

# INTERCHANGE ONLINE



THE OFFICIAL ONLINE NEWSPAPER OF THE  
NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL

Vol. 27 Issue 02

Veteran's News that needs to be Read Summer 2017



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From: President Ned Foote, Executive Officers and District Directors

Have a Fun fill Day and and a Safe Celebration

**REMEMBER: FREEDOM IS NOT FREE**



## IN MEMORIAM

### VVA #20

Charles Sawyer USMC & US Army Staff Sgt.

Passed March 22, 2017

Lee Houser Korea & Vietnam

June 27, 1944 - Feb 15, 2017

Andrew Allocco

1947 - April 17, 2017

Michael E. Geisler USAF

Passed on April 24, 2017

Fredrick A. Leipold III

Passed away March 3, 2017

William M. Ribble

Passed away Dec. 11, 2016

Daniel R. Murray

Passed away Sept. 23, 2016

James R. Hanley Sr. US Navy

Passed June 15, 2017

### VVA #72

Mauro M. Bacolo US Navy & Guard

1947 - December 10, 2016

VVA #77 William Lucas

Aug 1944—April 2017

### VVA #140

William Rejmaniak

Dennis Simmons

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THE OFFICIAL ONLINE NEWSPAPER OF THE  
NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL

VVA-NYSC Meeting Dates 2017

September 16

**On-Line INTERCHANGE** is the Bi-monthly publication of the VVA-NYSC. Comments and contributions are encouraged and can be sent to:

**VVAINTERCHANGE@AOL.COM**

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of this organization. Individuals with different viewpoints and opinions are invited to submit them to the Chapter by the **deadline** of the **Third Friday of each month**. Editor reserves the right to edit for length, grammar and reject any libelous or obscene material.

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## President's Report

Ned D. Foote

I'm not sure when you will receive this but if it is before convention I'm still hoping for more delegates. We have been number one in every convention with between 65 and 70 delegates. We have only 53 at this writing and it does not look that we will have anymore. Very disappointing and I think two states will beat us.

Not sure of the problem and I know maybe some do not have funds but most chapters do. Don't forget I see your reports. Also many Chapters receive Household Goods funds and a considerable amount. That should be helping to pay for delegates. After all it is an obligation for Chapters to participate in your organization. This convention and next will be very critical for VVA as we wind down.

The delegates at these conventions will tell us where we will go. Will it be Last man standing? Or find new organization to take over? Change our name to allow others to join? These questions are on the table. National has formed two Working Groups.

Working group 1 task is to find how to dissolve VVA. Working group 2 will try to find a way for us to continue. Once they complete those tasks and report at a convention where then the delegates will decide where we do. It will Not be National, State Council, nor Chapters but the delegates at that convention. So if you want to have a say in this 80,000 member organization you need to be there to represent your chapter's voices.

If this comes out after convention you all missed a great time in New Orleans. Elections are over. Amendments and resolutions debated. Great banquet and hope we received some awards.

The other report or experience I recently had over Memorial Day my wife and I traveled to Hawaii. It was our 47<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We would have gone in April but Hawaii was having a week long 50<sup>th</sup> Commemorative of Vietnam War.

President Rowan and our National Treasurer Wayne Reynolds wanted to go to represent VVA. So we all went. We participated in open ceremonies. John got to speak. Wayne and Region 9 director Dick Southerland represented us at a banquet.

We all attended ceremonies before parade. John did another fantastic speech off the top of his head. The parade was something. John, myself, Wayne, and Dick rode in separate cars with our wives. Thousands upon thousands lined street. It was Terrific!

Next day Memorial Day, Wayne, myself, and Dick went to the Punchbowl for that ceremony. John left for home. We laid 2 wreaths. One for VVA local Chapter and Wayne and I did the National.

I hope all of you had something going on to honor our KIA's. I hear a lot of folks saying Happy Memorial Day but that is not a Happy Day. Our day is Veterans Day and wish people could understand that and also my pet peeve is Memorial Day is May 30<sup>th</sup>. My VVA Chapter observes the real date and not the long weekend to BBQ and buy AC and furniture.

Hope all of our members had a Fun Fill and Safe July 4th weekend!



## Senate Health Bill: What You Need To Know

### Who is covered

#### Individual mandate

**ACA:** Individual mandate requires most Americans to have health coverage or pay a fine.

**House bill:** Instead of a mandate, insurers could impose 30% surcharge on people who buy a new plan after letting previous coverage lapse, giving healthy people an incentive to remain insured.

**Senate bill:** Individual mandate would be eliminated. Nothing would replace it as an incentive for healthy people to have insurance.

#### Employer mandate

**ACA:** Employer mandate requires larger companies to offer affordable coverage to employees.

**House bill:** Would eliminate employer mandate.

**Senate bill:** Would eliminate employer mandate.

#### Children under 26

**ACA:** Young adults could stay on parents' health plan until age 26.

**House bill:** Unchanged.

**Senate bill:** Unchanged.

#### Paying for coverage

#### Imposed taxes

**ACA:** Imposed new taxes (including investment income and wages above \$200,000) to help people pay for coverage.

**House bill:** Would eliminate most of those taxes.

**Senate bill:** Would eliminate most of those taxes.

#### Subsidies

**ACA:** Subsidies to insurers help people pay deductibles and copays.

**House bill:** Subsidies would end in 2020.

**Senate bill:** Subsidies would end in 2020.

#### Tax credits

**ACA:** Tax credits primarily based on income, age and geography to help low- and moderate-income people buy coverage via marketplaces.

(Cont. on pg. 6)

## Government Affairs

Joe Ingino—Chair

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today released finalized plans that lay the framework for providing emergency mental health coverage to former service members with other-than-honorable (OTH) administrative discharges.

This is the first time a VA Secretary has implemented an initiative specifically focused on this group of former service members who are in mental health distress.

"Suicide prevention is my top clinical priority," said Secretary Shulkin, MD. "We want these former service members to know there is someplace they can turn if they are facing a mental health emergency -- whether it means urgent care at a VA emergency department, a Vet Center or through the Veterans Crisis Line."

Effective July 5, all Veterans Health Administration (VHA) medical centers will be prepared to offer emergency stabilization care for former service members who present at the facility with an emergent mental health need. Under this initiative, former service members with an OTH administrative discharge may receive care for their mental health emergency for an initial period of up to 90 days, which can include inpatient, residential or outpatient care.

During this time, VHA and the Veterans Benefits Administration will work together to determine if the mental health condition is a result of a service-related injury, making the service member eligible for ongoing coverage for that condition.

**Individual Unemployability (IU) Cuts** - "It was a bad idea to begin with, unworkable and essentially uncaring for almost a quarter of a million veterans over the age of 62," said John Rowan, National President of Vietnam Veterans of America, referring to a provision in the President's \$186.5 billion budget proposal for FY18 that would take thousands of dollars in Individual Unemployability (IU) benefits from the most vulnerable of veterans. "Now the administration has seen the light and retreated from their poorly-reasoned plan."

"Here at VVA, we have been deluged by calls from our members," Rowan said. "They are concerned. They are scared. Some are angry. They fear a personal financial disaster that could cost them their house, their savings, their very life."

"The administration's plan was, in effect, to take from Peter to pay for Paul, to eviscerate the IU program to make available funds to enhance and expand the so-called Choice program, to the tune of \$3.2 billion in FY'18," noted Rowan.

"Just as an avalanche of calls and e-mails struck all through the VSO and MSO community, so too did VVA and our fellow organizations send letters and offer firm and focused testimony blasting the proposal at a Senate hearing," Rowan said.

"Once the politically astute in the administration recognized the folly of cutting benefits, which could cost certain veterans almost \$20,000 a year, they reversed field, acknowledging that theirs was a non-starter, and that Congress wasn't going to go along with the proposal," Rowan concluded.

(Cont. on pg. 8)

**House bill:** Tax credits would be based primarily on age. Amount would not increase if premiums increase, and people in high-cost areas would get no additional money.

**Senate bill:** Tax credits primarily based on income, age and geography, but would cover a simpler plan. People would need to be lower-income than ACA to be eligible.

#### **Pre-existing conditions**

**ACA:** Pre-existing conditions could not be used as basis to deny coverage or raise premiums.

**House bill:** State could allow insurers to raise premiums based on pre-existing conditions if they had a gap in coverage.

**Senate bill:** Pre-existing conditions could not be used as a basis to deny coverage or raise premiums.

#### **Costs for older people**

**ACA:** Insurers could charge older people up to 3 times more than younger people.

**House bill:** Insurers could charge older people up to 5 times more. States can adjust ratio.

**Senate bill:** Insurers could charge older people up to 5 times more.

#### **Pre-tax HSA**

**ACA:** For pre-tax health savings accounts, individuals could contribute up to \$3,400 and families up to \$6,750.

**House bill:** Individuals could contribute up to \$6,550 and families up to \$13,100 to accounts, starting in 2018.

**Senate bill:** People could contribute more to their accounts than under ACA.

#### **High-risk pools**

**ACA:** Did not create high-risk pools.

**House bill:** Creates fund for high-risk pools. States would get \$130 billion over 10 years to help sick people.

**Senate bill:** Creates fund for high-risk pools at \$112 billion over 10 years. Aimed at reimbursing insurers to help sick people.

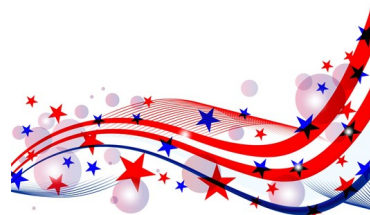
#### **Changes to Medicaid**

##### **Funding**

**ACA:** Entitlement program with open-ended, matching federal funds for all who qualify.

**House bill:** Would be funded by giving states a per-capita amount or block grant based on their spending, not adjusting for rising costs. Projected to reduce federal funding.

**Senate bill:** Would be funded by giving states a per-capita amount or block grant, starting in 2021. Amount projected to grow more slowly than in House bill, potentially reducing spending.



**( Cont. on pg. 7)**

(Cont. from pg. 6)

Expansion

**ACA:** States can expand Medicaid to cover people making up to 138% of poverty line, and federal government would pay a large part of the cost.

**House bill:** States would not be able to expand Medicaid after this year. In states that do expand by deadline, federal government would pay a smaller part of cost.

**Senate bill:** For states that expand Medicaid, federal government would pay a smaller part of the cost starting in 2021.

Other elements

Essential benefits

**ACA:** Insurers required to cover essential health benefits, such as hospital visits and mental health care.

**House bill:** States allowed to change what qualifies as an essential health benefit.

**Senate bill:** States allowed to change what qualifies as an essential health benefit.

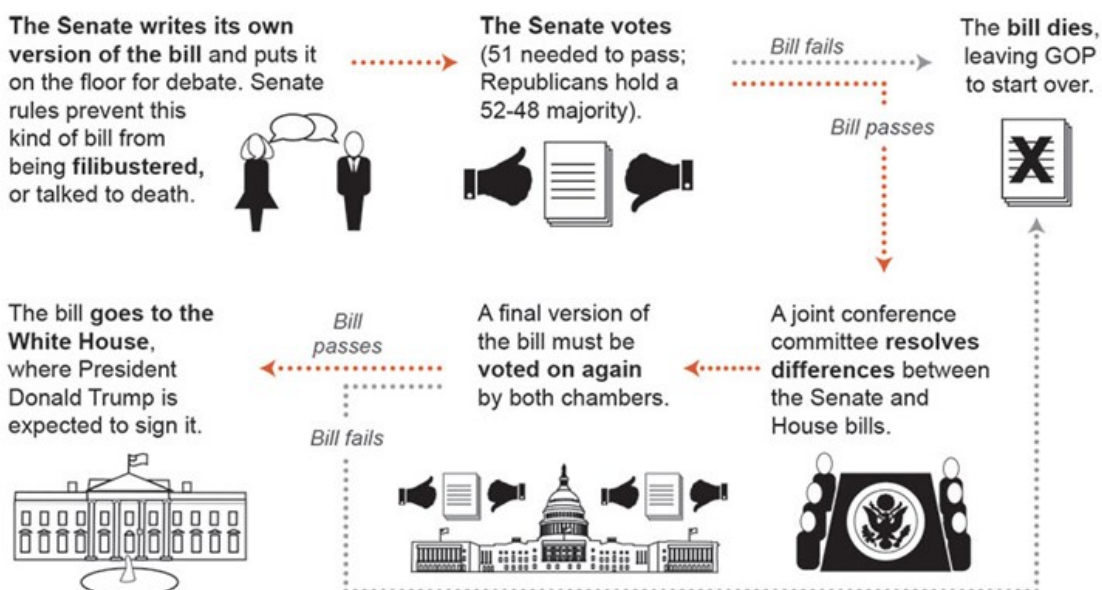
Planned Parenthood

**ACA:** Planned Parenthood eligible for Medicaid reimbursements, but federal money cannot fund abortions.

**House bill:** Planned Parenthood would face 1-year Medicaid funding freeze.

**Senate bill:** Planned Parenthood would face 1-year Medicaid funding freeze.

WHAT'S NEXT?



SOURCES: U.S. House of Representatives; U.S. Senate

AP

(Continue from pg. 5)

Contact your Member of Congress NOW and request-NO Cuts to Veterans Earned (IU) Benefits Take Action!

Vietnam Veterans of America founding principle is "Never Again Will One Generation of Veterans abandons another," and we strongly oppose this proposal by the Trump Administration.

Veterans legislation passes House of Representatives

For more information:

<https://veterans.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=1760> (view bills)

Today, Chairman Phil Roe, M.D. (R-Tenn.) released the following statement after the House of Representatives passed seven bills this week to improve veterans' access to quality health care, instill accountability at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and provide a cost-of-living adjustment for disability compensation:

"This week, members of the House passed seven pieces of bipartisan legislation to help our nation's veterans. These important bills will expand access to care, provide benefits for veterans and their dependents and bring greater accountability to VA.

"As we observe Memorial Day, there is no better way to honor the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice than by caring for those they have left behind. I'm particularly proud of the House's efforts to provide a cost-of-living adjustment for disability compensation so that survivors of certain disabled veterans can receive the increased benefits they deserve. I applaud my colleagues for coming together to put our veterans first, and I look forward to getting these important pieces of legislation to the president's desk without delay."

**Background:**

H.R. 467, The VA Scheduling Accountability Act, introduced by Rep. Jackie Walorski, would require VA medical center directors to certify annually that their facility is in compliance with the scheduling directive (or any successor directive that replaces it), prohibit VA from waiving certification, and require VA to report to Congress on individual medical facilities' compliance.

H.R. 1005, introduced by Rep. Lee Zeldin, would direct VA to enter into an agreement or a contract with state veterans homes to pay for adult day health care for a veteran eligible for, but not receiving, nursing home care.

H.R. 1162, The No Hero Left Untreated Act, introduced by Rep. Stephen Knight, would require VA to carry out a one-year pilot program at up to two VA medical facilities to provide access to magnetic EEG/EKG-guided resonance therapy to veterans with PTSD, TBI, MST, chronic pain or opiate addiction for up to 50 veterans. Click here for more information.

H.R. 1329, The Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2017, introduced by DA-MA Chairman Mike Bost and Ranking Member Elizabeth Esty, would increase the rates of compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities as well as the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for the survivors of certain disabled veterans as of December 1st, 2017.

H.R. 1545, The VA Prescription Data Accountability Act, introduced by Rep. Annie Kuster, would clarify current law to stipulate that VHA is required to disclose information to state controlled substance monitoring programs for anyone -- veteran or non-veteran -- who is prescribed these medications through VA.

(Cont. on pg. 9)



(Cont. from pg. 8)

H.R. 1725, The Quicker Veterans Benefits Delivery Act of 2017, introduced by Ranking Member Walz, as amended, seeks to reduce the number of unnecessary disability examinations by requiring additional information be provided to Congress regarding VA's use of private medical evidence in support of claims for disability compensation.

H.R. 2288, The Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017 would create three "lanes" for veterans' appeals, including the "Local Higher Level Review Lane" in which an adjudicator reviews the same evidence considered by the original claims processor; the "New Evidence Lane," in which the veteran could submit new evidence for review and have a hearing; and the "Board Lane," in which jurisdiction for the appeal would transfer immediately to the Board of Veterans' Appeals. The bill would give the Secretary the authority to test the new system prior to full implementation and would allow some veterans already going through the appeals process to opt into the new system. It would also require VA to provide a comprehensive plan for how the new system will be implemented and a subsequent certification by the Secretary that the department is prepared to roll-out the reform. Lastly, the bill would require the Secretary to submit periodic reports to Congress, including information on how many appeals are pending in both the modernized system and the legacy system. This legislation was sponsored by every member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

#### **Legislative Alert – H.R. 299/S.422 the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017**

For over a decade, Vietnam Veterans of America has sought legislation to restore presumptive Agent Orange exposure status to members of the Armed Forces, who served in the territorial waters of Vietnam.

Representative David Valadao, (CA-R-21) has introduced H.R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017 and Senator Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY) has introduced companion bill S.422, in the Senate. When enacted into law this legislation would reverse the Department of Veterans Affairs decision preventing "Blue Water Navy" veterans from claiming presumptive status for the diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure.

Presumption of service connection exists for Vietnam veterans who served in country, on land and inland waterways. Enactment of H.R. 299 and S.422 will bring a modicum of justice to several thousand Navy personnel who have been denied service connection by the VA since 2002. They no longer will have to prove direct exposure to Agent Orange, and they will receive expedited consideration for VA benefits if they are afflicted with any of the health conditions associated with exposure to this defoliant.

VVA fully endorses the sentiments expressed by Congressman Tim Walz (MN-1): 'When Congress allowed the Agent Orange Act of 1991 to expire, the need for this legislation became absolutely critical. Our nation must exhaust every effort to identify, prevent, and heal the injuries, illnesses, and wounds our military service personnel received during their service.' and Congressman Dennis Ross (FL-15), that 'there is absolutely no reason those veterans who served in the waters off the coast of Vietnam and currently suffer from diseases related to Agent Orange exposure should not qualify for current VA care,' *stated National President John Rowan in VVA National Press release on January 11, 2017.*

VVA strongly supports H.R. 299 and S.422 and will work with Congress to ensure passage of this bipartisan legislation to restore equity to all Vietnam Veterans that were exposed to Agent Orange.

VVA urges you to take action now! Go to our Legislative Action site at <http://capwiz.com/vva/home/>, enter your Zip Code, and send the prepared letters requesting your Member of Congress co-sponsor **H.R. 299 and S.422, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017**, also send the thank you letter to your members who have signed onto the bills.

## Southern District Report

Joe Ingino

VVA Chapters #11, #32, #72, #82, #118, #126, #421, #807

At the end of April, I was invited to Northport VA Hospital, to meet the new Interim Director, Mr. Vincent Immiti. In May I was invited to the Veterans Health Alliance of Long Island, tenth year *Anniversary in 2017*.

As WWII and Korea Veterans pass on, Vietnam Veterans are now the largest Veterans in New York State. Health care services are changing .looking forward to the next 10 years to work with Desert Storm, Iraq and Afghanistan. *Afghanistan*.

A special award was given to Francisco Muñiz III for all his advocacy to veterans on Long Island and New York State within The Veterans Health Alliance of Long Island. Congratulation! The Veterans Health Alliance of Long Island Award Health was presented at Adelphi University.

*On May 20th I was invited by Suffolk County United Veterans to celebrate Armed Forces Day.*

On Saturday June 3rd I was invited by American Gold Star Mothers, for the reading of the names of those who lost their lives at Eisenhower Park. June 9th Unveiling of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Elmhurst Park, I was asked to attend by Chapter 32. Also on June 9th at night, I joined the Town of Babylon High School Graduates , who have chosen to answer the call of military service.

## Western District Report

Mike Walker

VVA Chapters #20, #77, #193, #268, #459, #603, #865, #978

I hope all had a respectful Memorial Day.

**Chapter 20** - Color guard was in the Memorial Day parade in the city of Rochester.

**Chapter 77** - Attended the annual Military Appreciation luncheon, on Sunday a group from the chapter attended a mass that Paul Rudnicki Esq. has said for the only JAG officer killed in Vietnam, the color guard marched in the Tonawanda- North Tonawanda Memorial Day parade. On Memorial Day we had our service at the waterfront.

**Chapter 193** - The chapter was recognized for 30 years as a chapter.

**Chapter 268** - A great article was in the Buffalo News on how Gordie Bellinger on how he works in the community for veterans of all wars. The chapter marched in the Lockport Memorial Day parade.

**Chapter 978** - The chapter held a Town Hall meeting that was well attended and very well run, they tough a Boy Scout Troop on how to fold a flag and the meaning of each fold.

The other chapters did not get back to me.

## Central District Report

Nick Valenti

VVA Chapters #85, #103, #205, #296, #377, #480, #704, #708, #803, #827, #896, #944

Central District is seeing a lot of activity. Chapter 944 continues with its plans to establish a Veteran's Cemetery in their county. The personal connection of the birth of our country and the men and women that continue to define it is an honor the Chapter wishes to bring their community. The Chapter is moving forward with plans for another Washington, D.C. trip to be scheduled with Honor Flight Syracuse. Also, 944 is working on collecting manufacturer coupons and then sending them to the contact person for Military Families for their use around the world. One of the continuing community activities the Chapter involves itself with is the Patriot Run/Walk event. They have also established an ROTC Scholarship Awards program in honor of their local Gold Star Mothers Sons. It looks like this will continue to be an ongoing community activity.

Since May their activities have included a visit to the Oxford Veterans Home. Among other things 49 Vietnam Veterans were presented the 50<sup>th</sup> Commemorative pin accompanied by a personalized certificate. A ceremony for five KIA in Vietnam who were from Utica was held and bricks were placed in their names. They are Thomas Jones, Joseph "Keith" Wheeler, Louis Wuest Jr., Richard Kulpa and Allan Youngkrans Jr. More bricks are to follow.

Dates Chapter 944 wants you to remember are: Vietnam Veterans-Get-Together on June 17<sup>th</sup>; Gold Star Mother's Day, September 24<sup>th</sup>; and Washington, D.C. Honor Flight number 10 scheduled from September 28<sup>th</sup> thru October 1<sup>st</sup>. Membership is still going strong at 122.

Just want to give a shout out for the Annual "Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway of Valor" annual Tribute Ride. This year it will take place on Saturday, July 15<sup>th</sup>. As usual it will begin at 8:00 AM from the Owego Free Academy on Sheldon Guile Boulevard, Owego, New York and ends at the northern point of Route 38 in the Town of Sterling. From there it continues to the American Legion Post in Hannibal, New York for lunch. Want more information please call Harvey Baker, Chapter 377, Vietnam Veterans of America at 607-898-3507.

Harvey Baker sent out an email on June 11<sup>th</sup> giving everyone a heads up on DoD opening Online Exchange Shopping to Veterans. The Army, Air Force and Navy exchange will start allowing all honorably discharged veterans to shop on line. As Harvey puts it "think Amazon, but only cheaper with no taxes." The target date is Veterans Day, November 11, 2017. The catch is you must register before you can access the online exchange. Registration began on June 1, 2017. You must call 1-844-868-8672. For more information, here is the site to visit: <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1049558/dod-opens-online-exchange-shopping-to-veterans/>

Central District experienced a very unusual event or rather events this year. "The Wall That Heals" visited two Central New York locations. The first was Oneonta, New York and the second was Port Byron, New York. Chapter 704 worked with Dr. Linda Townsend, a teacher at the Dana L. West Jr./Sr. High School to bring "The Wall." By all accounts the Port Byron site was hugely successful. Not only did more than 8,750 people visit "The Wall" and mobile education center we were able to get over 180 volunteers to assist from May 31, 2017 to June 4, 2017.

(Cont. on pg. 12)

(Cont. from pg. 11)

It all began when we were able to get Fire & Iron, Patriot Guard, Blue Knights, Vietnam Veterans and anyone who wanted to join in to escort "The Wall" from Groton, New York to Port Byron, New York. Thanks to Ride Captain Harvey Baker, who has worked on the annual Tribute Ride from its inception, this ride went well. More than 200 participants followed Route 38 from Groton and were greeted along the way by area school children as they passed by. Once at the final destination, volunteers were on hand to erect the exhibit in record time. Each day a ceremony was conducted with more than 100 people in attendance. The first full day was set aside as a Day of Dedication. Guest Speaker Rear Admiral Richard West (Retired) spoke, with dignitaries from Governor Cuomo's Office, Mayors from Auburn and Port Byron in attendance along with our own Sheriff Gould. Posting of the colors, rifle volley and taps were the standard of the day as well as a letter from Gary Sinese, and a County Proclamation were read.

The second full day was set aside as a Day of Remembrance. We placed a rose at the foot of each panel of "The Wall" that had the name of one of the 27 Cayuga County servicemen killed in Vietnam.

Simultaneously, a dog tag bearing the name of the veteran was placed on a tree that will be planted by the school as a living memorial to the twenty-seven. All the while, a riderless horse slow walked across the front of "The Wall" as the names were being read and a bell tolled for each of our KIAs. To finish off the ceremony there was a pinning of all Vietnam Veterans present with the 50<sup>th</sup> Vietnam War Commemorative Pin. Jose M. Ramos, Senior Advisor, U.S. Army Department of Defense and representatives from the Marine Corps and Army also aided in the pinning. Our State Senator Pam Helming sent a representative who helped in reading a proclamation jointly with our Assembly person Robert Oakes.

The third day saw a luminary ceremony for the day we identified as a Day to Educate. We had the Red Skelton Pledge of Allegiance conducted by two sisters, followed by speakers William Yale, Sampson Cemetery; Gold Star Mother Lorie Schnieder from the Cpl. Kyle R. Schnieder Foundation and Gold Star Mother Tammy Bell whose son was killed in Afghanistan. Our main speaker was journalist Sean Kirst-recipient of the Ernie Pyle Award. The evening ended with all in attendance standing in front of "The Wall" holding glow sticks to the singing of America The Beautiful and Let There Be Peace On Earth.

The final day was dedicated for Healing. Colors were posted, the Pledge was led by the son of our guest speaker who is also a student at the Port Byron Central Schools. And special attention was given to recognizing that the school helping to sponsor "The Wall" had lost two of their favorite sons in Vietnam - Robert S. Barnes and Brian P. Russell. On another personal note the school district has had two other favorite sons killed in Afghanistan, Jerome Bell and Patrick DeVoe. These young men were the first and second casualties respectively from Cayuga County. As with opening day, colors were posted and taps were sounded. We did not do a rifle volley because this ceremony was held in doors.

The huge success for this event rests on the shoulders the NYS Office of tourism; radio, television, and newspaper exposure and enormous effort by Dr. Linda Townsend - teacher at Dana L. West Jr./Sr. High School and President Lou Patti from Vietnam Veterans Chapter 704.

One final thought, please get your financial and election reports in if you need help please do not be bashful, simply ask. I will do whatever I can.

Harvey Baker reports that VVA Chapter #377 has our own Facebook Page under (Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 377)

## Veteran Incarcerated Committee Report

Nicholas Valenti—Chair

The Veterans Group of Auburn (VGoA) held its General Membership Meeting (GMM) on Friday, June 9, 2017. This group, made up of Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter #205 and Veterans of Modern Warfare (VMW), Chapter #24 have successfully worked together to enhance the lives of the veteran population within their facility. There was a long delay before this meeting could take place due to a facility wide lock-down. This shutdown was for an especially prolonged period of time. The scheduled Memorial Day Vigil originally set up for May 30<sup>th</sup> had also been cancelled due to the lockdown.

June 9th, saw a combination of the cancelled Memorial Day Vigil and a General Membership Meeting. It has been since March of this year that I haven't been able to sit, talk and meet with our Vietnam Veteran incarcerated brothers.

Since the March meeting donations of yarn have been fast and furious. Word has spread that the Crochet Squad is on its way to producing 2,000 items for use outside the facility. There is so much excitement membership has stabilized and there is a resurgence of activity.

When "The Wall That Heals" announced that it was coming to the Auburn Correctional Facility region, Chapter #704 received a financial contribution from the veterans in the facility. They were eager to be part of the Dedicate, Remember, Educate and Healing ceremonies highlighted during the exhibit presentation in Port Byron, New York.

The Veterans Group of Auburn (VGoA) had a strong showing for its meeting given that numerous organizations were meeting at the same time due to the lifting of the lockdown. These men show a strong fellowship to each other and continue to have interests beyond the walls they live behind.

I am looking forward to participating with Chapter #205, Veterans of Modern Warfare, Chapter #24 and the VGoA on September 5, 2017 and being part of their POW/MIA Day Vigil.

On an encouraging note the financial and election reports for Chapter #205 have been completed.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOOTE & MANIACEK FAMILY

Ned Foote's grandson, Nicholas Maniacek, has joined the Air National Guard as a Fireman.



To all,

After our discussion on NY adding marijuana to listing treatment for PTSD here is update. We had objected this as too many adverse effects and could hurt our Veterans. This is not authorized by the VA and the many issues I raised last Saturday and I believe most of you agreed.

So the NY Legislature passed anyways so our medical marijuana folks can make a bunch of money off us. (my opinion).

As you move forward please be careful if you choose to find an uneducated doctor on PTSD treatment to prescribe marijuana for you. You will need to pay this from your own pocket and please if you go to VA for your other problems go clean so you will not test positive for banned substances and could lose big time.

Just a warning.

Dr. Tom Berger sent his reasons for not supporting: First, marijuana remains a Schedule 1 Controlled Substance. I don't see the government taking it off the list anytime soon because any attempt to do so then moves to the dogfight over legalization and VVA is not gonna get into the dogfight over legalization.

Therefore, because marijuana is a Schedule 1 Controlled Substance, the VA can't prescribe until that changes. So even if a vet gets a prescription from a non-VA physician in a state that permits such a prescription, there's no guarantee that any state which does not allow it will honor such a prescription. In fact, the vet would probably be subject to that state's laws re: possession of a Schedule 1 Controlled Substance (In other words, don't you NY boys bring your prescription marijuana to New Orleans because we can't bail you out).

Secondly, to date, there've been no randomized scientific clinical studies that show beyond a doubt that marijuana actually helps with alleviating the symptoms of PTSD. The one sanctioned study (that I mentioned several weeks ago) has been shut down at Johns Hopkins because the marijuana supplied by the government (the US has been growing marijuana in Mississippi since the 30's) was found to be contaminated with lead and other nasty stuff. I know there is lots of testimonials and statements from vets saying that marijuana helps with PTSD, but testimonials are not scientific evidence.

There are still folks who say that frontal lobotomies are now safer than ever, but there's no scientific evidence of that either...

I was not planning on website. I don't think it deserves an award as we do not keep it updated much

Ned D Foote  
President NYSC

## Secretary's Report

Francisco Muñiz III

Each Chapter Contact Person, Officers, Committee Chairs were sent an E-mail reminding them to send in their respective Report for this publication. Each Chapter during Open Mike gives a verbal report. Why can't you send that report via E-mail to [VVAINTERCHANGE@AOL.COM](mailto:VVAINTERCHANGE@AOL.COM) so that I could place the report on this publication?

We have over 4,500 VVA-NYSC members but we only have less than one percent of E-mail address to send this publication out! Why? Has everyone gone into a SHUT DOWN mode! We still have a lot to accomplish before we close shop.

We are receiving many return E-mail errors: See the following list: if anyone recognize the E-mails, please send me the corrected address.

A message that you sent could not be delivered to one or more of its recipients. This is a permanent error. The following address(es) failed:

[gsmith105@twcny.rr.com](mailto:gsmith105@twcny.rr.com)    [hearts@stny.rr.com](mailto:hearts@stny.rr.com)    [mclayton1@hvc.rr.com](mailto:mclayton1@hvc.rr.com)  
[gsmith105@twcny.rr.com](mailto:gsmith105@twcny.rr.com)    [rossie\\_nance@bellsouth.net](mailto:rossie_nance@bellsouth.net)    [gscain@roadrunner.com](mailto:gscain@roadrunner.com)  
[jbobful144@aol.com](mailto:jbobful144@aol.com)    [BobNSue@optonline.net](mailto:BobNSue@optonline.net)

Sorry that I missed the last State Council meeting but I needed my seventh heart stent placed in my heart! Thanks to Ted for filling in my absence and doing a great job!

VVA-NYSC Treasurer Nick DeLeo sent the following information:  
Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.

The new website is up and running. Take a look [www.vocroc.org](http://www.vocroc.org). For those on twitter be sure to vote on the poll to let us know what you think!

Veterans Outreach Center, Inc.

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585-546-1081 ext. 7810

## DoD to Open Online Exchange Shopping to Veteran

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13, 2017 — The Defense Department announced today that veterans will soon be able to shop online at military exchanges.

The policy change will extend limited online military exchange shopping privileges to all honorably discharged veterans of the military, DoD officials said in a [news release](#).

The shopping benefit will be effective this Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2017.

While shopping privileges exclude the purchase of uniforms, alcohol and tobacco products, it includes the Exchange Services' dynamic online retail environment known so well to service members and their families, the release said. The change follows careful analysis, coordination and strong public support,

(Cont. on pg. 19)

**Membership Affairs Committee**

Ted Wilkinson, Chair

Vietnam Veterans of America has 45 State Councils, 678 Chapters, and 81,246 members.

80,017 men 1,229 women 2,196 are incarcerated 460 are permanently hospitalized

New York State membership did not increase in 2016, due to members moving out of state:

but is mostly due to **LACK OF EFFORT IN MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT.**

New York is the state that has always set the bar and the state everyone followed. We are not living up to our reputation lately. I say we need to get the enthusiasm back. I want you to remember what it was like 50 years ago when took care of our own. We will have a **MEMBERSHIP DRIVE CHALLENGE.**

DD214 is required for every member. You must check the dates for VVA eligibility. Send DD214 to national with application. Once verified national has DD214 then chapter does not need to keep on file if they choose so.

As of December 31, 2016 there is no more printed rosters from the National office. Forms were sent out requesting point-of -contact to receive the roster either through email or view it real- time. As of the first of the month 5 state councils and 199 chapters have not replied. New York has 8 chapters that have not replied. They are 79, 85, 126, 205, 480, 541, 807, 869. The projected monthly roster date will be the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month

VVA National President John Rowan is presented with the VVA-NYSC Distinguish Service Medal along with a Certificate for his outstanding advocacy and service for the Vietnam veterans across New York State and the nation.



**L-R VVA-NYSC VP Grant, Nat'l Pres. Rowan & VVA-NYSC Pres. Foote**

**(Cont. on pg. 17)**



(Continue from pg. 16)

**New York State Council  
2017 CHAPTER GROWTH PERCENTAGE**

Chapter	February 29 2016	February 28 2017	Growth Percentage
At Large	778	870	+ 6.6%
8	63	60	-4.7%
11	466	467	+ 0.2%
20	616	621	+0.8%
32	254	245	-2.8%
49	283	303	+ 7.1%
60	37	37	0.0%
72	183	182	- 0.5%
77	644	657	+ 2.0%
79	87	83	-4.6%
82	333	329	-0.9%
85	45	42	-6.6%
103	197	203	+ 3.0%
126	101	106	+ 4.9%
140	113	115	+ 1.7%
193	136	137	+ 0.7%
205	25	23	- 8.0%
268	59	70	+18.6%
333	211	210	- 0.4%
377	67	73	+ 9.0%
421	243	247	+ 1.6%
459	49	48	-2.0%
480	85	84	-1.1%
537	30	28	-6.6%
541	36	34	-5.5%
704	50	57	+14.0%
803	186	204	+ 9.7%
807	6	6	0.0%
827	27	25	-7.4%
865	182	167	-8.2%
869	31	32	+ 6.4%
896	45	44	- 2.2%
944	111	116	+ 4.5%
978	18	18	0.0%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>5844</b>	<b>5943</b>	<b>+ 1.7%</b>

VVA-NYSC Vice President Grant Coates & Nat'l Sgt. At-Arms, receives VVA National Commendation Medal from Pres. John Rowan



VVA-NYSC President Ned Foote received The Chapel of Four Chaplain The Legion of Honor Humanitarian Award. He also received the National VVA Commendation Medal for his work on VVA issues.



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THE AWARDEES

(Continue from pg. 15)

officials said in the release.

“We are excited to provide these benefits to honorably discharged veterans to recognize their service and welcome them home to their military family,” said Peter Levine, performing the duties for the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

“In addition, this initiative represents a low-risk, low-cost opportunity to help fund morale, welfare and recreation programs in support of service members’ and their families’ quality of life. And it’s just the right thing to do,” Levine added.

The online benefit will also strengthen the exchanges’ online businesses to better serve current patrons. Inclusion of honorably discharged veterans would conservatively double the exchanges’ online presence, according to DoD officials, thereby improving the experience for all patrons through improved vendor terms, more competitive merchandise assortments and improved efficiencies.

“As a nation, we are grateful for the contributions of our service members,” Levine said. “Offering this lifetime online benefit is one small, tangible way the nation can say, ‘Thank you’ to those who served with honor.”

**The Army, Air Force and Navy exchange will start allowing all honorably discharged veterans to shop online, (think Amazon, but only cheaper with no taxes). The target start date is Veterans Day, November 11, 2017 but, you must register first. Registration begins June 1, 2017. You must call [1-844-868-8672](tel:1-844-868-8672) after June 1 to register.**

### **SEND THIS TO ALL OF YOUR VETERAN FRIENDS AND RELATIVES**

VVA NATIONAL CONVENTION—2017 August 8 - 12, 2017, New Orleans, Louisiana

Elections for VVA Officers and Board of Directors

Proposals for Constitutional Amendments and Convention Resolutions

Nominations for VVA National Awards

room Rates - \$99 + 13% tax + \$3 per day occupancy tax at either -

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**SHERATON NEW ORLEANS HOTEL, NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA**

500 Canal Street • New Orleans, LA 70130 • 504-525-2500

Sheraton Reservations: 888-627-7033 (Sheraton Group Code: “VH06AA ”)

or online: <https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/Book/vietnamveteransofamerica>



<b>COMMITTEES</b>	<b>CHAIRPERSON</b>	<b>E-MAIL ADDRESS</b>
<b>Agent Orange/Dioxin &amp; Other Toxic Exposure</b>	Walter Schmidt	waltdorsal@gmail.com
<b>Constitution</b>	<b>Grant T. Coates</b>	gcoates@stny.rr.com
<b>Finance</b>	<b>Charles Tipton</b>	ctipton237@yahoo.com
<b>Homeless Veterans</b>	<b>Tom Kelly</b>	dsdba53@yahoo.com
<b>Membership</b>	<b>Ted Wilkinson</b>	yankeeted@aol.com
<b>POW/MIA &amp; Veterans Initiative (VI)</b>	<b>Grant T. Coates</b>	gcoates@stny.rr.com
<b>PTSD &amp; Substance Abuse</b>	<b>Tom Harris</b>	bkrdad@aol.com
<b>Veterans Affairs</b>	<b>Sam Hall</b>	Sammyjh49@yahoo.com
<b>Veterans Health Care &amp; Aging Veterans</b>	<b>Tom Harris</b> <b>Jerry McDermott</b>	bkrdad@aol.com jmcdermott@murphynolan.com,
<b>Veterans Incarcerated Committee</b>	<b>Nick Valenti</b>	npvalen64@yahoo.com