

# November 2009 Department News Bulletin:

## VETERANS DAY SPECIALS 2009:

The following are some Veteran Day specials for 2009. In addition to this list many companies, restaurants, and recreational sites offer military discounts which are not well advertised. When making purchases it is always a good idea to first ask if a military discount is available for your veteran status:

**NOV 01-26:** KNOTT'S BERRY FARM - Knott's Berry Farm pays tribute to past and present U.S. Armed Forces personnel during Veteran's Month with park admission at no charge for them and a guest 1-26 NOV 09 only. Up to six additional tickets can be purchased for only \$15 each. Military ID or DD214 required for discount. Not valid for the evening event - Halloween Haunt. For details refer to [www.knotts.com/public/admission/prices/deals.cfm#](http://www.knotts.com/public/admission/prices/deals.cfm#) .

**NOV 06-11:** Lowes - Lowe's Companies, Inc. will offer all active, reserve, honorably discharged retired military personnel and their immediate family members a 10% discount on in-store U.S. purchases made during the Veterans Day holiday Nov. 6 thru 11. The discount is available on in-stock and special order purchases up to \$5,000. To qualify individuals must present a valid military ID or other proof of service. Excluded from the discount are sales via Lowes.Co., previous sales, and purchases of services or gift cards. In addition to offering military discounts at specific times during the year Lowe's has extended benefits for its employees serving in the military and offers employment opportunities to military personnel after their military service has ended. [www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck/lowes-veterans-day-discount.asp](http://www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck/lowes-veterans-day-discount.asp) .

**NOV 07:** Cosco - Herocare San Diego and Costco have partnered to offer a special shopping event in recognition of those who serve as heroes within the community. The event is being held Saturday 7 NOV from 1800 - 2000 at Costco store locations in Santee, San Marcos, Vista, Poway, Temecula, Carmel Mountain, Carlsbad, Rancho Del Ray, La Mesa, Chula Vista, Lake Elsinore, and SESD. The event is to recognize those who work, at any level, active or retired in the following industries: Military Schools, Colleges, Medical, Fire, Police, CHP, Sheriff, State, City, County or non-profit agencies. Employees and their families are invited to attend for pictures with Santa Claus, refreshments, food samplings and opportunity drawings. Some locations will feature entertainment from local schools, police cars and fire trucks.

**NOV 08:** McCormick & Schmick's Seafood Restaurants is honoring veterans who have served in war and peace on Sunday, 8 NOV with a complimentary entree from a special menu upon presentation of proper authentication when you visit the restaurant. Acceptable ID includes VA card, VFW card, American Legion card, discharge papers, DD214, or other veteran's ID. For details refer to, [www.mccormickandschmicks.com/featured-promotion/Veterans-Appreciation-Day.aspx](http://www.mccormickandschmicks.com/featured-promotion/Veterans-Appreciation-Day.aspx)

**NOV 11:** Applebees - Choose from five dinner entrees which will be provided at no charge at participating stores during business hours on Wednesday, 11 NOV to veterans who can identify themselves with an active/reserve/retired ID card or Veterans Organization Card (i.e., American Legion and VFW). For details refer to [www.applebees.com/vetsDay/default.aspx](http://www.applebees.com/vetsDay/default.aspx) .

**NOV 16:** Golden Corral - The 2009 Military Appreciation Monday dinner will be held on Monday, 16 NOV from 1700 to 2100 in all Golden Corral Restaurants. The no cost "thank you" dinner is available to any person who has ever served in the United States Military. If you are a veteran, Retired, currently serving, in the National Guard or Reserves you are invited to participate in Golden Corral's Military Appreciation Monday dinner. Some form of ID indicating your service is required. For details refer to [www.goldencorral.com/military](http://www.goldencorral.com/military) .

Additional discounts are available to active duty and retirees at the following:

**Home Depot Home Depot:** The Home Depot offers at participating stores all active duty personnel, reservists, retired military veterans, and their families a 10% discount off their purchases up to a maximum of \$50 or \$200 depending on the time of year.

**Sea World:** Military Members can receive up to 4 free tickets for themselves and their dependants (discounted tickets after your four free for those of you with many rugrats) each year.

**Disney World:** Complimentary 5-day "Disney's Armed Forces Salute" ticket which includes admission to all Disney World theme parks, including the water parks and Disney Quest. Eligible military members can purchase discounted Disney tickets for their friends and family - adult or child 5-day "Disney's Armed Forces Salute Companion" ticket for up to 5 people for \$99 per ticket (add \$25 for access to all parks). A limited number of discounted Disney Resort hotel tickets are available. Offer Expires 23 DEC 09.

**San Diego Zoo/ Wild Animal Park :** The zoo and wild animal park are free to active duty military all the time.

**USS Midway Tour:** Tour the USS Midway (a great piece of WWII history) for free with your Military ID.

**Deep Sea Fishing:** Deep sea fishing is available in San Diego and Oceanside and offer great rates for military members sometimes up to half off.

**Restaurants/Stores/Shops:** Many restaurants, stores and shops offer military discounts in the San Diego area (large military population) you just need to ask for it many times.

**ITT:** Information, ticket + Tours (ITT) offices on Camp Pendleton, Miramar, MCRD, and other bases offer great rates on tickets to many of the other attractions throughout the area. You can also get vouchers for hotels in Primm (48 mi from the strip) and Las Vegas Nevada through the ITT ticket offices.

[Source: Various OCT 09 ++]

## **COLDS vs. FLU:**

With Flu Season upon us, and with the increasing number of H1N1 flu cases being reported, more people are making the trip to the doctor. So how can you tell if it's a cold, seasonal flu or H1N1? According to Fred Sutton, MD, executive vice president and chief medical officer, Harris County Hospital District Texas, "The flu is usually much worse than the common cold. Colds will generally last a few days, while the flu normally lasts much longer. Complications from colds are relatively minor, but seasonal flu and H1N1 can both lead to pneumonia and hospitalizations. If you have symptoms, it's important to see your doctor." The common cold and flu are both contagious viral infections. Because these two types of illnesses have similar symptoms, it can be difficult to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. Whether a person has typical seasonal flu or H1N1 flu, the symptoms are also similar. H1N1 is also associated with vomiting and diarrhea. There are multiple viruses and colds causing similar symptoms circulating during the fall and winter season. Here are some ways to decide the difference.

**Fever:** Fever is rare with a cold whereas fever is usually present with the flu in up to 80% of all flu cases. A temperature of 100°F or higher for 3 to 4 days is associated with the flu.

**Coughing:** A hacking, productive (mucus-producing) cough is often present with a cold whereas a non-productive (non-mucus producing) cough is usually present with the flu (sometimes referred to as dry cough).

**Aches:** Slight body aches and pains can be part of a cold whereas severe aches and pains are common with the flu.

**Stuffy Nose:** Stuffy nose is commonly present with a cold and typically resolves spontaneously within a week whereas stuffy nose is not commonly present with the flu.

**Chills:** Chills are uncommon with a cold whereas 60% of people who have the flu experience chills.

**Tiredness:** Tiredness is fairly mild with a cold whereas tiredness is moderate to severe with the flu.

**Sneezing:** Sneezing is commonly present with a cold whereas sneezing is not common with the flu.

**Sudden Symptoms:** Cold symptoms tend to develop over a few days whereas the flu has a rapid onset within 3-6 hours. The flu hits hard and includes sudden symptoms like high fever, aches and pains.

**Headache:** A headache is fairly uncommon with a cold whereas a headache is very common with the flu, present in 80% of flu cases.

**Sore Throat:** Sore throat is commonly present with a cold whereas sore throat is not commonly present with the flu.

**Chest Discomfort:** Chest discomfort is mild to moderate with a cold whereas chest discomfort is often severe with the flu.

[Source: Various Oct 09 ++]

## **NDAA 2010 Update 04:**

On 28 OCT the President signed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) which authorizes \$550.2 billion for FY 2010 Department of Defense programs, and \$130 billion to support overseas military operations. Some highlights include:

No proposed Tricare fee increases.

A 3.4% pay raise for active duty, Guard and Reserve members.

Authorizing premium-based Tricare coverage for "gray area" Reserve retirees who are under age 60.

Authorizing special compensation on behalf of caregivers of severely wounded warriors while on active duty.

Requiring a medical examination before administrative separations of members affected by traumatic brain injury or PTSD.

Protecting absentee voting rights for military members and families.

Expanding active-duty Tricare eligibility for activating Guard/Reserve members and their families.

The complete Conference Report of what Congress passed and signed into law can be found at <http://armedservices.house.gov>. A summary of what is contained in that report is provided in an attachment to this Bulletin. [Source: VFW Washington Weekly 30 Oct 09 ++]

## **VA BURIAL BENEFIT Update 06:**

The Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee of the House Veterans Affairs Committee voted 21 OCT in favor of legislation that would allow parents of certain deceased veterans to be buried with their

loved ones in U.S. military cemeteries. The bill, the Corey Shea Act (H.R.761), was introduced earlier this year by Congressman Barney Frank in response to a request made by Denise Anderson of Mansfield, whose son Army Specialist Corey Shea was killed in Mosul, Iraq during NOV 08. Congressman John Hall, chairman of the Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee, moved the legislation forward quickly, holding a hearing 8 OCT, and putting the bill to a vote 21 OCT. The legislation passed the subcommittee by a unanimous vote. "I am grateful to Chairman Filner and Subcommittee Chairman Hall for moving this legislation quickly," said Frank. "I will work with leadership to help bring this bill to a vote on the House floor. This legislation is a testament to the devotion of Mrs. Anderson, whose personal commitment will help veterans' families across the country."

According to current law, only spouses or minor children of deceased veterans may be buried in the same plot as their loved ones in national military cemeteries, unless special permission is granted by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. Shea lost his life at the age of 21, leaving behind no surviving spouse or minor children. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs denied the request of Shea's mother to be allowed to be buried with her son in Bourne national cemetery. Anderson asked Frank if he would help change the law to allow parents of deceased veterans to be interred with their adult children if the veteran has no living spouse or minor children. Earlier this month, Anderson traveled to Washington, D.C. to testify in favor of the bill before the Veterans Affairs Subcommittee. The bill passed by the subcommittee grants parents of deceased veterans the right to be buried with their children if the veteran has no living spouse or minor children. The legislation stipulates this does not cause any veteran to be displaced. The bill covers veterans who died in battle or in preparation for battle, and it includes either biological or adoptive parents. The legislation will next come before the full Veterans Committee for a vote and, if the bill passes, will move to the House floor. [Source: Mansfield News and Enterprise staff report 21 Oct 09 ++]

## **VA BURIAL BENEFIT Update 07:**

Hmong and Laotian war veterans could secure treasured burial spots in U.S. national cemeteries under legislation now being drafted by California San Joaquin Valley lawmakers. Prompted by the natives of Laos who fought side by side with U.S. Special Forces and CIA officers during the Vietnam War, the region's House members are seeking support for the burial benefit. Supporters call this fair compensation for those who sacrificed much. "We helped the United States fight that war," said Wangyee Vang, president of the Fresno-based Lao Veterans of America. "We deserve to have this." In a letter circulating among congressional colleagues, Reps. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, George Radanovich, R-Mariposa, Devin Nunes, R-Visalia, Jerry McNerney, D-Pleasanton, and Dennis Cardoza, D-Merced, are rallying additional support for the Hmong burial bill. The bill will be introduced once more co-sponsors are gathered. "This bill is written narrowly enough so as not to grant these individuals full veterans status, just internment benefits in national cemeteries, which they so richly deserve," states the letter, initiated by Costa's office.

Traditionally, the Hmong have resided in the mountains of Laos. Beginning in the early 1960s, Vang and others were recruited by U.S. personnel to assist in a largely covert theater of the broader war in Southeast Asia. Tens of thousands of Hmong and Lao are estimated to have died. After the war, with Laos fallen into communist hands, many emigrated to this country. Presently, an estimated 130,000 Hmong and Lao live in California, with many in the San Joaquin Valley. Along with the lowland Lao, the Hmong have lobbied in recent years for various immigration and other benefits. Until now, though, they have not explicitly sought burial rights in U.S. national cemeteries. Politically, it is easier to ask for one benefit at a time rather than an outright declaration of veteran status. Steve Robertson, legislative affairs director for the American Legion, said 28 OCT that extending the burial benefits to Hmong and Lao veterans is "in the realm of possibility," though the veterans advocacy organization has not taken a formal position. "In general, we've been very, very supportive of assisting that group of veterans, Robertson said, "Still, it's rare for anyone other than U.S. military veterans and their immediate family members to win burial rights in one of the 130 Veterans Administration national cemeteries.

The closest parallel to the Hmong's request came several years ago when Congress extended the cemetery benefits to Filipino soldiers and guerrilla fighters from World War II. A few other groups have likewise won national cemetery burial rights, including World War II merchant mariners and officers with the

Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The available burial areas overseen by the VA's National Cemetery Administration range from the 322-acre San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery in Santa Nella to the four-acre Sitka National Cemetery in Alaska. Separately, the Department of the Army oversees the world famous Arlington National Cemetery. Many facilities have been swamped with demand, particularly as veterans from the World War II and Korean War generation age. "We've got a lot of cemeteries that are already maxed out," Robertson noted. Verification of service is one potential hurdle, accentuated because of the covert nature of the war in Laos. Unlike U.S. military veterans, the Hmong were not provided a DD-214 form that attests to their service. Previous bills aiding the Hmong typically required proof such as affidavits signed by superior officers. The Hmong burial benefits bill will leave verification standards up to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

[Source: McClatchy Newspapers Michael Doyle article 28 Oct 09 ++]

## **VA HEALTH CARE FUNDING Update 22:**

President Barack Obama signed the Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act in a ceremony at the White House. The new law requires advance funding for the VA health-care system. "We have made the biggest commitment to veterans with the largest percent increase in the VA budget in more than 30 years" Obama said. "So we're keeping our promise to make real progress for our vets." In short the president said VA advance funding "promotes accountability at the VA, it ensures oversight by Congress ... And it ensures that veterans health care will no longer be held hostage to the annual budget battles in Washington." The president made his remarks in the East Room of the White House joined by VA Secretary Eric Shinseki and Sen. Daniel Akaka, chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee and the bill's sponsor. Representatives from veterans service organizations and members of Congress who played key roles in passing the legislation were part of the crowd that witnessed the signing. "No longer will VA and the veterans in its care have to suffer from the 'check's in the mail' syndrome," American Legion National Commander Clarence Hill said, "Now the VA will know a year in advance what resources will be available to it so plans can be made accordingly. Advance appropriations will go a long way toward minimizing compromises in the delivery of the high-quality VA health care our veterans expect and deserve."

Obama thanked several members of Congress for their efforts in getting the advance funding bill passed noting that it was an example of what Democrats and Republicans can do when they join forces to do right by our veterans. "Let me say that I take special pride in this legislation", Obama said. "Because as a senator, I was a proud co-sponsor of this legislation, I served on the Veterans' Affairs Committee, and in the campaign last year you all remember I had promised to pass it and today as president I'm fulfilling that promise." Obama told the audience that with the new legislation veterans medical care will be funded one year in advance. "For VA this means timely, sufficient, and predictable funding from year to year. Most of all for our veterans it will mean better access to doctors and nurses and the medical care that they need." Akaka introduced the VA advance funding bill in Congress on 12 FEB, guided it through committee hearings, and gathered 56 co-sponsors. On 13 OCT the Senate approved the legislation unanimously.

[Source: American Legion Online Update 22 Oct 09 ++]

## **VIETNAM MEMORIAL WALL Update 04:**

Repair work was under way 21 OCT at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the National Mall as a private memorial fund took over landscaping and maintenance of 13 acres from the National Park Service. Over the next two weeks, workers are restoring the flagpole's bronze finish and its decorative base with five military branch insignias. They will also restore the bronze finish for five stands that hold directories that help people find names on famous V-shaped memorial wall, which draws millions of visitors each year. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, which built the memorial, also has repaired an irrigation system and is reseeding and sodding the grass. Last month, the group announced plans to pay for maintenance at the site because of scarce funding from the federal government. They plan to raise more than \$1 million to care for the memorial and grounds, including \$500,000 to buy replacement granite if sections of the wall need to be replaced in the

future. "Everybody has the same goal: We want it to look good," said fund spokeswoman Lisa Gough. "We want it to shine." The memorial's bronze fixtures - including the flagpole and a statue of three soldiers - will be restored for the first time since they were installed more than 25 years ago, said James Cummings, who was part of the memorial's original architecture team the project. The fund is working to raise \$100,000 to restore the statue in the next year. The bronze is worn down and has turned green on the soldiers' noses and arms, Cummings said. The weather caused some of the damage, along with the hands of many visitors. "No one expected the memorial itself would have such an impact with the culture," said Cummings. "There's a plan now to take care of it."

[Source: Marine Corps Times Brett Zongker article 21 Oct -09 ++]

## **WE CARE FOR VETERANS PROGRAM:**

Homewatch CareGivers is offering up to 20 hours of free in-home care to a disabled or injured U.S. military veteran in honor of their service and sacrifice through the We Care for Veterans Program. They feel the best way to pitch in and show their support is by providing their services to those who have sacrificed so much for our nation. If eligible sign up at 1-800-777-9770 or contact your area location to apply. You can find a list of nationwide locations by entering your zip code at [www.homewatchcaregivers.com/Blog.aspx#](http://www.homewatchcaregivers.com/Blog.aspx#) . Promotion Rules are:

The offering is available only in participating Homewatch CareGivers locations.

The promotion is available to one Disabled U.S. Military Veteran per participating location, issued on a first come, first serve basis.

Applicants must live within the service area of a participating Homewatch CareGivers location.

Care can be purposed for any use that falls within the parameters of Homewatch CareGivers existing service offering.

The 20 hours of free care can be used in increments determined by the Homewatch location.

Applicants must be signed up for the We Care for Veterans promotion by November 30th.

Homewatch CareGivers gives back to the community through its Veterans Outreach Program, which provides guidance and education about the Aid and Attendance Benefit to veterans as well as surviving spouses.

Homewatch CareGivers make every effort to put potential claimants together with service offices from groups like Legion and Purple Heart who will represent the claimant before the VA for no charge. Contact your area location for more information.

[Source: [www.homewatchcaregivers.com](http://www.homewatchcaregivers.com) 21 Oct 09 ++]