

# VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

## POST 9934 AND AUXILIARY 9934

DANA POINT, CALIFORNIA  
OCTOBER 2021



ALL STATE POST 2004-05, 2005-06, 2007-08,  
2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13,  
2013-14, 2014-2015, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-2018  
2019-2020

ALL AMERICAN POST 2007-08  
2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13, 2013-2014,  
2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2019-2020

### QUARTERMASTER REPORT



The months of October and November are beginning to shape up as a particularly busy time. On Sunday, October 17, the City of Dana Point will hold the annual CLASSICA CAR AND MOTORCYCLE SHOW on Del Prado street. The show starts at 10:00 but, before that, Post members will be assisting in getting the vehicles into their assigned positions along the street. Before the award presentations later in the day, the Post Color Guard will be part of the opening ceremonies. Also, the Post will have an information booth during the day for visitors to receive information concerning veterans' benefits and services. The event is expected to be a recruiting opportunity to gain at least a few new members for the Post.

At the end of that week on Saturday, October 23, the Post will participate in the City's annual HALLOWEEN SPOOKTACULAR at the Community and Senior Center, 34052 Del Obispo Street. As is traditional, Post members may dress up in their costumes and assist in entertaining the

young children who come for this early Halloween event.

The Post is also working on plans for the VETERANS DAY period in November. There will be a service program at the Dana Point Veterans Memorial, starting at 10:00 on November 11, and Post members will distribute the *BUD-DY POPPIES* at stores in the area that weekend. This is one of the two very important fund raising events during the year. The donations received for the *POPPIES* provide the income for the Post Relief Fund which is the source of emergency assistance help for veterans, their families, and active duty personnel during the year.

I should also note that the Dana Point TURKEY TROT comes up at Thanksgiving time, November 25. More on that later.



**LET'S TROT!**  
Dana Point Turkey Trot

(cont'd page 3)

#### TO CONTACT YOUR POST

Mail address 33282 Golden Lantern, Suite 103  
Dana Point, Ca. 92629  
Telephone Office (949) 248-1419  
E-mail: vfwpost9934@cox.net  
Website: <https://www.vfwpost9934.org>  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/vfwpost9934](https://www.facebook.com/vfwpost9934)

TO CONTACT U.S. DEPARTMENT  
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
1-800-MyVA411

#### OCTOBER 2021 MEETING

The next meeting of the Post and Auxiliary 9934 will be Tuesday, October 12. **The Post meeting will be at South Shores Church, 32712 Crown Valley Parkway, starting at 6:00 p.m.** Members may also join the meeting using the ZOOM protocol.

Meeting ID: 806 684 3584 Passcode: 748119

One tap mobile

+14086380968,,8066843584#,,,,\*748119# US

(San Jose)

**The Auxiliary will meet at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 33501 Stonehill. Auxiliary meeting time**

## VA COLA 2022

### Passed Congress Awaiting Signature

Veterans may be in line for a big cost-of-living boost in their benefits payouts starting in December thanks to legislation finalized by Congress on 20 SEP. The Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act passed unanimously in the House and without objection in the Senate earlier in the summer. It now heads to the White House, where President Joe Biden is expected to sign it into law. The legislation ties the cost-of-living boost for veterans benefits to the planned increase in Social Security benefits. Although the Social Security boost is automatic each year, lawmakers must approve the veterans' benefits increase annually.

How much that boost will be next year is still not certain. The Social Security Administration is expected to officially announce the COLA rate for 2022 soon, based on economic trends over the last few months. That increase will go into effect for benefits checks sent out starting this December. The cost-of-living bump hasn't been above 3.0 percent since 2011, and has averaged less than 1.3 percent over the last six years. But last month, officials from the Senior Citizens League predicted that next year's rise could top 6.2

percent, based on recent inflation and wage data released by federal economists. If so, it would be the largest increase since 1983 for Social

Lawmakers praised the bill passage as needed support for American veterans. "The cost-of-living adjustment to veterans' benefits is so much more than a rate adjustment tied to inflation," said Rep. Mark Takano (D-CA) in a statement. "It is a quality-of-life guarantee in the retirement years for veterans suffering with service-connected disabilities and ailments." Committee ranking member Mike Bost (R-IL) said the increase is critical for veterans and families who rely on disability benefits as a primary source of income. "Many veterans rely on disability compensation payments to make ends meet; this was especially true during the pandemic," he said in a statement. "For millions of veterans and their families, this adjustment is more important now than ever fore."

The VA COLA increase applies to payouts for disability compensation, clothing allowance, dependency and indemnity benefits, and other VA assistance programs.

[Source: MilitaryTimes Leo Shane III September 21, 2021]

## DOD ID CARDS

### Time to Renew Extended ID Cards

The Defense Department is asking as many as a half-million ID card holders to go online now and make appointments to renew their IDs — many of which are past the expiration dates printed on them. DOD extended the expiration dates electronically to account for the challenges of renewing them in a COVID-19 environment.

Last year when it became apparent that COVID-19 was going to dramatically affect the ability of individuals to congregate or wait in line at ID card offices, the Defense Department electronically extended the expiration dates for many ID cards for several months to allow cardholders a greater amount of time to get those cards renewed. The extensions primarily benefited the dependents of active-duty service members, Reserve and National Guard service members and their dependents, as well as retirees and their dependents.

Currently, there's a backlog of more than a half-million people who have ID cards that are past the expiration dates printed on them, and it's time to go online and schedule an appointment to get those cards renewed, said Stephen Wellock with the Defense Manpower Data Center. Right now, the previously extended ID cards for dependents of active duty service members, as well as Reserve and National Guard service members and their dependents, can be used until Oct. 31, 2021. The cards of retirees and their dependents can be used until Jan. 31, 2022.

But Wellock also said some might not have the time they think they have. For those service members and their dependents and retirees and their dependents whose ID cards expired after July 31, 2021 — there is no extension. "You

have no extension, your ID card is expired," he said. "You need to get it replaced, for both active duty, Guard and Reserve dependents, and for retirees. So, if a service member's dependent is out there, and their ID card expired on Sept. 7, they don't have until October to get it replaced; their ID card has expired, and they need to make an appointment as soon as possible."

While some family members may have an expired ID card, Wellock said that just because an ID card expires doesn't mean health benefits expire. Those benefits are managed by a different system, he said. "Their health care is managed by the fact that they're enrolled in DEERS, in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System. That's what determines their eligibility for health care. So if somebody's ID card expires on Aug. 7, they don't automatically lose their health care because their card is expired." An additional change is that while currently cards were previously issued to dependents as young as 10 years old, going forward, cards will only be issued to those dependents who are 14 or older.

Wellock said the department is not planning any further extensions on the renewal of expired ID cards. He said cardholders should begin scheduling appointments now to get their cards renewed. Appointments can be made online to renew ID cards, he said, and cardholders don't need to limit their appointment to the card office they typically visit — there are many locations that can handle renewals, and many provide a "walk-in" service capability..

[Source: DOD News C. Todd Lopez  
September 24, 2021]

## MILITARY DRAFT

### Women Register Plans Advance for Potential Draft

Plans to require women to register with the Selective Service System for the possibility of a future military draft took another step forward after a key congressional panel backed the change as part of a must-pass military budget policy bill. The House Armed Services Committee approved the proposal by a 35-24 vote, with support from all Democrats and several Republicans on the panel.

Supporters said the time to include women in cases of national emergency is long overdue. “The current male-only registration sends a message to women not only that they are not vital to the defense of the country, but also that they are not expected to participate in defending it,” said Air Force veteran and author of the amendment Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-PA). “It also sends a message to men that they, for some reason, are uniquely and perhaps unfairly depended upon. This needs to change.” Senate lawmakers included similar language in their draft of the annual defense authorization bill, making it likely that some version of the proposal will remain in the final compromise draft of the legislation. The authorization bill — which includes items such as the annual military pay raise and specialty pay authorizations — has passed each year for more than five decades.

Currently only men between the ages of 18 and 25 are required to register for potential conscription in the event of a prolonged war. The new rules would include women on those lists too. “Whatever the emergency is, if it’s so great that we have to go to a draft, we need everybody,” said Army veteran Rep. Mike Waltz (R-FL). “We need men, women, gay, straight, any religion, black, white, brown. We need all hands on deck.”

The idea of requiring women to participate in the draft has been considered in the budget bill debate in the past, including in 2016, when lawmakers established a commission to research the idea. Last year, the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service offered its recommendation that women be included in potential draft lists, given the military’s prior decision to open all combat posts to women. That had been the legal basis for excluding women from conscription in the past. Despite that, in June the Supreme Court declined to hear a challenge to the men-only rule, saying a final decision was more appropriately left to Congress.

Conservatives on the committee objected to the idea, saying that the move upends traditional gender roles and is not urgently needed, given military commanders’ past stated preference for the all-volunteer force. “I feel confident in an emergency that the women of this country would step up and volunteer as needed,” said Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R-MO). “This current system does not fence off anyone. It seems like this is a solution in search of a problem.”

But women rights advocates have argued for the change, saying inequitable treatment affects social perceptions of men and women. Under the current system, if men fail to register for a possible draft, they can face criminal penalties and be ruled ineligible for federal loans and other benefits. Women do not face such punishment. The full defense authorization bill is expected to be voted on by the full House later this month. A compromise version of the measure is expected to be finalized and set to the president later this fall.

[Source: AirForceTimes Leo Shane III September 2, 2021]

## VA PROJECT FUNDING

### Major Medical Facility Authorization Act of 2021 Becomes Law

President Biden signed into law the Major Medical Facility Authorization Act of 2021. This change will authorize VA to carry out the below specific major medical facilities projects and also increase the amount of money that can be spent on each project. A total of \$2,083,941,000 has been authorized for the projects.

The VFW applauds the passage of this legislation and calls on Congress and the Administration to continue rigorous oversight of VA’s infrastructure needs. The VFW has testified numerous times on VA infrastructure and the need for proper attention to aging VA facilities. This new law will be a step in the right direction.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs may now carry out the following major medical facility projects in fiscal year 2021 at the following locations in this area:

- Seismic corrections to the mental health and community living center in Long Beach, California, \$367,300,000;

- Construction of a spinal cord injury building with a community living center, including a parking garage, in San Diego, \$252,100,000.

[Source: VFW Action Corps Weekly August 9, 2021]

## QUARTERMASTER REPORT

(cont’d from first page)

All of these activities require assistance of course from many of our members for success. This is one of those time when we need a few hours of time from our members who can help the Post activities. If you are at the monthly meeting, there will be sign up sheets available for you to indicate specific dates and times that you can help. If you cannot be at the meeting, but are able to assist in these programs, you can contact me in the office by phone – 949-248-1419 – or by email – vfw-post9934@cox.net .

Bill Manes, Post Quartermaster

## VA CLAIMS BACKLOG

### Expected To Grow In Coming Months

Veterans Affairs officials don't know how bad the backlog of veteran disability claims will get this fall, but they know it's getting worse. The backlog — defined as the number of first-time disability and pension claims that have been awaiting decisions for more than four months — has now topped 215,000, up 16 percent since July and nearly triple what it was in early 2020 before the coronavirus pandemic in America. In a press conference with reporters on 15 SEP, VA Secretary Denis McDonough acknowledged that the problem is going to get worse before it gets better.

□ “We anticipate the backlog to further increase this fall as we process claims for new presumptive conditions from the Vietnam and Gulf wars,” he said.

□ “We're in the field fulfilling those claims now. But we want to keep warning our veterans about what to expect, so they see what's coming in the same way that we do.”

Before the coronavirus pandemic, the claims backlog hadn't been above 200,000 cases since 2015. In the years before that, the delayed cases swelled to more than 600,000, drawing national criticism from advocates and lawmakers who said the slow pace of work was delaying needed financial support for injured veterans. After the department digitized most of its medical records and hired more claims processors, officials had been able to keep the backlog under 100,000 cases up until early 2020. Office closings due to the pandemic and new claims files for blue water veterans from the Vietnam war — individuals who served in coastal waters but were given presumptive disability benefits status by Congress because of possible exposure to

chemical defoliants — led to the recent spike in delayed processing.

Past VA leaders have said that reaching zero backlogged cases is impractical, because in many cases the complexity of claims or concerns about incomplete medical records require staff to take extra time to ensure veterans are getting all of the payouts they are owed. Officials could close out those cases quicker to meet the backlog deadline, but then the files would end up in the appeals process, which can take years to resolve.

But McDonough said he is committed to driving the backlog claims number back down. VA officials plan to hire about 2,000 new personnel to help sort through the existing files and anticipated surge new ones coming this fall, as the department begins to offer presumptive benefit status for certain burn pit related illnesses for the first time. “We think that we're staying ahead of this so that we don't fall into some of the big backlogs we've seen in the past,” he said. “But any individual who is impacted matters very much to me, so I want to make sure we're communicating about that and preparing for it.”

Despite the recent surge in caseload, VA officials have not seen a corresponding decrease in claims processing accuracy. According to internal department data, about 95 percent of cases are correctly completed, a figure that has remained steady over the last three years.

[Source: MilitaryTimes Leo Shane III September 16, 2021]

## VET UNEMPLOYMENT 2021

### Well-Below National Levels, Matches Pre-Pandemic Levels

The veterans unemployment rate fell in August to pre-pandemic levels as national jobless rates continued their steady decline of recent months. According to data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics on 3 SEP, the unemployment rate for all veterans dropped from 4.0 percent in July to 3.6 percent in August. That's the first time the mark has been below 4 percent since February 2020, before the outbreak of coronavirus in America prompted widespread business closings and layoffs. The 3.6 percent rate translates into roughly 300,000 working-age veterans unable to find steady employment last month, down about 160,000 individuals from August 2020.

Nationally, the unemployment rate declined for the fourth consecutive month in August, to 5.2 percent. Despite the improvement, that figure still sits well above pre-pandemic monthly jobless rates of around 3.5 percent. BLS officials said that so far in 2021, the U.S. economy has averaged about 586,000 new jobs a month. Veterans unemployment rates generally outpace civilian sector figures, although not typically by a gap as large as the August numbers. In the 38 months before the pandemic began, the veterans monthly

jobless rate was more than 1 percentage point different from the national rate only twice. In the 17 months since coronavirus impacts, the veterans rate has bettered the overall U.S. estimate by more than 1 percentage point 13 times.

Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars era saw the biggest job improvements in April, posting a 3.1 percent unemployment rate, the lowest for that group since December 2019. The group makes up about 20 percent of all former military members in America today, and about 43 percent of all working veterans. About half of all veterans in America are retired or otherwise no longer actively seeking employment.

Lawmakers have approved a series of veteran-focused job training programs in response to the pandemic, arguing that their lack of time in the civilian job market compared to peers could leave them at a competitive disadvantage. But the recent numbers suggest that veteran job seekers may be emerging from an economy crippled by coronavirus faster than many of their peers.

[Source: MilitaryTimes Leo Shane III September 3, 2021]

## VA WOMEN VET PROGRAMS

### I Am Not Invisible Campaign

Leaders across the Department of Veterans Affairs are mitigating barriers for women veterans and increasing access to benefits and services through new technology solutions. Within VA's Center for Women Veterans, division Director Lourdes Tiglaio highlighted a new campaign called I Am Not Invisible (IANI), which aims to spotlight diversity across the veteran community. IANI is increasing awareness and dialogue about women veterans as well as highlighting their skills and expertise.



“The importance of that is making sure that veterans, whether they're male or female, across different demographics, they see that women veterans served. Many times, you've probably heard that when someone says 'veteran,' the first thing that comes to mind is a male veteran,” Tiglaio said during ACT-IAC's VA Initiatives for Women Veterans webinar earlier this month. “We don't always hold space to make sure that we own our space as women veterans.” IANI also aims to make sure that women are comfortable in their service and to create a community of support as they transition out of the military. To foster these communities, the Center for Women Veterans also hosts networking opportunities to connect women veterans and ensure their voices are heard.

At the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), leaders are conducting outreach to women veterans to build new spaces to share experiences and create new learning opportunities, said Cheryl Rawls, executive director of outreach, transition and economic development at VBA. “We've been conducting roundtables across various demographics ... to listen to the issues and concerns and some of the barriers they find for access with Native American women veterans, with Caribbean and international women veterans,” Tiglaio said. “We will try to reach women veterans wherever they are... to make sure that no one feels that they are any less deserving of their service because they are not seen.”

While VA evolves to drive equity, the department is honing in on education. Many times, women veterans are not aware of their full range of benefits and services, Tiglaio said. VA is accelerating awareness campaigns to ensure all

veterans receive equal opportunities after service. “We're trying to connect those women veterans together to feel empowered, to find support and to be mentored,” Tiglaio said. “The first part of providing positive impact is acknowledging their existence, providing a platform for them to speak their mind and helping them to feel empowered to have a voice. Their opinions and voices are valued at VA, and we will do our best to address those.”

As service members transition out of the military, Rawls is working to boost veteran participation, so they better understand the range offerings at VA. Rawls' team recently launched a women's health training module that provides a safe environment for women to talk with other women about their health and get the help they need. “As we are continuing to evolve, we are listening to you,” Rawls said. “We are continuing to put out programs and projects ... and we're at a pace now where we are sprinting.”

VA is also launching new technology tools like call centers, new reproductive health capabilities and telehealth to expand access services and benefits. Luwanda Jones, deputy CIO at VA's Office of Strategic Sourcing, said that IT capabilities are enabling better care and removing barriers. “What the pandemic allowed us to do was to expand our telehealth capabilities. We're looking at approximately 11 million veterans that access telehealth between the time that the pandemic started until now. We're looking at how we can use artificial intelligence to make sure we can provide the capabilities that we need to provide for our women,” Jones said.

Looking ahead, the Center for Women Veterans is working with the Veterans Experience Office to develop new tools that are tailored for women veterans. Tiglaio said that many of VA's existing tools are generic across veterans and dilute the needs of minority communities. “This is all going to be a part of an ongoing effort to meet women veterans where they're at in the mode they're comfortable with. It's not to force us to come to us. It's just one way to show that we're listening to our women veterans across various demographics, and that we're lowering the barriers for them to reach us,” Tiglaio said.

[Source: Government CIO Media & Research Sarah Sybert August 30, 2021]

### HAVE YOU HEARD? PROOF READING

- Notice in restroom: "Toilet out of order. Please use floor below."
- In a Laundromat: Automatic Washing Machines: Please Remove All Your Clothes When the Light Goes Out.
- In a London department store: Bargain Basement Upstairs...
- In an office: After Tea Break, Staff Should Empty the Teapot and Stand Upside Down on the Draining Board.
- Outside a secondhand shop: We Exchange Anything - Bicycles, Washing Machines, Etc. Why Not Bring Your Wife Along And Get A Wonderful Bargain?
- Spotted in a safari park: Elephants, Please Stay in Your Car.
- Seen during a conference: For Anyone Who Has Children and Doesn't Know it, there Is a Day Care on the 1st Floor.
- Notice in a farmer's field: The Farmer Allows Walkers to Cross the Field for Free, But the Bull Charges.
- Message on a leaflet: If You Cannot Read, This Leaflet Will Tell You How to Get Lessons.
- On a repair shop door: We Can Repair Anything. (Please Knock Hard On The Door - The Bell Doesn't Work.)

## VA ELDERLY BENEFITS

### Special Benefits for Elderly Wartime Veteran Population

As a follow up to the 14 AUG National Financial Awareness Day, the Department of Veterans Affairs is launching an awareness campaign to inform elderly wartime Veterans and their families of their lesser known pension, funeral, burial and survivor benefits. “VA’s pension benefit helps Veterans and their families cope with financial challenges by providing supplemental income,” said Acting Under Secretary for Benefits Thomas Murphy. “Currently, only 189,800 wartime Veterans and 139,800 surviving spouses are using their needs-based pension benefits that are meant to ease the burden on them, their families and caregivers. We need to ensure all of our wartime Veterans and their survivors are aware of their benefits.”

The following benefits are available through VA’s Pension and Fiduciary Service as noted in the guide at [https://benefits.va.gov/FIDUCIARY/docs/VA\\_Fiduciary\\_Guide\\_Apr2020.pdf](https://benefits.va.gov/FIDUCIARY/docs/VA_Fiduciary_Guide_Apr2020.pdf) for use in planning and preparing for the future.

□ VA pension is payable to wartime Veterans who are permanently and totally disabled due to non-service connected disability, or who are age 65 years old or older, and who meet certain income and net worth limits. Refer to <https://www.va.gov/pension>.

□ Special monthly pension is an additional benefit for Veterans in receipt of pension who are housebound, require the aid and attendance of another person to help them with daily activities (such as eating, bathing and dressing), have very limited eyesight or require nursing home care. See <https://benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/limitedincome/EnhancedorSpecialPension.pdf>.

□ For surviving spouses, there are two types of benefits P&F Service offers. Survivors Pension (<https://www.va.gov/pension/survivors-pension>) provides monthly payments to qualified surviving spouses and unmarried dependent children of wartime Veterans who meet certain income and net worth limits. Special monthly pension is also available to surviving spouses who are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person.

□ Dependency and Indemnity Compensation is available to dependents and parents and generally is not based on income and assets (except the income limits apply to parents). DIC is a monthly monetary benefit paid to a surviving spouse, child or parent of a Veteran who died from a service related injury or illness, or when an active-duty ser-

vice member dies in the line of duty. Special monthly DIC is also available to surviving spouses who are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person. See [www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation](http://www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation).

□ A surviving spouse of a Veteran who served on a Blue Water Navy vessel offshore of the Republic of Vietnam, or on another U.S. Navy or Coast Guard ship operating in the coastal waterways of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975, may be eligible for DIC benefits — even if they were previously denied. See <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materialsexposure/agent-orange>.

□ VA’s funeral and burial benefits are available for both service-related and non-service-related deaths. New regulations allow a flat-rate burial and plot or interment allowance with decreased paperwork and maximum payment permitted by law. See <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials>.

□ For those interested in burial benefits such as a Presidential Memorial Certificate, burial flag, headstone or marker, the National Cemetery Administration has information about pre-need eligibility. See [https://www.cem.va.gov/burial\\_benefits/index.asp](https://www.cem.va.gov/burial_benefits/index.asp).

Many vulnerable senior wartime Veterans are targeted with misinformation. In many cases, this is because they are not fully aware of their benefits, which increases the chances of them being taken advantage of and/or defrauded. VA encourages elderly wartime Veterans and their family members to consult a VA accredited representative (<https://www.benefits.va.gov/vso/index.asp>) if they want or need help filing a claim. They are reminded to beware of individuals or companies that promise benefits or ask for money upfront, as only VA can make final determinations on eligibility.

Factsheets at:

<https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/factsheets.asp#BM3> are available to assist Veterans with limited resources. Pension eligibility information with details on how Veterans and their families can get help filing their claim for free can be found at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/limitedincome/pensionprogram-and-representation.pdf>.

[Source: VA News Release August 17, 2021]

## VET SERVICE DOGS

### Congress Unleashes Service Dogs for Veterans with PTSD

After nearly a decade of bureaucratic slowdowns, advocacy efforts and stalled legislation, veterans may be getting increased access to one of the more effective treatments for combat-related mental health conditions: a service dog. On 5 AUG, the Senate passed on a voice vote a measure called the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers for Veterans Therapy Act, or PAWS Act for short. The House passed the bill in May, so now it awaits President Joe Biden's signature. The widely supported, bipartisan legislation would direct the Department of Veterans Affairs to carry out a pilot program on dog training therapy and would authorize the VA to provide service dogs to veterans with mental illnesses — rather than just mobility issues, as was previously the case.

The White House did not return a request for comment regarding if or when Biden might sign the legislation, introduced by former Rep. Steve Stivers (R-OH) and co-sponsored by 317 lawmakers in the House. "It's a big deal for veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder. I think it'll lower the suicide rate and give these veterans their lives back," Stivers, now the CEO of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, told CQ Roll Call. Legislation directing the VA to offer service dogs to veterans more widely has been in the works since 2010, when former Sen. Al Franken (D-MN) introduced a bill that directed the VA to do a three-year pilot study on the benefits and feasibility of using service dogs to treat PTSD.

But that study was plagued by organizational and reporting problems and paused for two years, after which the VA reengineered and restarted the study. The results, finally released in March of this year, were conclusive: Veterans with PTSD stand to benefit tremendously from service dogs. In the meantime, other legislative efforts to pair veterans with service dogs stalled. The House passed the PAWS Act last Congress, but it never gained momentum in the Senate. Among the opponents was the VA, which cited the lack of scientific evidence to show that service dogs improve the mental health of veterans with PTSD.

This year, Stivers says Sens. Thom Tillis (R-NC) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) were instrumental in moving the bill forward. "I have made it a priority since being elected to the Senate to do everything possible to combat veteran suicide, and this legislation adds another tool in the toolbox for our men and women who served," Tillis said in a news release. The bill's passage comes as the situation surrounding veterans' mental health worsens. According to a 2016 report from the VA, an average of 20 veterans die by suicide each day. Today, more than 1.7 million veterans receive mental health care through the VA.

One of those people is Leslie Wohlfeld. Wohlfeld, now 57, was 17 years old when she enlisted in the military. By the time she took medical retirement, Wohlfeld had been deployed overseas during two separate wars and returned

home with a host of injuries — physical and mental. As a network administrator with the Army's 82nd Airborne Division in 2003, Wohlfeld managed a network of hundreds of computers housed within Bagram Air Base, the U.S. military's center of operations for two decades during the now-ending war in Afghanistan.

While Wohlfeld was there, Bagram was the target of rocket and mortar attacks and improvised mines. At the time, the base had not been fully cleared of the hidden explosives, she said, and servicemembers were told to never pick up anything they hadn't dropped themselves. The reminders of the mines, sometimes in the form of children with missing limbs, could be seen on the base. The deployment left Wohlfeld permanently disabled and suffering from PTSD. On many days, her feelings of anxiety were so severe that Wohlfeld would not leave her Brooklyn apartment — that is, until she was paired with Lizzie in 2011.

Lizzie, who died last month, was a purebred yellow Labrador and a service dog. "Lizzie's main mission was mobility, helping me to get around," Wohlfeld said 8 AUG in an interview, "but what she did to improve my quality of life, words cannot properly describe."

Service dogs like Lizzie can sometimes help veterans with PTSD far more than standard treatment techniques, which employ a mix of therapy and medication. "Once they feel comfortable knowing the dog is there, the veterans can be freer. It helps to calm their minds," said Lu Picard, co-founder of ECAD, an organization that trains and pairs service dogs with people who need them. "The dogs can wake them up from night terrors, pull them out of negative flashbacks. And they know that with the dog, they're never alone or a burden to any other human being. That's a big deal," Picard said.

The dogs can also be a safeguard against the worst-case scenario for veterans with PTSD. "If a veteran has a gun in their mouth, and has lost hope, they can look at the dog and say, 'Well, I can't leave the dog,'" said Cole Lyle, a Marine Corps veteran who was paired with his service dog, a German Shepherd named Kaya, after his deployment to Afghanistan in 2011. Lyle said dogs give veterans struggling with PTSD a sense of purpose that can be taken away from them when they leave the military. "And there are no negative side effects of a dog — except for maybe an accident on the floor, which is extremely rare," he said.

Lyle, a former military legislative assistant to Sen. Richard M. Burr (R-NC) helped craft the original version of the PAWS Act, which was introduced by former Rep. Ron DeSantis, currently the Republican governor of Florida, in 2016. Despite the delays in passing the PAWS Act, Lyle views the progress positively. "Any bill that passes that puts more dogs in the hands of veterans is a win for the veteran community," he said.

[Source: <https://www.rollcall.com/2021/08/09> Mark Satter August 9, 2021]

**POST OFFICERS FOR 2021-2022**

Post Commander:	Ricardo Jauregui	Service Officer:	John Coon
Senior Vice Commander:	Richard Alonzo	Service Officers Team:	Jim Socks
Junior Vice Commander	Carlos Garcia		Don Ellis
Post Quartermaster	Bill Manes		Ben Valencia
Assistant Quartermaster	Wayne Yost		Aaron Pluff
Post Chaplain:	James Lofdahl		Robert Fowler
Post Surgeon	Gil Castro	Service Officer Advisor	Marty Hoffman
Judge Advocate	Dolores Padgett	Service Officer Support	Debbie Yost
Adjutant	Wayne Greenleaf	Trustee (3-year term)	Richard Carr
Women Veterans Coordinator	Marcia Kuehl	Trustee (2-year term)	David Vera
Post Color Guard Captain	Carlos Garcia	Trustee (1-year term)	Phil Jimenez

**AUXILIARY OFFICERS FOR 2021-2022**

President	Rebecca Dulmage	Chaplain	Yvonne English
Senior Vice President	Sharon Miller	Conductress	Terri Marr
Treasurer	Renee Fulk	Guard	Torey Boegeman
Secretary	Lisa Mers		

**CALENDAR OCTOBER 2021**

- Thursday, October 7 Afghanistan War Began (2001)
- Monday, October 11 **COLUMBUS DAY**
- Tuesday, October 12 Post and Auxiliary 9934 Meetings
- Wednesday, October 13 U.S. Navy Established (1775)
- Sunday, October 17 DANA POINT LANTERN DISTRICT CLASSIC CAR & MOTORCYCLE SHOW
- Saturday, October 23 City Dana Point HALLOWEEN SPOOKTACULAR & TRUNK OR TREAT, 2:00-8:00, Dana Point Community Center
- Saturday, October 23 Grenada Campaign Began (1983)
- Sunday, October 31 **HALLOWEEN**



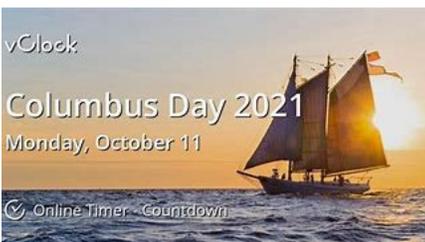
**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 27 NAVY DAY**

**Thought of the month**

“I didn’t fail the test. I just found 100 ways to do it wrong.”

— *Benjamin Franklin*

DANA POINT VFW POST AND AUXILIARY 9934  
 33282 Golden Lantern Suite 103  
 DANA POINT, CA 92629



**OCTOBER 31**