



Florida Veteran

Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida, Inc.

1226 Wing Road SW, Palm Bay FL 32953

www.vvof.org - 321-453-7498 – E-Mail Drwassmer@Yahoo.com

April 2010

Volume 9 - Issue 1

Florida's 23rd Annual Vietnam And All Veterans Reunion

Sunday, April 18th The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall, The Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom Tribute Panels Walls will be escorted from Brevard Community College Cocoa Campus, Clearlake Road at 10 am. Be there an hour earlier for line up. We are going to need help at the Wall Escort selling T -Shirts, flags, and help with the parking lot control. If you would like to help, please contact Greg at 321-501-6896 or e-mail at vets2gether@cfl.rr.com.

BCC has always been a big supporter of the Reunion and they said we could use their parking lot forever if we clean it up when we are done, so please help police it up before you pull out. There will be coffee & donuts available that morning for a donation courtesy of the USA River Rats. More than 1500 motorcycles and vehicles took part in the escort last year and several joined in along the way. The escort route will be South on Clearlake to 520, East to US 1 and South to Parkway Drive in Melbourne, should arrive about 11am at Wickham Park. At the back pavilions the VVB will host a covered dish picnic, grilling hamburgers & hot dogs to feed the many volunteers there to help set up the memorial displays. Please bring a covered dish or snack foods to share. Anyone with large drink containers are asked to please bring them filled with iced tea, lemonade, Kool-aid or even water to share with the many hot & thirsty workers. We will have plenty of cups, plates and napkins. There is so much to do, but with everyone pitching in it is easily accomplished. The sign-up book will be at the Wall Set-up, please remember to volunteer some of your time throughout the week.

Opening Ceremony is Monday evening April 19th starting with the Wreath presentations at 6 PM with the guest speakers starting at 7:00pm and will feature the presentation of colors, several speakers who support the Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion, a rifle salute and taps. The memorials will be open to the public 24 hours a day through April 25th.

It will be a busy week and we will need lots of help this year to set up the tents, generators and light trees.

The Tentative schedule of events is listed to the right.

2010 Tentative Schedule of Events:

Sunday - April 18
10:00 AM ---- Wall Escort from Brevard Community College Cocoa to Wickham Park
12:00 PM ---- Covered Dish Picnic and Wall Set Up

Monday - April 19
6:00 PM ---- Presentation of wreaths
6:45 PM ---- Florida Air Academy Marching Band
7:00 PM ---- Opening Ceremony at the Wall

Thursday - April 22
6:00 PM ---- Doc Holiday
7:00 PM ---- Bone Dog Band
8:30 PM ---- Doc Holiday
9:00 PM ---- Mammoth Band

Friday - April 23
12:00 PM ---- Doc Holiday
1:00 PM ---- Two of Diamonds
2:00 PM ---- Doc Holiday
2:30 PM ---- JQB Band
4:00 PM ---- Doc Holiday
4:30 PM ---- Absolute Blue Band
6:00 PM ---- Doc Holiday
6:30 PM ---- Michael J. Martin
7:30 PM ---- Doc Holiday
8:00 PM ---- Open Fire Band
9:00 PM ---- Doc Holiday
9:30 PM ---- Viva Rock Band

Saturday - April 24
10:00 AM ---- Line Up for the Massing of the Colors Back of Amphitheater
11:00 AM ---- Opening Ceremonies / Massing of the Colors
12:00 PM ---- LZ Helicopter Landing
1:00 PM ---- Two of Diamonds
2:00 PM ---- Doc Holiday
2:30 PM ---- SweetWater Junction Band
3:30 PM ---- Patience Mason, at the Wall Pavilion - Recovering From the War - PTSD
4:00 PM ---- Doc Holiday
4:30 PM ---- Caitlin Wehrly
5:30 PM ---- Suncoast Vietnam Vets "The Last Patrol"
6:00 PM ---- John Steer
6:45 PM ---- Doc Holiday
7:00 PM ---- Michael J. Martin
8:30 PM ---- Doc Holiday
9:00 PM ---- Viva Rock Band

Sunday - April 25
10:00 AM ---- Church Services By Rev John Steer
10:30 AM ---- Patience Mason, at the Wall Pavilion - Recovering From the War - PTSD
11:00 AM ---- Doc Holiday
11:30 AM ---- Open Fire
12:30 PM ---- Doc Holiday
1:00 PM ---- Absolute Blue
3:00 PM ---- Doc Holiday
4:00 PM ---- Michael J Martin
6:00 PM ---- Melbourne Municipal Band at the Wall
7:00 PM ---- Closing Ceremony at the Wall

Monday - April 26
9:00 AM ---- Cleanup Wickham Park and Wall Take Down

Brought to you by the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, Inc.

PLEASE - NO COOLERS, GLASS OR PETS IN REUNION OR MEMORIAL AREA

Brevard, Inc.

PLEASE - NO COOLERS, GLASS OR PETS IN REUNION OR MEMORIAL AREA

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

An article published by the American Legion in December draws attention to a relatively new concept in the American criminal justice system concerning the effects of PTSD and mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) that was inflicted on many servicemembers and veterans who served overseas.

A rising number of state and local criminal courts have recognized this as one of the "invisible injuries" that may affect how these citizens transition back to American society. The courts and criminal defense attorneys are acknowledging that if criminal behavior is driven by psychological injury, whether PTSD or TBI, the servicemember or veteran deserves the help they need from the country that sent them to war.

The first local veterans' court appeared in Buffalo, N.Y. Others now operate in Orange County and San Diego Calif.; Tulsa, Okla. and parts of Alaska, Illinois, and Pennsylvania.

In some jurisdictions special veteran courts have been established and others have assigned veterans to serve as mentors for fellow veterans facing conviction for crimes. These mentors arrange appointments for VA services and probation officers use information received from the VA to inform judges on what role these injuries may have on the veterans' and servicemembers' criminal behavior. Some of the courts use this information to address the underlying problems for veteran offenders, including unemployment and homelessness.

These veteran courts cost less money than incarceration and more importantly they may save the lives of those who have served our country. Given the sacrifices our veterans and servicemembers have made, legal advocates such as Mr. Brockton Hunter, a criminal defense attorney in Minneapolis, are urging judges and prosecutors to consider a "therapeutic response" rather than to convict these people if they have an opportunity to get the help they need. Judges today are handing down more constructive sentences to troubled veterans rather than prison terms.

However, PTSD or TBI cannot be "get out of jail free" cards, which is a legitimate concern for prosecutors. Before treatment can replace jail time, veterans must take responsibility for what they have done, admit they have a problem and commit to get the help they need.

The veteran court concept is relatively new and long overdue. It is one that the Coalition welcomes and supports. Many of our members know of fellow veterans and servicemembers who could have benefitted from a system like this when they returned from combat in the past.

"Together Then.....Together Again"

**Don Wassmer
President**

Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida State Coalition

The Vietnam and all Veterans of Florida State Coalition would like to recognize the following members/organizations for awards that were presented at our Annual Banquet held this past January. Florida Dustoff Association - Organization of the Year, Leo "Doc" Williams - Veteran of

The Year, Denise Wassmer - Member of the Year, and WHOG/Blackcrow Broadcasting of Daytona Beach - Business of Year.

In addition, our 2010 executive board members are: Don Wassmer, President, Robert Neitzel 1st Vice President, Leo "Doc" Williams 2nd Vice President, Denise Wassmer, Secretary and Jacque Earrusso, Treasurer.



As the time for our 23rd Annual Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion approaches I have given much thought to what that event means to us. I know that if I asked that question of ten different veterans I would get ten different versions regarding why they attend the reunion and what it must mean to them. I know, we all come to visit with old friends, some that we haven't seen since last year; then there are those who come for a good time, you know, the bands, the beer, and the comradeship they experience even with those they don't know personally; and some come just to renew their hearts and souls for the coming year; and the list of reasons goes on. But there is a common thread that runs deep within this group of veterans that gathers each year in Wickham Park. We all come to pay our respects to our fallen brothers and sisters and to those who are unaccounted for.

As well as the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard I also belong to several other veterans' organizations. I have recently received my copy of the Veterans of Foreign Wars magazine. In that March, 2010 issue, they discuss the efforts that VFW National is making to work with veterans organizations in both Russia and China to encourage those governments to open their archives in an effort to resolve MIA issues from the Korean Conflict, the Cold War, and Vietnam. It appears that this effort may produce results where government-to-government contact has been ineffective. Let us hope so. As I read this article, I thought

about how we are part of a long line of soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and others who have been willing to "risk it all" since the birth of our great nation to be sure this country remains the "greatest land on earth." There has never been

a shortage of patriots in this country, and our current involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan proves that. We owe a debt of honor to those who came before us and to those

who are coming after us. Having said that, I for one, will stop during this reunion event and pay my respects to all of those who have fallen in the defense of this country and to all of those whose resting places are "known but to God". It is the least I can do.

Floyd Merckle
VVB President

The Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard---About Us

A small group of Vietnam veterans in Central Brevard started to meet in 1985 to help each other to deal with lingering issues from the Vietnam War. In 1986 it developed a philosophy and a purpose to attract other Vietnam vets and formally organized. The primary goal was to assist other veterans. The camaraderie was the glue that developed into a program to help those with PTSD symptoms and the concomitant problems associated with it such as substance abuse and homelessness.

An area of great concern was the POW/MIA unresolved problem and the actions of the government to deal with it honestly. It is still a frustrating matter that we continue to pursue.

Within two years, the VVB organized and hosted its first Vietnam Veterans Reunion. This event eventually became famous throughout the country and today is *the* premier event of its kind. After the Gulf War it became evident that the problems faced by Vietnam veterans were not much different than those faced by subsequent generations and we began a systematic effort to welcome all veterans into the VVB. We changed our name in 2000 to reflect that commitment at that year's reunion and by 2003 the Vietnam Veterans of Brevard officially became the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard (we still abbreviate to VVB to, well, to abbreviate).

From the start efforts were made to find a place for distressed veterans to go to regroup and get back on their feet. The story cannot be told in this brief synopsis but suffice it to say, we stumbled our way to it. In fact, we did it ourselves and the hard work and perseverance of those who got it off the ground cannot be understated. We call it the Veterans Transitional Facility and since 1990 it has helped thousands of local vets, which include their families, get back on track. Today the program houses 20 vets and their family members at any given time and sets the pace for a smooth transition back into the mainstream of life. Those that have taken advantage of the opportunity never forget.

Our Reunion depended on various organizations to provide the sacred centerpiece, a mobile Memorial Wall. Getting those commitments coordinated were sometimes nail biting scary. In 2005 we came close to not having one; so we decided to build one. In less than a year, with the committed efforts of several local businesses, Brevard

citizens, a laid off vet and other VVB volunteers we had our own Wall on display at our Reunion in 2006. In addition, we make The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall available for other events throughout the country.

Those are the stars of the VVB but in no way are the only services we offer to the veteran community here in Brevard and even beyond. We have a Color Guard and Rifle Team

who manage to come together for local events and memorials in spite of the fact that they must coordinate their own work schedules to accomplish those duties. We provide veterans to speak to school students about the experience of war firsthand, beyond what they find in the history books. There is a mobile museum available for community events where citizens can touch the experience; even smell it. Our newsletter has been published since day one and is the source for other events, projects and activities in which we and other veterans groups are involved.

So what about membership? The most common theme heard at reunions for not joining is—I'm not a Vietnam vet. But that isn't a requirement to join. We are an organization dedicated to the support of our local *veteran community*. A veteran who served in peacetime, a veteran's family and any citizen that wishes to lend hands-on support of veterans is part of that community. The Vietnam veterans who started the VVB never intended it to be an exclusive club. They recognized that family members and friends were also affected by the times in which the War took place and as we grew, new generations and their families were welcomed as their own Eras unfolded.

The only requirement for membership in the VVB is a \$15 check and a desire to support your veteran community. Many members will assist at the reunion. Others find they're best suited for other activities. So if you like what you've read so far, give our Membership Chairman a call (back page) or fill out the application below and join; even if it's just to stay informed through the newsletter.

For more about us and our work check out the website at www.vietnamandallveteransofbrevard.com

VVB Change of Address

Please note the VVB has a new mailing address:
Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard, Inc.

1125 W. King Street
Cocoa, FL 32922-8505

The Post Office did away with PO Box 929 and we had to change addresses please do not use the PO Box anymore.

The Wall Report

Well it has been a busy time since we got home from our last event. Well the Memorial Wall has completed its refurb and is ready to begin this year's events. Of course the first

will be here at the Reunion and we will do 12 other events this year. We have 2 trips to Wisconsin, Texas, twice to Mississippi, Nebraska, West Virginia, Ohio, twice to North Carolina, and we will be Andersonville Ga. for Rolling Thunders Welcome Home.

Be sure to check our website [HYPERLINK "http://www.TravelingWall.us" www.TravelingWall.us](http://www.TravelingWall.us) for exact locations and escort information. As always wear your reunion shirts so we can spot you while we're on the road...

See you on the road.

Greg Welsh
Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall Manager

More About The VVB Wall

The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall is owned and trademarked by the Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard. It is the centerpiece of our annual reunion. Our first reunion in 1988 featured a Wall listing 83 Florida veterans still missing from the Vietnam War. It was constructed by inmates at the Brevard Correctional Institution, who at that time formed a veterans group. Unfortunately the group dispersed not long after it formed when inmates were scattered throughout other institutions to make way for a juvenile detention center.

For subsequent reunions the VVB used Walls from other organizations. Frequent scheduling problems mandated our own Wall and that came about in 2005 with the establishment of a Wall Committee. This had been anticipated as early as 2002 when our first donation toward the construction of a Wall was made. Greg Welsh enlisted help from his boss at Kennedy Space Center to estimate the extent of the project and the race was on. A Wall had to be ready by the 2006 Reunion because the VVB could not book one.

Finding a builder was next and several companies were considered. Material samples were made and transported back and forth by VVB members for testing and quality. Greg, Ralph Earrusso and Ray Johnson cut costs by sanding and taping the panels in a requisitioned garage. That's when Greg lost his job at the Space Center and became the Wall Manager.

Met-Con, Inc. of Cocoa constructed the Wall in 2005 donating a considerable portion of their labor. Precision Powder Coating of Melbourne did the finish work with McCotter Ford of Titusville installing the highlighting of the names. Those three businesses stretched the entire length of Brevard making this labor of remembrance truly a countywide project. It wasn't planned; it just worked out that way. A Truck and Trailer acquired by the VVB served as storage and transport.

Sixteen hours before the 2006 reunion the Wall was still being carefully arranged in the trailer. It met its send off time with only hours to spare, but it got there and the reunion went off without a hitch. The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall is still being improved as it sets to make its 4th appearance at our reunion.

Each year there are more requests for the Wall from organizations throughout the country to display at their events. "Everywhere we go," says Greg Welsh, "The VVB is thanked for building it and making it available for people to see."

FLORIDA DUSTOFF ASSOCIATION



**Dedicated Unhesitating Service To Our
Fighting Forces**

“So Others May Live”

On behalf of The Florida Dustoff Association I would like to take a moment to say “Welcome Home.” The Florida Dustoff Association is comprised of Dustoff Medics, Pilots, Corpsmen, Donut Dollies, Med-Evacs and many whom themselves have been “dusted-off” from the Vietnam and Gulf Wars. Please stop by our campsite in Camp Ground B at this year’s coming reunion if you are one of the above to say hello, or are interested in joining our organization. **ALL ARE WELCOMED AT DUSTOFF!!**

This past years elected officers are: Robert Neitzel President, Brett Brookins Vice President, Elizabeth Brookins, Secretary, Roberta Neitzel, Treasurer and Doc Combs, Chaplin.

I am proud to announce that In January, the Executive Board of Florida Dustoff Association was present at The Vietnam and All Veterans State Coalition Annual Meeting and Banquet in Altamonte Springs to accept the Coalitions Organization of the Year Award, and their Veteran of the Year Award was presented to, none other than our own, Leo “Doc” Williams.

I would like to take a moment to congratulate this past years recipients of awards in our organization: Member of the Year – Roberta Neitzel, Certificate of Appreciation for Service to Dustoff – Tony Cartledge, Tom Bubb and Bob Gallagher, and Feeding of the Troops – Elizabeth Brookins and Jim “Patches” Watson.

We are currently in the process of completing our website – www.DUSTOFFFL.ORG, so please feel free to take a peek, but please remember, it is currently under construction.

Robert Neitzel -President Florida Dustoff Assoc.
1st Vice President VVOF

“WHEN I HAVE YOUR WOUNDED”



USA RIVER RATS

We are a group of individuals, military and civilian, who have come together to foster the care and welfare of Americas Military Service Veterans and support the veteran care facilities in the Brevard County area. We will be raising monies to be donated to those deserving individuals and organizations. Every member has an equal say in the operation of our organization. We are a not-for-profit organization whose purpose is to help veterans, active duty personnel and to foster community relations.

We had another successful year in 2009 and are looking forward to a great year for 2010. We have numerous events going on throughout the year, so please check our website at usariverrats.com for details on upcoming events, as well as other pertinent information. We will be hosting the VVOF meeting on April 3rd at the VFW Post 4228 in Titusville.

On April 21st, during the reunion, we will be hosting our annual **STEAK DINNER which includes STEAK, BAKED POTATO, BEANS and a ROLL at CAMPSITE: B76 at 6:00 pm – Music will be provided by Bone.** Advanced tickets are being sold and the number of tickets available is limited, so if you are interested, please call Chappy at 321-403-4518. When the tickets are sold, no more reservations will be accepted. Hope to see you there.

If you have questions or comments you can contact any of our officers. Our 2010 Officers are:

President	Al "Big Al" Diaz	321-863-0575
1 st Vice	Rose Fantaccione	321-403-5875
2 nd Vice	Eric Ackler	321-863-7415
Treasurer	Norm Pamplin	321-228-6576
Secretary	Michelle Ollice	321-323-4382
Chaplain	Francesca Aberns	321-501-2847
Sr Sgt @ Arms	Skip Aberns	321-431-3352
Asst Sgt @ Arms	George Golden	321-693-4281
Advisor	Arthur Dudley	321-258-3098
Advisor	Steven Worrell	321-698-0009
Historian	Francesca Aberns	321-501-2847
Quarter Master	Ken Wakefield	321-693-4762
Service Office	Chuck Weston	321-258-2744

New VA Facility in Florida-- A ground breaking ceremony was held recently to announce a Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) grant award and start of construction of Operation Home Front, a new **28-bed, women-only supportive housing facility** in Cocoa,

Florida for homeless female Veterans who have substance use and mental health disorders and their children. Operation Home Front will be the only female Veteran supportive housing in Central Florida that will provide a comprehensive array of integrated services including mental health, substance abuse, medical, housing, educational/vocational, financial, legal, spiritual, and post-traumatic stress disorder services on site.

VVOF needs your Assistance

The State Coalition has been putting forth an effort to support our troops by contacting corporations and placing public service announcements in local papers requesting donations for our fighting forces. It would be appreciated if our membership would join our effort in helping by collecting items our soldiers can use. We are looking for personal toiletry items such as brushes, combs, soap, flip-flops, trial sizes of shampoo, toothpaste, etc., to send over seas. Items or monetary donations (personal or from organizations) would be greatly appreciated. We do have a 501(c) 3 being used if an organization is donating money. If you and your local organizations are interested, please contact Roberta Neitzel, Treasurer of Florida Dustoff Association at 386-424-1989. *All your efforts would be greatly appreciated!!*

KWA Mid-Florida Chapter 173 News

Commander's Message

This is going to be short and sweet. I want to say "Thank You" to all those that have answered the call and renewed their membership. It shows me and our officers that you care what happens to YOUR chapter. Your officers will do everything in their power to keep the chapter active and strong. For those that have not yet renewed, please do so and keep YOUR chapter number one in the State and one of the biggest in the Country. We will help you in any way we can if you just give us a chance. The paperwork that was sent to each of you, please sign and send back ASAP so that we can stay on top.

I look forward to seeing you at the regular Chapter meeting on the 18th at the VCFW Post 2093 starting at 11:00 am. I'll have more info coming in the Commander's Message next month.

Again, thanks for all your support, Yours in comradeship.

**Yours in Comradeship
Chuck Travers**



1st Cavalry Division Association Florida Chapter

FLORIDA CHAPTER EXECUTIVE BOARD AND OFFICER
ORIENTATION MEETING – MARCH 14, 2009

The Florida Chapter was chartered in 1987 and has four sub-chapters or Troops that meet quarterly in four different locations in Florida. The Florida Chapter meets quarterly around the state and the location and dates of these meetings are announced in *The Charging Saber*.

The Chapter holds a mid-year meeting/reunion in the January/February period of each year. The next mid-year meeting will be held 5-7 February, 2010 at the Clarion Hotel and Conference Center located at 250 SR 436 in Altamonte Springs, Florida. The deadline for Reunion and Hotel Reservations for this meeting are due to Tom Campbell by Tuesday, 5 January, 2010. The Chapter regularly attends the Vietnam and ALL Veterans Reunion that is held in Wickham Park in Melbourne each Spring (22-25 April, 2010). Annual Chapter dues are \$10 per year and Lifetime Chapter member dues are \$150.

The Chapter publishes a newsletter, *The Charging Saber*, that is published bi-monthly to inform members of Chapter activities and also of activities in the Troops. The public relations advisor for the Chapter is Bob Johnson, rdj5cav@earthlink.net.

The Florida Chapter administers a Scholarship Fund that provides a \$400 scholarship to children of Chapter members. This is overseen by elected Trustees that receive, process and award the scholarships from a separate fund from the regular Chapter funds. In 2009 the Chapter provided \$2,000 in scholarships to 5 eligible children.

The Florida Chapter has hosted three 1st Cavalry Division Association reunions: The 41st Reunion in 1988 and the 47th Reunion in 1994 were both held in Orlando, and the 61st Annual Reunion in Jacksonville in 2008. Additionally, the 19th Reunion of the Association was held in Miami in 1966.

Upcoming Chapter meetings are as follows:

Florida Chapter "A" Troop - President - Walt Smith - D 2-7 CAV 5090 Ironwood Trail, Bartow, FL 33830 (863) 644-7207 tarbucket67@yahoo.com
A Troop meets on the first Saturday of each month but will be switching to quarterly meetings. Location and times are to be determined. Contact Verlin "Buck" Rogers for additional information bucknger@yahoo.com.

Florida Chapter "B" Troop 'Space Coast'
Mailing address: 400 S. Sykes Creek Parkway., Merritt Island, FL 32952 President - Bill Franklin, C 1-7 CAV (321) 255-0868 SWFWWF@aol.com B Troop meets quarterly at area restaurants in the 329 and 327 area codes. The meetings are usually on Tuesday evening. Spouses are encouraged to attend. Contact Ken Baker, (321) 632-4928, bakevet@aol.com for additional information.

Florida Chapter "C" Troop President - Woodrow N. Hines, Sr. - A 1-7 CAV2465 Bronco Dr., St. Cloud, FL 34771 (407) 957-6917 wnhinessr@juno.com
C Troop is located in Central Florida area surrounding Orlando and Orange County and meets at the Orange County VFW Post 2093 located at 4444 Edgewater Drive in Orlando on the 2nd Saturday of each month except June. These meetings begin at 1100 hours. Contact Tom Horas, (407) 894-5213, for additional information.

Florida Chapter "E" Troop 'Black Hats'
<http://www.seahog.org/cav/> President - William D "Stretch" Hungerford 1st Signal 15 Desert Candle Dr., Lehigh Acres, FL 33936 (239) 369-7871 wdhung@earthlink.net
E Troop's meetings are generally held at 1300 hours on the fourth Saturday of each month from August - May at Buddy Freddie's Family Restaurant which is located at the intersection of old US 41 and Bayshore in North Fort Myers. E Troop held its Christmas Party on 13 December. Contact Andy Dulay for additional information at AirCav@Comcast.net.

Call To Action! Help us Pass H.Res 11 248 Cosponsors Co Sponsors are still needed for this Legislation

H.Res 111 continues to gain momentum in the House of Representatives with 248 co-sponsors to date and the indication of more to come. Unfortunately, the support of over 35% of the Congress has not translated to action in the Rules Committee. So, while we continue to work on the Rules Committee, specifically its Chairperson Louise McIntosh-Slaughter, we are also working on another option.

This option requires 218 co-sponsors. We can't do this without your support and continued efforts. If your Congressional Representative is not a co-sponsor, please contact their office and

request they sign on to H.Res 111. If you have already called, once, twice or even ten times, please call again. Don't stop calling until they sign on. Have family and friends call and ask them to keep calling. The call is free! All it takes is a few minutes of your time.

Call the toll free number 1-866-727-4894. That's the Capitol switchboard. Ask for your congressional representative. Once connected ask for the staff person who handles military matters. If you've tried speaking with the military aide, asking to speak to the Chief of staff or legislative director. Please call or fax, letters mailed require too much screening time.

Request that they sign on by Veterans Day to show their support for the men and women who served and continue to serve this country.

Emphasize that you as their constituent want H.Res 111 calling for a House Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs voted on and passed by the House of Representatives.

Remind them that much new information has surfaced, since the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs concluded 1993, requiring Congressional attention. There has been no action on the follow-up recommendations made by that committee. Additionally, volumes of information has surfaced on the World War II, and Korean and Cold War aspect of the POW/MIA issue, and new information continues to surface on Vietnam era POW/MIAs. This information was unavailable to previous committees.

Please contact your Congressional Representative this week asking they co-sponsor H. Res 111 and don't forget to contact Rules Chairperson Louise McIntosh-Slaughter at

2469 Rayburn Bldg, Washington D.C. 20515

1-866-727-4894

Direct to Office 202-225-3615 Fax 202-225-7822

Why We Need H. Res 111? For additional information and documents supporting the case see www.nationalalliance.org/legis.documents.pdf

STRESS RELIEF IN CRIMINAL COURT

By Tom Philpott - December 26, 2009

A rising number of state and local criminal courts are recognizing that combat veterans who commit crimes may suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder or mild traumatic brain injury. If such is the case, they may need – and deserve – health care more than jail time.

The trend is seen in jurisdictions that have established special veterans courts, and in states that have passed legislation to raise awareness among judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys that combat-related stress may be causing some veterans' misbehavior. When PTSD is confirmed, judges today are handing down more constructive sentences to troubled veterans than stints in

prison. The first local veterans court appeared in Buffalo, N.Y. Others now operate in Orange County and San Diego, Calif.; Tulsa, Okla., and parts of Alaska, Illinois and Pennsylvania.

Rep. Bob Filner, D-Calif., chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, led a roundtable discussion on these courts in mid-September to tout their benefits.

For veterans facing conviction, these courts assign other veterans to serve as mentors, arrange appointments with VA services, or appoint public defenders who encourage vets to tell their stories in court. Some of these courts also work to address underlying problems for vet offenders, including unemployment and homelessness. Filner said veterans courts cost significantly less than incarceration. Long term, they save money and, "more importantly, they save lives," he said.

Less costly still is legislation like Minnesota passed last year. Hunter and another attorney, Guy Gambill, drafted and pushed the bill through, inspired by California's passage of a similar measure in 2007. It modified Minnesota's sentencing statute to encourage courts to deal more appropriately with psychologically injured veterans. Probation officers conducting pre-sentencing investigations now must consult with VA and inform judges on what role PTSD or TBI may have played in offenses committed by servicemembers or veterans.

Given the sacrifices our veterans have made, legal advocates such as Hunter are urging judges and prosecutors "to take a look at this issue with fresh eyes." Where they find "underlying psychological injury," courts should consider "a therapeutic response" rather than convictions and sentences that will follow veterans throughout their lives.

The message is being received. "With lower level offenses, more judges are deciding it doesn't make sense to convict these people if they have an opportunity to get the help they need," Hunter said. Offenders often enter no-contest pleas and agree to get treatment, thus avoiding convictions.

These initiatives, combined with news accounts of "invisible injuries" inflicted on thousands of troops overseas, have changed the way many veterans who break the law are handled.

"There's a bunch of Petri dishes in courts all across the country where people are experimenting with different approaches," said Brockton D. Hunter, a criminal defense attorney in Minneapolis. "The commonality is recognizing that when veterans' criminal behavior is driven by a psychological injury, whether PTSD or TBI, we owe them the help they need as the country that sent them to war, because these veterans are every bit as injured as the guy who lost both legs to an IED blast."

But PTSD or TBI can't be "get-out-of-jail-free" cards, which remains a worry for prosecutors, Hunter said. Before treatment can replace jail time, veterans need to take responsibility for what they've done, admit they've got a problem and get the help they need.

Tom Philpott, a former Coast Guardsman, has written about veterans and military personnel issues for more than 30 years.

STATE OF FLORIDA

Important Upcoming Legislation:

These bills were just recently introduced in the Florida House/Senate – I think we all need to keep an eye on these and contact your representatives **if you support them**, please remember, this is not an endorsement, but for informational purposes only:

H.B. 313 introduced by Holder, Ambler, Hooper, Horner, Sachs, Snyder. Joint Resolution Disabled Veterans' Property Tax Discount: Proposes amendment to s. 6, Art. VII & creation of s. 31, Art. XII of State Constitution to expand availability of property tax discount on homesteads of veterans who became disabled as result of combat injury to include those who were not Florida residents when they entered military & schedule amendment to take effect January 1, 2011. Effective Date: Not Specified As of 2/18/10 in Economic Development & Community Affairs Policy Council.

S.B. 348 introduced by Dean. General Solicitation of Funds/Veterans' Organizations [GPSC]; Exempts certain veterans' organizations from requirements to file registration statements with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. EFFECTIVE DATE: 07/01/2010. As of 12/9/09 Referred to Military Affairs and Domestic Security; Commerce; General Government Appropriations.

S.B. 644 introduced by Governmental Oversight and Accountability, Transportation and Economic Development Appropriations, Justice. General Direct-support Org./Department of Military Affairs [WPSC]; Authorizes the direct-support organization to support the processing of requests from the Soldiers and Airmen Assistance Program or similar programs. Requires the direct-support organization to submit its annual budget and financial reports to the DMA. Requires the financial committee of the board of directors of the direct-support organization for the DMA to review the financial transactions of the program quarterly, etc. EFFECTIVE DATE: 07/01/2010. As of 2/19/10 Committee Substitute Text (C2) Filed.

H.B. 781 introduced by Burgin. Memorial Veteran Benefit Offset for Military Widows and Widowers: Urges Congress to amend federal law to eliminate offset for Dependency & Indemnity Compensation administered by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs imposed on benefits received by military widows & widowers through Survivor Benefit Plan administered by U.S. Department of Defense. Effective Date: Not Specified As of 2/5/10 in Economic Development & Community Affairs Policy Council

S.B. 1824 introduced by Gelber. General Misrepresentation of Military Status [CPSC]; Prohibits a person from falsely representing himself or herself as a member of or representing the U.S. Armed Forces or organized militia for the purpose of solicitation of charitable contributions or participation in a charitable or sponsor sales promotion. Provides criminal penalties, etc. EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/01/2010. As of 2/17/10 Referred to Commerce; Criminal Justice; Criminal and Civil Justice Appropriations

S.B. 1972 introduced by Aronberg. General Veterans [GPSC]; Redefines the term "service-disabled veteran" for purposes of the Florida Service-Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise Opportunity Act. Revises the eligibility requirements for a veteran's residency in the Veterans' Domiciliary Home of Florida. Revises the eligibility requirements for a veteran's admittance into a licensed health care facility that is operated by the FDVA. EFFECTIVE DATE: 07/01/2010. As of 2/25/10 On Committee agenda - Military Affairs and Domestic Security, 03/02/10, 10:15 am, 37 S

Important info to pass on for those that are currently receiving social security or planning on applying in the future...

The amount of your Social Security check depends on the level of income you had while working. If you are not in a top bracket of income, and therefore have your SS check amount maxed out already, then the benefit we are about to tell you about can boost the size of the check you get every month. This is not an automatic benefit, you must ask for it !!

Please share this with anyone who's had active duty service prior to January 2002 and is planning for retirement. In a nutshell it boils down to this: You qualify for a higher social security payment because of your Military service, for active duty any time from 1940 through 2001 (the program was done away with in January 2002).

Up to \$1200 per year of earnings credit are credited at time of application - which can make a substantial difference in social security monthly payments upon your retirement.

You must bring your DD-214 to the Social Security Office - and you must ask for this benefit to receive it!

Soc Sec website: <http://www.ssa.gov/retire2/military.htm>

This is something to put in your files for when you apply for Social Security down the road. It is NOT just for retirees, BUT anyone who has served on active duty prior to January 2002.

If you are already receiving social security and not receiving this additional benefit, please make an appointment with your local social security office and bring your DD-214 with you to apply for this benefit. **ONE MORE TIME - this benefit is not automatic, you must ask for it!**

Shinseki: US Will Fix Broken VA System

February 22, 2010
Associated Press

CHILLICOTHE, Ohio --- Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki said he's making it a top priority this year to tackle the backlog of disability claims that has veterans waiting months --- even years --- to get financial compensation for their injuries.

Among those waiting for relief are sick Vietnam and Gulf War veterans to whom the former Army commander feels an allegiance and who have long felt ignored.

"I'm a kid out of the Vietnam era, I just have enough firsthand knowledge of folks walking around with lots of issues. If there's a generation of veterans that have had a tough row to hoe, it's the Vietnam generation," said Shinseki, 67, in an interview with The Associated Press as he traveled through snowcapped mountains in Ohio and West Virginia between meetings with veterans.

Shinseki, a former Army chief of staff who had part of a foot blown off when he was a young officer in Vietnam, was unapologetic about a decision he made in October to make it easier for potentially 200,000 sick Vietnam veterans who were exposed to the Agent Orange herbicide to receive service-connected compensation.

He said it was the right thing to do, even though the claims volume will grow and it will likely take about two years to get the average claim-processing wait time back to where it is today, about five months.

There's a chance Shinseki could also extend similar benefits to veterans from the 1991 Gulf War. A task force he appointed to look at their health is expected to release a report this week, which could eventually lead to thousands of additional sick Gulf war veterans receiving health care and compensation.

Shinseki said he's often questioned why 40 years after the Vietnam war and nearly two decades after the Gulf War his agency is still trying to resolve issues related to those veterans' illnesses.

Vietnam veterans with B-cell leukemias, Parkinson's diseases and ischemic heart disease no longer have to prove their illness are the result of their military service. Shinseki determined after reviewing a study by the Institute of Medicine that the illnesses should be presumed to have come from the veteran's war service, making it easier for them to receive financial compensation. The VA currently presumes that twelve other illnesses are linked to Agent Orange are exposure.

Shinseki said he's looking ahead to make sure Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries don't have similar problems getting financial compensation.

"I'm also asking the question, how do we ensure that 20 years from now, that future secretary isn't answering questions about PTSD or TBI, sort of the signature injuries of this war in the same way that I'm having to look back and try to address these issues," he said.

In recent years, resources have been poured into clearing the backlog, but problems persist. Besides the time it takes to process a claim, there are frequent complaints about lost paperwork and inconsistency in how claims are processed.

To start looking for solutions, Shinseki's agency instigated pilot projects in Pittsburgh; Little Rock, Ark.; Providence, R.I.; and Baltimore that he says he's watching closely. His plan is to reduce the backlog by 2015, which means a veteran wouldn't wait more than four months for a claim to be processed.

The VA and Pentagon are also working together to create a universal electronic system with the goal of solving many of the claims challenges. Some of the collaboration is expected to be rolled out in 2012, although it could take years before the system is fully in place.

Shinseki, who became the Army's chief of staff in 1999, is no stranger to change. In that role he sought to modernize and better prepare the Army for urban combat. In his current position, he's highlighted the challenges veterans face, such as unemployment, suicide and homelessness.

In small gatherings in Chillicothe and Charleston, W.Va., he listened to complaints about the red tape veterans face and explained the work he's doing to fix the claims backlog.

"We're going to fine-tune each of the pieces and then put that engine back together again and look for better processing by the end of the year," Shinseki said during a morning meeting with employees at the VA hospital in Chillicothe.

The employees listened quietly, not touching the pastries and juice put out for them, as he told them matter-of-factly that he knew the Agent Orange decision was going to add new claims.

"This backlog I just told you I'm going to knock down, I added to it, I know that," he said.

Later in the morning, he told veteran advocates he wants vets to see the VA as an ally.

"In time, I'm hopeful this relationship will create a culture of advocacy between VA and veterans so that there is that sense, that trust between veterans that VA is working to their benefit," he said.

IMPORTANT INFO FOR FLORIDA VETS CURRENTLY USING THE TAMPA AND ORLANDO VA CENTERS: The Orlando VA Medical Center will soon be separate from the Tampa VA and your **CORRECT** contact information is needed for the Orlando VA Data Base.

Check with your team or next appointment to ensure that they have everything correct so that they will have a green light when it is time for Orlando to take over. Please pass on this info to anyone you may know that this may affect.

Submitted by an Unknown Author

I have been at numerous Veterans functions over many years. Sometimes I participate in the conversation and discussions, whereas other times I listen and observe. Based on my observations, I have determined that there is no **I, WE, OR ME** in the term **US VETERAN**. You may ask yourself, what is meant by that comment? Well, here it is in a nutshell.

When attending these functions, many veterans organizations want to know what is in it for me, what is in it for my organization, how much funding will be designated to our group? The point is, it shouldn't be thought of in this manner, it should be what is in it for **all veterans** – how does this affect **all veterans** and how can we help **all veterans**. The issues that affect all of us should not be brought to the lowest level of I or me, but **ALL OF US**.

I for one do not care how much money my organization can make from the sale of a vanity license plate, but I am interested in how much money goes to all veterans from the sale of a vanity license plate. I believe the monies should be going to transitional programs for our homeless vets, meal programs for our hungry vets as well as other programs designated to aid all veterans, whether they served in WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Enduring Freedom, etc. I also strongly believe that when our legislators are addressing veterans issues, specially when it comes to reducing benefits that all must take heed and not only listen, but pass on the information and make sure the information is disseminated among all veterans groups. We all served together, fought together and we are now all fighting for the rights of veterans – shouldn't this be a united front? The old adage **UNITED WE STAND – DIVIDED WE FALL** pertains to all of us. If we as organizations cannot unite on issues pertaining to all of us, and cannot determine the best way to fund these issues, then we fail as organizations as our goals in most of our charters and/or by-laws have fallen to the wayside and have been long forgotten. Isn't this the reason we started these organizations and became involved in the first place? So next time the discussion becomes **I, WE or ME**, speak up and ask what about **US – the US VETERAN**.

INTERESTED IN JOINING THE COALITION?

There are many benefits to join the Vietnam and All Veterans State Coalition. A voice of many is heard above a voice of one. The coalition meets quarterly at various locations in the State of Florida and we discuss and disseminate information pertaining to veterans and their benefits. To obtain information regarding joining the coalition either as an Organization, or an individual, please visit our website at VVOF.ORG.

If you, or your organization is already a member of the coalition, and there has been a change in officers, please immediately advise the coalition of these changes, including mailing addresses, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers so we may keep you up-to-date with all pertinent information.

FAIR USE NOTICE: This newsletter contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. The Vietnam and ALL Veterans of Florida, Inc. are making such material available in our efforts to advance understanding of: POW/MIA, Military, Veterans, Health, democracy, and scientific issues, etc.

We believe this constitutes a 'fair use' of any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material in this email is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for research and educational purposes. For more information go to: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>

All inquiries, questions or comments may be directed to the President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer. All articles printed in our newsletters are strictly the opinion of the submitter and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Vietnam and All Veterans of Florida State Coalition or its member organizations. Updated September 17, 2006

THE VIETNAM TRAVELING MEMORIAL WALL



About Our Wall

Our Wall is a 3/5 scale of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC, it stands six feet tall at the apex and covers almost 300 feet from end to end. The Memorial Wall is sponsored by The Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard (VVB). Work to build our Wall was started in April of 2005. The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall was completed and first shown to the public April 24, 2006.

This Traveling Memorial stands as a reminder of the great sacrifices made during the Vietnam War. It was made for the purpose of helping heal and rekindle friendships. The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall also allows people the opportunity to visit loved ones in their home town, who otherwise may not be able to make the trip to Washington.

The names on The Wall were painstakingly researched from five different data bases and cross-referenced with the Department of Informational and Organizational Reports (DIOR) in Washington, DC, and is one of the most correct and up-to-date traveling wall in the country.

Feel free to take a look at our website www.travelingwall.us, read about what we have to offer. Please contact us with any questions you might have in regards to The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall coming to your town.

Copyright The Vietnam Traveling Memorial Wall 2006-07



Officers 2010

Don Wassmer - President (VVB)
Denise Wassmer - Secretary
1226 Wing Rd SW
Palm Bay FL, 32908
321-726-6752 - Home
drwassmer@yahoo.com

Bob Neitzel 1st VP & Bert (VVB & Dust-Off)
2304 Woodland Drive
Edgewater, FL 32141-4320
386-424-1989 Home 386-527-5445 (cell)
Hdwizrd7@aol.com

Doc Williams 2nd VP & Linn (Dust-Off)
3098 Golden View Lane
Orlando, FL 32812
407-227-5763
Dragin52@hotmail.com

Ralph Earrusso, Past President (VVB)
Jacque Earrusso, Treasurer
4905 Secluded Way
Merritt Island, FL 32953-7967
321-453-7498
Daydrmr333@aol.com

Organizations

1st Cavalry Division Assn, FL Chapter
2465 Bronco Drive
St Cloud, FL 34771-7955
johnfaklgoil@hotmail.com

Florida Dustoff Association
2304 Woodland Drive
Edgewater, FL 32141
Hdwizrd7@aol.com

Mid Florida Korean War Veterans Ch
#173333 Los Altos Way, Apt 104
Altamonte Springs, FL 32714
President Charles Travers
H 407-862-0773
Gunship442@aol.com

Military Order of the Purple Heart
Department of Florida
P.O. Box 1576
Auburndale, FL 33823-1576
john.douglas2@va.gov

National Vietnam War Museum
3400 N. Tanner Road
Orlando, FL 32826-3433
mbornemann@cfl.rr.com

Native American Veterans Information
5170 Patricia Street
Pt St John, FL 32927
ribold@bellsouth.net

USA River Rats
22 Legion Lane
Cocoa, FL 32922
alzzenbelzzz@msn.com

Rolling Thunder Florida
17616 Veterans Way
Micanopy, FL 32667
moegin@bellsouth.net

Some Gave All, Inc
3810 Murrell Road #168
Rockledge FL 32922
Bill Cox, President kewico48@aol.com
nojefo37@aol.com

Space Coast War Dog Association
PO Box 254315
Patrick AFB, FL 32925
lp32120@aol.com

Suncoast Vietnam Veterans of
Pinellas County
PO Box 28141
Kenneth City, FL 33709

United Veterans All Armed Forces USA
5555 Barton Drive
Orlando, FL 32807
WLS332@aol.com

Vietnam and All Veterans of Brevard
P.O. Box 929
Cocoa, FL 32923-0929
vets2gether@cfl.rr.com

Vietnam and All Veterans of Central FL
3400 N. Tanner Road
Orlando, FL 32826
Hoiyuan1@aol.com

Vietnam Brotherhood
PO Box 1073
Venice, FL 34284
vcarter@hughes.net

Vietnam Veterans of America State
Council
PO Box 212348
Royal Palm Beach, FL 33421-2348
Jim Rufino 321-255-0917
Jim.Rufino@yahoo.com

Vietnam Veterans of America #96
241 Lake Ella Drive 850-224-8838
Tallahassee, FL 32303-5572

Vietnam Veterans of America #127
PO Box 3133
Stuart, FL 34995
VVAPLL1@aol.com

Vietnam Veterans of America #594
2651 SE 19th Ave
Cape Coral, FL 33904

VVA #755
PO Box 451904
Kissimmee, FL 34745-1904
ForthGunner@aol.com

VVA #831
4650 Knoxville
Cocoa, FL 32926
jimrufino@yahoo.com

Vietnam Veterans of Florida Association
2304 Woodland Drive
Edgewater, FL 32141-4320
Hdwizrd8@aol.com

Vietnam Veterans of South Florida
1740 NE Media Ave
Jensen Beach, FL 34957
vungtauqm2@aol.com

Vietnam Veterans of Wakulla
21 Shoreline Drive VV Year 92/93
Ochlockonee, FL 32346
USMC-VIETNAM-GRUNT@att.net

**Vietnam and All Veterans
of Florida, Inc.**
1 226 Wing Rd SW
Palm Bay FL, 32908

NEWS PLEASE EXPEDITE