Possible Medical Care In Non VA Facilities?

A congresswoman who served in Iraq wants the Veterans Affairs Department to let veterans seek medical care from private physicians without needing approval from the VA first. Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI), one of two female combat veterans in Congress, wrote a letter to President Obama on 2 JUN urging him to use his executive powers to order VA to pay for private care for vets unable to get an appointment at a VA facility. While VA already has the ability to approve outside or “non-VA care,” veterans must “undergo bureaucratic red tape” to get that authorization, leaving their “health and well-being in the hands of a broken system,” according to Gabbard. “This is a crisis, and as such, private medical care must be available to veterans without VA pre approval,” Gabbard wrote. In her letter she asked that the stopgap measure be in place for at least a year or more. “To make any veteran wait for medical care is not only an emergency, it is a travesty,” Gabbard said. The Hawaii National Guard veteran’s proposal is the latest of lawmaker initiatives intended to accelerate veterans’ access to health treatment. Several bills have been floated or are in the works, including:

- one by Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-IL) that would direct VA to enter into contracts with private physicians to provide care.
- another from House Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chairman Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL) that would allow any veteran who could not be seen by VA within 30 days the option to go to a private doctor and bill VA.

Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee Chairman Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) will introduce legislation this week proposing that veterans who cannot get timely appointments be allowed to go to community health centers, military hospitals or private physicians. Sanders’ bill also would broaden access within VA, authorizing the department to lease 27 new health facilities as well as hire new doctors, nurses and other providers.

Legislation to be introduced 3 JUN by John McCain (R-AZ), Jeff Flake (R-AZ), Tom Coburn (OK), and Richard Burr (R-NC) will introduce a bill that would allow veterans to seek care outside the VA system under certain conditions. VA officials on 27 MAY released details of the department efforts to speed veterans’ access to care. Under the initiative, VA began a department wide review of primary care clinics to determine staffing shortages, authorized extended hours and overtime for providers, and directed VA health facilities to increase use of non-VA care where the hospitals and clinics cannot meet demand. [Source: Military Times]

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A new Veterans Affairs Department effort to shorten wait times for veterans needing health care could include extended hours and overtime at VA health facilities in addition to increased staffing at some VA clinics. In cases where VA cannot meet demand for timely appointments in-house, the initiative would expand access to care in private health facilities paid for by VA. The VA on May 27 released details of the effort, the “Accelerating Care Initiative,” with officials saying the program was underway with a review of all primary care clinics to determine if they are correctly sized and staffed. Clinics needing more capacity will be authorized extended hours, to include nights and weekends. According to a VA release, facilities will:

- Try at least three times to reach patients new to VA care or new to a clinic if their appointment is more than 30 days away or they are on an electronic wait list.
- Assess whether the veteran wants to be seen sooner, and — if resources are available — provide a new appointment.
- Refer veteran to non-VA care if resources are not sufficient.

According to a VA fact sheet, this "surge" will continue for at least 90 days. VA officials did not provide an estimated cost of the initiative but said in fiscal 2014, it already has paid $3.38 billion for health services for 904,714 veterans at non-VA facilities. Veteran service organizations, while welcoming the efforts, questioned why they came so late. "They have always had the authority to utilize purchased care, and we don't think it's been used very effectively," said Garry Augustine, executive director of Disabled American Veterans Washington headquarters. [Source: NavyTimes | Patricia Kim | Jun 9, 2014 ++]

POW/MIA

Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl

On 31 MAY President Barack Obama announced that Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, 28, the only American P.O.W. from the Afghanistan war, had been released. Since then, many critics have questioned the decision to swap five top Taliban operatives, held in Guantanamo Bay, for the soldier, saying that swap will ultimately put more lives in danger. Now, many American soldiers are coming out against the decision for another reason. They say Bergdahl put their lives at risk when he abandoned his duties, and Don’t think he receives a hero’s welcome home.

According to CNN, six soldiers were killed during searches for Bergdahl. Bergdahl was reportedly seized by the Taliban in 2009, after he left the camp where he was stationed, without authorization. Bergdahl had reportedly become disillusioned with the war effort and wanted out.

He was almost immediately captured and held in Pakistan, which According to the Washington Post prompted a dangerous and deadly search. At the time, an entire U.S. military division and thousands of Afghan soldiers and police officers devoted weeks to searching for him, and some soldiers resented risking their lives for someone they considered a deserter...

One Afghan special operations commander in eastern Afghanistan remembers being dispatched. “Along with the American Special Forces, we set up checkpoints everywhere. For 14 days we were outside of our base trying to find him."

Some soldiers said they think Bergdahl should be tried for desertion or going absent without leave (AWOL), both serious military crimes.

The U.S. government, however, doesn't intend on pursuing charges. One senior defense official told the Post, “Five years is enough."

[Source: GovExec.com | The Wire | Danielle Wiener-Bronner | Jun 2, 2014 ++]
FBI Director James Comey on 11 JUN told members of the House Judiciary Committee that the bureau's Phoenix office has opened an investigation. The FBI is looking into allegations that VA staffers at its Phoenix facility lied about veterans' wait times for medical care so they could receive a bonus. "We will follow wherever the facts take us. The Phoenix office is where we opened it, because that was the primary locus of the original allegations. We are working with the VA IG," Comey said, responding to questions on if the FBI will expand its investigation. Multiple reports have found that the manipulation of wait time data at VA facilities is a systemic, nationwide issue. The decision comes after Richard Griffin, the VA's acting inspector general, told members of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee that it was investigating 69 VA facilities—not including Phoenix—for allegations including criminal wrongdoing. Griffin added that his office is working with DOJ, but it remains to be seen whether the Justice Department thinks that altering the wait times for veterans to receive care rises to the level of a criminal prosecution. "Once someone loses his job or gets criminally charged for doing this, it will no longer be a game. And that will be the shot heard around the system," he said. Lawmakers from both parties have increasingly called for a criminal investigation into whether VA officials potentially committed fraud by lying about wait times so they could meet performance measures that would—in turn—get them a bonus. [Source: National Journal Jordain Carney | Jun 12, 2014 ++]

Adams Co Veteran’s Fair

CVSO Bill Rosenau will participate in the Adams County Veterans Resource and Benefit Fair at the Adams County Community Center 569 N. Cedar Street, Adams-Friendship, WI, on Thursday, July 31, 2014 from 10 am to 3 pm. The fair will have CVSO’s PTSD/Substance Abuse, Dental Enrollment/Eligibility, SSVA, Housing authority, HUD-VASH, Judicare, WDVA, Transportation, Agning and Disability Center, Vocational Rehabilitation, MyHealtheVet, Job Center, Woman Veterans Health Care, and Vet center. If you know of a veteran in the area who could use some information, bring them to the fair!

VAMC Phoenix, AZ Investigation

The House on 11 JUN adopted an amendment from Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA) to allow veterans to apply for food stamps while their disability claims are pending with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Passed on a voice vote, Speier's amendment to the 2015 Agriculture appropriations bill would increase funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as food stamps, by $1 million to handle claims from veterans. Speier said her proposal would allow the veterans to be eligible for SNAP benefits under the "disabled" category. "This particular amendment addresses the issue of veterans in this country who are living on the edge. The 1.4 million veterans who are living in poverty, the 900,000 who are on food stamps," Speier said. No members objected to Speier's amendment. "I think we can all agree that no disabled veteran should go hungry," said Rep. Dan Benishek (R-MI). Passage of the Agriculture appropriations bill will likely occur 12 JUN. [Source: The Hill | Cristina Marcos | Jun 11, 2014 ++]

Vet Food Stamps Update:

....After note the House voted to on Wednesday June 12, 2014 to allow veterans to apply for food stamps while their disability claims are pending with the Department of Veterans Affairs....
The Last “Windtalker” Dies

The final member of the original Navajo code talkers, the group of 28 Native Americans who played a crucial role for U.S. communications during World War II, has died. Chester Nez died Wednesday in Albuquerque, confirmed Judy Avila, who helped Nez write his memoirs. He was 93.

Chester Nez, 93, the last of the Navajo code talkers dead. In 2001, Nez received a Congressional Gold Medal for his work during World War II. Nez, among the first recruited, helped to develop code based on the Navajo's unwritten language. The code thwarted the Japanese trying to intercept American communications in the Pacific during World War II. The 2002 John Woo film "Windtalkers" brought the story of the code breakers to the big screen. "The passing of Chester Nez, one of the original 29 Navajo Code Talkers, sadly marks the end of an era in our country's and Marine Corps' history," Col. David Lapan, director of the Office of U.S. Marine Corps Communication, said in a statement. "We mourn his passing but honor and celebrate the indomitable spirit and dedication of those Marines who became known as the Navajo Code Talkers."

In his memoirs, Nez said he knew he made the right decision to join the fight. "I reminded myself that my Navajo people had always been warriors, protectors," he said. "In that, there was honor. I would concentrate on being a warrior, on protecting my homeland. Within hours, whether in harmony or not, I knew I would join my fellow Marines in the fight."

The code, which they had to memorize, was based on a system in which the Navajos used their own words to substitute for the 26 letters in the English alphabet. For example, the word "wol-la-chee" means "ant" and it might have stood for the letter A in a coded message. Because the Navajos had no words applicable to modern warfare, they settled on hundreds of descriptive words in their own language. A tank was a tortoise; a submarine, an iron fish; a dive bomber, a chicken hawk; a grenade, a potato; a battleship, a hale. Bombs were eggs, and the commanding general a war chief. The death in 2011 of Lloyd Oliver made Nez the last surviving member of the unit.

In 2001, when the surviving Navajo code talkers were invited to Washington to receive the Congressional Gold Medal for their service, Nez told the Los Angeles Times that their operations did not always run smoothly. "Quite a few Navajo guys were mistaken for Japanese," he said. But he said he had jumped at the chance to enlist when Marine recruiters came to the reservation boarding school where he was enrolled. "I told my buddy [Roy Begay], 'Let's get the heck out of here, climb that mountain up there and see what's on the other side,'" Nez said. [Source: Los Angeles Times | Ryan Parker | Jun 04, 2014++]

Chester Nez, 93, the last of the Navajo code talkers dead. In 2001, Nez received a Congressional Gold Medal for his work during World War II.
The Supreme Court ruled 9 JUN that a group of homeowners in North Carolina can’t sue a company that contaminated their drinking water decades ago because a state deadline has lapsed, a decision that could prevent thousands of other property owners in similar cases from recovering damages after being exposed to toxic waste. In a 7-2 decision, the justices said state law strictly bars any lawsuit brought more than 10 years after the contamination occurred — even if residents did not realize their water was polluted until 29 years later. The high court reversed a lower court ruling that said federal environmental laws should trump the state law and allow the lawsuit against electronics manufacturer CTS Corp. to proceed. The decision is a setback for the families of several thousand former North Carolina-based Marines suing the federal government in a separate case for exposing them to contaminated drinking water over several decades at Camp Lejeune. The government is relying on the same state law to avoid liability. That case is currently pending at the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta. The ruling on Monday involves property owners living on land where CTS used to make electronics equipment until it sold the property in 1987. It wasn’t until 2009 that residents discovered their well water contained chemicals that can cause numerous health problems including cancers, reproductive disorders and birth defects. North Carolina has a “statute of repose” that ends a plaintiff’s right to seek damages to property more than 10 years after the last act of contamination occurred. The property owners argued that their claims were still valid under federal environmental laws, which give victims two years to sue from the date they discover what caused their illness. The court’s majority and dissent opinions stated:

- Writing for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy said Congress did not intend to preempt statutes of repose. He said federal environmental laws only pre-empt more traditional statutes of limitation, where the clock starts running at the time of the injury. “The case for federal preemption is particularly weak where Congress has indicated its awareness of the operation of state law in a field of federal interest, and has nonetheless decided to stand by both concepts and to tolerate whatever tension there is between them,” Kennedy said.

- In dissent, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said Congress was concerned about state statutes that “deprive plaintiffs of their day in court.” That concern is apparent in the case of diseases like cancer that take years to develop before a victim understands the cause, she said. Ginsburg said the majority’s decision “gives contaminators an incentive to conceal the hazards they have created until the repose period has run its full course.” She was joined in dissent by Justice Stephen Breyer.

Only four states other than North Carolina have statutes that place a similar time limit on property lawsuits: Connecticut (3 years), Kansas (10 years), Oregon (10 years) and Alabama (20 years). At Camp Lejeune, health officials estimate as many as 1 million people may have been exposed to tainted groundwater over several decades. In 2012, President Obama signed a bill into law providing health benefits to Marines and family members exposed to the water from 1957 to 1987. (Source: The Associated Press | Sam Hananel | Jun 09, 2014 ++]
Long before the advent of television advertising, colorful posters were the most effective means of advertising for wartime manpower and galvanizing Americans' patriotic emotions. Now famous World War I and World War II posters touched every aspect of American wartime life, from enlistment in the armed forces to women filling in for men on the home front to recycling and conservation of resources. Images of woman on World War I recruiting posters were designed to recruit men, said Air Force Brig. Gen Wilma Vaught, president of the Women in Military service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc. "World War II posters had women on them to recruit women," she said. But, she said, sometimes the recruiting message intended for men attracted women. Vaught tells the story of World War I "poster girl" Bernice Smith Tongate.

"Bernice Smith was a young girl of 20 when she announced to Navy recruiters, 'Gee! I wish I were a man, I'd join the Navy,'" Vaught said. Artist Howard Chandler Christy overheard Smith, modeled her in sailor blues and used her exclamation as his poster tag line, Vaught said. Ten days after posing, Smith enlisted as a Navy yeoman for three years and made the rank of chief yeoman. "She was the first woman in California to enlist," Vaught said. "When the Navy said she was too old to enlist in World War II, she joined the Army."

Another World War I poster girl turned sailor was Helen O'Neill, who posed for "I Want You for the Navy." At that time, O'Neill was a civilian employee in the secretary of the Navy's office. When the Navy started accepting women, she joined as a yeoman and worked as an aide to the assistant secretary in charge of procuring ships, Vaught said. When Congress passed legislation authorizing women reservists in the Marine Corps, O'Neill accepted a commission with the title of deputy director of the Women Marines, Vaught said. She remained in the Marine Corps Reserve and retired as a lieutenant colonel. Vaught said the most famous recruiting poster featured "Uncle Sam" and the words "I Want You for the U.S. Army. Enlist Now." Not only did it attract men but women, too, caught the patriotic bug and signed up to do their patriotic duty. "Many women in World War II saw that poster and thought it was talking to them and they had to join," Vaught said. "Army and Navy Nurse Corps posters were also very effective in recruiting nurses." [Source: AFPS | Rudi Williams | April 7, 1999 ++]

DAV Brat Fry
Stone Ridge Grocery Store
State Road 21
Wautoma, WI
July 3, 2014
9:30-3:00 P.M.
VA Gulf War Claims 4 of Every 5 Denied

While the Veterans Affairs Department encourages former troops with Gulf War illness symptoms to file claims for health care and benefits, only one in five applications are approved, according to data obtained by Military Times. In 2011 — the last time VA published data on claims for undiagnosed illnesses related to service in the 1991 Gulf War — a total of 42,811 vets requested service connection for their symptoms, with 21,072, or 49 percent, approved. Yet new figures provided to Rep. Kerry Bentivolio (R-MI) by VA in April show 54,193 claims have been filed for Gulf War-related illnesses with 11,216 granted service connection — a denial rate of nearly 80 percent. The figures come with caveats: They do not include compensation claims to Gulf War-era veterans who became sick while on active duty, and of those denied service connection for Gulf War illness, 52 percent are receiving compensation for another service-connected condition. Nonetheless, the low approval rate — and the discrepancies between the 2011 data and the more recent figures — has angered veteran advocates who have worked Gulf War illness issues for years. “VA prefers to deny the reality of the illness to keep benefits and wait lists down rather than address it honestly and aggressively pursue treatments while veterans suffer,” said Jim Binns, who heads the Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans’ Illnesses. Bentivolio requested the updated information because VA had not published it since 2011. VA did not provide that data when it was requested by Military Times in May. On 3 JUN, Binns wrote a letter to acting VA Secretary Sloan Gibson, White House Deputy Chief of Staff Rob Nabors and others asking for an investigation into the VA’s handling of Gulf War-era claims as well as research. Binns said VA has sought to manipulate research, data and independent observations in an effort to deny benefits. “Like the Gulf War battlefield, VA is a toxic environment,” Binns wrote. [Source: NavyTimes | Patricia Kime | Jun 05, 2014 +]
Heavy Bombers Weekend July 25-27, 2014

Dane County Regional Airport (KMSN) and Wisconsin Aviation 3606 Croben Ct. Madison, WI will be hosting an Aviation Event Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 9-5 Daily, Ground Tours $15.00 per individual, $25.00 for Family (Parents and children 18 and under). Ground Tour tickets can be purchased ON LINE, or AT THE GATE. Food and beverage vendors including Famous Dave’s BBQ, aircraft static displays, WWII re-enactors and much more. A 1940’s Style Hangar Dance on Saturday evening, July 26th, from 7:00 to 10:00 pm, featuring “Ladies Must Swing”. Hosted by Wisconsin Aviation. To pre-purchase tickets for the dance, contact Wisconsin Aviation (609) 268-5000 or email Jane Seeber, janeseeler@wisconsinaviation.com

Take a flight in the B-25 “Miss Mitchell” or a Night flight with Aluminum Overcast by Scott Slocum, Sign up for a P-51 Mustang Ride, T-6 “Texan” BT 13 Vultee “Valiant”, PT-22 Ryan “Recruit”L-5A Stinson “Sentinel” Air–Ride online reservations can be made by going to the website http://heavybombersweekend.splashthat.com/

Selecting the image of the plane you would like to reserve a ride in. Several Static displays on the ground. Any questions should be directed to Pete Buffington EAA Chapter 93, Madison email: avitengineer@yahoo.com Cell phone #913-850-1522