



Hangar Flying Newsletter 17 June 2021

A Publication of the JBLM McChord Field Retiree Activities Office for Air Force Retirees, their spouses and survivors. Department of the Air Force, 100 Joe Jackson Blvd, Customer Service Mall Rm 1001, JBLM McChord Field WA 98438-1114; Phone (253) 982-3214 (Voice Mail 24 hours a day). Email –

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Law expands Veteran housing

benefits: VA is currently implementing [Public Law 116-315](#) containing three key loan provisions for Vietnam War era Veterans, eligible National Guard members, and service members, Veterans and certain surviving spouses with VA-guaranteed loans.

The law, known as the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 offers new and renewed homeownership possibilities. These few changes can have a significant impact on our current homeowners, especially for those who were previously ineligible but now have the opportunity to use the benefits they have earned.

1. Expanded criteria for eligibility among Vietnam Era Veterans to those whose wartime service began on or after Nov. 1, 1955. The previous start date to qualify for the VA home loan benefit as a Vietnam Era Veteran was Feb. 28, 1961.
2. Enhanced access to service members and some Veterans of the National Guard. The new statutory authority extends eligibility to members of the National Guard who have been mobilized to perform full-time guard duty for at least 90 cumulative days, with 30 days of that service being consecutive.

Service members, Veterans and certain survivors with VA-guaranteed home loans or VA direct loans whose residences have been substantially damaged or destroyed in an area that has been declared a major disaster by the President are now eligible to be charged a first time use funding fee on a VA-guaranteed loan rather than a subsequent use funding fee. The borrower's next VA-guaranteed loan must be for the repair of the damaged or destroyed residence or purchase or construction of a new home closed within three years of the Presidential declaration of the disaster. For more

information go to [VA's Loan Guaranty page](#). (Source: Veterans Affairs)

Agent Orange: VA will begin implementing provisions of the [William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021](#) (Public Law 116-283), adding three conditions to the list of those presumptively associated with exposure to herbicide agents, more commonly known as Agent Orange. Those conditions are bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism. "Many of our Nation's Veterans have waited a long time for these benefits," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough. "VA will not make them wait any longer. This is absolutely the right thing to do for Veterans and their families."

VA will apply the provisions of court orders related to [Nehmer v. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#), which may result in an earlier date for entitlement to benefits for Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Vietnam War era Veterans and their survivors who previously filed and were denied benefits for one of these three new presumptive conditions will have their cases automatically reviewed without the need to refile a claim. VA will send letters to impacted Veterans and survivors. (Source: Department of Veterans Affairs)

All Veterans and Survivors

Including Blue Water Navy: The

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced it will readjudicate claims for Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

This review is part of the Veterans Benefits Administration's implementation of the November 5, 2020, U.S. District Court of the Northern District of California decision to readjudicate previously

denied claims as applied in *Nehmer vs. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*.

All veterans who were previously denied service connection for an herbicide related presumptive condition due to lack of in-country Vietnam service will automatically have their claims readjudicated.

Readjudication means VA will review the evidence of record and provide replacement decisions in the cases of Veterans who were previously denied service connection for one or more herbicide related conditions on the basis that military service was not performed on the landmass of the Republic of Vietnam or on its inland waterways. This review will also apply to eligible survivors of deceased Vietnam era Veterans. VA is dedicated to ensuring all Veterans receive the benefits they have earned.

VA ensures that we have the proper resources in place to meet the needs of the Veteran community. Eligible survivors of deceased Veterans may also benefit from the policy and may be eligible for benefits based on the Veterans' service.

Veterans who have a condition caused by herbicide exposure during military service can learn more about Agent Orange exposure at this [website](#).
(Source: *Veterans Administration*)

Retirement homes opens to Reserve, National Guard members: The [Armed Forces Retirement Home](#) is now welcoming retired enlisted Reserve and National Guard members for residency.

With locations Washington DC and Gulfport, Mississippi, residency is open to those who retired from military service with a majority of their duty time spent as an enlisted member or warrant officer.

Rooms are currently available at both locations with no waiting period, down payment or contract required. The monthly rate for independent living is just 46.7% of the resident's gross monthly income or \$2,050.00, whichever is less.

All residents must be able to live independently upon moving to AFRH. The facilities also provide advanced levels of care to residents as they age in place.

Many veterans choose to live at AFRH for the superior medical, dental and vision care offered, said AFRH officials. Amenities include private rooms with a shower, three daily meals prepared by licensed nutritionists in a modern dining facility, a wellness program and deluxe fitness center, movie theater, bowling center, and numerous hobby shops, clubs, and social activities.

Services include recreational activities and resident day trips, a full-service library, barber shop, beauty salon, 24/7 security, computer center, mailboxes, ATM, campus Exchanges and transportation available to local hospitals and appointments. Residents also have access to additional services such as on-site physical and occupational therapy, in-room internet and cable TV, podiatry, and counseling.

In Washington, AFRH offers residents a wooded campus just minutes from downtown -- home to museums, monuments, and a host of local entertainment, sports and other cultural options. In Gulfport, AFRH offers residents a view of the Gulf of Mexico, with an outdoor swimming pool, walking path to the beach, reflecting pool, art studio and modern media room.

Veterans who are not retired may also be eligible to live at AFRH if they have a service-connected disability of 50% or greater, or if they served in a war theater (such as in Vietnam, Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan) and now have an injury, disease or disability.

Married couples are welcome to apply for residency at AFRH:

- If both individuals meet all military and other eligibility requirements in their own right, or
- If the eligible veteran is retired and married their current spouse prior to military retirement.

Married couple fee discounts are available.

Veterans convicted of a felony or who are not free of drug, alcohol, or psychiatric problems are ineligible to become a resident.

For more information or to request an application, visit <https://www.afrh.gov/apply> or contact the AFRH Public Affairs Office at admissions@afrh.gov or 1-800-422-9988.

TriCare Qualifying Life Events:

When life changes for you and your family, your TRICARE health plan options may also change. These are known as Qualifying Life Events (QLEs).

A QLE is a certain change in your life, such as marriage, birth of a child, or retirement from active duty, which may mean different TRICARE health plan options are available to you. A QLE opens a 90-day period for you to make eligible enrollment changes. A QLE for one family member means all family members may make enrollment changes.

Depending on your eligibility, a QLE may allow you and your family to: Enroll in a new TRICARE health plan, Change your health plan coverage. If you want to enroll in or change your health plan, you must: Update DEERS with the QLE,

Make the enrollment changes within 90 days following the QLE, Pay any enrollment fees or premiums due during that period. No matter when you initiate the enrollment change following a QLE, coverage starts on the date of the QLE. A list of Qualifying Life Events can be found at

<https://tricare.mil/LifeEvents>

What to Do Following a QLE, with any QLE, the first step is to update your or your family member's information in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). Once your change shows in DEERS, you may make any eligible enrollment change online, by mail, or by phone.

What Happens if I Don't Take Any Action? If you remain eligible for your current health plan and wish to continue coverage following a QLE, you don't need to take action.

If you aren't already in a health plan and don't enroll in one, you'll only be eligible for care at a military hospital or clinic if space is available.

When retiring from active duty, you must make an enrollment decision within 90 days of your retirement. If you don't enroll in a health plan within the 90-day period, you'll lose TRICARE coverage and may only be eligible for care at military hospitals or clinics if space is available.

Making Enrollment Changes When You Haven't Experienced a QLE, if you and your family haven't experienced a QLE, you can enroll in or make changes to your health plan during TRICARE Open Season. Open season occurs each fall, beginning on the Monday of the second full week in November to the Monday of the second full week in December. (Source: TRICARE Communications Daily Digest Bulletin)

Summer Safety Tips

Safety tips to make your summer and vacation trips a safe and happy adventure.

- Hydrate. Hydrate. Hydrate.
- Always carry water with you and drink frequently.
- If you feel thirsty, you are already dehydrated.
- Always wear sunscreen outside and frequently reapply.
- Hats and sunglasses are a good idea each time you go outside.
- Know your own limits when it comes to activity.
- Watch for signs of heat strain and heat stroke. These include:
 1. Painful muscle spasms usually in the legs or abdomen
 2. No sweating
 3. Goosebumps
 4. Headache
 5. Clamminess, pale skin
 6. Dizziness or disorientation
- Try to stay out of the mid-day sun when temperatures are their highest.
- If bugs are a problem, use bug spray.
- Mosquitoes can cause Zika and West Nile infection and disease.
- Check for ticks when you remove your clothes. Ticks can cause a number of diseases

If you find a circular red spots on your skin after being outdoors, you may have been exposed to deer ticks. Check with your health care provider as soon as possible.

New, Accessing VA Benefits: On April 30 the VA.gov site became the central login point for accessing VA benefits. Veterans and their families

may now begin accessing their Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits and services on the new and user-friendly VA.gov website <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/PressArtInternet.cfm?id=5659> (Source VA News Release)

VA Benefits for Family

Caregivers: Through VA's [Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers \(PCAFC\)](#), Veterans can appoint one primary and up to two secondary caregivers who may be eligible to receive financial assistance, training, and more to support their important role of caring for a Veteran. [Find out if you're eligible and how to apply for PCAFC.](#) (Source VA News Release)

GI Bill Is Going Digital: The VA is modernizing your [education benefits](#), and soon 1 million GI Bill beneficiaries will enjoy improved customer service. With the Digital GI Bill, you will have [faster access to your educational benefits](#) to pursue your academic and career goals. Stay tuned for more information! (Source VA News Release)

VA Expands COVID-19 Vaccine

Eligibility: Now all Veterans, their spouses, and caregivers can get COVID-19 vaccines from VA regardless of their VA health care enrollment status. [Learn how to get your COVID-19 vaccine from VA!](#) (Source VA News Release)

Washington State Coronavirus Response (COVID-19) Website:

Looking for the latest News or Information on the COVID-19 situation? Washington State maintains an all-inclusive website where you can find current pandemic information, pertaining to Family's, Businesses, Workers and Health Care Providers as well as a vaccine locator and procedures for the Home Bound for obtaining a COVID-19 vaccine. https://coronavirus.wa.gov/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIiNjApNvY8AIVACGtBh1Lbg9jEAMYASAAEgLu6_D_BwE

How to Find a COVID-19

vaccine near you, Use www.vaccines.gov to find a location near you, then call or visit their website to make an appointment.

The RAO is in need of Volunteers,

If you have been looking for a way to stay involved with the McChord Retiree community, volunteering could be your answer, you can easily join our volunteer staff. Hands on training is provided and you will be working with a great team of volunteers who are military retirees and spouses providing their time, skills, and knowledge in assisting the retired military community. For more information you can contact us at (253)-982-3214. Our hours are from 9 till noon Monday thru Friday or you may leave a message after hours.

HELPFULL LINKS

To find your state representative:

<http://www.house.gov/representatives/>

To find your state senators:

<http://www.senate.gov>

To find the VA: <http://www.va.gov>

To find DFAS: <http://www.dfas.mil>

To find Tricare: <http://www.tricare.mil>

To schedule appointment to renew ID Card

<https://rapids-appointments.dmdc.osd.mil>

Link to Retiree Publications

Army Echoes:

<http://soldierforlife.army.mil/retirement>

Navy Shift Colors: www.shiftcolors.navy.mil

Air Force Afterburner:

www.retirees.af.mil/afterburner

Marine Corps Semper Fidelis:

www.manpower.usmc.mil/portal/page/portal/M_RA_HOME/MM/SR/RET_ACT/SemperFidelis

Coast Guard Evening Colors:

<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg1/psc/ras>

List of businesses who give military discounts <https://militarybenefits.info/military-discounts/>

VA benefits book available The Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents & Survivors handbook is available – with 18 pages of new information.

The book can be found at:

https://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/2020_Federal_Benefits_for_Veterans_Dependents_and_survivors.pdf

Need to call the VA, have questions, but don't know who you need to talk to, call the VA at phone number 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411) their new one-stop call line.

Veterans Crisis Hotline

1-(800)-273-8255 press 1