



The Veterans Observer

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Senior enlisted leaders push expansion of basic needs allowance to help address food insecurity in military!

By: Svetlana Shkolnikova, *Stars and Stripes*

Senior enlisted leaders threw their support behind a proposal to widen military family eligibility for a basic needs allowance on Wednesday, urging lawmakers to approve the measure to help lessen food insecurity.

The Defense Department in its fiscal 2025 budget request is asking Congress to expand the pool of troops that qualify for the monthly allowance by raising the household income cutoff from 150% of federal poverty guidelines to 200%.

Few servicemembers and mostly only those with large families are taking advantage of the stipend in its present form, which became law in 2021, senior leaders told members of the House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday. Troops must have at least one dependent to be eligible.

In the Army, only 16 people are receiving the allowance, according to Sgt. Maj. Michael Weimer. One of them, an E-4 rank that lives at Washington's Joint Base Lewis-McChord, had to have nine dependents to qualify for the supplemental.

"I had to have my team do the calculation on the whiteboard for me to truly understand between federal poverty

guidelines and gross household income, and I felt like I needed an accounting degree to truly understand how to get soldiers to take advantage," Weimer said.

Raising the income ceiling would mean that a family of eight would need to make under about \$105,000 to qualify for the stipend instead of the current threshold of about \$80,000. An average allowance today is more than \$1,000 per month.

Pentagon officials said the



(Zachary Foster/U.S. Air Force)

eligibility expansion would cost \$245 million and help decrease servicemember reliance on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as the food stamp program.

Nearly 26% of active-duty troops are considered to be food

insecure, meaning they skip or cut meals or go hungry instead of eating, according to a 2023 study by the Rand Corp. think tank that examined 2018 data.

It is unclear if a larger group of candidates for the basic needs allowance will have the impact the Pentagon intends. A recent survey by the nonprofit organization Blue Star Families found that the allowance is having a limited effect so far on alleviating hunger.

"Our limited, but novel, data

shows that this new policy may not yet efficiently target food insecure military families, though this may change as more families become aware of the program," the survey states. "Many families who could benefit are unaware of the program."

Chief Master Sgt. John Bentivegna of the Space Force said it was "unacceptable" for a military family to not have enough food on the table. But he said educating families, specifically young enlisted members, about budgeting and healthy eating was also an important part of addressing food insecurity.

"From a financial perspective, we have to make sure service members have at least enough money in the bank account so they can budget appropriately to make sure that they are buying the right foods and having the right access to the foods," Bentivegna said.

The basic needs allowance is a helpful tool, he said, though it needs to be coupled with a broader effort to boost overall compensation and pay for troops who are stretched thin financially.

Master Chief Petty Officer James Honea of the Navy also advocated for that approach and said sailors and other service members need to be paid salaries that are reflective of their unique roles and responsibilities.

"That young 19-year-old that's working at the Starbucks is not the same thing that we're asking our 19-year-olds who are serving in harm's way," he said.

(Continued on Page 2 See Defense)

(Defense Continued from Page 1)

The Defense Department is proposing a 4.5% pay raise for troops next year but lawmakers have made clear that they also want to see targeted pay hikes that specifically focus on junior enlisted servicemembers.

The White House has resisted proposals to make dramatic pay changes until the Defense Department completes its quadrennial review of military compensation.

Honea said on Wednesday that the review should result in pay

models that account for the difficult work performed by troops and perhaps align with compensation models for first responders, who often receive hazard pay for dangerous work.

"If we look after the well-being [of troops], and we pay our people appropriately, then we won't have to worry about the basic needs allowance or be overly concerned about food insecurity," he said. "If we pay them appropriately, they'll figure out how to feed themselves."

Congress considers doubling number of Afghanistan SIVs

By: The American Legion

Congress is considering the FY24 State Department Funding Bill, which would significantly increase the number of Afghanistan Special Immigrant Visas (SIV), which would essentially double the number of combat interpreters and others who could find safety in America.

The State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations bill authorizes an additional 12,000 Afghan SIVs. It also extends the time that applicants can apply for the program by one year, until Dec. 31, 2025.

"This will be a huge win for our Afghanistan allies," American Legion National Commander Daniel Seehafer said. "Since April 2021 when the U.S. announced it would withdraw from Afghanistan, Congress has only authorized 12,000 additional visas until now. While this process should have been expedited, we are grateful for the prospect that more of our Afghanistan allies will be safe now."



Photograph courtesy of The American Legion.

Congress authorized an additional 8,000 SIV visas before the withdrawal and then another 4,000 in December 2022.

The American Legion has long supported Afghanistan allies who assisted U.S. troops during the 20-year war. Resolution No. 16: Recognition for Afghan and Iraqi Combat Translators was passed by the National Executive Committee in 2018, and still is in effect today.

"Because of the tireless work from The American Legion and our many friends and supporting organizations, we are about to double the visa authorization in this bill," Seehafer said. "Without question we still need to do more, but a victory in a larger fight is something to celebrate. I urge all Legionnaires to contact your member of Congress today and encourage them to support this bill."

To contact your member of Congress, visit The American Legion's Grassroots Action Center and encourage them to support this legislation.

The American Legion Internet Observer

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Still Serving America

Do you have an ongoing program or activity that serves your community?

Do you have a friend or relative that goes above and beyond the call of duty to help others?

Send an e-mail to chief1921@comcast.net and tell us what your story is or how you or this person is demonstrating that they are Still Serving America, but must be received by the 10th of the month, the month prior.

In submitting your information, please be sure to include your full name, address and telephone number. There's a good chance the information you send us will make it into The Internet Observer.

Connected and galvanized

By: Laura Edwards

Each March, more than 58,000 attendees from all corners of the trucking industry meet at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville for the Mid-America Trucking Show, the largest of its kind in the world. Exhibitors showcase both the past (the American Truck Historical Society) and the future (alternative-fuel, carbon-negative truck stops) of the industry. A trucker can find everything they need in 2024, from specialty bedding, to trucking-oriented media (including Wreaths Across America Radio), to health and wellness products, to support and charitable organizations such as Truck Stop Ministries and Truckers Against Trafficking.

ArcBest Corporation, a logistics company, estimates that 10% of the trucking industry is staffed by military veterans. Some veteran-founded businesses had exhibit booths, and a number of war-period and service-branch hats and shirts were worn by attendees. ArcBest and its subsidiary ABF Freight are participants in the Department of Defense's (DoD) SkillBridge program, which connects civilian employers with soon-to-be-discharged servicemembers and spouses via training classes (such as for trucking licenses). SkillBridge is an important focus of the national Task Force Movement initiative to connect the military-connected community with jobs in understaffed sectors of the economy (such as trucking), which The American Legion has a steering-committee seat on. According to a March report, thanks to the efforts of the coalition of businesses, federal agencies, training institutions, labor unions and more, 750 transitioning servicemembers and veterans were credentialed and began trucking jobs in 2023.

The two companies took out a large booth, offering veterans candy and branded freebies, a seating area and information on employment opportunities. Their display vehicle – one of dozens scattered through the show, both indoors and in parking lots – made their purpose clear: "Thank You For Your Service."



The ArcBest/ABF booth welcomed veterans in one of the multiple exhibition wings. (Photo by Laura Edwards)

Another large booth area belonged to FASTPORT, a national career-placement company that also works with TFM. Executive Director of Workforce Development & Government Programs Dave Harrison, who spoke at the credentialing summit at the 2023 American Legion national convention, said in Louisville that they were there to maintain a network of connectivity between employers, drivers, CDL schools, social media and more in the industry – "we believe in that connectivity." One major objective was to talk to employers on how to engage and retain veteran drivers. Harrison added that setting them up for a future as operators is a "Holy Grail accomplishment: you're making them a business owner."

FASTPORT President Brad Bentley said the trucking industry has about 10-12% more veterans than they think, because not all actively self-identify as such. He has been to every Mid-America Trucking Show held since 1989. "This industry was always patriotic, veteran-friendly," he continued. Another goal for FASTPORT at the show was to "make sure we keep (it) galvanized" so prospects aren't lost to other fields like IT. Bentley concluded that the company's presence in Louisville was a small, but important, part of connecting the military

community to trucking.

And not just veterans. Mike Richie is chairman of the Kentucky committee of Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, a DoD office. His group was at the show to talk to trucking companies about hiring National Guard and reserve members. He listed some of that community's virtues as employees: they are guaranteed to be drug-free; they receive training in leadership and other fields as they climb the ranks; and, hearkening back to the national-security component of TFM's focus, they "understand that people's lives are at stake."



Creating a safe space for women Veterans at VA

Supporting women Veterans with resources across VA

By: VA Assault and Harassment Prevention Office, appeared in VA News

The following story includes discussions of sensitive topics like sexual harassment and sexual assault. VA acknowledges it may be difficult to engage with this content. It is our priority to make our stories educational, where we can engage empathetically and thoughtfully with difficult content, when appropriate, to promote a culture that is safe, welcoming and inclusive for all. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual assault or harassment, support is available.

Over two million women Veterans live in the U.S., making them the fastest growing Veteran group. For over 100 years VA has given women Veterans access to a wide range of comprehensive health and gender specific care that supports their every stage of life.

Women Veterans can have unique health needs following their time in service and, unfortunately for some, additional support may be needed if they experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault. About 1 in 3 women Veterans tell their VA health care provider they experienced sexual harassment or sexual assault while in the military.

It is important to note that sexual harassment and sexual assault can happen to anyone regardless of gender. Both men and women can experience sexual violence.

How is VA creating a safe and inclusive environment for women Veterans?

VA has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual assault and sexual harassment, which means VA expects and actively works to create a culture free of such incidents. However, responding to sexual harassment and sexual assault is not enough. VA aims to achieve and sustain a proactively inclusive culture for all genders.

VA systematically carries out national harassment and sexual assault prevention and recovery strategies. We also outline ways to act if you see misconduct, which helps to ensure a culture of respect is maintained throughout VA.

VA's commitment extends to collaborative efforts across facilities where clinicians undergo specialized training to deliver trauma-informed health care, specifically addressing the needs of women

Veterans who have encountered military sexual trauma (MST) or intimate partner violence (IPV).

MST refers to sexual assault or sexual harassment experienced during military service. As with other forms of trauma, MST can impact women Veterans in different ways. VA provides free MST related mental health counseling and medical care at all VA medical centers and community-based outpatient clinics.

Wherever women Veterans receive care at VA, they should feel safe

VA also offers the Beyond MST Mobile App, a free, secure and private self-help mobile app created specifically to support the health and well-being of those who have experienced MST. Telehealth appointments are always an option for those not comfortable with in-person appointments.

IPV is a specific type of domestic violence that refers to physical, verbal, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as stalking, between intimate partners. Military service has unique psychological, social and environmental factors that contribute to elevated risk of IPV.

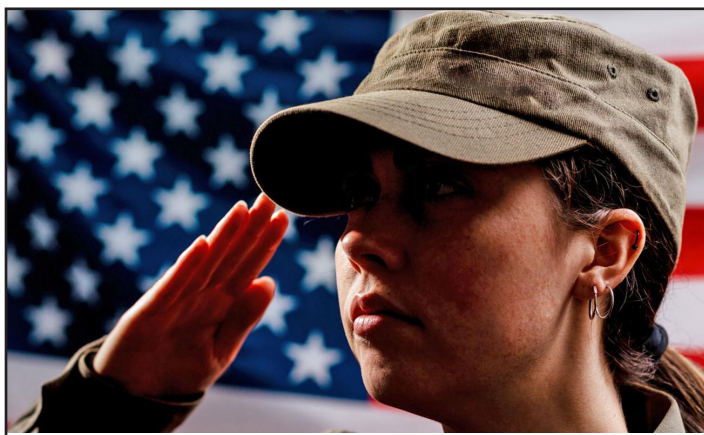


Photo courtesy of The American Legion.

In response, VA created the VA Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program (IPVAP), which offers guidance for healthier relationships between Veterans and their partners who may be experiencing IPV. The program provides confidential help through a local IPV coordinator who can offer safety planning guides and link women Veterans with VA providers. They also provide access to community-based support, domestic violence shelters, legal services and housing through VA's Homeless Programs Office if needed.

VA is committed to providing women Veterans with appropriate treatment and resources for their mental health needs. Wherever women Veterans receive care within VA, they should feel safe, confident and empowered during medical examinations. This fosters a safe environment, ensuring they receive the highest quality care possible.

Learn more about how VA creates a more welcoming environment free of harassment for all who rely on our services.

Join The American Legion



Help Our Nation's Veterans

A Message From Post 123 Commander Winter

The Veterans Observer, its who we are!

By: PDC Doug Winter, Commander Post 123

Congratulations on making it through the first calendar quarter of 2024. As a Post, we are at 65% membership goal. Thank you and keep up the good work.

Our Post 123 is growing and our adjutant, Larry Larsen, is doing a fantastic job at his new home, Home Lake Veterans Center. Larry has gone out and solicited donations of food and supplies for the Veterans. He has also presented the Veteran Center with a complete POW/MIA table. Great job Mr. Adjutant. With any luck, you'll see and hear more about Larry in The Veterans Observer, which will be out shortly. Larry is our resident VA knowledge reference specifically Grand Junction. For most questions regarding the VA, Larry has the answer or will do his best to get it. Should you want to reach Larry with a question, his email is: HM3larsen@yahoo.com or just send him an email that says, "Thanks Larry for the job you are doing at Home Lake."

In case you didn't realize it, any time a word(s) is in a different color i.e. The Veterans Observer, Larry's email, Department of Colorado, American Legion National headquarters address means I have linked to that page or person. You should be able to click on it and go directly there. You have probably noticed over the past year that I have been directing you to National for dues payment etc. The reason is that National is the home of all membership and this just shortcuts the Department as they are understaffed and being staffed by National personnel at this time. I can assure you the results are the same. Also, when you go to National, you'll be able to see all of the many programs the American Legion has to offer. To keep abreast and bring you the most current information and news, I receive two emails a day from National.

As we head into this quarter, the weather should be starting to

break (Yesterday hit 80 and today's high is predicted to be in the 40s with the possibility of snow) Some say it is "climate change" or others refer to the 100-year weather Panamanian. Whatever it is I hope you and yours are doing well.

A couple of comments about The Veterans Observer. I am happy to report that YOUR news publication is off to a great start. Why is it your (our) publication? The simple answer is "It's the Bengamin's Baby" Many years ago there was a similar publication that was applauded and received much acclaim. Over the years that publication just faded away. A couple of the "Old Timers" have a vision to restore it. Rather than jump through all of the hoops of buying a domain name, contracting with a hosting company, software development, email distribution, etc., they came to me. Since Patty and I have just been through all of those hoops and own 2TWR.com and Patty has designed and implemented our home page, it seemed like a win-win. I am a 35-year paid-up-for-life (PUFL), Patty is an American Legion Auxiliary life member, and we are both dedicated to Veterans. To give the publication a little more credence we call it The Veterans Observer, published by American Legion Post 123.

As Paul Harvey used to say, "Now you know the rest of the story." If you like the publication, pass it on, and if you have any input, contact our Editor Darrell at: chief1921@comcast.net.

At 2TWR.com we have three categories that we email to. Post 123, Kitchen Tips Pros, and Associates. As a Post 123 member, you will receive all emails. If you don't care to read the Kitchen Tips blogs and posts, please just delete them. CAUTION: Please do not unsubscribe as you will be permanently deleted from receiving American Legion Post 123 news and updates.

Increased disability rating for time in a hospital

From: VA News, Disability benefits, Special claims

If you spent time in a VA hospital or a VA-approved hospital for a **disability related to your military service**, you may be able to get a temporary 100% disability rating. With this increased rating, you may get added compensation for the time you spent in the hospital. Keep reading to find out if you may be eligible.

Am I eligible for a temporary 100% rating from VA?

You may be eligible for a temporary 100% rating if you meet one of the requirements listed here.

One of these must be true:

- You spent more than 21 days in a VA hospital or other approved hospital for a service-connected disability, or
- You were under hospital observation for more than 21 days at our expense for a service-connected disability.

What kind of disability benefits can I get?

You may be able to get a temporary increase in compensation for the time you spent in the hospital.

Example: A Veteran with a 40% service-connected disability rating for diabetes had to stay in a VA hospital after going into a diabetic coma. He needed to stay in the hospital for 25 days because of the coma and related infections. We raised his rating to 100% during his hospital stay. After he got out of the hospital, his disability rating went back to 40%.

How do I get these benefits?

You can file a claim online now to get a temporary 100% rating. You can also file by mail, in person, or with the help of a trained professional.

Note: If you weren't in a VA hospital, you'll need to submit your hospital discharge summary when you file your claim. The hospital discharge summary must show the length and cause of your hospital stay.

What if I have questions about these benefits?

You can call us at 800-827-1000. We're here Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET.

Legion urges Congress to boost quality-of-life funding

By: The American Legion

Congress is currently considering the FY24 Defense Appropriations Act, which would significantly increase the funding for numerous quality-of-life programs such as child-care services, base housing modernization and education aid.

The allocation of approximately \$824.5 billion within the bill, marking a significant \$27 billion augmentation from the FY23 enacted level, is the highest national defense priority. Foremost among these is the strategic countering of China, underscoring the urgency of fostering innovation within the Pentagon's operational framework. Additionally, the bill strongly emphasizes investing in initiatives to enhance the quality of life for service members and their families, affirming our commitment to the well-being of those who dedicate themselves to our nation's security.

American Legion National Commander Daniel J. Seehafer applauded the increase as a necessary step to improve quality-of-life aspects for servicemembers and their families, a key priority of the organization.

"The Defense Appropriations Act demonstrates a step in the right direction toward addressing many quality-of-life challenges facing our servicemembers and their families," Seehafer said.



Photo by Ken Scar

"Our servicemen and women, along with their loved ones, make tremendous sacrifices in service to our country. We must ensure we meet their needs for housing, childcare, food resources and more. I am grateful that Congress is significantly investing in military quality of life. The American Legion will watch closely to ensure our servicemembers and their families receive the priority they deserve."

The American Legion goes beyond advocacy when it comes to quality-of-life issues. In fact, its National Executive Committee

called for Congress to fund such measures back in 2016 via Resolution No. 85: Support for Military Quality of Life Standards. In 2022, the Legion created the BASE visit program, which aims to work with the Department of Defense on improving conditions for service members and their family members.

Those are a couple of examples of how The American Legion, bolstered by its 1.6 million members, staunchly champions the welfare of servicemembers and their families.

"We firmly hold that access to adequate housing, exceptional childcare and transformative programs are an inherent right for those who defend our nation from harm," Seehafer said.

VA offering updated COVID-19 vaccines

Including additional dose for Veterans 65 years and older

By: Dr. Jane Kim, Executive Director, Preventive Medicine, VA News

VA is offering updated COVID-19 vaccines for the 2023-2024 season, including an additional dose for people 65 years and older. The updated vaccines target more recent COVID-19 strains. Due to changes in the virus, it is important to get the updated vaccine.

Updated vaccines are available free of charge to VA health care employees and Veterans receiving care at VA.

Updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 shot eligibility

The following people should get an updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine:

- Anyone who has not yet received an updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine (available after September 2023).
- Anyone who has not yet received any COVID-19 vaccine should receive one updated Pfizer or Moderna COVID-19 vaccine OR two updated Novavax vaccines spaced three weeks apart.
- People with moderately to severely immunocompromising conditions may receive additional updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 doses if recommended by their provider.

- Additionally, for adults 65 and older: CDC recommends adults aged 65 and older receive one additional dose of an updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine if it has been at least four months since their last COVID-19 vaccine dose.

Adults who are younger than 65 are up to date after receiving one single dose of the most recent COVID-19 vaccine (the updated 2023-2024 Formula).

A VA health care provider can provide you with more information about COVID-19 vaccines.

You can also receive your updated shot at no cost to you outside of VA.

You can locate a vaccine site at [Vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) – Search for COVID-19 vaccine locations.

If you received your vaccine outside of VA, we encourage you to share this information with your VA health care team. You can do this by adding your vaccine information to your My HealtheVet health summary for your own records. To add your information, you'll need a premium My HealtheVet account. Learn more about managing your COVID-19 vaccine records online

**Department of Veterans Affairs
Eastern Colorado Health Care System
1700 N Wheeling St
Aurora, Colorado 80243
303-399-8020**

Departments	Scheduling Questions	Clinical Questions
Cardio-Thoracic	720-723-6392	720-857-2710
Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT)	720-857-5404	720-857-5571
Bariatrics	720-723-6363	720-723-4782
Urology	720-723-4775	720-857-5829
OBGYN	720-857-5701	720-857-5377
Vascular	720-723-6392	720-723-4780
Plastics	720-723-3271	720-857-4782
Breast	720-723-6363	720-857-4780
Orthopedics	720-723-6683	720-857-5580
Podiatry	720-857-5406	720-857-5577
Colorado Springs	719-227-4690	719-227-4432
Neurosurgery	720-723-6684	720-723-4782
General Surgery	720-723-6363	720-857-5816

For other concerns: Dial 303-399-8020 then

Press 1 for Pharmacy

Press 2 to make or change an appointment.

Press 3 to speak to a Nurse.

Press 4 for Eligibility and Registration

Press 5 for Billing Questions

Press 6 for Community Care and Mission Act information.

Press 7 for Veterans Crisis Line



VA Health Care Expands to Millions of Veterans

All Veterans exposed to toxins while serving can enroll in VA health care.

From: VA News

Beginning March 5, millions of Veterans are eligible for VA health care years earlier than called for by the PACT Act. Specifically, all Veterans who meet basic service and discharge requirements and who were exposed to toxins and other hazards while serving our country—at home or abroad—are now eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits.

Who is eligible?

In one of the largest-ever expansions of Veteran health care, 3 new groups of Veterans are now eligible to enroll directly in VA health care. You are eligible if you meet basic service and discharge requirements and if any of the following applies to you:

You served in the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, or any other combat zone after 9/11.

- You were deployed in support of the Global War on Terror.
- You were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty. This includes working with chemicals, pesticides,



A person fills out a form at an information booth.

lead, asbestos, certain paints, nuclear weapons, x-rays and more.

You don't need to be sick or file a claim to become eligible. All you have to do is show that you served in a location or operation—or participated in an activity—that could have exposed you to hazards. You can view more military exposure categories on VA's Public Health website.

Even if none of these descriptions match your service, you may be eligible based on your income. Bottom line: it's now quicker and easier than ever for you to enroll.

Why should you apply for VA health care?

VA provides the best and most affordable health care for Veterans in America. Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are proven to have better health outcomes than those who get their care elsewhere. That's because our clinicians know Veterans and often

are Veterans. And they know exactly how to help.

So, don't wait. Apply for the care you deserve at [VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT). Even if you don't need this care today, you might need it tomorrow, or the next day, or 30 years from now. It's quick and easy to apply. And once you're in, you have access for life.

Physical Evaluation Board Discharge Claims

From: Veterans Benefits Newsletter

On September 27, 2022, the United States District Court for the District of Columbia determined veterans of the United States Navy and Marine Corps whose final Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) occurred between September 12, 2016 and June 11, 2018 and who did not receive a medical retirement through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) may be entitled to a remedial PEB.

In accordance with the District Court's ruling, the Department of the Navy has established a Class Action Review Board (CARB) as a remedial PEB process for those impacted. To that end, the CARB is reissuing PEB findings for those identified as class members over the next 12-18 months.

Veterans who are impacted and desire further review of their PEB findings, must submit the Election of Options to the CARB/PEB by e-mail or U.S. mail within 240 days of the date of the notice letter, if the notification letter is dated between June 30, 2023 and October 19, 2023. If notified on or after October 20, 2023, Veterans must submit the EOO within 180 days of the date of the notice letter.

If class members do not want further review of their PEB case, no

action is required. If no review is requested, there will be no impact to your current status and benefits, to include your VA benefits.

Inquiries about the CARB or general information about the CARB may be directed to a CARB Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officer at peb_peblo_comms.fct@navy.mil or 202-685-6436.

For class members desiring legal advice or counsel regarding the Torres CARB, a government attorney is available for advice and counsel, free of charge, through the Department of the Navy's Office of the Judge Advocate General, Disability Evaluation System Counsel Program (DESCP). The DESCP may be reached at DESCP_TorresUnit@us.navy.mil or (202) 875-1198.

For additional information and the latest updates about the CARB please visit the CARB website: <https://www.secnaw.navy.mil/mra/CORB/Pages/CARB.aspx>

The logo for the American Legion, featuring a stylized American flag with red and white stripes to the left of the words "AMERICAN LEGION" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

New prostatectomy surgery is minimally invasive

Shorter time for patient recovery

By: Nate Schaeffer, Public Affairs Specialist, Houston VA,

On Feb. 23, Houston VA continued its expansion of minimally invasive surgeries by performing its first single-port robotic simple prostatectomy using the state-of-the-art da Vinci Surgical System.

For men with enlarged prostates, the surgical procedure restores normal urinary function by removing the obstructing part of the prostate.

Unlike the multi-port robotic system which enters the abdomen through four to six incisions, the single port robotic system requires only one incision and enters the body near the bladder.

“Previously, we had to enter the abdominal cavity to get where we needed to get to,” said Dr. Jeremy Slawin, director of Robotic Urologic Surgery. “You had to move the colon and bowels out of the way, and, for many patients, it can take a long time for their bowels to recover. They can also have nausea and pain, and that can lead to a longer hospital stay.”

The Houston VA robotic team with the new da Vinci Surgical System is pictured above.



Photo courtesy of VA

Desert Shield/Desert Storm and Iraq War Veteran Angelo Devine was the first Veteran to benefit from the new surgery, which was performed by Dr. Slawin and Dr. Michael Brooks, VA surgeons.

Just one incision? Let's do it!

“The doctor gave me the pros and cons of each surgery and left it up to me as to which way I wanted to go,” said Devine, who served in the Army for 34 years and retired as a lieutenant colonel. “The single port was just one incision, so I said, ‘Let's do it.’”

Bringing the new technology to Houston VA Veterans was years in the making and involved the hard work of staff across Houston VA.

“Houston VA has long been a nationwide leader for urologic robotic surgery. The single port robot allows us to expand our minimally invasive surgery offerings to Veterans while continuing to also be an essential part of surgical education for the next generation of urologic surgeons,” said Dr. Neel Srikishen, deputy section chief, Urology.

From around the state

Firestone welcomes Vietnam Veterans home

By: Rich Eskew, Past Post 1985 Commander

On March 29, 2004, officially recognized as National Vietnam War Veterans Day, American Legion Post 1985 in Firestone held a ceremony to recognize Vietnam Veterans for their service in that unpopular war.

Firestone Post 1985 and other local non-profits, Tru Community Care and Carbon Valley Community Center, organized the event to identify and present the Vietnam lapel pin and certificates to local veterans.

For the last three years the post has held this event and will continue to do so until the remaining Vietnam Veterans receive their official welcome according to Rich Eskew, Past Commander of Post 1985.

If you are a Vietnam Vet, or know of a Viet Vet, and have not received your lapel pin and certificate contact your local American Legion Post or you can call Legion headquarters in Denver at 303 366-5201.



More from around the state

Colorado Legion post brings Be the One to community

By: *The American Legion*

In addition to serving as finance officer for Neal Thomas Jr.-Centennial Post 209 in Colorado Springs, Colo., Legionnaire Jeff Heischman also volunteers his time with Veterans Trauma Court (VTC), a state- and grant-funded program that provides an alternative to incarceration for U.S. military veterans and active-duty military personnel with trauma spectrum disorders and/or substance abuse issues who have proven to be high risk and high need.

When tragedy hit the VTC, Heischman wanted to take his volunteer efforts a bit further. And that's when he turned into The American Legion's Be the One veteran suicide prevention program.

"They had just lost one of their veterans to suicide," Heischman said. "I was talking to the person that was in charge of the VTC, and I said, 'The American Legion has a program called Be the One. Maybe we can get together and have a seminar or symposium and get the word out and help other people.'"

The concept became reality on March 30, when Post 209 hosted a Be the One symposium for anyone in Colorado Springs wishing to attend and learn more about suicide awareness and Be the One.

Heischman said it was important to make the symposium a community, rather than post, event. "Colorado Springs has several military installations, and a lot of veterans retire here," he said. "And there are a lot of people that help veterans here in this area. So, we felt it would be a good idea to get as many people from the community that we could."

During the symposium, Heischman gave a presentation on Be the One, stressing how any individual can be the one to save a life simply by reaching out to a veteran they feel may be in crisis.

Post 209 Service Officer Brian Murphy, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and a Navy

veteran, shared personal stories related to mental health and also shared information about VA S.A.V.E. Training. The training focuses on four key facets:

- S - Signs of suicidal thinking should be recognized.
- A - Ask the most important question of all, "Are you thinking of killing yourself?"
- V - Validate the veteran's experience.
- E - Encourage treatment and expedite getting help.

Also speaking during the event was Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor Daniel Schreiter, who works with Resurgence of Life Suicide Awareness. A U.S. Marine Corps and Army Green Beret

combat veteran, Schreiter shared his own personal struggles and his path toward working to assist others. Around 55-60 people attended the symposium, "which was really a pretty good attendance for the date. Good Friday was the day before and Easter was the day after," Heischman said. "We will probably have another one later and pick a better date. But it was still a pretty good attendance, and it was a combination between veterans and (mental health) professionals."

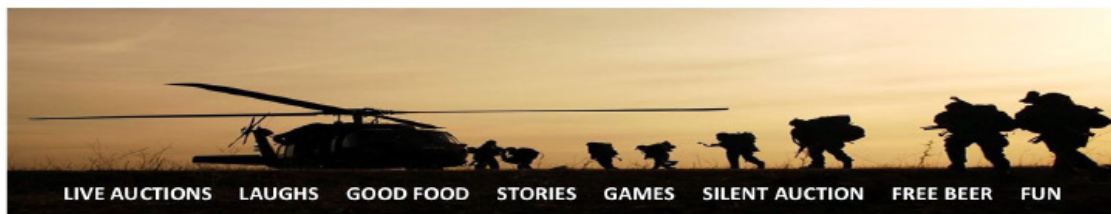
In addition to Post 209, the event also was sponsored by the VTC and Combat to Community, a nonprofit dedicated to addressing the insufficient support for military personnel transitioning or have already transitioned from active duty, specifically those dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder, military sexual trauma, traumatic brain injury and physical injuries incurred during service.

Heischman said Be the One's mission is why he wanted to bring the program to the rest of his community. "It's the concern of The American Legion and the concern about veterans helping veterans any way we can," he said. "And helping to prevent suicide in veterans is a great program."



Post 209 Facebook photo





2 COLORADO BANQUETS

Loveland - Saturday, February 24th

Embassy Suites Hotel

Denver - Saturday, April 27th

Crowne Plaza Hotel

Doors open at 4:30 PM

FREE BEER FROM COORS

Dinner served at 6:00 PM

Your choice - Steak or salmon

Live Auction at 7:00 PM

Tickets are just \$75 per person, or \$125 per couple,
Scan the QR Code and buy your tickets today!



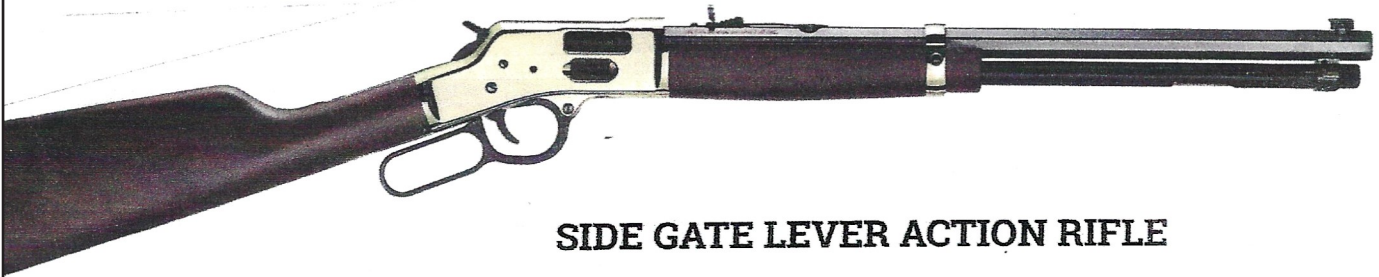
2024 GUN RAFFLE

AMERICAN LEGION PAUL C. BECK POST 23

2 WINNERS TICKETS 1 /\$20 OR 3/ \$50

DRAWING JULY 13TH, 2024. NEED NOT BE PRESENT TO WIN

Henry Big Boy Classic Side Gate 44 Mag. rifle. Retail value \$1,210



SIDE GATE LEVER ACTION RIFLE

Dan Wesson 357, 6 shot double action revolver with 36" holster

Retail Value \$725



For tickets mail check to

Post 23, PO Box 473758, Aurora, Colorado 80047

Tickets will be returned to you

DEPARTMENT OF COLORADO LEGION FAMILY

**105th Annual Convention of The American Legion - Department of Colorado
Sky Ute Casino and Hotel, Ignacio, Colorado – June 20, 2024 – June 22, 2024**

MEAL MENU

Deadline for registration**May 31, 2024****NOTE: Meals for American Legion Junior Auxiliary 10 years old and under at ½ price.**

Meal Description	Number of Meals	Number of Junior Meals	Total Cost of Meals	Check Amount	Check Number
<u>Friday, June 21st – Breakfast FREE</u> Fresh Cantaloupe and Honeydew Melon Wedges with a Yogurt Dipping Sauce Vanilla and Cinnamon French Toast, served with Maple Syrup Sausage Links or Bacon Choice of Orange, Apple, or Cranberry Juice				NA	NA
<u>Friday, June 21st – Lunch \$15.00 per person</u> BBQ Pulled Pork BBQ Shredded Chicken Yellow Squash Casserole Seasoned Waffle Fries Served with Sesame Seed Buns Cornbread, whipped butter, Coleslaw Chef's Choice Fresh Garden Salad with assorted dressing Coffee, Hot Tea, Water-All Day Iced Tea					
<u>Friday, June 21st – Dinner \$15.00 per person.</u> 20 Assorted Pizzas Wings Bread Sticks Caesar Salad Dessert: Cookies, Crudit�� Drinks from Window (Cash)					
<u>Saturday, June 22nd – Breakfast FREE</u> Fresh Fruits, Fluffy Scrambled Eggs with Chorizo Sausage Spicy Pico de Gallo Salsa, Grated Cheddar Cheese, Guacamole and Refried Beans Shredded Chicken Hash with Onions, Cilantro and Jalapeno Peppers Country-Style Biscuits and Sausage Gravy Home Fries and Warm Flour Tortillas Green Chili Selection of Chilled Juices				NA	NA
<u>Saturday, June 22nd - Lunch \$15.00 per person</u> Salad Chilled Rotini Salad Caesar Salad with Parmesan and Garlic Croutons Entree Vegetarian Lasagna Mediterranean Chicken topped with Roasted Peppers and Sun-Dried Tomato Pesto Dessert Lemon Essence Cheesecake					
<u>Banquet Dinner - \$28.00 per person</u> Caesar Salad with Garlic Croutons Shaved Parmesan Herb Rotini Salad with Sun-Dried Tomato Pesto Entree Honey Hoisin Salmon Tortellini Alfredo Beef Bourguignon Sides Rolls and butter Mashed Potatoes and Gravy, Sweet Corn Dessert: Carrot Cake Freshly Brewed Coffee, Decaffeinated Coffee, or Iced Tea					

If you are attending the Department of Colorado Convention, please complete the form below.

No credit cards will be accepted. Please mail this form with your check to:

Department of Colorado Headquarter at 7465 E. 1st Ave. Unit D, Denver, CO 80230.

Attention: Legion Department Administrator

Name _____

District # _____ Post/Squad/Unit _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

REGISTRATION FOR LEGION MEMBERS**105th Annual Convention of The American Legion - Department of Colorado
Sky Ute Casino and Hotel, Ignacio, Colorado – June 20, 2024 – June 22, 2024**

This is to certify that Post No. _____ has chosen the representatives below to attend the 105th Annual Convention of The American Legion, Department of Colorado.

Please mail to Department Headquarters, 7465 E. 1st Ave D. Denver, CO 80230, by May 31, 2024, or as soon as your Post has chosen its Delegates and Alternates you can also **EMAIL** it to jhavlick@legion.org.

REPRESENTATIVE(S)

1 _____	Email: _____
2 _____	Email: _____
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16 _____	Email: _____
17 _____	Email: _____
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19 _____	Email: _____
20 _____	Email: _____
21 _____	Email: _____

CERTIFIED CORRECT:

Dated: _____

Post Adjutant or Commander



SAVE THE DATE

JUNE 20 - 22, 2024

**DEPARTMENT OF COLORADO
AMERICAN LEGION CONVENTION**



SKYUTE CASINO/HOTEL

**14324 HIGHWAY 172 NORTH,
IGNACIO, COLORADO**

