for Veterans and their Families group on LinkedIn at http://bit.ly/Military-Civilian. Thanks for the opportunity to share this--the more we spread the word, the more veterans we can help find jobs!"

House of Representatives' Veterans Bills

See below for a list of bills related to Veterans which are in the House right now. Thanks to Randy Richards (Congressman Cramer, R-At Large/ND) for providing them.

HR 303 Retired Pay Restoration Act

Sponsored by Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) - Summary: To amend title 10, United States Code, to permit additional retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability to receive both disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs for their disability and either retired pay by reason of their years of military service or Combat-Related Special Compensation and to eliminate the phase-in period under current law with respect to such concurrent receipt. (Currently the veteran would forfeit one dollar of retirement pay for each dollar of disability that comes in.)

HR 333 Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act

Sponsored by Sanford Bishop Jr (D-GA) - Summary: Amends federal military retired pay provisions to: (1) permit veterans with a service-connected disability of less than 50% to concurrently receive both retired pay and disability compensation; (2) eliminate provisions requiring a phase-in between January 1, 2004, and December 31, 2013, of concurrent receipt of retired pay and disability compensation; (3) eliminate a phase-in of concurrent receipt of retired pay and disability compensation for disabled veterans determined to be individually unemployable; and (4) require a limited reduction in retired pay for qualified disability retirees with less than 20 years of retirement-creditable service.

HR 679 Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act

Sponsored by Tim Walz (D-MN) - Summary: To amend title 38, United States Code, to recognize the service in the reserve components of certain persons by honoring them with status as

veterans under law. **Additional summary:** This bill would authorize 'veteran status' for National Guard and Reserve members of the Armed Forces that are entitled to a reserve retirement at age 60, but were never called to active federal service during their careers.

Career Reserve Component members that were never called to active duty over a full service career and are entitled to military retired pay, TRICARE health coverage and many veterans' benefits, deserve to be recognized as veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States.

HR 690 Reserve Retirement Deployment Credit Correction Act

Sponsored by Tom Latham (R-IA) - Summary: Requires the days of active duty or active service used to reduce the minimum age at which a member of the reserves may retire for non-regular (reserve) service to occur in in any two consecutive fiscal years (under current law, in the same fiscal year). **Additional Summary:** The Reserve Retirement Deployment Credit Correction Act would clarify the law to ensure that Guard members receive the retirement credit for all time spent on active duty over the course of their career. This legislation will ensure that Guard members whose deployments span two fiscal years or occur within a fiscal year but don't total 90 days still receive the retirement credit to which they're entitled. The Reserve Retirement Deployment Credit Correction Act would clarify the law to ensure that Guard members receive the retirement credit for all time spent on active duty over the course of their career. This legislation will ensure that Guard members whose deployments span two fiscal years or occur within a fiscal year but don't total 90 days still receive the retirement credit to which they're entitled. From Rep. Latham website: "The men and women of the National Guard and Reserve have served an expanded, integral purpose in America's recent foreign engagements, and they deserve retirement benefits that reflect the commitment and sacrifice of their increased role," **Congressman Latham said**. "This legislation simply removes a technical glitch that is keeping some Guard members from receiving the retirement benefits that they've earned. We made significant progress last Congress in moving this measure closer to becoming law, and I intend to keep working until we can make it a reality."

HR 733 Access to Veterans Benefits Improvement Act

Sponsored by Jon Runyan (R-NJ) - Summary: Directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to provide veterans' case-tracking information access to employees of a Member of Congress or of a state or local governmental agency assisting veterans with benefit

claims. Directs the Secretary to ensure that such access does not: (1) allow the employee to modify the data in the case-tracking system, and (2) include access to medical records. Requires such employees to complete a certification course on privacy issues before receiving such access.

HR 2319 Native American Veterans' Memorial Amendments Act of 2013

Sponsored by Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) - Summary: This legislation amends the Native American Veterans' Memorial Establishment Act of 1994 to allow the National Museum of the American Indian to construct a memorial to Native Veterans on the museum's grounds, which is on the National Mall. Current law authorizes a memorial inside the confines of the museum, but there is not sufficient space within the facility to construct a proper tribute to Native American Veterans.

Serving Our Veterans At Home (SOVAH) Partners With Macy's To Help Veterans

"Hi Friend, we want to thank you for your continued support of our veterans who have sacrificed so much. Serving Our Veterans At Home (SOVAH) works tirelessly to fulfill our mission to seek out veterans and connect them with the benefits and services they earned. Macy's has partnered with SOVAH to provide exclusive discounts to any financial supporters. When you donate at least $5 to SOVAH, you will receive a savings pass. This grants the best savings of the summer on most items in store including sale & clearance items. When you arrive at Macy's with your shopping pass, you will be entered to win a $500 Macy's giftcard. Every store will have a winner! The best part is that 100% of your donation will be used to connect a veteran with services and resources. This is your chance to earn great savings and help veterans at the same time!
http://www.sovah.org/#!shop-for-a-cause/cp7a

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Central and Northeast Region

Michigan Tribal Veteran Representative (TVR) Training

From Mary Kay Campbell (VISN 12 Rural Health Consultant - MaryKay.Campbell@va.gov) "The second session of the Tribal Veteran Representative training has been scheduled for **Monday, August 19 through Thursday, August 22, 2013**! The training will again be facilitated by W.J. 'Buck' Richardson who has extensive experience in doing these outreach trainings for VISN 19, Rocky Mountain Network. He is passionate about helping all Veterans become aware of the benefits available to them and family members and is a strong proponent about helping Veterans getting this information.

The intent of the program is for tribes to designate staff to be trained as TVRs who will act as a liaison between the VA and tribal Veterans to assist them in knowing what benefits are available, assist them with communications between the VA, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), and the National Cemetery Administration (NCA), and serve to provide information at tribal meetings, etc. The August training will include presentations by the VBA, NCA, and VA and will allow adequate time for questions and interactions with the presenters.

The first training in April laid the groundwork for developing the TVR program. Although a lot of information was covered during that training, there is more to learn! We want all TVRs to feel comfortable in their roles and this training will help to accomplish that objective. We encourage you to send TVRs trained in April as more in-depth information will be covered, as well as, sending other staff you may want to designate who will assist your Native American Veterans. We welcome your participation!
Event: Tribal Veteran Representative (TVR) Training
Dates: August 19 – August 22, 2013
Location: Clare/Farwell American Legion Post 558, 400 E. Ludington Drive, Farwell, MI 48622

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Fargo VA Reaches out to Native American Veterans

When the Fargo VA recently visited the Ft. Berthold Indian Reservation in Newtown, North Dakota, they made a life changing decision for a widow of a deceased Veteran. "Even though my husband has passed away, I feel as though he is continuing to look out for me, states Claudia McGrady, who lost her husband four years ago. The DIC benefits awarded to me by the Department of Veterans Affairs helped me to achieve a better life."

Since 2003, twice a year, the Fargo Department of Veterans Affairs VA HealthCare System and Dakotas Regional Office work together with local service organizations in reaching out to local reservations in the Fargo VA's encatchment area. "We basically take VHA, VBA and the Vet Center to the Veterans on the reservation," states Harold Lindsay, Minority Veteran's Coordinator. "We provide the venue and tools to assist those Veterans that have a hard time in traveling to the Fargo VA Medical Center." The Fargo VA Health Care System serves Veterans in the state of North Dakota, the northwestern counties of Minnesota and two counties in northeastern South Dakota. North Dakota is a large rural area where Veterans from the Ft. Berthold area would travel 6 hours one-way to Fargo.

Harold Lindsay, Claudia McGrady, Ken Buatala

When a Veteran arrives to the event he/she is triaged to see how the Department of Veterans Affairs can best serve them. Some Veterans are a little overwhelmed when they first arrive so the triage serves as a welcome and a way to personally assist them. Services at the

outreach event support Veterans in many different ways. A Veteran can come in with their medical records, file a compensation claim and be rated all in the same day. "this was the case with Claudia McGrady, states Ken Buatala, VA rating specialist and co-organizer of the event. "Claudia and her husband were meticulous in keeping medical documentation that assisted in processing her claim promptly. It was a very rewarding experience to help Mrs. McGrady with her claim."

Other events during the outreach event included a special program for Women Veterans with an emphasis on women's health care and compensation benefits. One special piece of the program is a medal ceremony in recognition of the women's service. During the medal ceremony, women Veterans are recognized with a Department of Veterans Affairs medal and women Veterans coin. "You can visibly see how proud these Women Veterans are when we hold the medal ceremony. Many are touched by the recognition they receive, states Glenda Trochmann, Women Veterans Program Manager.

The Homeless Veterans Program and Vet Center were also represented at the event along with various National Service Organizations and county Veteran service officers. All provide a needed service to those Veterans a long way from Fargo. "In order to improve access, we continue to open new community based outpatient clinics in North Dakota, but believe going to the Native American Veteran population on the reservation, serves a need for those Veterans who have a hardship in traveling to a local VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic or to the Fargo VA Medical Center. These Veterans proudly served their country and need to have the opportunity to use the benefits they deserve," states Dale DeKrey, Acting Medical Director, Fargo VA Health Care System, "we are honored to provide this outreach to them."

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe - Vacancy Announcements
Visit www.standingrock.org for online employment application and instructions.
• Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
• Office Assistant (2) - LIHEAP
• Senior Water Distribution/SCADA Technician
• Water Distribution/SCADA Technician (2)
• Water Treatment/SCADA Technician
• Tobacco Prevention Coordinator

Vacancies announcements for other employers on Standing Rock:

- Prairie Knights Casino (30) www.prairieknights.com

- Grand River Casino (10) www.grandrivercasino.com
- Sitting Bull College (7) www.sittingbull.edu
- United Tribes Technical College (53) www.uttc.edu
- Sitting Bull School (5) www.sittingbull.k12.sd.us
- Standing Rock Schools (9) www.standingrockschools.com
- McLaughlin Public Schools (18) www.mclaughlin.k12.sd.us
- Wakpala Public Schools (2) www.smee.k12.sd.us
- Rock Creek Grant School (2) www.rockcreekschool.org

Permanent Supportive Housing for Native American Veterans

On July 12, the Fond du Lac Reservation held the Grand Opening for their brand new veterans Supportive Housing facility.

10 rental units of Permanent Supportive Housing for Native American Veterans that was just dedicated by the Fond du Lac Band in MN.

Congressman Ami Bera

Western Region

Congressman Bera (D-7th/CA) Will Hold Veteran Summit in Rancho Cordova, CA

From Keaton Riley, in the Office of Congressman, Ami Bera:

"Dear Friends of Veterans, I want to start by thanking all of you for everything that you do for veterans. I am also very excited to announce that our office will be hosting a Veteran Summit event this summer. The date will be Tuesday, August 20th from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM. It will be at Rancho Cordova City Hall (2729 Prospect Drive, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670). The event will be free of charge and provide a wide array of services and information for veterans and their families.

The Veteran Summit Event will have two parts: a veteran focused town hall with Congressman Bera (6:00-7:00) and a large veteran resource fair (4:00-6:00). During the town hall Congressman Bera will discuss how our office can help veterans and give a legislative update on veterans' issues. This will be followed by a Q&A where the Congressman can listen to veterans and veteran service organizations' concerns and ideas.

The resource fair is where we really need all of your help to make it an excellent resource for veterans. We want to provide access to as many services as possible including, but not limited to: health services, counseling services, job training, education, claims and benefits. Any organization looking to help veterans, we want to give them a place.

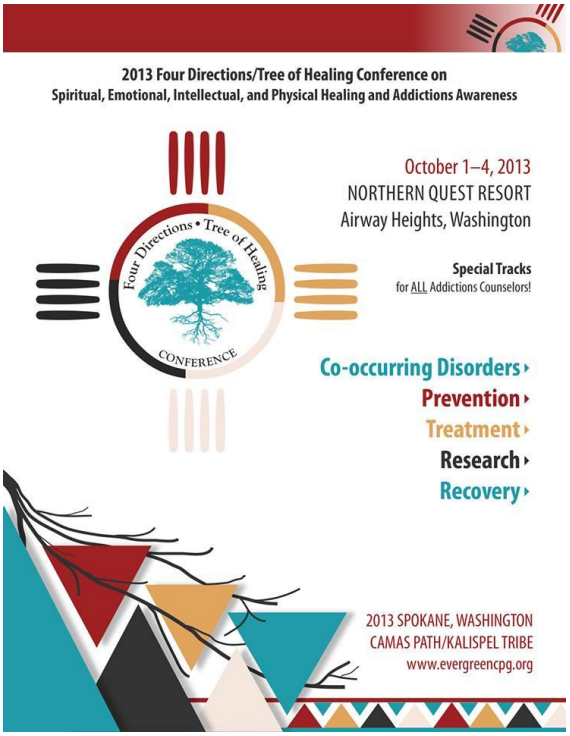
All those who are interested please e-mail myself, Keaton Riley, at keaton.riley@mail.house.gov. Please include the name of your organization, a contact person and contact information, followed by a one or two line description about services your organization can offer. Also please pass this along to other veteran service organizations that may be interested. Our office will provide all veterans at the event a full list of service organizations with a description of each for veteran's future use. A flyer for the event will be coming soon.

This is an event that the Congressman and our office are very excited about. I think it will be an excellent resource for veterans and give the Congressman the opportunity to listen to constituents who have made many sacrifices for our country. With your help I know it will be great. I

look forward to hearing from you. All the best, Keaton" Field Representative and Case Worker
Congressman Ami Bera CA07 Keaton.Riley@mail.house.gov - 916-628-0561

2013 Four Directions/Tree of Healing Conference ~ Northern Quest Resort, Airway Heights, Washington

2013 Four Directions/Tree of Healing Conference on Spiritual, Emotional, Intellectual, and Physical Healing and Addictions Awareness. There will be special tracks for ALL addictions counselors



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VA Mental Health Summit – Boise, August 14

From Dr. Mark Bondeson, Chief of Behavioral Health, Boise VAMC

"Dear Community Partner, you, or a representative of your organization are cordially invited to participate in the upcoming VA Mental Health Summit on August 14, 2013 from 8:30a to 1:30p at the Boise VA Medical Center. Event details and additional information can be found in the attached files. [To receive these files, contact Terry Bentley at Terry.Bentley@va.gov] Please RSVP with you or your representative's name, and also the top two breakout sessions you are interested in attending while at the Summit. The breakout sessions offered can be found in the attached agenda. Please RSVP to Josh Callihan by email at Joshua.callihan@va.gov or by phone at (208) 422-1054 no later than July 19, 2013. You may also get with Josh Callihan for additional question about the Mental Health Summit. Look forward to seeing you there, Dr. Mark Bondeson, Chief of Behavioral Health, Boise VA Medical Center

Native American Veterans Association's First Annual NAVA Summit – Long Beach, CA – August 7/8, 2013

Native American Veterans Association

Pacific Clinics Training Institute
ADVANCING BEHAVIORAL HEALTHCARE LEARNING

The *Native American Veterans Association* (NAVA) will be hosting their first annual veterans summit. It will take place at the Hilton Hotel in Long Beach (701 W. Ocean Blvd.) 90831. To register, call (562) 826-5373 or email summit@navavets.org. For hotel registration information, call (562) 983-3400 (code: NAVA).

The 1st Annual Native American Veterans Association (NAVA) Summit will present up-to-date information for VETS and their families about dealing effectively with readjustment issues and how and where to get help. Leading experts will share proven and effective methods on how to keep fit – mentally and physically; where to find employment and training opportunities and which techniques and skills are needed to sustain and strengthen veterans and their families.

The NAVA 2013 Summit will bring together Native American community agencies, Veterans Affairs, Health Services, Veterans Service

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Organizations, Mental Health Providers and Tribal Representatives throughout Southern California; literally everyone whose mission is to serve Veterans. NAVA is dedicated to help our Veterans reintegrate into the community, discuss how to take full advantage of Federally mandated services and where to find opportunities set aside specifically for Veterans and their family members.
NAVA salutes the 2 million veterans who are returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan and acknowledges their lives have been changed by war. Our commitment is to address what communities are doing collectively to assure that veterans and their families can be assisted during their transition and reintegration in the community. Continuing education credits will be provided by Pacific Clinics Training Institute.

NAVA is a strong advocate for Veterans, a source of relevant information and a connection to vital resources for Veterans and their families. NAVA assists Veterans and dependents when applying for Federal, State, and County benefits and all other rights to which they are entitled in the most expedient manner possible.

CALVET HOME LOANS

California Department of Veterans Affairs - CalVet Home Loans

Calvet can help you get pre-approved for your home purchase. A preapproval confirms that you are eligible and financially qualified for a specific loan amount. Knowing the size of your loan will help you in selecting a home and negotiating your purchase. You can start the pre-approval process by submitting an inquiry online at www.calvet.ca.gov/homeloans or you can download the application and submit it by mail, fax, or email. Once you have obtained a pre=approval, you will know how much you can borrow and be ready to purchase your new home. For more info, contact (866) 653-2510 or email - LOANAPPS@CALVET.CA.GOV

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Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs

Veterans Family Trail Run/Walk – Keizer, OR

Time: Race will start at 9am follow by awards at 11 and an After Race Family Event at 11:30
Location: Keizer Rapids Park 1900 Chemawa Rd N, Keizer, OR 97303
Event Description: Veteran's 5K Family Trail Run/Walk
Purpose: All net proceeds from the run will benefit the 2013 Veterans Stand Down- A health and wellness fair for Veterans. Veterans and their families' members from Oregon are invited to attend at no charge to learn more about the benefits/entitlements they have earned from their dedicated service in the military (many Veterans are unaware of benefits earned).
And the 2014 ODVA Women Veterans Conference-Women Veterans throughout the state of Oregon are invited to attend this Bi-Annual Conference free of charge. A variety of workshops on veteran's benefits/entitlements, women Veteran health issues and employment/job seeking information.
Course: Thru Keizer Rapids Park Trail System
Entry Fees: Adults 16 and up $30. Service members and Veterans $20. Youth 16 and under $5.
Registration:
This race is limited to **300** participants.
Award ceremony at 11:00am
Award category to 3 male and top 3 female
Point of contact: Rosy Macias- 503-362-9911/ rosa.macias@va.gov

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Yuba-Sutter Standdown – Marysville, CA, August 22, 23, 24, 2013

For more information, see the flyer below or check out the website: http://www.yubasutterveteransstanddown.org/

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Returning Veterans Project
free counseling and other health services for returning veterans and their families

Oregon National Guard
CITIZEN. WARRIOR. DEFENDER OF FREEDOM.
Courage and Commitment

2013 Annual Veteran Suicide Prevention Conference September 20, 2013

Sponsored By: Returning Veterans Project & Oregon Army National Guard
With Support from Portland VAMC Suicide Prevention Team

Conference Topics: Oregon suicide data in comparison to the rest of the country; myths about suicide and military culture; suicide prevention safety plans, and identifying treatment options available for Veterans and Service Members. CEU's Applied For

Location: Camp Withycombe Clackamas, OR
When: Friday September 20, 2013 8 am - 3 pm
Cost: $25 for Registration, Free CEU's and CATERED BREAKFAST/LUNCH by Panini 'Amore Free CEU's

Register after 7/15/13 @ **www.returningveterans.org**

Southwest Region

SAVAHCS
Southern Arizona VA Health Care System

Southern Arizona VA Health Care System Annual Gathering of American Indian Veterans

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend **our 7th Annual Gathering of American Indian Veterans** Event **September 22, Sunday, 2013** at the Casino del Sol Ballrooms/Conference Center. Booth application forms will be sent in August. Hope to see you in September!

For more information, contact: Phyllis Spears, MS RN - American Indian Veteran Program Coordinator/HBPC RN Case Manager – SAVAHCS - 3601 S 6th Ave, Tucson AZ 85723 - 520-629-4960 - Cell 520-343-4452

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Share Your Story, Poetry, Essay and Visual Art in *RED INK* Magazine

On June 20, 2013, Simon J. Ortiz, Regents Professor of English and American Indian Studies at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona, addressed Veterans, their families and friends, and Veterans' Providers at the Southwest Region Veterans Benefits Summit, in Tuba City, Arizona. Ortiz is the Managing Editor of *RED INK* Magazine: An Indigenous American Indian and Tribal Community Publication. He asked Veterans to share stories, poetry, essays, and visual art in *RED INK* by contacting him at 480-965-7999 or 602-438-9325. He also can be reached by eMail at Simon.Ortiz@asu.edu or sjo527741@msn.com. He is a Veteran of the U.S. Army and the Vietnam era between 1963 and 1966. He was hospitalized at VA medical centers four times for alcoholism treatment and rehabilitation.