

VA Pittsburgh Health Care System
Military Order of the Purple Heart
7180 Highland Drive 118-VH
Building 1, Room 6023W
Pittsburgh, PA 15206



STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART

For Combat Wounded Veterans
“In War there is no substitute for Victory”

Spring ISSUE 2009

Volume 1 – Issue 1

PURPLE HEART NEWSLETTER

Editor – Jim Lang
State Commander – Joe Serenka

Assistant Editor – Dan Wilhelm
State Finance Officer – Harry Clark

NEW STATE NEWSLETTER UPDATE

The state newsletter will be compiled and circulated on the website by Chapter 455, our offices are located at VA Healthcare System, at 7108 Highland Drive, Bldg. 1, rm 6023w, Pittsburgh, PA 15206. The phone number is 412-954-5165 – Fax – 412-954-5171

WEB SITE—www.chapter455.org

E-Mail—moph455@yahoo.com.

COMMENTS FOR NEWSLETTER

Your comments are welcomed and appreciated. We welcome you to submit articles for publication. Please no political or religious matters. Your questions and comments will be answered in a timely manner. If you have any pictures of interest we will also include them. We are hoping that all the chapters will precipitate and send articles quarterly to be published. We want to make this newsletter as inter-

(continued)

esting as possible, also the Department Newsletter will only be found on the website and it will not be mailed. If you need more information contact Harry Clark at 786 Hartley Rd., Bedford, PA. 15522 ph# 1-814-623-7809

MEMORIAL DAY
May 25, 2009



THE NEW STATE OFFICERS FOR 2008-2009

- COMMANDER – JOE SERENKA
- SENIOR VICE
COMMANDER – NICHOLAS COMBITCHI
- JUNIOR VICE
COMMANDER – OPEN UNTIL ELECTION
- ADJUTANT – NICHOLAS COMBITCHI
- FINANCE OFFICER – HARRY CLARK
- JUDGE ADVOCATE – ANTHONY GOWER
- INSPECTOR – WALTER SHEVCHIK
- SERGEANT AT ARMS – BRUSE BOICE
- SERVICE OFFICER – HARRY CLARK
- LEGISLATIVE
OFFICER – CHARLES JACKSON
- WELFARE OFFICER – ROBERT CARTER SR.
- HISTORIAN – OPEN UNTIL ELECTION
- CHAPLAIN – GEORGE HUMMER
- AMERICANISM
OFFICER – JOSEPH SERENKA
- CHIEF OF STAFF – HARRY CLARK
- ROTC OFFICER – DANIEL McLAUGHLIN
- AIDE-DE-CAMP—JOHN GOCHNOUR
ARLINGTON PHILLIPS
- MOPH NSO
PHILADELPHIA – WILLIAM JONES
- MOPH NSO
PITTSBURGH – KIM SHATNEY
- SHARING & CARING – JOSEPH SERENKA

VETERANS GROUPS BLAST OBAMA

President Obama's plan to require private insurance carriers to reimburse the Department of Veterans Affairs for the treatment of troops injured in service has infuriated veterans groups who say the government has a moral obligation to pay for service-related medical care.

Calling it a "desperate search for money at any cost," Craig Roberts, media relations manager for the American Legion, told FOX-News.com in March 17, 2009 that the president will "wish away so much political capital on this issue" if he continues to insist on private coverage for service-related injuries.

Cmdr. David K. Rehbein of the American Legion, the nation's largest veterans group, called the president's plan to raise \$540 million from private insurers unreasonable, unworkable, and immoral.

"This reimbursement plan would be inconsistent with the mandate "to care for him who shall have borne the battle," given that the United States government sent members of the Armed Forces into harm's way and not private insurance companies," Rehbein said late Monday in March after a meeting with the president and administration officials at the Veterans Affairs Department.

Roberts said that 11 veterans service organizations were told to come up with another plan if they didn't like this one. The groups met on Monday the 16th with Obama, Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel, Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki and Office of Management and Budget defense spending chief Steven Kosiak.

"What we've been tasked with now is to raise this money through alternative means and we're supposed to have a conference call in two or three days...with Rahm Emanuel. So the implication was...you guys come up with a better idea or this is what's going to happen," Roberts said.

A call to the White House was not immediately returned. But a summary of the proposed budget says the president wants to increase

**CHAPTER AFFILIATIONS
FY – 2008-2009**

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>FACILITY</u>
♦ 9	VAMC OAKLAND (UD)
♦ 11	CBOC CAMP HILL (LEBANON)
♦ 14	VAMC BUTLER
♦ 34	NURSING HOMES
♦ 63	VAMC PHILADELPHIA (COATESVILLE WARD C AND LZ 2)
♦ 107	VAMC LEBANON
♦ 170	SE VETERANS HOME
♦ 190	CBOC ALLENTOWN (WILKES BARRE NURSING HOME)
♦ 197	VAMC ERIE, S&S HOME
♦ 376	VAMC ALTOONA
♦ 390	VAMC LEBANON
♦ 455	VAMC PITTSBURGH (HD) - SOUTH WESTERN STATE VETERANS HOME
♦ 481	CBOC WILLIAMSPORT (WILKES BARRE)
♦ 519	VAMC PITTSBURGH (ASPINWALL/HEINZ)
♦ 529	VAMC WILKES BARRE
♦ 546	LAUREL HIGHLANDS NURSING HOME

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>FACILITY</u>
♦ 654	CBOC WILKES BARRE GINO MERLI VET HOME
♦ 655	CBOC WILKES BARRE
♦ 656	VAMC LEBANON
♦ 992	NURSING/PERSONAL CARE HOMES HOLLI-DAYSBURG STATE VETS HOME
♦ 1777	VAMC COATESVILLE
♦ 1983	VAMC LEBANON

ANNUAL CONVENTION FOR 2009

The Dept. Convention will be held at the Quality Inn, Somerset, PA, on 5-8 June 2009 commencing at 12:30 Fri. June 5th and ending with a banquet at 7:00 p.m. on Sat. June 8, 2009. In accordance with the National Hq. policy, Dept. funds will be provided to those members of the Executive Committee who attend *The First and Last Executive Meeting of the Convention*. The Executive Committee consists of all Dept. Elected and Appointed Officers, all PDCs, and one of the following: Either the Chapter Commander, or the Senior Vice Commander or the Junior Vice Commander or Executive Committeeman. No exceptions!



"Okay, let the mii with the munny"



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VETERANS GROUPS BLAST OBAMA (continued from page 2)

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE By Joe Serenka

funding for VA by \$25 billion over five years, and bring more than 500,000 eligible veterans of modest income into the VA health care system by 2013.

“The president’s avowed purpose in doing this is to, quote, “make the insurance companies pay their fair share,” Roberts said. But he said it will raise premiums, make insurance unaffordable for veterans and impose a massive hardship on military families. It could also prevent small businesses from hiring veterans who have large health care needs.

“It’s not the Blue Cross that puts soldiers in harm’s way, it’s the federal government,” Roberts said, adding that the American Legion would like the existing system to remain in place.

Service-related injuries currently are treated and paid for by the government. The American Legion has proposed that Medicare reimburse the VA for the treatment of veterans.

He said that the argument about the government’s moral obligation to treat wounded soldiers, sailors and Marines fell on deaf ears during the meeting.

“The president deflected any discussion when it got into any moral issue here,” he said. “Any attempt to direct the conversation (to the moral discussion) was immediately deflected.”

Private insurance is separate for troops who need health care unrelated to their service. But Roberts noted that if a wounded warrior comes back and needs ongoing treatment, he or she could run up “to the max of the coverage in very short order,” leaving his family with nothing.

Roberts added that how the plan would raise \$500 million “is a great mystery and it seems to be an arbitrary number... The commander said it seemed like this phantom number.”

Monday’s meeting was preceded by a letter of protest earlier this month signed by Rehbein and the heads of 10 service organizations. It read that “there is simply no logical explanation” for the plan to bill veteran’s personal insurance “for care that the VA has a responsibility to provide.

The letter called it “unconscionable” to shift the burden of the country’s “fiscal problems on the men and women who have already sacrificed a great deal for this country. Lucky this plan will not pass.

Walk the wards at any of the 10 VA hospitals, 40 community based outpatient clinics and 6 State Veterans Homes throughout our Commonwealth and visit the brave men and women who served those agonizing years during America’s Wars, then you will know why their battles are not yet over. Nothing hurts like being forgotten...yet nothing helps like being remembered. When Benjamin Franklin wrote the words “time cures all”, he had never seen what a mortar shell or machine gun does to a person’s body, or what years in a POW camp does to their minds.

When the shooting has stopped, the guns are silent, the troops have returned home, for most it’s back to a family, job or friends, for some, the war will never be over. They have left behind part or parts of their body. For others, you can not see any scars, combat does many things to the mind, it does not always show up right away. It is difficult to treat, difficult for others to understand.

Our veterans stood by America when the country needed them. We, as a Nation, must not let them down when they need our help now.

It was President Lincoln who said, “to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan.”

The veteran population is getting older for many, long term care is needed. As long as there is a Dept. of PA Military Order of the Purple Heart and a veteran in need, they will receive assistance.

VERY INTERESTING QUOTE:

In light of the present financial crisis, interesting to read what Thomas Jefferson said in 1802: *I believe that banking institutions are more dangerous to our liberties than standing armies. If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation, then by deflation, the banks and corporations that will grow up around the banks will deprive the people of all property and reduce them to a state of homeless on the c.*