

Preventing Suicide among Veterans

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- Suicide is preventable, and each of us has a role to play in suicide prevention. Quick, easy access to services in times of crisis, which provide hope and connection to resources, can and does save Veterans' lives.
- Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988 then Press 1 Launch.
 - Veterans across the nation now have the option to Dial 988, then press 1 to reach the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL).
 - The new, shorter number took effect July 16, 2022, and directly addresses the need for ease of access and clarity in times of crisis, both for Veterans and non-Veterans alike.
 - This change is the result of the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, which designated 988 as the universal telephone number within the U.S. for purposes of the national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system, operating through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and VCL.
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 - Crisis support, available 24/7/365, is one critical component of implementation of the National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide (2018).
 - VA will be actively listening to Veteran feedback on the change and will continue to center on cultivating trust and providing an excellent experience of seeking care. We look forward to continuing to provide updates on the positive impact this will create.
 - VA recognizes the resiliency of the Veterans we serve and reiterate the honor and pride we have in serving those who have served this Nation so well.

VA Infrastructure Modernization

- President Biden has insisted that our Veterans in the 21st century should not be forced to receive care in early 20th century buildings.
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- Regardless of what Congress decides to do with the AIR Commission - which was called for in the 2018 MISSION Act - we will continue to fight for the funding and modernization that our veterans deserve.

VA Caregiver Support Program

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 - Leveraging the expertise of VBA to create efficiencies and consistency in processing future PCFAC applications and other best practices.
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- *Beaudette* Appeal

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- Although this case has specific implications to the VA Caregiver Support Program, a Departmental evaluation of the case has identified more far-reaching implications to other services and benefits to Veterans.
- The DOJ's decision to pursue this appeal does not change the services or support provided to Veterans and their caregivers participating in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) or Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS).

These efforts are a few of many action steps CSP has taken and has plans to develop a more robust action plan that considers the feedback from the stakeholder engagement sessions to improve the Veteran and caregiver experience and implement a sustainable program targeted to meet the unique needs of caregivers and their Veterans.

Veterans and Families Access to Voting Rights

- [VA unveiled a series of measures](#), March 24, promoting greater access to voter information for Veterans and their families as part of the department's proposed designation as a voter registration agency under the [National Voter Registration Act](#).
- In accordance with [Executive Order 14019: Promoting Access to Voting](#), these steps are part of VA's "whole health" approach to care, ensuring Veterans and their families are able to exercise the right to vote which Veterans fought and served to protect.
- VA is providing assistance with the voter registration process for tens of thousands of inpatients and residents at our hospitals, nursing homes and treatment centers, along with homebound Veterans and their caregivers. This is a major undertaking as VA expands this effort, putting voting access right at the fingertips of all Veterans who may need it.
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Electronic Health Record (EHR) Program

- VA's new electronic health record system has deployed in 2022 at facilities in Walla Walla, Washington; Columbus, Ohio; and Roseburg and White City, Oregon. The next scheduled deployment is Jan. 28, 2023, at facilities in Saginaw and Ann Arbor, Michigan.
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Military Environmental Presumptives

- For the very first time, VA is also presumptively granting military environmental exposures claims to Gulf War Veterans—specifically to those who suffer from Asthma, Sinusitis, and Rhinitis as a result of their service.
- This is good news, especially for the 28,049 Veterans and survivors whose claims have already been granted. As of August 29, 2022, VA has completed 37,560 of these claims and granted 28,049, which represents a 74.7% grant rate for claims that include asthma, sinusitis, rhinitis, and rare respiratory cancers due to fine particulate matter.
- This is just the start. VA is seeking every avenue possible to develop additional processes where a presumptive can be determined in a more expedient and holistic manner for Veterans.
- VA is also proactively 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 for Vietnam-era Veterans presumptively associated with exposure to herbicide agents, more commonly known as Agent Orange. Those conditions are bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism.
- As of August 29, 2022, 70,099 of these claims have been processed, with over \$515 million in retroactive benefits awarded to Veterans and survivors.

Disability Claims Backlog

- The new Gulf War and Agent Orange Presumptive Medical Conditions—along with the Blue Water Navy (BWN) claims—have led to an increase in the current disability claims backlog.
- Fortunately, we're able to respond to these increases. To proactively address the increase, we're:
 - Hiring and training of more than 2,000 new positions to process and support Veteran' claims for disability benefits.
 - Using American Rescue Plan funding to pay overtime for processors.
 - Deploying FY22 budget resources to expedite toxic exposure claims processing.
 - Currently, between 20 to 25% of VBA's Rating Veteran Service Representatives (RVSRs) are working BWN-Nehmer, NDAA-Nehmer, and BWN claims. Nehmer claims are highly complex and require specialized training to complete.
 - As part of mitigation measures, VBA has been mandating overtime for all RVSRs as well as aggressively hiring new RVSRs to ensure sufficient rating capacity, both for existing workload and expected future workload related to toxic exposure filing.
- As of August 22, 2022, the backlog was 155,600 claims, 41.1% below the recent high on October 24, 2021 (264,236).
- VBA is also leading a comprehensive modernization of the claims process through the utilization of data and automation. Historically manual administrative tasks and workflows will be automated to enable more effective and timely claim decisions.
- VBA began a pilot program in December 2021 to automate business processes with certain medical data to eliminate unnecessary examinations, streamline workflows, and reduce manual processes. The pilot is:
 - Focusing on claims for increased benefits related to service-connected hypertension.
 - Processing claims in approximately five days. A remarkable improvement from the traditional process which is currently taking well over 100 days on average.

Ending Homelessness among Veterans

- The words “homeless” and “Veteran” should not exist together. VA is committed to ending homelessness among Veterans because it is our nation's duty to ensure all Veterans have a place to call home.
- Significant progress has been made to prevent and end Veteran homelessness. The number of Veterans experiencing homelessness in the United States has declined by nearly half since 2010. Since 2010, over 966,000 Veterans and their family members have been permanently housed,

rapidly rehoused, or prevented from falling into homelessness through HUD's targeted housing vouchers and VA's homelessness programs.

- During calendar year 2022, VA's goal is to place at least 38,000 homeless Veterans into permanent housing.
- This goal represents nearly the same number of Veterans counted in the 2020 Point-in-Time count.
- From January through July 2022, VA achieved 22,458 permanent housing placements, which represents nearly 60% of the goal.
- VA is focusing significant effort on this now in Los Angeles, where there are more homeless Veterans than anywhere else in America.
- VA [updated its joint Master Plan](#) with our key partners to end Veteran homelessness in Los Angeles, greatly enhancing our 'on the ground' efforts there.
- [VA and HUD](#) continue to align efforts and work towards ending Veteran homelessness. By mobilizing the strength of our two departments, together with other federal agencies and partners, this collective effort is doing all in its power to ensure every Veteran has access to a safe and stable housing.
- There are two primary ways that the public can help:
 - If you are a Veteran who is homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.
 - Landlords with housing units interested in renting to Veterans can visit <https://www.va.gov/homeless/landlords.asp> to learn how to help.

National Day of Service (Sept. 9)

- More than 60 VA national cemeteries will host a National Day of Service on Sept. 9th to mark the 21st anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. There is no better place to reflect on the sacrifices our Veterans have made than at a national cemetery.
- We urge everyone, Veterans, and non-Veterans alike, to come out. Volunteers should register in advance through the non-profit Carry The Load (www.carrytheload.org). Volunteers will clean headstones and perform other beautification projects for a few hours.
- For those who can't make it to a cemetery, we urge you to pay tribute to a Veteran on the Veterans Legacy Memorial site (www.va.gov/remember).

From: Michaud, Gerald (Jerry)
Sent: Mon, 12 Sep 2022 21:47:47 +0000
To: Undisclosed recipients:
Subject: VHA Topline Messages September 12-16, 2022
Attachments: Topline Messages September 12-16, 2022.pptx, UPDATED Enterprise TPs for 09-09-22.docx

Attached please find the VHA key messages and selected good news stories update for this week, with the aim of speaking with one voice. I've also included the most recent VA-level weekly talking points—consolidating the whole organization—provided by the VA Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs.

We will be including these Topline Messages with executive messaging, social media, blogs and other communications throughout the week. We wanted to equip you and other influencers with basic and focused information and links so you can share with your staff.

Please contact me with any questions, suggestions, etc.
If you no longer wish to receive these messages, please let me know.

Thank you.

Jerry Michaud
Executive Director, Office of Communications (10BCOM)
Veterans Health Administration

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Topline Messages Week of September 12-16, 2022

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

COVID continues its steady decrease and new boosters are now available.

- Known coronavirus cases have fallen significantly in recent weeks, with the national average falling below 90,000 cases per day just before Labor Day. The holiday has skewed current figures somewhat, since many states reported delayed or incomplete data in the aftermath of the long weekend. Still, case counts are in far better shape today than a month ago, when nearly 120,000 cases were announced each day. Cases have decreased over the past two weeks in all but a handful of states. In the Northwest, Washington and Oregon have both seen cases fall by more than 20%. Hospitalizations have also seen sustained improvement. Fewer than 35,000 people are currently in American hospitals with the coronavirus each day, a decrease of 13% over the past two weeks. Data on new virus deaths is particularly volatile this week due to holiday reporting disruptions. Still, deaths today are far lower than they were a year ago, when the Delta variant was causing more than 1,500 deaths per day.
- On August 31, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized updated COVID-19 vaccine boosters that protect against both the original virus strain and the Omicron variant. These updated boosters will replace the original boosters we've been using to date, and they'll provide better protection against COVID-19. Updated booster shots are arriving at VA and will be available at most VA health facilities starting the week of September 12, 2022.
- Communications about the COVID virus are changing as the virus keeps evolving and new treatments are developed. Check out www.VA.gov with the latest information and guidance for Veterans as they become available. Also, please check the CDC [COVID Data Tracker](#) for local community and transmission levels.

Notable communications

- Secretary Denis McDonough will hold a virtual employee [town hall](#) at the Des Moines (IA) medical center on Tuesday, September 13, at 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. ET.
- Congratulations to Dr. Patty Hayes, Chief of the Women's Health Office, for her award as "[Government Executive of the Year](#)" for her over 30 years of experience in VA women's health leadership. [Many other VAVHA employees](#) were selected as 2022 Service to the Citizen Award winners.
- September is [Suicide Prevention](#) Month, and we want Veterans to know that they don't have to solve life's challenges alone. The "[Don't Wait. Reach Out.](#)" campaign website will be promoted across all ongoing campaign communications (including PSAs, social content, and press outreach). Two new PSA videos were developed for VA by the Ad Council—specifically with older Veterans and women Veterans in mind—and will also be highlighted in Suicide Prevention Month communications throughout September and beyond.
- The [PACT Act 101 Overview](#) TMS training is now available and encouraged for all VHA staff. All approved and updated PACT Act information, communications products, and resources are now posted on [VA Insider](#), [VHA Resources](#), and [VHA Comm Site](#). A blog about [PACT Act fraud](#) was just published.
- Tune in to the [C20 Talk Show](#) on [9/13 @ 12pm or 4:30pm ET](#) for a re-airing of last week's episode with Mr. John Boerstler, Chief Veterans Experience Officer, who discussed the patient experience at VA as part of the [CX Symposium](#); and on [9/15 @ 12pm or 4:30pm ET](#) for a discussion on this year's flu, VHA's prevention efforts, and how to protect yourself with Mr. Troy Knighton from VHA's National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, with Ms. Rachael Hewson and Ms. Cherie Wright from VHA Employee Whole Health.
- As I am receiving alerts of a tornado watch right now, September is [National Preparedness Month](#), occurring each September to raise awareness and strengthen resilience against the effects of disasters and emergencies.



Dublin Veterans compete in National Veterans Wheelchair Games

"It makes me feel good. It makes me feel proud. It gives me a feeling of purpose."

[Read the full story.](#)



Beekeeping program for Vets at White City VA offers therapy and fun

"They taught us that the bees don't really want to hurt us. They're just busy working."

[Read the full story.](#)



Repaired sculpture returns again to VA grounds

"A lot of people care about this sculpture. It's created a lot of curiosity and awareness."

[Read the full story.](#)



Homeless couple finds their path home

"The greatest thing was when we got our keys," Army Veteran Randy Jones said. "We unlocked the door for the first time ourselves."

[Read the full story.](#)

VA “Top Lines”
(As of September 9, 2022)

This document provides cleared information for immediate use by VA leaders and their communication staffs across the department. It provides approved enterprise-level messages for use at local level to complement their actions to answer local media inquiries and conduct public engagements. OPIA will periodically update and republish this document as policy guidance changes or new policy decisions occur.

VA Toplines 2022

Secretary McDonough

- **Core Message:** *Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors are the heart of America, having dedicated their lives to serving and sacrificing for this country—for all of us—in the times when we’ve needed them most. Now, it’s our job to serve them as well as they have served us by delivering timely access to world-class health care and earned benefits. And we’re fighting like hell to do exactly that.*

- **Supporting Themes:**
 - **Veterans are at the center of everything we do:** The Veteran is at the heart of everything we do. Whenever we make a decision at VA, we ask ourselves one question above all else: what does it mean for the Veterans we serve, and for their families, caregivers, and survivors? Because they have earned and deserve our very best, and we will never settle for anything less.

 - **Getting things done:** Last year, we made promises—now, we’re keeping them. VA is now providing more care, more benefits, and more services to more Veterans than ever before.

 - **Accountability to the Veteran:** Outcomes drive everything we do—because Veterans, not us, are the ultimate judges of our success.

 - **President Biden’s charge:** “At the beginning of last year, President Biden charged us with a mission: to fight like hell for Veterans. That’s how we evaluate ourselves today and every day: are we fighting like hell for those who fought for us?”

Current Issue Toplines

Unity Agenda

- President Biden outlined during his first State of the Union address a four-part Unity Agenda. The [Unity Agenda](#) focuses on making progress in areas where historically members of both parties can come together and deliver results for the American people:
 - [Tackling the mental health crisis.](#)
 - [Ending cancer as we know it.](#)
 - [Supporting our Veterans](#) (inclusive of reducing homelessness, financial hardship, relief from medical debt, all things environmental exposures, and training for VA and non-VA providers).
 - [Beating the opioid epidemic.](#)
- VA's efforts to deliver Veterans, family members, survivors and care givers timely access to world-class health care and earned benefits touches on all these areas.

Interim Final Rule (IFR) on Women's Reproductive Health/ Dobbs Decision

- [VA now offers abortion counseling and will provide access to abortions](#) for pregnant Veterans when: 1) the life or health of the Veteran would be endangered if the pregnancy were carried to term, or 2) the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.
- VA beneficiaries enrolled in CHAMPVA will also have access to these services.
- This was a patient safety decision. We listened to VA health care providers and Veterans across the country, who sounded the alarm that abortion restrictions are creating a medical emergency for those we serve.
- Access to abortion is particularly critical for protecting the health and life of pregnant Veterans, because Vets are at greater risk than non-Vets of experiencing pregnancy-related complications.
- The bottom line is that pregnant Veterans and VA beneficiaries deserve to have access to world-class, life-saving reproductive care when they need it most — including access to abortion counseling and abortions when needed.
- Offering this care will save Veterans' health and lives, and there is nothing more important than that.
- For more information about abortion services at VA, visit [VA.gov/ReproductiveHealth](https://www.va.gov/ReproductiveHealth) and click on "Abortion Services."

Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2021 (“PACT Act”).

- The PACT Act is a historic law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. The law empowers VA to provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they’ve earned and deserve.
 - Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 combat Veterans.
 - Adds more than 20 new presumptive conditions for burn pits and other toxic exposures.
 - Adds more presumptive locations for Agent Orange and radiation exposure.
 - Provides toxic exposure screenings to every Veteran enrolled in VA health care.
 - Helps us improve research, staff education, and treatment related to toxic exposures.
- VA will execute a comprehensive Veteran outreach plan to make sure that every Veteran and survivor gets the care they need and the benefits they deserve. For now, here are the most important things for Veterans to know:
 - We at VA want Veterans and survivors to apply now for their PACT Act benefits.
 - Because these conditions have already taken a serious toll on so many Veterans and their families, we are considering all conditions established in the PACT Act to be presumptive on August 10, the date the bill was signed into law.
 - We will begin processing those presumptive benefits for Veterans and survivors on the earliest date possible, which is January 1st.
 - Any Veteran or survivor can learn more about the PACT Act by visiting VA.gov/PACT or calling 1-800-MY-VA-411.

COVID Response

- Bottom line: VA’s priority remains vaccinating and boosting as many employees, Veterans, their families, and caregivers as possible because it is the best way for us to end this pandemic and reduce the number of hospitalizations across the country.
- As of September 7:
 - VA has documented that over 4.3M Veterans received at least one dose of vaccine. And more than 4.2M Veterans have completed a vaccination series (two-dose or one J and J vaccine).

- More than 2.2 million Veterans have received an initial booster dose. That represents about 52% of the more than 4.2 million individuals we have a record of being fully vaccinated. Over 500,000 Veterans have received an additional booster dose.
- VHA Employee Vaccinations
 - 98% of all paid VHA healthcare personnel currently working have completed the submission process to report vaccination or request an exception.
 - Of these submissions, about 90% have provided records of being fully or partially vaccinated and about 9% have requested an exception. VHA is in the process of analyzing the requests for accommodation and making decisions that ensure VA has the ability to adequately deliver safe patient care.

Monkeypox Response

- VA has received 13,000 vials (65,000 doses) of JYNNEOS™ monkeypox vaccine from Department of Health and Human Services and distributed vials to all 18 VISNs.
- VA will continue to receive additional allocation of vials of JYNNEOS to reduce the spread of monkeypox as more product is available within the supply chain.
- Once distribution and vaccine administration training at VA medical centers has been completed, VA will begin offering the JYNNEOS™ vaccine to Veterans at highest risk of infection. For Veterans who need the vaccine, the series requires 2 doses per person, 28 days apart.
- Due to the limited supply and to ensure availability for Veterans who need it, most Veterans will receive a lower, and still effective dose based on the Emergency Use Authorization. This route, which is being used across the country, uses less vaccine per person and is safe and effective.
- Most Veterans will receive a small dose into the forearm, though some Veterans who have had a type of scarring called a “keloid” will get a larger dose in the upper arm.
- VA has convened a group of subject matter experts and key stakeholders to ensure a swift and comprehensive response to this new emerging infection.
- VA is working in close collaboration with local and state public health authorities and with other federal agencies to ensure access to testing, treatment, and prevention tools, such as antivirals and vaccines.
- VA is closely following clinical, infection control, and occupational health guidance provided by CDC.
- VA is providing monkeypox testing support its healthcare facilities through its Public Health Reference Laboratory (PHRL) in Palo Alto, CA. PHRL is part of CDC’s LRN (Laboratory Response Network).

- For more information about monkeypox, please visit [Monkeypox | Poxvirus | CDC](#).

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- VA continues to advocate for the needs of Veterans and caregivers and will continue the hard work being done in partnership with Veteran Service Organizations, Military Service Organizations and other strategic partners surrounding improvements to the Caregiver Support Program.

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- This is good news, especially for the 28,623 Veterans and survivors whose claims have already been granted. As of September 6, 2022, VA has completed 38,331 of these claims and granted 28,623, which represents a 74.7% grant rate for claims that include asthma, sinusitis, rhinitis, and rare respiratory cancers due to fine particulate matter.
- This is just the start. VA is seeking every avenue possible to develop additional processes where a presumptive can be determined in a more expedient and holistic manner for Veterans.
- VA is also proactively 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 for Vietnam-era Veterans presumptively associated with exposure to herbicide agents, more commonly known as Agent Orange. Those conditions are bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism.
- As of September 6, 2022, 70,981 of these claims have been processed, with over \$518 million in retroactive benefits awarded to Veterans and survivors.

Disability Claims Backlog

- The new Gulf War and Agent Orange Presumptive Medical Conditions—along with the Blue Water Navy (BWN) claims—have led to an increase in the current disability claims backlog.
- Fortunately, we’re able to respond to these increases. To proactively address the increase, we’re:
 - Hiring and training of more than 2,000 new positions to process and support Veteran’ claims for disability benefits.

- Using American Rescue Plan funding to pay overtime for processors.
- Deploying FY22 budget resources to expedite toxic exposure claims processing.
- Currently, between 20 to 25% of VBA's Rating Veteran Service Representatives (RVSRs) are working BWN-Nehmer, NDAA-Nehmer, and BWN claims. Nehmer claims are highly complex and require specialized training to complete.
- As part of mitigation measures, VBA has been mandating overtime for all RVSRs as well as aggressively hiring new RVSRs to ensure sufficient rating capacity, both for existing workload and expected future workload related to toxic exposure filing.
- As of September 5, 2022, the backlog was 157,600 claims, 40.5% below the recent high on October 24, 2021 (264,236). Backlog is defined as the number of claims pending more than 125 days.
- VBA is also leading a comprehensive modernization of the claims process through the utilization of data and automation. Historically manual administrative tasks and workflows will be automated to enable more effective and timely claim decisions.
- VBA began a pilot program in December 2021 to automate business processes with certain medical data to eliminate unnecessary examinations, streamline workflows, and reduce manual processes. The pilot is:
 - Focusing on claims for increased benefits related to service-connected hypertension.
 - Processing claims in approximately five days. A remarkable improvement from the traditional process which is currently taking well over 100 days on average.

Ending Homelessness among Veterans

- The words "homeless" and "Veteran" should not exist together. VA is committed to ending homelessness among Veterans because it is our nation's duty to ensure all Veterans have a place to call home.
- Significant progress has been made to prevent and end Veteran homelessness. The number of Veterans experiencing homelessness in the United States has declined by nearly half since 2010. Since 2010, over 966,000 Veterans and their family members have been permanently housed, rapidly rehoused, or prevented from falling into homelessness through HUD's targeted housing vouchers and VA's homelessness programs.
- During calendar year 2022, VA's goal is to place at least 38,000 homeless Veterans into permanent housing. This goal represents nearly the same number of Veterans counted in the 2020 Point-in-Time count.
- From January through July 2022, VA achieved 22,458 permanent housing placements, which represents nearly 60% of the goal.

- VA is focusing significant effort on this now in Los Angeles, where there are more homeless Veterans than anywhere else in America. VA [updated its joint Master Plan](#) with our key partners to end Veteran homelessness in Los Angeles, greatly enhancing our ‘on the ground’ efforts there.
- [VA and HUD](#) continue to align efforts and work towards ending Veteran homelessness. By mobilizing the strength of our two departments, together with other federal agencies and partners, this collective effort is doing all in its power to ensure every Veteran has access to a safe and stable housing.
- There are two primary ways that the public can help:
 - If you are a Veteran who is homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.
 - Landlords with housing units interested in renting to Veterans can visit <https://www.va.gov/homeless/landlords.asp> to learn how to help.

From: (b)(6) on behalf of (b)(6)
Sent: Thu, 15 Sep 2022 15:38:52 +0000
To: DRM
Subject: VSO Breakfast
Attachments: 9.20.22 - VSO Lunch EBS.docx, VVA - Jack McManus - Bio and Photo.docx, WWP - Jose Ramos - Bio and Photo.docx, 9.20.22 - VSO Lunch EBS.docx, American Legion - Chanin Nuntavong - Bio and Photo.pdf, DAV - Randy Reese - Bio and Photo.pdf, IAVA - Tom Porter.docx, MOAA - Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins USAF (Ret) - Bio and Photo.docx, Seating OBCR VSO - 20 SEPT 2022.docx, Talking Points.docx, UPDATED Enterprise TPs for 09-09-22.docx, VFW - Bob Wallace - Bio and Photo.docx



BRIEFING AGENDA and EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(2-pages MAX – can include attachments)

SECVA/DEPSEC VA VSO Lunch

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decisional | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informational | <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remarks | <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> Courtesy Call |

SEPT 20, 2022 12:00pm
VACO – Omar Bradley Conference Room

ATTENDEES:

- Secretary McDonough
- Deputy Secretary Remy
- Kim Mitchell, VSO Liaison
- Leslie Williams, Special Assistant, VSO Office
- MOAA – Dana “DT” Atkins
- American Legion - Chanin Nuntavong** Tentative
- IAVA - Tom Porter
- WWP - Jose Ramos
- VFW - Bob Wallace
- DAV – Randy Reese (out of country this week – not on emails – but had RSVPd for Breakfast)
- VVA - Sharon Hodge/Jack McManus
- AMVETS - Joe Chenelly (invited – no RSVP)

OVERVIEW OF EVENT:

- Secretary McDonough will host VSO Leaders to provide an update on the State of VA as well engage in discussion concerning VSO concerns/ issues

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS:

- A. ***Enterprise Top Line TP (9/9/2022)***
- B. ***Talking points***
 - a. ***PACT Implementation – how VSOs can assist***
 - b. ***PACT “Education Requirement – Outreach Provision”***
 - c. ***EHRM Update***

POINT OF CONTACT: *(Person to verify details)*

Kim Mitchell (b)(6) [@va.gov](mailto:Kim.Mitchell@va.gov) (202) 738-(b)(6)



Jack McManus was elected to serve as National President of Vietnam Veterans of America on November 6, 2021, at the organization's 20th National Convention in Greensboro, North Carolina. He was first elected VVA national treasurer in 1995 and was re-elected to the position in 1997 and 2019. Jack previously served as the VVA Michigan State Council President for six and a half years from 1989 to 1996, overseeing the largest state program in VVA. In 1997, he was awarded VVA's highest honor, the VVA Commendation Medal, for his extraordinary service to the organization, to all veterans, and to the community at large.

He has also been recognized by the VVA New York State Council with its Commendation Medal. Originally from New York City, Jack joined the Air Force in 1965, where he served until 1969. Between 1967 and 1968, he was assigned to Operation Ranch Hand in Vietnam.

Jack received his B.A. in Business Management from New York University in 1973. He resides in North Carolina, with his wife Jackie. He is a recipient of numerous business and community awards.

Jack is deeply committed to achieving justice and receiving answers for veterans and their families whose health has been impacted by their exposure to toxic substances during their military service.



Jose Ramos
Vice President, Government & Community Relations

Jose Ramos serves as WWP's Vice President of Government and Community Relations and has been helping post-9/11 veterans as a member of the WWP team since 2018. Prior to joining WWP, Jose served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as the Special Assistant for Constituent Inquiries and as an appointed Commissioner on President Bush's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors. Jose's background as a combat-wounded Navy corpsman informs his current role and helps guide WWP's efforts to promote policies that support the needs of America's wounded warriors and their families. Jose served three combat tours during his Navy service while assigned to a Marine Corps infantry battalion. Jose holds his BA from George Mason University. He is a native of the Great State of Texas.



BRIEFING AGENDA and EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(2-pages MAX – can include attachments)

SECVA/DEPSEC VA VSO Lunch

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|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decisional | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Informational | <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Event |
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POINT OF CONTACT: *(Person to verify details)*

Kim Mitchell (b)(6) [redacted] @va.gov (202) 738- [redacted] (b)(6)



Chanin Nuntavong
Executive Director
The American Legion
Washington, D.C. National Headquarters



Chanin Nuntavong is the Executive Director of Government Affairs for The American Legion National Headquarters. His responsibilities include: managing a staff dedicated to the timely and compassionate delivery of benefits earned by U.S. military veterans; overseeing the daily functions of employees who support the commissions and committees of The American Legion (i.e. Legislative, National Security, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, and Veterans Employment and Education); and serving as the Legion's liaison to the President of the United States, Vice President, heads of the executive departments and other cabinet-level officials, members of Congress, and organizations with an interest and impact on veterans' issues.

Chanin retired from the U.S. Marine Corps as Gunnery Sergeant, with more than 22 years of service, where he was as a combat correspondent in the Public Affairs field. Notably, he served in the Pentagon as the official spokesperson and staff advisor to the 16th, 17th and 18th Sergeants Major of the Marine Corps. His personal decorations include two Meritorious Service Medals, two Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals, and three Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals.

Chanin is a member of American Legion Post #43 in Hollywood, Calif., American Legion Auxiliary Post #364 in Woodbridge, Va., Marine Corps League, and Marine Corps Association and Foundation. He is also a life member of Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and Disabled American Veterans (DAV). He sits on the executive board of The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program, and is a representative member of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) Department of Veterans Affairs Special Medical Advisory Group.

Chanin earned his Bachelor of Science from Liberty University, and is currently studying executive leadership at Cornell University. He resides in the northern Virginia area with his wife and two teenage boys.



National Service & Legislative Headquarters
807 Maine Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20024-3501
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dav.org

Biographical INFO

EDWARD R. REESE, Jr.

Executive Director, Washington Headquarters
DAV (Disabled American Veterans)

Edward R. “Randy” Reese, Jr., a combat veteran of the Persian Gulf War, was appointed Executive Director of DAV’s National Service and Legislative Headquarters (NSLH) in Washington, D.C. in December 2018. In this capacity, he directs DAV’s legislative and service programs, which provide free benefits assistance to over 200,000 veterans, survivors and family members each year. Reese manages more than 400 professional and support staff at NSLH and 88 offices across the country. Reese also serves as DAV’s principal spokesperson before Congress, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the White House.



Reese has more than two decades of professional experience advocating for the men and women who served, having first joined DAV in 1995 as a National Service Officer and has worked in multiple locations around the country, including Kentucky, Nevada and California. He was appointed Associate National Service Director in May 1999, Assistant National Service Director in August 2000, Deputy National Service Director in August 2001, National Service Director in 2002, Deputy Director of Human Resources in July 2010, National Human Resources Director in August 2013 and Assistant Executive Director of NSLH in 2017 before his current appointment.

A nationally recognized expert on veterans benefits and services, Reese has served on a number of veteran-related federal advisory committees, including the Advisory Committee on Disability Compensation, Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans, VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Task Force, and the most recent VA Under Secretary for Health Search Committee.

A native of Bristol, Virginia, Reese enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1984. He was a rifle squad leader in the 82nd Airborne Division during the Persian Gulf War. Following the war, he served as an elite “Black-Hat” instructor in the Air Movement Operations and Jump Master Courses at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. There, he suffered a disabling back injury while conducting a night parachute jump in an airfield seizure training operation. Among his military decorations are the Combat Infantryman Badge, Master Parachutist Badge and the Meritorious Service Medal.

Reese earned his paralegal degree from Kaplan College for Professional Studies and is certified by the HR Certification Institute as a Senior Professional of Human Resources (SPHR) and Senior Certified Professional (SCP) by the Society for Human Resource Management. He is a life member of DAV Arlington/Fairfax Chapter 10. Reese and his wife Belenda currently live in Chesapeake Beach, Maryland.



Tom Porter - IAVA

Tom joined IAVA in 2015 and now leads IAVA's government relations team in advocating for our nation's veterans, while also serving as a media spokesman for IAVA priorities. He has led successful campaigns to protect military and veterans education benefits, address exposures to burn bits and airborne toxins while deployed, and fill gaps in care for women veterans.

Prior to joining IAVA, Porter was Vice President at Morgan Meguire, LLC since 2004. He was successful in achieving goals on behalf of a nationwide client base through aggressive and bi-partisan advocacy before Congress and federal agencies. He also served nine years on the staff of three senior Members of Congress. Tom is also a Captain in the U.S. Navy Reserve with service since 1996, including deployments to Afghanistan and the Arabian Gulf as a Public Affairs Officer.

His military experience drives him to serve our Nation's military and veteran community, and his career working for and with Congress enables him to be a strong advocate on their behalf. Tom came to Washington, DC from the Golden State by way of Tennessee in 1996. He is a 1994 graduate of California State University, San Bernardino.

In Tom's spare time, he is completely consumed with his role as doting husband and father to three daughters. You'll find him on weekends and many weeknights Jeeping them to and from soccer fields, martial arts lessons, and other activities.



Lt. Gen. Dana Atkins, USAF (Ret)
President and CEO

Atkins is a native of Portland, Ore. He earned his bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Portland and holds two master's degrees, one in aeronautical science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and another in national security strategy from the National War College. He also received an honorary doctorate in public service from the University of Portland, his "alma mater."

A command pilot with more than 4,000 hours in fighter aircraft, Atkins has served in a number of key command and staff positions, including commander, 20th Fighter Wing, Shaw AFB, S.C.;

commander, 35th Fighter Wing, Misawa, Japan; vice commander, 7th Air Force and U.S. Air Force Korea; director of operations, U.S. Pacific Command; and special assistant to the supreme allied commander Europe during the air war over Serbia. During his career, he flew as a demonstration pilot for both the European A-10 Demonstration Team and the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds.

At the time of his retirement from the Air Force, Atkins served as commander, Alaskan Command, U.S. Pacific Command; commander, 11th Air Force, Pacific Air Forces; and commander, Alaskan North American Defense Region, Elmendorf AFB, Alaska.

He and his wife, Laura, were the 2004 recipients of the General and Mrs. Jerome F. O'Malley Award, which recognizes the wing commander and spouse whose contributions to the nation, the Air Force, and the local community best exemplify the highest ideals and positive leadership of a military couple.

Before becoming the ninth president of MOAA, Atkins served as president of Chronicle Media, a print and digital media company based in Augusta, Ga., that serves the southeastern U.S.

Seating for SECVA Lunch with VSO Leaders
Tuesday, Sept 20, 2022
12:00pm-1:00pm
OBCR

Leslie Williams
Special Assistant VSO

Kim Mitchell
VSO Liaison

Chanin Nuntavong
Executive Director, American Legion

Jose Ramos
VP, Wounded Warrior Project

T.H. Denis McDonough
Secretary of Veterans Affairs



Dana Adkins
President and CEO, MOAA

T.H. Donald Remy
Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Tom Porter
Executive VP Govt Affairs, IAVA

Bob Wallace
Executive Director, VFW

Randy Reese
Executive Director, DAV

***Joe Chenelly**
*Executive Director,
AMVETS*

Jack McManus
President, VVA

* - Invited but have not RSVP'd

Talking Points – Attachment A

VSO Lunch – 20 SEPT 2022

1. How VSOs can help the Department of VA with the successful implementation of the PACT ACT
 - VSO's can assist the VA with successful implementation most by assisting in amplifying the PACT messaging to members, constituents, spouses and caregivers. Assist in amplification of products being sent out from the VA. The VSOs are our greatest force multipliers. VSOs will also play a major role in encouraging and assisting Veterans and families to file claims and apply for benefits. We would like to hear from the VSOs how well those processes are going from their perspective, particularly the ones with service officers, as that data will be very informative to outreach efforts.
 - Would also be helpful to know what they are hearing from their constituencies? What are the info gaps we need to fill? Tell us where there's specific cohort outreach that's lacking or where we're doing well so we can replicate comms tactics.

2. The law has an education requirement to spread the word about the new benefits, and how can we, the VSOs, help?
 - If the "education requirement" about spreading the word in question 2 is the outreach provision, the outreach plan development, currently underway. Section 111 is due to Congress in December 2022. We will have much more to follow as we continue to develop said plans, but again, the biggest thing we need from VSOs is their advice and counsel on targeted outreach based on what they're seeing/hearing.

3. Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) Program Talking Points

TOPLINE:

- VA's new electronic health record system has deployed in 2022 at facilities in Walla Walla, Washington; Columbus, Ohio; and Roseburg and White City, Oregon. To date, five VA medical centers, 22 community-based outpatient clinics and 52 remote sites have gone live with the new system, with more than 10,000 end users serving more than 200,000 Veterans. The next deployment is scheduled for January 2023, at facilities in Saginaw and Ann Arbor, Michigan.

VSO/NASDVA Outreach:

- The Electronic Health Record Modernization Integration Office (EHRM-IO) holds quarterly briefings for Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) and the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) on the status of the Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) effort. The next briefing is scheduled for Oct. 24, 2022, at 11 a.m. EDT, and emails have been sent to VSOs and NASDVA to hold this date/time.

EHRM Background/Status:

- Modernizing VA's electronic health record is much more than a routine software implementation. It is a fundamental change in how business and health care work processes are performed within VA. It presents us with opportunities to transform the way we deliver health care, and to standardize

that delivery across the enterprise to achieve improvements in patient safety and efficiency in health care deliver.

- The goal of the new EHR is, and always has been, to provide improved health outcomes for Veterans and a better experience for providers. Right now, it is not meeting those goals and needs improvement. We're holding Oracle Cerner and ourselves accountable to get this right. All future deployments of the system have been paused until early 2023 to make sure that the system delivers for Veterans and providers.
- During the remainder of the calendar year prior to the next deployment in 2023, VA is actively working on improving the system and our processes, and adding new capability enhancements that will improve the usability of the system for our health care personnel. We're still very much engaged with our past deployment sites, closely monitoring, and assessing for user experience, adoption and lessons learned.
- To ensure future facilities are prepared for the transition to the new EHR, VA conducts current state reviews (CSRs) at each facility, which include a comprehensive review of each facility's current clinical processes for patient care, patient documentation requirements and existing technical infrastructure, including network closets, server rooms, end-user devices, medical devices, printers and scanners. VA also uses a site readiness for deployment checklist to track progress in the following areas critical to successful system adoption: leadership, governance, infrastructure, user readiness, patient safety and system usability.
- VA remains committed to getting the new EHR right for Veterans and aims ultimately to serve as a model for transformative health care innovation by using the same health record system as DOD and the U.S. Coast Guard and improving exchange of Veteran medical information with participating community care providers.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What is the next scheduled site going live on the new electronic health record?

A: The next scheduled deployment is Jan. 28, 2023, at facilities in Saginaw and Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Q: Where has the new electronic health record (EHR) system been deployed to date?

A: To date, the new EHR system has been deployed at the following sites:

- October 2020, VA launched the new EHR system at the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center, its associated community-based outpatient clinics and the West Consolidated Patient Account Center in Las Vegas.
- March 26, 2022, VA launched the new EHR system at the Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center in Walla Walla, Washington, and its associated clinics.
- April 30, 2022, VA launched the new EHR system at the VA Central Ohio Healthcare System in Columbus, Ohio, and its associated clinics.
- June 11, 2022, VA launched the new EHR system at the Roseburg VA Health Care System in Roseburg, Oregon, and the VA Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center and Clinics in White City, Oregon.

Q: Are the balance of deployments still on schedule?

A: VA decided to postpone its planned go-live at the Boise VA Medical Center (VAMC), that was scheduled for July 23, 2022. This decision was based on concerns that the site and Oracle Cerner had not completed all the tasks required to be ready for deployment based on assessment using our site readiness checklist. A new launch date for Boise has not been determined.

We also shifted the deployment date for the Puget Sound VA Health Care System, which includes the American Lake and Seattle VAMCs, from the original date of August 2022 to March 2023, and the VA Portland Health Care System, which includes the Portland and Portland-Vancouver VAMCs, from November 2022 to April 2023. These decisions were based on system stability concerns. Moving the deployment of these larger, more complex sites allows Oracle Cerner more time to stabilize the system and implement our top priority capability enhancements.

A revised schedule for VA's new EHR system rollout through FY 2024 quarter one has been developed. The full EHR deployment schedule through 2028 is currently under development with VHA..

Q: What has VA done in response to the many system issues that have occurred since the initial launch of the EHR at Mann-Grandstaff?

A: VA continues to actively address previous concerns regarding system outages and degradations and is holding Oracle Cerner accountable. Not only are these episodes frustrating and disruptive to our medical personnel, but they could potentially put our Veterans' safety at risk.

We are working collaboratively with DOD, the Federal Electronic Health Record Modernization Program Office, Oracle Cerner and Leidos to make sure the capabilities and processes are in place to ensure stability of the Federal network. Oracle Cerner has committed to upgrading the current system and implementing procedures for responding more quickly to service disruptions to ensure a better, more reliable user experience.

VA is holding Oracle Cerner accountable for not meeting the system uptime requirement in our contract. Oracle Cerner has failed to meet the 99.9% service uptime Service Level Agreement (SLA) for 7 out of the last 13 months (June 2021 through July 2022) and the Department has received financial credits for their failure to meet the contractual level of performance. To further hold them accountable, VA sent a second Letter of Concern on August 5, 2022, reiterating our concerns and directing Oracle Cerner to provide their detailed technical and operational roadmap to remedy the ongoing system instability issues within 30 calendar days.

These failures put our medical professionals' ability to deliver safe and effective care to Veterans at risk. Oracle Cerner's failure to resolve the system instability issues could result in the use of other contractual remedies within the government's authority.

Q: What is VA's response to the recent OIG reports citing patient safety issues?

A: The OIG is an important partner in our efforts, and we have already made significant progress addressing many of the issues the OIG has identified. For example, the issues discussed in a recent OIG report regarding the unknown queue were identified by VA in late December 2020. VA has implemented corrective actions and reported them to OIG via a memorandum, dated July 6, 2022, requesting closure of the recommendations in the report, and is diligently working to ensure that all current and upcoming EHRM facilities are adhering to the appropriate processes in managing the unknown queue.

Q: Can you describe why the "unknown queue" feature of VA's new electronic health record is an issue?

A: Like other electronic health record systems, the Oracle Cerner EHR system was purposely designed to include a part of the system known as a queue to capture erroneous orders. Therefore, the “unknown queue,” while not artfully named, is not a “dysfunction” of the EHR, but rather how the system was designed. The unknown queue was designed to capture orders that cannot be delivered and completed so that they can be reviewed by staff for correction.

VA has taken actions to ensure that the queue is working optimally, including ensuring order locations are configured properly so that the orders can be directed to the right place, adjusting workflows, identifying staff to monitor the queue who are trained in its use, development of tip sheets and additional resources, among other steps to manage the unknown queue. Almost all this work was completed prior to the 2022 deployments.

The issues discussed in the recent OIG report regarding the unknown queue were identified by VA in late December 2020. VA has implemented corrective actions and reported them to OIG via a memorandum, dated July 6, 2022, requesting closure of the recommendations, and is diligently working to ensure that all current and upcoming EHRM facilities are adhering to the appropriate processes.

Q: Does the acquisition of Cerner by Oracle have any impact on the EHRM program?

A: VA does not expect Oracle’s June 8, 2022, acquisition of Cerner to impact the EHRM program. We expect them to remain accountable to VA leadership and be attentive and responsible for their contractual obligations with VA.

VA “Top Lines”
(As of September 9, 2022)

This document provides cleared information for immediate use by VA leaders and their communication staffs across the department. It provides approved enterprise-level messages for use at local level to complement their actions to answer local media inquiries and conduct public engagements. OPIA will periodically update and republish this document as policy guidance changes or new policy decisions occur.

VA Toplines 2022

Secretary McDonough

- **Core Message:** *Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors are the heart of America, having dedicated their lives to serving and sacrificing for this country—for all of us—in the times when we’ve needed them most. Now, it’s our job to serve them as well as they have served us by delivering timely access to world-class health care and earned benefits. And we’re fighting like hell to do exactly that.*

- **Supporting Themes:**
 - **Veterans are at the center of everything we do:** The Veteran is at the heart of everything we do. Whenever we make a decision at VA, we ask ourselves one question above all else: what does it mean for the Veterans we serve, and for their families, caregivers, and survivors? Because they have earned and deserve our very best, and we will never settle for anything less.

 - **Getting things done:** Last year, we made promises—now, we’re keeping them. VA is now providing more care, more benefits, and more services to more Veterans than ever before.

 - **Accountability to the Veteran:** Outcomes drive everything we do—because Veterans, not us, are the ultimate judges of our success.

 - **President Biden’s charge:** “At the beginning of last year, President Biden charged us with a mission: to fight like hell for Veterans. That’s how we evaluate ourselves today and every day: are we fighting like hell for those who fought for us?”

Current Issue Toplines

Unity Agenda

- President Biden outlined during his first State of the Union address a four-part Unity Agenda. The [Unity Agenda](#) focuses on making progress in areas where historically members of both parties can come together and deliver results for the American people:
 - [Tackling the mental health crisis.](#)
 - [Ending cancer as we know it.](#)
 - [Supporting our Veterans](#) (inclusive of reducing homelessness, financial hardship, relief from medical debt, all things environmental exposures, and training for VA and non-VA providers).
 - [Beating the opioid epidemic.](#)
- VA's efforts to deliver Veterans, family members, survivors and care givers timely access to world-class health care and earned benefits touches on all these areas.

Interim Final Rule (IFR) on Women's Reproductive Health/ Dobbs Decision

- [VA now offers abortion counseling and will provide access to abortions](#) for pregnant Veterans when: 1) the life or health of the Veteran would be endangered if the pregnancy were carried to term, or 2) the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.
- VA beneficiaries enrolled in CHAMPVA will also have access to these services.
- This was a patient safety decision. We listened to VA health care providers and Veterans across the country, who sounded the alarm that abortion restrictions are creating a medical emergency for those we serve.
- Access to abortion is particularly critical for protecting the health and life of pregnant Veterans, because Vets are at greater risk than non-Vets of experiencing pregnancy-related complications.
- The bottom line is that pregnant Veterans and VA beneficiaries deserve to have access to world-class, life-saving reproductive care when they need it most — including access to abortion counseling and abortions when needed.
- Offering this care will save Veterans' health and lives, and there is nothing more important than that.
- For more information about abortion services at VA, visit [VA.gov/ReproductiveHealth](https://www.va.gov/ReproductiveHealth) and click on "Abortion Services."

Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2021 (“PACT Act”).

- The PACT Act is a historic law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. The law empowers VA to provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they’ve earned and deserve.
 - Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 combat Veterans.
 - Adds more than 20 new presumptive conditions for burn pits and other toxic exposures.
 - Adds more presumptive locations for Agent Orange and radiation exposure.
 - Provides toxic exposure screenings to every Veteran enrolled in VA health care.
 - Helps us improve research, staff education, and treatment related to toxic exposures.
- VA will execute a comprehensive Veteran outreach plan to make sure that every Veteran and survivor gets the care they need and the benefits they deserve. For now, here are the most important things for Veterans to know:
 - We at VA want Veterans and survivors to apply now for their PACT Act benefits.
 - Because these conditions have already taken a serious toll on so many Veterans and their families, we are considering all conditions established in the PACT Act to be presumptive on August 10, the date the bill was signed into law.
 - We will begin processing those presumptive benefits for Veterans and survivors on the earliest date possible, which is January 1st.
 - Any Veteran or survivor can learn more about the PACT Act by visiting VA.gov/PACT or calling 1-800-MY-VA-411.

COVID Response

- Bottom line: VA’s priority remains vaccinating and boosting as many employees, Veterans, their families, and caregivers as possible because it is the best way for us to end this pandemic and reduce the number of hospitalizations across the country.
- As of September 7:
 - VA has documented that over 4.3M Veterans received at least one dose of vaccine. And more than 4.2M Veterans have completed a vaccination series (two-dose or one J and J vaccine).

- More than 2.2 million Veterans have received an initial booster dose. That represents about 52% of the more than 4.2 million individuals we have a record of being fully vaccinated. Over 500,000 Veterans have received an additional booster dose.
- VHA Employee Vaccinations
 - 98% of all paid VHA healthcare personnel currently working have completed the submission process to report vaccination or request an exception.
 - Of these submissions, about 90% have provided records of being fully or partially vaccinated and about 9% have requested an exception. VHA is in the process of analyzing the requests for accommodation and making decisions that ensure VA has the ability to adequately deliver safe patient care.

Monkeypox Response

- VA has received 13,000 vials (65,000 doses) of JYNNEOS™ monkeypox vaccine from Department of Health and Human Services and distributed vials to all 18 VISNs.
- VA will continue to receive additional allocation of vials of JYNNEOS to reduce the spread of monkeypox as more product is available within the supply chain.
- Once distribution and vaccine administration training at VA medical centers has been completed, VA will begin offering the JYNNEOS™ vaccine to Veterans at highest risk of infection. For Veterans who need the vaccine, the series requires 2 doses per person, 28 days apart.
- Due to the limited supply and to ensure availability for Veterans who need it, most Veterans will receive a lower, and still effective dose based on the Emergency Use Authorization. This route, which is being used across the country, uses less vaccine per person and is safe and effective.
- Most Veterans will receive a small dose into the forearm, though some Veterans who have had a type of scarring called a “keloid” will get a larger dose in the upper arm.
- VA has convened a group of subject matter experts and key stakeholders to ensure a swift and comprehensive response to this new emerging infection.
- VA is working in close collaboration with local and state public health authorities and with other federal agencies to ensure access to testing, treatment, and prevention tools, such as antivirals and vaccines.
- VA is closely following clinical, infection control, and occupational health guidance provided by CDC.
- VA is providing monkeypox testing support its healthcare facilities through its Public Health Reference Laboratory (PHRL) in Palo Alto, CA. PHRL is part of CDC’s LRN (Laboratory Response Network).

- For more information about monkeypox, please visit [Monkeypox | Poxvirus | CDC](#).

Preventing Suicide among Veterans

- Preventing Veteran Suicide is our top clinical priority because one Veteran suicide is simply one too many.
- Suicide is preventable, and each of us has a role to play in suicide prevention. Quick, easy access to services in times of crisis, which provide hope and connection to resources, can and does save Veterans' lives.
- Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988 then Press 1 Launch.
 - Veterans across the nation now have the option to Dial 988, then press 1 to reach the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL).
 - The new, shorter number took effect July 16, 2022, and directly addresses the need for ease of access and clarity in times of crisis, both for Veterans and non-Veterans alike.
 - This change is the result of the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, which designated 988 as the universal telephone number within the U.S. for purposes of the national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system, operating through the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and VCL.
 - Veterans may still dial 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, which will continue to be operational. VCL text (838255) and chat services remain unchanged (VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat).
 - Crisis support, available 24/7/365, is one critical component of implementation of the National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide (2018).
 - VA will be actively listening to Veteran feedback on the change and will continue to center on cultivating trust and providing an excellent experience of seeking care. We look forward to continuing to provide updates on the positive impact this will create.
 - VA recognizes the resiliency of the Veterans we serve and reiterate the honor and pride we have in serving those who have served this Nation so well.

VA Infrastructure Modernization

- President Biden has insisted that our Veterans in the 21st century should not be forced to receive care in early 20th century buildings.
- The median age of VA's hospitals is nearly 60 years old, and that's why the President requested nearly \$20 billion in new VA infrastructure spending last year and it is why he has requested the largest ever investment in VA infrastructure in his FY23 budget.

- Regardless of what Congress decides to do with the AIR Commission - which was called for in the 2018 MISSION Act - we will continue to fight for the funding and modernization that our veterans deserve.

VA Caregiver Support Program

- The Caregiver Support Program is prepared for Phase II expansion on October 1, 2022, to Veterans and caregivers of all service eras. In preparation, CSP engaged in a robust recruitment effort to ensure adequate staff are in place and have completed training to enable timely processing of PCAFC applications.
- VA is committed to supporting Veterans and their Family Caregivers by listening to concerns raised and working diligently to address them as we continue to ensure Veterans and their caregivers get the support they need and deserve. VA halted discharges for all participants based on reassessment and undertook an effort to put meaningful solutions in place that will have an immediate and positive impact on current and new caregivers and Veterans participating in PCAFC.
- No Legacy Veteran or caregiver has been dropped from the PCAFC based on reassessment since October 1, 2020, and this cohort will remain enrolled in PCAFC and continue to receive support and services under PCAFC.
- Appeal and review options for those who disagree with a PCAFC determination remain the same.
- VA continues to review all aspects of PCAFC to identify opportunities to improve the experience of Veterans and caregivers.
- CSP has undergone improvements to expand and increase access to programs that support caregivers of Veterans. CSP improvements made thus far to improve the Veteran and caregiver experience include:
 - Leveraging the expertise of VBA to create efficiencies and consistency in processing future PCFAC applications and other best practices.
 - Continuing stakeholder engagement sessions to share updates with VSOs, Congress, Caregivers, Veterans, other stakeholders, etc. and gain their insights and feedback.
 - Administering a customer experience survey to capture the voice of the caregiver and Veteran.
 - VA redesigned the PCAFC wellness contact visit to make them more centered on the caregiver and Veteran's overall needs
- *Beaudette Appeal*

- The Department of Justice (DOJ) has agreed to pursue an appeal on behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs, in the case of U.S. Court of Veteran Appeals *ruling of Jeremy Beaudette, Maya Beaudette v. Denis McDonough, Secretary of Veterans Affairs' (VA)*.
 - Although this case has specific implications to the VA Caregiver Support Program, a Departmental evaluation of the case has identified more far-reaching implications to other services and benefits to Veterans.
 - The DOJ's decision to pursue this appeal does not change the services or support provided to Veterans and their caregivers participating in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) or Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS).
- VA continues to advocate for the needs of Veterans and caregivers and will continue the hard work being done in partnership with Veteran Service Organizations, Military Service Organizations and other strategic partners surrounding improvements to the Caregiver Support Program.

Veterans and Families Access to Voting Rights

- [VA unveiled a series of measures](#), March 24, promoting greater access to voter information for Veterans and their families as part of the department's proposed designation as a voter registration agency under the [National Voter Registration Act](#).
- In accordance with [Executive Order 14019: Promoting Access to Voting](#), these steps are part of VA's "whole health" approach to care, ensuring Veterans and their families are able to exercise the right to vote which Veterans fought and served to protect.
- VA is providing assistance with the voter registration process for tens of thousands of inpatients and residents at our hospitals, nursing homes and treatment centers, along with homebound Veterans and their caregivers. This is a major undertaking as VA expands this effort, putting voting access right at the fingertips of all Veterans who may need it.
- This summer, VA is seeking NVRA designation, by state officials in several states, as a voter registration agency under a pilot voter registration assistance program at VA facilities in those states — with an eye to the geographic and demographic diversity of the Veteran population.
- To learn more about VA's voter registration efforts, visit va.gov/vote.

Electronic Health Record (EHR) Program

- VA's new electronic health record system has deployed in 2022 at facilities in Walla Walla, Washington; Columbus, Ohio; and Roseburg and White City, Oregon. The next scheduled deployment is Jan. 28, 2023, at facilities in Saginaw and Ann Arbor, Michigan.
- VA is doing everything possible to ensure safe and successful deployments, and adjustments to the go-live schedule and other important considerations reflect this due diligence.

- During the remainder of the calendar year prior to the next deployment in January 2023, VA will be actively working on updates to the system, including testing at the department’s most complex facilities and adding new capability enhancements. We’re also still very much engaged with our past deployment sites, closely monitoring, and assessing for user experience, adoption and lessons learned.
- VA remains committed to getting the new EHR right for Veterans and aims ultimately to serve as a model for transformative health care innovation.
- VA will leverage its new EHR to enhance the Veteran and provider experience by using a health record system common with DOD and the U.S. Coast Guard and improving interoperability with participating community care providers.

Military Environmental Presumptives

- For the very first time, VA is also presumptively granting military environmental exposures claims to Gulf War Veterans—specifically to those who suffer from Asthma, Sinusitis, and Rhinitis as a result of their service.
- This is good news, especially for the 28,623 Veterans and survivors whose claims have already been granted. As of September 6, 2022, VA has completed 38,331 of these claims and granted 28,623, which represents a 74.7% grant rate for claims that include asthma, sinusitis, rhinitis, and rare respiratory cancers due to fine particulate matter.
- This is just the start. VA is seeking every avenue possible to develop additional processes where a presumptive can be determined in a more expedient and holistic manner for Veterans.
- VA is also proactively 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 for Vietnam-era Veterans presumptively associated with exposure to herbicide agents, more commonly known as Agent Orange. Those conditions are bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism.
- As of September 6, 2022, 70,981 of these claims have been processed, with over \$518 million in retroactive benefits awarded to Veterans and survivors.

Disability Claims Backlog

- The new Gulf War and Agent Orange Presumptive Medical Conditions—along with the Blue Water Navy (BWN) claims—have led to an increase in the current disability claims backlog.
- Fortunately, we’re able to respond to these increases. To proactively address the increase, we’re:
 - Hiring and training of more than 2,000 new positions to process and support Veteran’ claims for disability benefits.

- Using American Rescue Plan funding to pay overtime for processors.
- Deploying FY22 budget resources to expedite toxic exposure claims processing.
- Currently, between 20 to 25% of VBA’s Rating Veteran Service Representatives (RVSRs) are working BWN-Nehmer, NDAA-Nehmer, and BWN claims. Nehmer claims are highly complex and require specialized training to complete.
- As part of mitigation measures, VBA has been mandating overtime for all RVSRs as well as aggressively hiring new RVSRs to ensure sufficient rating capacity, both for existing workload and expected future workload related to toxic exposure filing.
- As of September 5, 2022, the backlog was 157,600 claims, 40.5% below the recent high on October 24, 2021 (264,236). Backlog is defined as the number of claims pending more than 125 days.
- VBA is also leading a comprehensive modernization of the claims process through the utilization of data and automation. Historically manual administrative tasks and workflows will be automated to enable more effective and timely claim decisions.
- VBA began a pilot program in December 2021 to automate business processes with certain medical data to eliminate unnecessary examinations, streamline workflows, and reduce manual processes. The pilot is:
 - Focusing on claims for increased benefits related to service-connected hypertension.
 - Processing claims in approximately five days. A remarkable improvement from the traditional process which is currently taking well over 100 days on average.

Ending Homelessness among Veterans

- The words “homeless” and “Veteran” should not exist together. VA is committed to ending homelessness among Veterans because it is our nation’s duty to ensure all Veterans have a place to call home.
- Significant progress has been made to prevent and end Veteran homelessness. The number of Veterans experiencing homelessness in the United States has declined by nearly half since 2010. Since 2010, over 966,000 Veterans and their family members have been permanently housed, rapidly rehoused, or prevented from falling into homelessness through HUD’s targeted housing vouchers and VA’s homelessness programs.
- During calendar year 2022, VA’s goal is to place at least 38,000 homeless Veterans into permanent housing. This goal represents nearly the same number of Veterans counted in the 2020 Point-in-Time count.
- From January through July 2022, VA achieved 22,458 permanent housing placements, which represents nearly 60% of the goal.

- VA is focusing significant effort on this now in Los Angeles, where there are more homeless Veterans than anywhere else in America. VA [updated its joint Master Plan](#) with our key partners to end Veteran homelessness in Los Angeles, greatly enhancing our ‘on the ground’ efforts there.
- [VA and HUD](#) continue to align efforts and work towards ending Veteran homelessness. By mobilizing the strength of our two departments, together with other federal agencies and partners, this collective effort is doing all in its power to ensure every Veteran has access to a safe and stable housing.
- There are two primary ways that the public can help:
 - If you are a Veteran who is homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness, call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at (877) 4AID-VET (877-424-3838) for assistance.
 - Landlords with housing units interested in renting to Veterans can visit <https://www.va.gov/homeless/landlords.asp> to learn how to help.



Bob Wallace

Executive Director, VFW

Bob Wallace is the executive director of the VFW Washington Office, a position he's held since 2001, and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of VFW activities in our nation's capital. He served as the deputy executive director of the VFW Washington Office from 1996-2001.

After a successful 24-year career in banking in his home state of New Jersey, Wallace joined the administration of former New Jersey Gov. Thomas H. Kean as deputy commissioner/administrator of veterans affairs. Immediately prior to joining the VFW staff, he served as executive director of the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission. He has also served on a number of state and national committees to improve the quality of life of America's veterans, military personnel and their families.

Wallace served as a lance corporal with the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, 1st Marine Division, in Vietnam from November 1967 to June 1968. He is a veteran of the Battle of Hue during the 1968 Tet Offensive, and received three Purple Heart medals for wounds sustained in Vietnam.

He joined the VFW while in Vietnam. In 1979, Wallace was the recipient of the VFW's Young Veteran of the Year award from both the national organization and the VFW Department of New Jersey. Wallace was the first Vietnam veteran, as well as the youngest veteran, to command the Department of New Jersey from 1980-81. He has served on a variety of state and national VFW committees, to include Legislative, Security, Budget and Finance. He also served on the National Council of Administration.

Wallace is a past VFW commander-in-chief, having served from August 1991 to August 1992. During his term of office, he focused on quality VA health care for veterans and worked for the fullest possible accounting of American Prisoners of War and Missing in Action from the Vietnam War. He continues to travel to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia to meet with Southeast Asian leaders and to the Russian Federation to help resolve the POW/MIA issue.

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Mon, 6 Nov 2023 12:38:22 +0000
To: VACO 00 Secretary
Cc: (b)(6)
Subject: OCHCO Bulletin: Fact Sheet on Administrative Leave for Voting-Related Activities
Attachments: OCHCO Bulletin - Fact Sheet on Administrative Leave for Voting-Related Activities.pdf, FS_Admin_Leave_for_Voting_Related_Activities.pdf

Good morning ☺

Please note the following guidance for Administrative Leave for Voting Related Activities.

V/r

(b)(6)

HR Liaison

Office of Secretary, VA – Room 1014

Desk: 202-461 (b)(6) Work cell: 202-203 (b)(6)

(b)(6) @va.gov

WOMEN VETERAN PROUDLY SERVED!



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Good Afternoon VACO Staff Offices:

Please see the OCHCO Bulletin regarding: Fact Sheet on Administrative Leave for Voting-Related Activities

Thank you.

(b)(6)

Program Manager, Human Resources Service Center

Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer

Human Resources & Administration/Operations, Security and Preparedness

(216) 469-(b)(6)



VA Core Values: Integrity Commitment Advocacy Respect Excellence

VA Core Characteristics: Trustworthy | Accessible | Quality | Innovative | Agile | Integrated

From: VACO 058 Worklife (b)(6) <va.gov>

Sent: Thursday, November 2, 2023 12:21 PM

To: OCHCO Communications (b)(6) <va.gov>

Subject: OCHCO Bulletin: Fact Sheet on Administrative Leave for Voting-Related Activities

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer

VA Central Office
2023
Washington, D.C.

November 2,

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER (OCHCO) BULLETIN

SUBJECT: Fact Sheet on Administrative Leave for Voting-Related Activities

This OCHCO Bulletin shares the OCHCO fact sheet on administrative leave for voting-related activities. In accordance with Executive Order (EO) 14019, Promoting Access to Voting, all employees shall be informed of the availability of administrative leave (AA) for voting and for non-partisan volunteer activities. Please share this information with your employees. The VA policy on leave for voting is contained VA Handbook 5011, Part III, Chapters 2 and 3.

The fact sheet is available for download on the OCHCO website at: [Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer \(OCHCO\) - OCHCO Fact Sheets \(sharepoint.com\)](#). Additional information on voting is available on the [VA Voting Assistance Program website](#).

Employees with questions regarding this guidance should contact their HR office. HR offices with questions regarding this bulletin should contact the Worklife and Benefits Service at: (b)(6) va.gov.

Issued by: VA OCHCO/Worklife and Benefits Service

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer

VA Central Office
Washington, D.C.

November 2, 2023

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER (OCHCO) BULLETIN

SUBJECT: Fact Sheet on Administrative Leave for Voting-Related Activities

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Issued by: VA OCHCO/Worklife and Benefits Service



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer
Worklife and Benefits Service

Fact Sheet – Administrative Leave for Voting-Related Activities

Background: In accordance with Executive Order (EO) 14019, Promoting Access to Voting, all employees shall be informed of the availability of administrative leave (AA) for voting and for non-partisan volunteer activities. Departmental policy on leave for voting is contained VA Handbook 5011, Part III, Chapters 2 and 3.

Policy: Approving officials shall grant AA for the following voting-related activities, subject to the considerations and limitations provided:

<p>Federal General Election Day</p> <p>(Including for other elections which coincide with Federal general election day)</p>	<p>Up to four (4) hours of AA for voting in connection with each Federal general election day. AA may be used for voting on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal general election day; or • Early voting (i.e., voting prior to Federal general election day, as authorized by their jurisdiction). <p>Note: When an election simultaneously involves more than one level, it is considered to be a single election event.</p>
<p>Other Election Events</p> <p>(Election events that do not coincide with a Federal general election day)</p>	<p>Up to four (4) hours of AA for voting in connection with each election event. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primaries and caucuses at the Federal, State, local (i.e., county, and municipal), Tribal, and territorial level. • Federal Special Congressional elections. AA may be granted for voting on the established date of a special election or for authorized early voting in connection with that election.
<p>Non-partisan Volunteer Activities</p> <p>(To serve as a non-partisan poll worker or non-partisan observer activities, including related training)</p>	<p>Up to four (4) hours of AA per leave year¹ at the Federal, State, local (i.e., county and municipal), Tribal, and territorial level, including related training. This leave is in addition to any AA an employee uses to vote.</p> <p>If duties require an employee to be absent for a longer period of time than four (4) hours, the employee must use annual leave, compensatory time off, credit hours, or request leave without pay.</p>

¹ A "leave year" begins on the first day of the first pay period commencing on or after January 1 of the given year and ends on the day before the first day of the next leave year. This leave is in addition to any AA an employee uses to vote.

Additional Considerations and Limitations:

- AA for voting is limited to four (4) hours per election event. If an employee needs to spend less than four (4) hours to vote, only the needed amount of time should be granted.
- When an election simultaneously involves more than one level, it is considered to be a single election event. In such an election event, AA may be used for voting on the established election day or for early voting, whichever option is used by the employee with respect to an election event.
- The scheduling of leave is subject to a determination that the employee can be spared from duty during the specific time period requested without significant impairment to mission-essential operations. Employees must obtain the approval of their supervisor before using AA, so that use of this leave does not significantly disrupt agency operations.
- Where there are multiple early voting options, employees should coordinate in advance with their supervisor to determine the best day for voting to continue meeting the agency mission.
- AA may not be used on an employee's non-workday or during overtime work hours outside of the regular tour of duty.

References:

- [Executive Order 14019](#)
- [Office of Personnel Management CPM 2022-05, Executive Order of Promoting Access to Voting \(March 24, 2022\)](#)
- [OCHCO Bulletin: Updated Guidance – Promoting Access to Voting, Version 2](#)
- [VA Handbook 5011, Part III, Chapter 2, Paragraph 12b and Chapter 3, Paragraph 9o](#)
- [VA Voting Assistance Program](#)
- [Information on How, When, and Where to Vote](#)

Issued: October 2022

From: Bryant, Melissa
Sent: Wed, 2 Mar 2022 17:06:18 +0000
To: (b)(6)
Cc: (b)(6) Che, Jane, VBAVACO (b)(6)
Subject: Voting Rights Papers
Attachments: Veterans Affairs Voting EO Strategic Plan 9.23.21.docx, MEMO - DAS OPA to SECVA for Voting Access Next Steps (EO 14019)_2.1.22.docx, VA Voter Registration Survey v1.1 20220201.pdf

Hi Sir,

Per our conversation, I've been working on a few items from the strategic plan that you ***might*** be able to announced or at least telegraph in your speech in AL. This landing page isn't public yet, but it's one item: [How Veterans Can Register To Vote | Veterans Affairs \(va.gov\)](#).

Happy to chat more on this tomorrow when we connect 1:1 as well.

Best,
Melissa

Melissa A. Bryant
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs
Department of Veterans Affairs
(m) 202-689-(b)(6)
(b)(6)@va.gov

**STRATEGIC PLAN
for the Implementation of Executive Order 14019, Promoting Access to Voting**

FROM: Department of Veterans Affairs
Melissa Bryant, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs

TO: Susan Rice, Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy

Due Date: September 23, 2021
Method of Submission: MAX, via link to be provided by OMB
Format: Microsoft Word document, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, normal margins
Release: This document is not intended for public release, and contains internal, deliberative, and pre-decisional information.

(b)(5)

I. Flagship actions:

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

II. Providing information online:

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

III. Providing information offline, in activities/services that directly engage the public:

(b)(5)

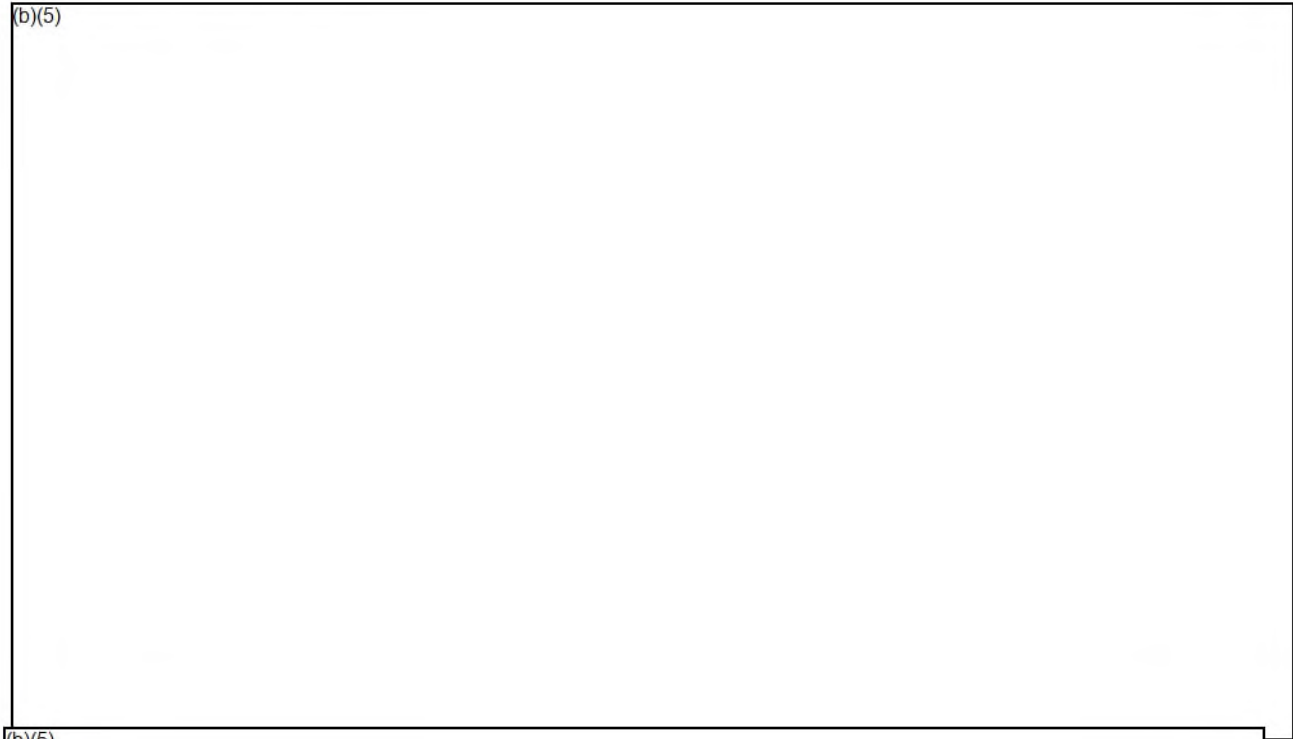
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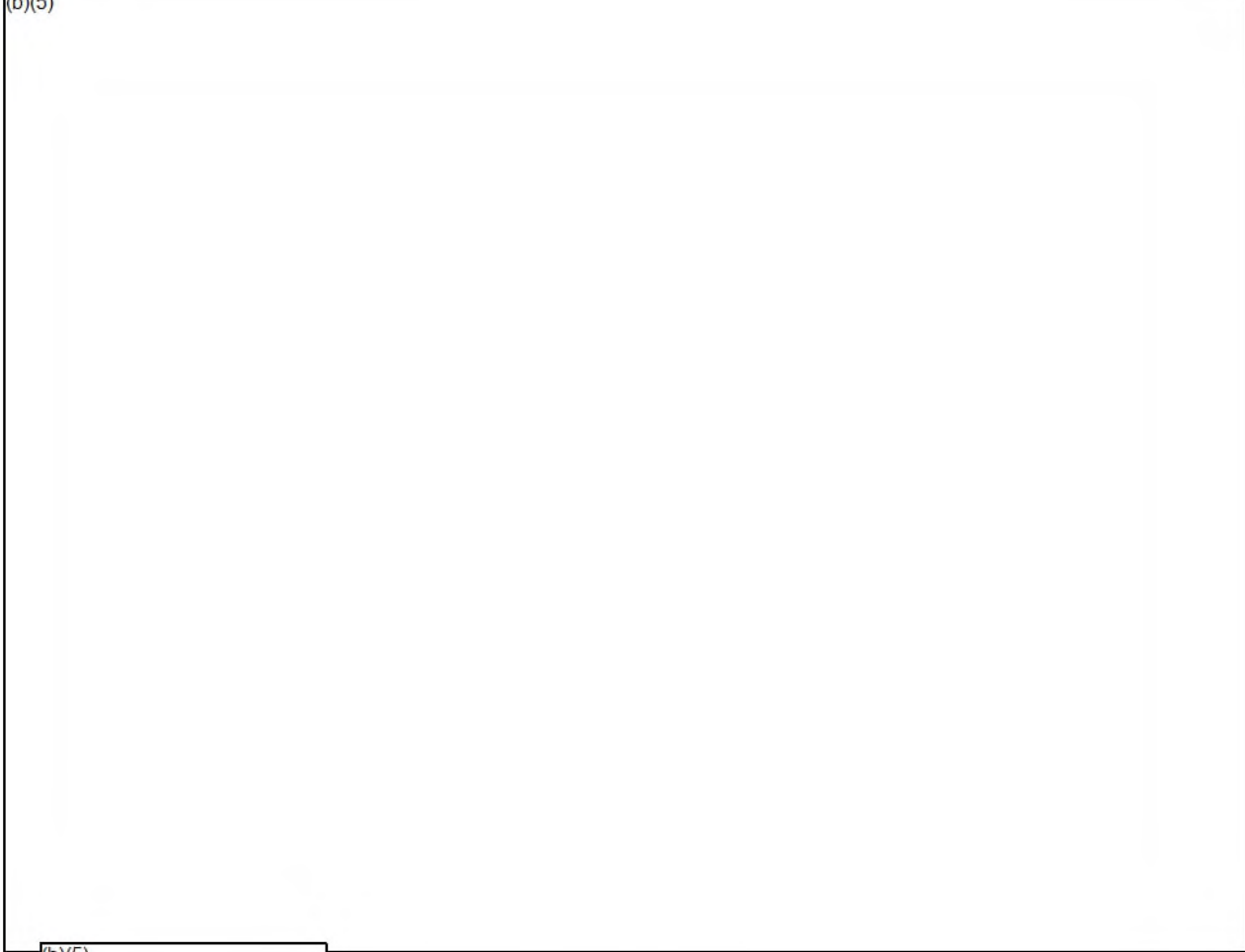
IV. Assisting the public with voter registration, mail ballots or other aspects of voting:

(b)(5)

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V. Preparing to be designated under the NVRA:

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VI. Identity documents:

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

VII. Workforce:

(b)(5)

VIII. Other:

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

(b)(5)

From: Enterprise Governance
Sent: Fri, 4 Mar 2022 13:58:55 +0000
To: Enterprise Governance; (b)(6) Kiyokawa, Guy T.; Tran, Dat VACO; Love-Holmon, Shana; Bryant, Melissa; Che, Jane, VBAVACO; Mason, Cheryl
Cc: (b)(6) DEPSECVA Scheduling; (b)(6); VACO OEI Schedulers; (b)(6) EGM Team; (b)(6) (b)(6) Abold-Labreche,
Justin
Subject: DEPSEC Pre-Brief for March 8th VAOB
Attachments: Veterans Affairs Voting EO Strategic Plan 9.23.21.docx, MEMO - DAS OPA to SECVA for Voting Access Next Steps (EO 14019)_2.1.22.docx, VA Voter Registration Survey v1.2 20220302.pdf, 220308 VAOB Briefing Deck.pptx

Microsoft Teams meeting

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+1 872-70 (b)(6) United States, Chicago

Phone Conference ID: (b)(6)

Purpose: Preparation for the March 8th VAOB Meeting

Agenda: Voting Access

OEI Participants:

- Assistant Secretary
- Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
- Chief of Staff/SL

OPIA Participant:

- Melissa Bryant, Deputy Assistant Secretary

Thank you

**STRATEGIC PLAN
for the Implementation of Executive Order 14019, Promoting Access to Voting**

FROM: Department of Veterans Affairs
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III. Providing information offline, in activities/services that directly engage the public:

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IV. Assisting the public with voter registration, mail ballots or other aspects of voting:

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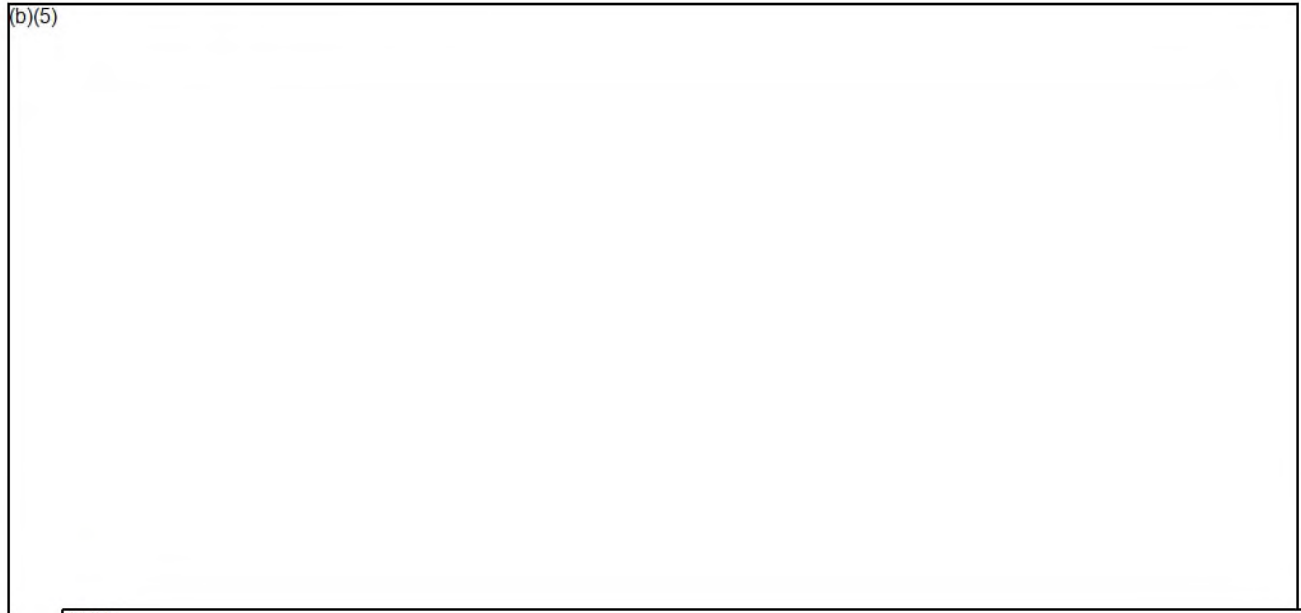
VII. Workforce:

(b)(5)

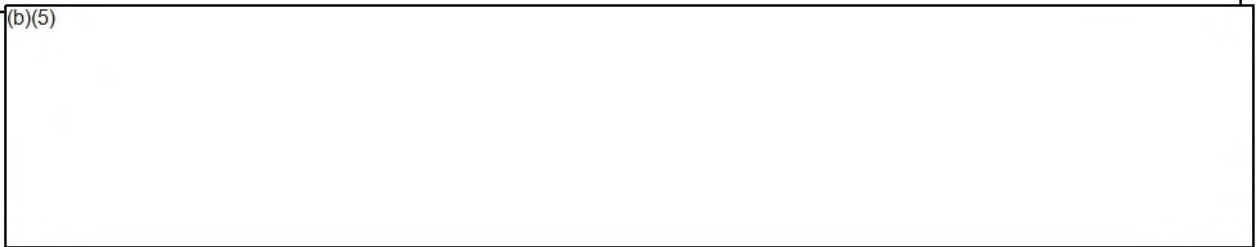
VIII. Other:

(b)(5)

(b)(5)



(b)(5)



From: (b)(6)
Sent: Sat, 5 Mar 2022 18:51:51 +0000
To: (b)(6)
Cc: Che, Jane, VBAVACO
Subject: FW: Selma Trip Pack
Attachments: 2022_03_05_Selma Event Memo (DRAFT-3).docx, 2022 03 06 - FINAL - SELMA MARCH COMMEMORATION.docx, Rep. Sewell's Selma Meet and Greet with Cabinet Secretaries - Stakeholder Bios_.pdf, DepSecVA Talking Points for Selma, AL Visit 3-6-2022.docx, 1 Pre-Event-Agenda, Exec Summary.pdf, 2 AL Delegation Bios.pdf, 3 AL Delegation Facechart.pdf, 4 Fact Sheet-Biden AdminiPromotes Voter Participation.pdf, 5 VA Voting EO Strategic Plan 9.23.21.pdf, Selma Trip_Cabinet Secretary Bios.docx

Sir,

The bios of the participating cabinet secretaries have been added in a single document. This has also been added to your 1-Note trip pack.

Regards,

(b)(6)

Acting Executive Assistant
Office of the Deputy Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs
M: 202.876 (b)(6) | **O:** 202.382 (b)(6)
Main DepSec Line: 202.461 (b)(6)
810 Vermont Avenue, NW, 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20420
Time Zone: Eastern Standard Time
For scheduling and general inquiries, please email: (b)(6)@va.gov

From: (b)(6)
Sent: Saturday, March 5, 2022 11:50 AM
To: (b)(6)@va.gov>
Cc: Che, Jane, VBAVACO (b)(6)@va.gov>
Subject: Selma Trip Pack

Sir,

Sending you the contents of the 1-Note notebook as a backup. Documents placed in order of relevance.

Regards,

(b)(6)

Acting Executive Assistant
Office of the Deputy Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs

M: 202.876 (b)(6) **O:** 202.382 (b)(6)

Main DepSec Line: 202.461 (b)(6)

810 Vermont Avenue, NW, 10th Floor
Washington, DC 20420

Time Zone: Eastern Standard Time

For scheduling and general inquiries, please email:

(b)(6)

[@va.gov](mailto:(b)(6)@va.gov)

STRATEGIC PLAN
for the Implementation of Executive Order 14019, Promoting Access to Voting

FROM: Department of Veterans Affairs
Melissa Bryant, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs

TO: Susan Rice, Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy

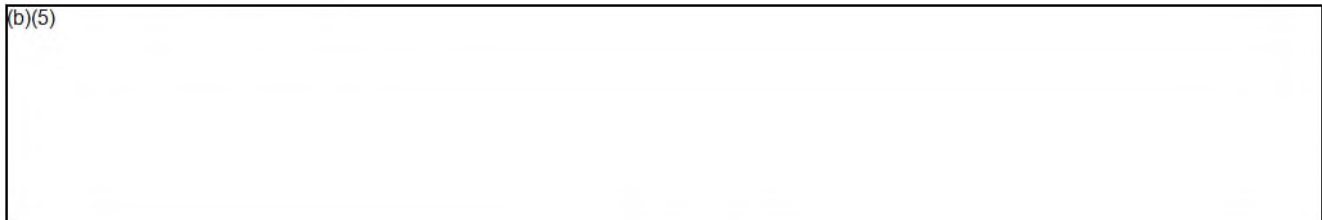
Due Date: September 23, 2021
Method of Submission: MAX, via link to be provided by OMB
Format: Microsoft Word document, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, normal margins
Release: This document is not intended for public release, and contains internal, deliberative, and pre-decisional information.

(b)(5)



I. Flagship actions:

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II. Providing information online:

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III. Providing information offline, in activities/services that directly engage the public:

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V. Preparing to be designated under the NVRA:

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VI. Identity documents:

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VII. Workforce:

(b)(5)

VIII. Other:

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From: (b)(6)
Sent: Sun, 6 Mar 2022 12:10:44 +0000
To: (b)(6)
Cc: Che, Jane, VBAVACO
Subject: Selma Trip Pack - FINAL
Attachments: 2022 03 06 - FINAL - SELMA MARCH COMMEMORATION.docx, 2022_03_06_Selma Event Memo (FINAL).docx, 2022_03_06_Selma Tarmac Greets Attachment.docx, Rep. Sewell's Selma Meet and Greet with Cabinet Secretaries - Stakeholder Bios_.pdf, Selma Trip_Cabinet Secretary Bios.docx, DepSecVA Talking Points for Selma AL Visit 3-6-2022.docx, 1 Pre-Event-Agenda, Exec Summary.pdf, 2 AL Delegation Bios.pdf, 3 AL Delegation Facechart.pdf, 4 Fact Sheet-Biden AdminiPromotes Voter Participation.pdf, 5 VA Voting EO Strategic Plan 9.23.21.pdf, Selma Security POC Info.docx

Good morning Sir,

This is the final version of your backup trip pack for Selma today. Here they are listed in order of importance. All of the documents have been uploaded to 1-Note. Have a safe and wonderful trip, and best of luck (break a leg) on your remarks this afternoon!

Attachments:

1. Your Remarks
2. Selma Event Memo
3. Selma Tarmac Greets (These folks will meet the VP and her guests at Maxwell AFB)
4. Selma Meet & Greet Stakeholder Bios
5. Participating Cabinet Secretaries Bios
6. Talking Points for Press
7. Congressional Executive Summary
8. Alabama Delegation Bios
9. Alabama Delegation Face Chart
10. Biden Administration Fact Sheet on Voter Participation
11. VA Voting EO Strategic Plan
12. Security Detail Contact Information (b)(6); (b)(7)(C) etc.)

Regards,

(b)(6)
Acting Executive Assistant

Office of the Deputy Secretary
Department of Veterans Affairs

M: 202.876 (b)(6) | **O:** 202.382 (b)(6)

Main DepSec Line: 202.461 (b)(6)

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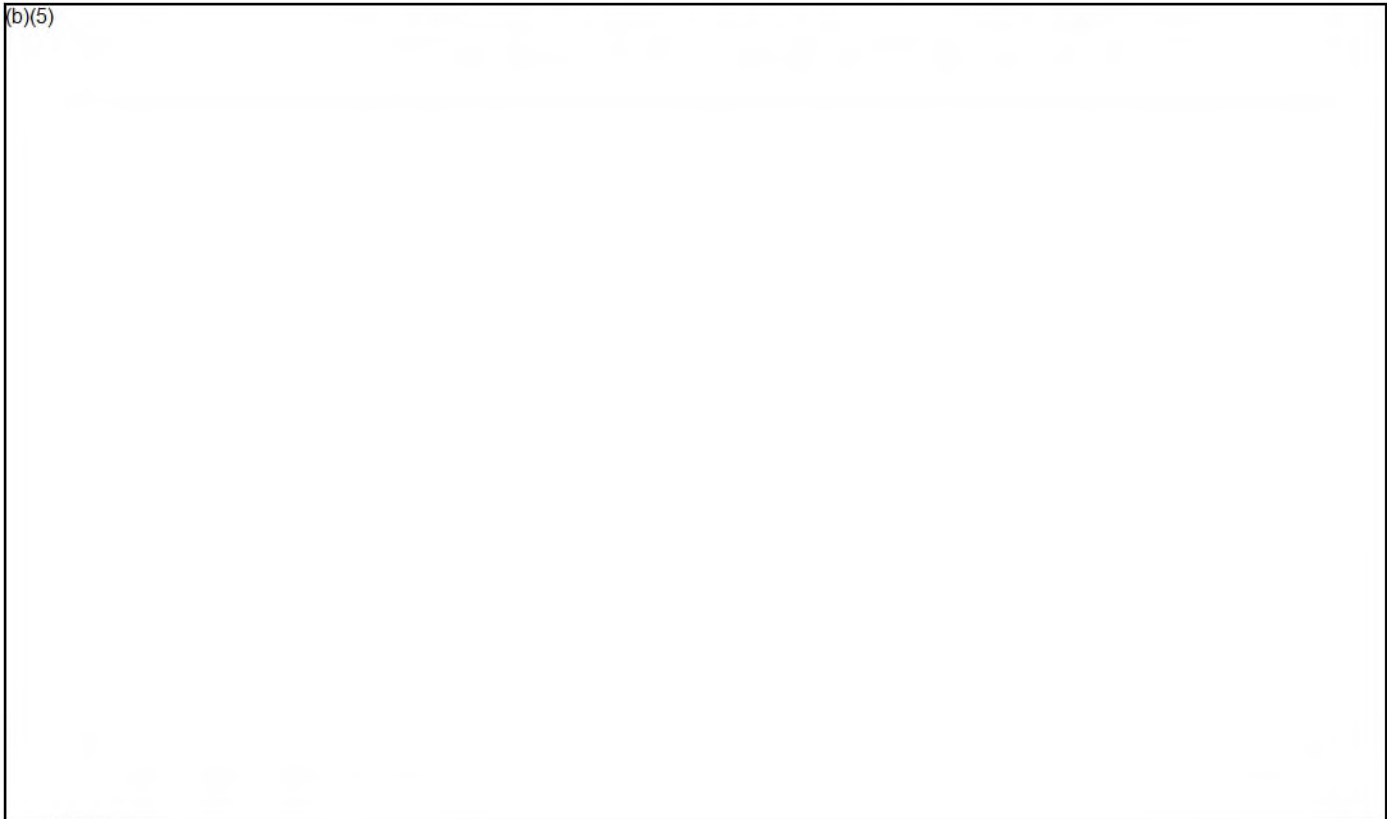
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for the Implementation of Executive Order 14019, Promoting Access to Voting**

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V. Preparing to be designated under the NVRA:

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VI. Identity documents:

(b)(5)

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VII. Workforce:

(b)(5)

VIII. Other:

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From: Che, Jane, VBAVACO
Sent: Sun, 6 Mar 2022 23:36:15 +0000
To: (b)(6)
Subject: Notes for Mon 03/07
Attachments: Veterans Affairs Voting EO Strategic Plan 9.23.21.docx, MEMO - DAS OPA to SECVA for Voting Access Next Steps (EO 14019)_2.1.22.docx, VA Voter Registration Survey v1.2 20220302.pdf, EBS - DEPSEC- AR16 IF Hannon Act Section 201 Calls 3.8.22v3.docx, DEPSEC Only - OCLA Memo on Hannon Act Impementation 7-8 March 22 .docx

Good evening, Sir.

Please find below Monday's notes and attachments. I'll re-send in tomorrow morning as well.

Thanks,

Jane

0815 – DEPSEC Huddle (Teams)

0830 – SECVA Week Ahead (Teams)

- Selma AL trip read-out
- Just a reminder that we have two notable events tomorrow:
 - First, VAOB – to review OPIA's proposals on implementing the Executive Order on Promoting Access to Voting, and
 - Second, Caregivers Offsite at the White House from 1 to 4 pm

0900 – DEPSEC Pre-Brief for March 8th VAOB (Teams)

- Attachments –
 - Voting EO Strategic Plan – Implementation of EO Promoting Access to Voting
 - OPIA Memo to SECVA on approval on 3 actions:
 - Deployment of VSignals self-service survey
 - Announcement of VA's intent to become a National Voter Registration Act designated agency
 - Incorporation of vote.gov where applicable on va.gov
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0930 – Travel to ENT Appointment

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1100 – Return to VACO

1130 – Package Review

1200 – Congressional Call with Rep. Boozman

- Purpose – Notify Members that we're publishing an Interim Final Rule to implement requirements of the Hannon Act/Staff Sergeant Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program on March 10th.
- Attachments –
 - Executive Summary with more background details
 - OCLA Memo with message and talking points

1230 – Lunch

1300 – Huddle with Terry Adirim (Teams)

1330 – 1:1 with John Boerstler (Teams)

1400 – Interview with (b)(6) (DepSec Suite)

1430 – Package Review

1500 – Quick Call with Maryanne Donaghy (Teams)

1530 – Biweekly 1:1 with Mike Frueh (DepSec Suite or Teams)

1600 – SECVA Daily Closeout (SECVA Suite)

1730 – SECVA Senior Advisor Daily Wrap (Team)

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V. Preparing to be designated under the NVRA:

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VI. Identity documents:

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VII. Workforce:

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VIII. Other:

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From: Enterprise Governance
Sent: Mon, 7 Mar 2022 01:39:46 +0000
To: (b)(6) Kiyokawa, Guy T.; Tran, Dat VACO; Love-Holmon, Shana; Bryant, Melissa; Che, Jane, VBAVACO; Mason, Cheryl
Cc: (b)(6) DEPSECVA Scheduling; (b)(6) VACO OEI Schedulers; (b)(6) EGM Team; (b)(6) Abold-Labreche, Justin
Subject: DEPSEC Pre-Brief for March 8th VAOB
Attachments: Veterans Affairs Voting EO Strategic Plan 9.23.21.docx, MEMO - DAS OPA to SECVA for Voting Access Next Steps (EO 14019)_2.1.22.docx, VA Voter Registration Survey v1.2 20220302.pdf, 220308 VAOB Briefing Deck.pptx

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join on your computer or mobile app

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Or call in (audio only)

+1 872-70 (b)(6) United States, Chicago

Phone Conference ID: (b)(6)

Purpose: Preparation for the March 8th VAOB Meeting

Agenda: Voting Access

OEI Participants:

- Assistant Secretary
- Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary
- Chief of Staff/SL

OPIA Participant:

- Melissa Bryant, Deputy Assistant Secretary

Thank you

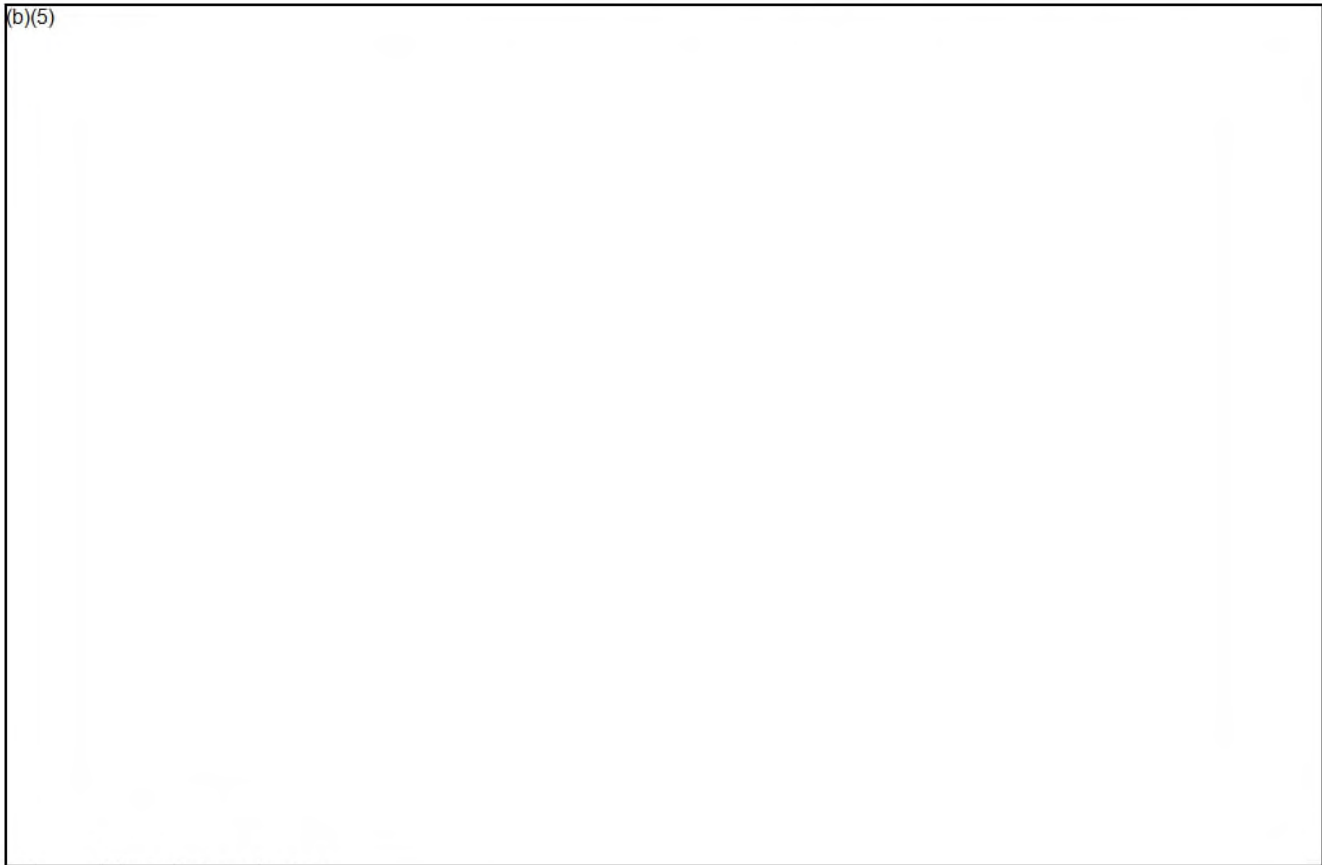
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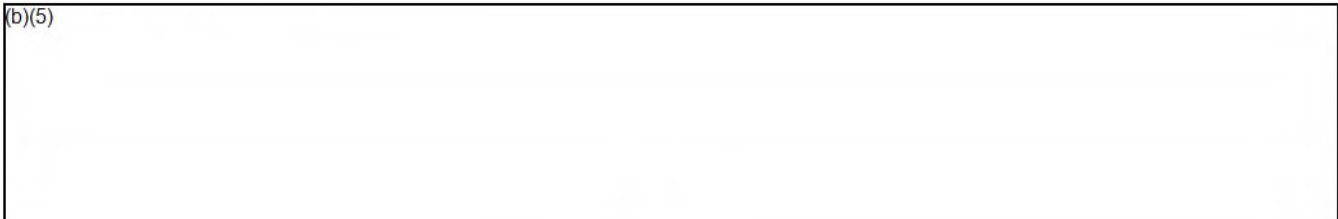
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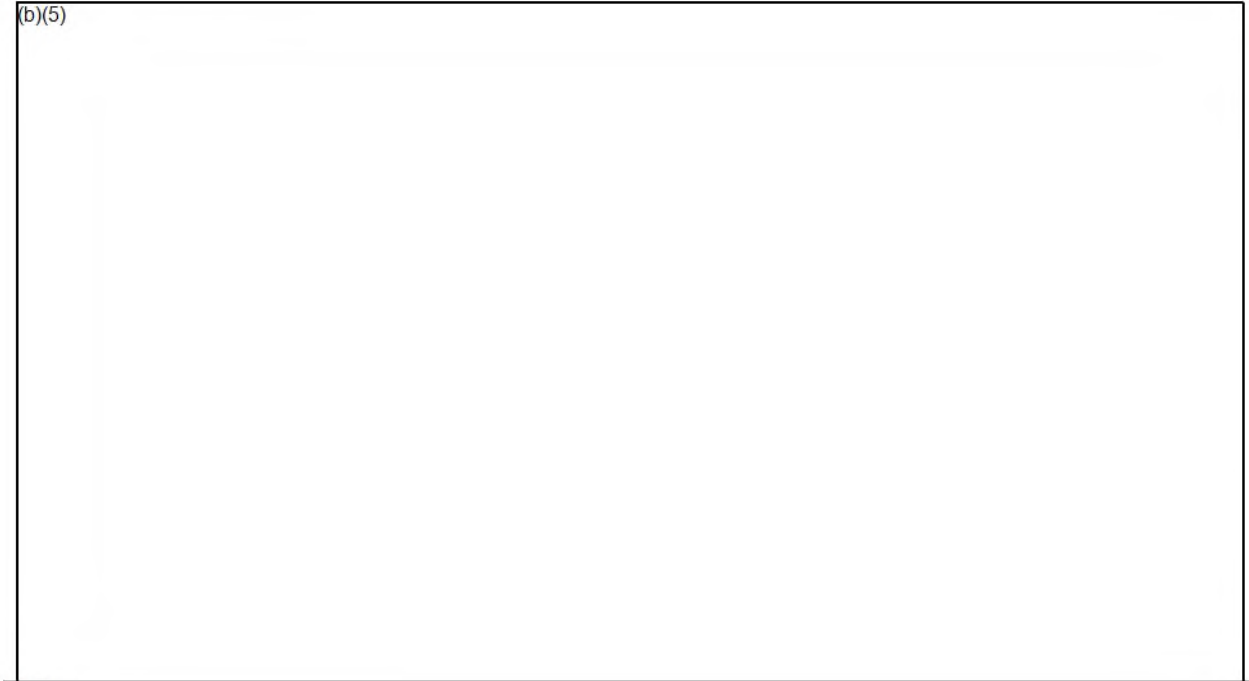
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IV. Assisting the public with voter registration, mail ballots or other aspects of voting:

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V. Preparing to be designated under the NVRA:

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Sent: Mon, 7 Mar 2022 11:08:46 +0000
To: (b)(6)
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Subject: Notes for Mon 03/07
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Good morning and welcome back, Sir.

Notes for Monday – 03/07/22

0815 – DEPSEC Huddle (Teams)

0830 – SECVA Week Ahead (Teams)

- Selma AL trip read-out
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1600 – SECVA Daily Closeout (SECVA Suite)

1730 – SECVA Senior Advisor Daily Wrap (Team)

Thanks,
Jane

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VIII. Other:

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From: Che, Jane, VBAVACO
Sent: Tue, 8 Mar 2022 11:02:23 +0000
To: (b)(6)
Cc:
Subject: Notes for Tues 03/07
Attachments: EBS - DEPSEC- AR16 IF Hannon Act Section 201 Calls 3.8.22v3.docx, EBS - DEPSEC- AR16 IF Hannon Act Section 201 Calls 3.8.22v3.docx, 220308 VAOB Briefing Deck.pdf, Veterans Affairs Voting EO Strategic Plan 9.23.21.docx, MEMO - DAS OPA to SECVA for Voting Access Next Steps (EO 14019)_2.1.22.docx, VA Voter Registration Survey v1.2 20220302.pdf, 220225 VAOB Meeting Notes__FINAL.pdf, DepSec Remarks-Caregivers Offsite (03-07-22).docx, CSP Offsite Slides (03-07-22 FINAL VERSION) 1635.pptx, VA Strategy Session_Caregiver Support Program_Overview_March 8 2022_Final.pdf, VA Strategy Session_Caregiver Support Program_March 8 2022_Attachment 1.pdf, VA Strategy Session_Caregiver Support Program_March 8 2022_Attachment 2.docx.pdf, SVAC Hearing on Caregivers_OCLA-SeniorAdvisor_Edits_3-7-2022.docx

Good morning, Sir.

Notes for today - Tuesday, 03/07/22:

General (b)(6) is teleworking today.

0815 – DEPSEC Morning Huddle (DepSec Suite)

0830 – SECVA Morning Huddle (Teams)

- We have the VAOB this morning and then the Caregivers Program offsite at the White House from 1 to 4 pm.

0900 – SECVA Weekly Meeting with Under Secretaries (In Person)

- Agenda: still pending

0930 – Congressional Call with Rep. Carter

- Purpose – Notify Members that we're publishing an Interim Final Rule to implement requirements of the Hannon Act/Staff Sergeant Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program on March 10th.
- Attachments –
 - Executive Summary with more background details
 - OCLA Memo with message and talking points

1000 – VAOB (Teams)

- Attachments –
 - VAOB Briefing Deck
 - Voting EO Strategic Plan – Implementation of EO Promoting Access to Voting
 - OPIA Memo to SECVA on approval on 3 actions, namely:
 - Deployment of VSignals self-service survey
 - Announcement of VA's intent to become a National Voter Registration Act designated agency
 - Incorporation of vote.gov where applicable on va.gov

- VA Voter Registration Survey
- February 25, 2022 VAOB Meeting Notes

1100 – COVID (Delta Surge) Meeting (Teams)

1130 – Lunch

1230 – Departure to White House

1245 – Arrival at White House

1300 – Caregivers Program Offsite (WH Diplomatic Room)

- Attachments –
 - DepSec opening/closing remarks
 - Presentation slide deck
 - Read-Aheads for Informational/Background Purposes:
 - “VA Strategy Session-CSP Overview” - CSP Strategy Session
 - “VA Strategy Session-CSP Attachment 1” - Information on CARMA Workflow Management System for PCAFC
 - “VA Strategy Session-CSP Attachment 2” – Veteran Caregiver Discovery Findings Report
 - Draft of SVAC Hearing Testimony from Beth Taylor, VHA, as lead witness

(1400 – Gov Board Meeting-Overview of MISSION Act Required Asset Infrastructure Review Recommendations – Day 1 (Teams))

1730 – SECVA Senior Advisor Daily Wrap (Teams)

1800 – Record Welcome Back Message (VACO Suite 900 Kayla’s Office)

Thanks,
Jane

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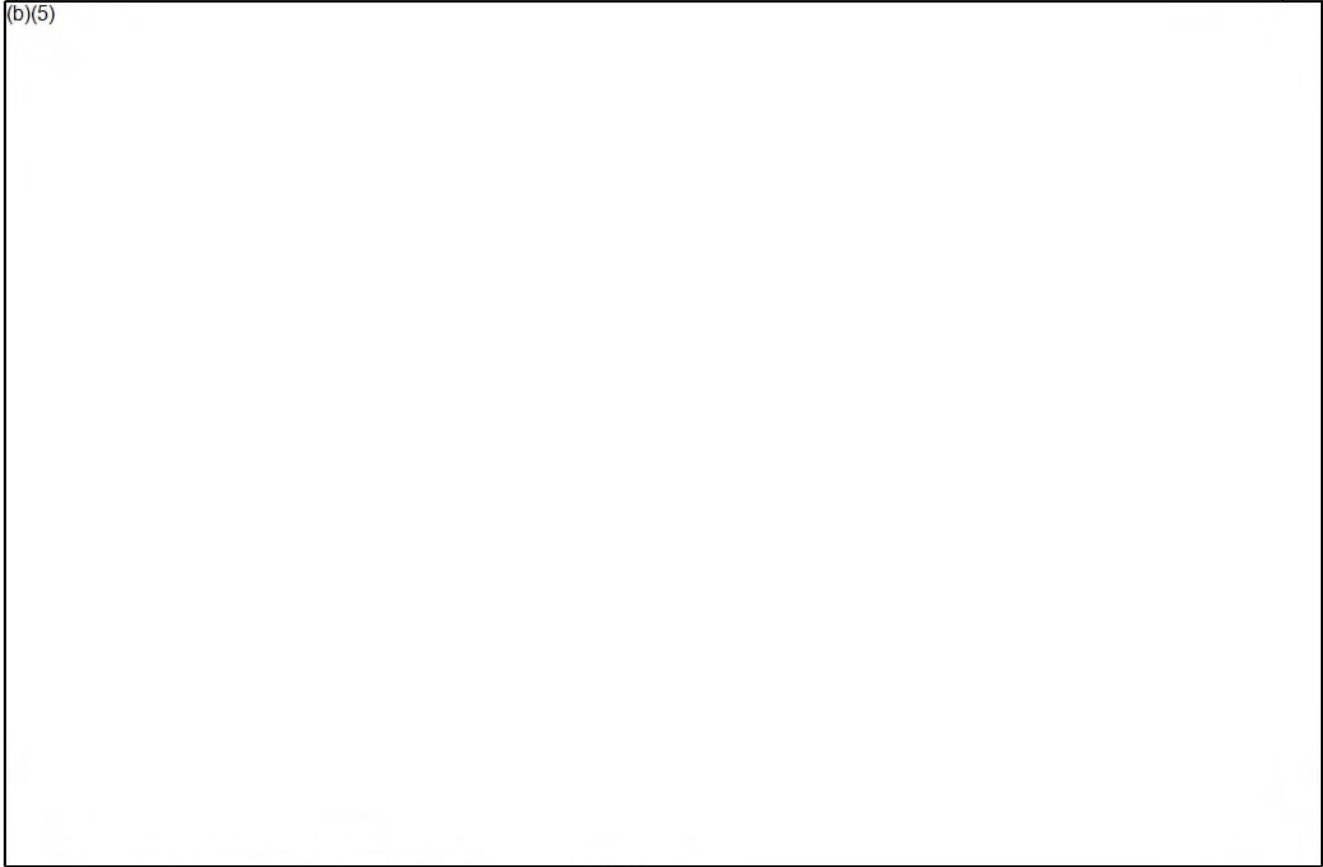
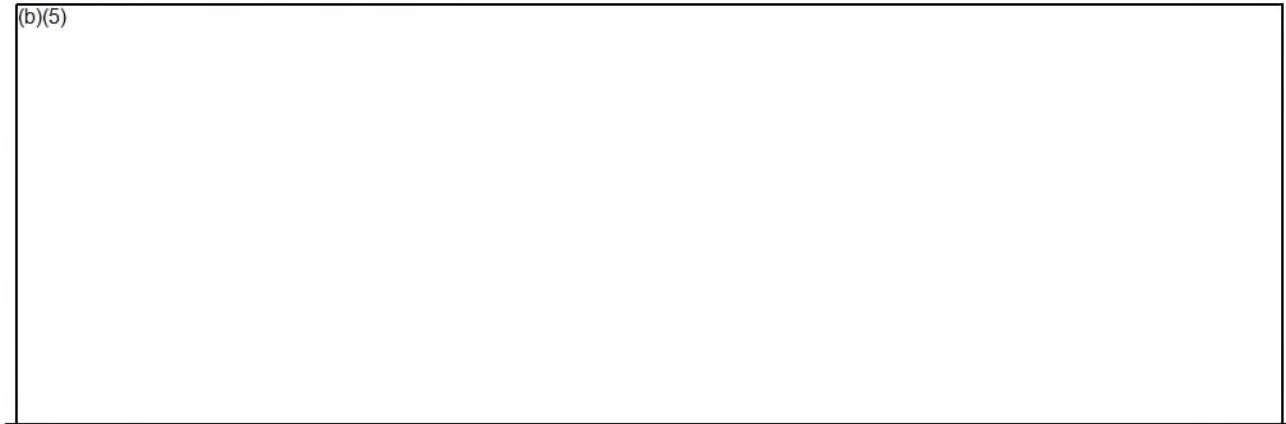
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