

# VET'S VANTAGE

APRIL 2018

AFTER READING, PLEASE PASS THIS TO ANOTHER VETERAN !

## Costs of Irag and Afghanistan Wars

Inside this issue:

Ahead of and shortly after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, a number of officials, including form Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his deputy Paul Wolfowitz suggested the war could be done on the cheap and that it would largely pay for itself. In October of 2003, Rumsfeld told a press conference about President Bush's request for \$21 Billion for Iraq and Afghan reconstruction that "the 20 billion the President requested is not intended to cover all of Iraq's needs. The build of the fund for Iraq's reconstruction will come from Iraqis— from oil revenues, recovered assets, international trade, direct foreign investment, as well as some contributions we've already received and hope to receive from the international community."

Now, however, a new report from the Congressional Research Service reports that the Defense Department had obligated \$1.47 trillion for war-related costs since Sept 11, 2001. Another report out of Washington says, "One of Congress' top defense policy voices said he is open to discussion about increasing available fitness waivers for some new enlistees in light of the dwindling number of eligible recruits."

According to a story in the *Military Times.com.*, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mac Thornberry (R-TX) recently said that for certain high demand areas such as computer experts especially those with cy-

bersecurity expertise, current physical fitness standards may not be necessary.

The article cites a study, by the Heritage Foundation in Washington D. C., that reported that "more than 70 percent of 17 to 24-year-olds in America today are ineligible to join the military under "current Pentagon requirements. About half of that group did not meet physical fitness or health requirements for service."

Incidentally, back in 2003 then-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld also said the war would last "Five days, five weeks or five months., but it certainly isn't going to last any longer than that."

So as America continues fighting in a war that began in 2001 (Afghanistan) when the U.S is in the process of sending additional troops to a war that began in 2003 (Iraq), when lawmakers are worried because they can't find enough people who are fit enough to qualify for military service, when the US military equipment is wearing out because it has been used so much, and when there are warnings that our troops are also wearing out because of so many deployments, Congress decided to make military retirees pay more for their healthcare. If this upsets you, you need to let your Senators and Representatives know. *Taken from The Enlisted Associates Newsletter. (TREA)03/08/2018*

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**A veteran is someone who, at one point in their lives, wrote a blank check made payable to 'The United States of America' for an amount of 'up to and including my life'.**



## **BEWARE OF TAX SCAMS!**

The IRS has issued a warning to taxpayers about a scam in which a fraudulently obtained tax refund is deposited into a victim's actual bank account. Here's how it works:

Cybercriminals steal people's data from tax professionals, including routing and bank account numbers. The crooks file fraudulent tax returns. Fake refunds are then direct deposited into taxpayers' real bank accounts.

In one version of this scam, the criminals then contact victims claiming to be from a debt-collection agency, and they say the refunds were deposited in error. They claim they are now trying to get the refund back for the IRS.

I can imagine how easy it is to panic and fall victim to this scam. Taxpayers can see money has been deposited. They know it isn't rightfully theirs. And since nobody in their right mind wants to mess with the IRS, they are eager to cooperate to return the money. "It's insidious," said Eric Smith, an IRS spokesman, who added that thousands of taxpayers have been affected by this scam.

In another version of this racket, a taxpayer gets a menacing recorded telephone message about the deposited refund. Someone claiming to be from the IRS threatens the person with arrest, criminal fraud charges and a warning that his or her Social Security number will be "blacklisted." People are given a case number and then a telephone number to call to arrange the return of the refund, the IRS said. Obviously, do not call back any number left by anyone claiming to work for the IRS or on the agency's behalf. The IRS would

not call you. It's definitely the crooks calling.

"You need to return the money — just not to them," Smith said.

In addition to having to figure out how to properly give back the refund to the IRS, you need to close your bank account and contact your tax preparer.

As for returning the fraudulent refund, you should go to [irs.gov](http://irs.gov) and search for "Topic Number: 161 — Returning an Erroneous Refund — Paper Check or Direct Deposit." Then follow the steps. If the fraudulent refund was direct deposited into your bank account, contact the "Automated Clearing House" (ACH) department of your financial institution. See if you can have the deposit returned directly to the IRS. You'll also need to call the agency to explain why the refund is being returned. Individuals should call 800-829-1040. If you're a business, call 800-829-4933.

**[ Get a tax refund every year? Why you probably shouldn't. ]**

If the erroneous refund came as a paper check, write "void" on the back where you would normally endorse it. You'll have to send the check to the IRS location based on the city listed on the refund check. You should include a note explaining why you're returning the refund. And, if I were you, I'd make a copy of the check and return it via certified mail just to be on the safe side.

Return the money as soon as you can. By law, interest may have accrued on the fraudulent refund, Smith said.

This is another reason why you shouldn't procrastinate in filing your return. But if you do find that you've fallen for a tax scam, read the IRS' "Taxpayer Guide to Identity Theft" at [irs.gov](http://irs.gov).

One thing I did to protect myself was to sign up for an IRS online account. If you're still putting together your tax return, as I am, it's one way to monitor your tax records. Here's the link to set up an account: <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/online-services-account-activation>.

You may not be able to immediately set up an account because of security measures. If you have a credit freeze on your Experian credit file, you'll have to temporarily lift it. I had to wait for the agency to mail me an activation code to finish the process. But once your account is set up, you can see what return has been filed and get a payment history.

When it comes to your tax return, just be careful out there.

BY: Michelle Singletary

[NAVY/Marine Corps Discharge Upgrades](#)

## **Class Action for Navy/ Marine Corps vets denied discharge upgrades**

**FYI Any Navy or Marine Corps veterans who were separated during the Iraq/Afghanistan era with a less-than-Honorable discharge potentially stemming from PTSD or other related mental health conditions should contact the clinic team at the following address: [ptsd.classaction@yale.edu](mailto:ptsd.classaction@yale.edu)**



## ALL VETERANS -TOXIC EXPOSURE

## HEPATITIS C CURE

To All Veterans and Families, the public is invited to a:

### TOXIC EXPOSURE SEMINAR

Toxic Exposures include:

Agent Orange, Burn Pits, Burning Oil Fields, etc. Discussions on Chemical Warfare, PCB's, Biological Warfare, Noise, Asbestos, Multiple Vaccinations, Insecticides, Insect Repellents, Depleted Uranium, Fuels, Dioxin, Fungicides, Fumigants, Burn Pits, Head Injury, Oilwell Fields. CARC paint and Solvents, Radiation, Infections Diseases, Vibration, Heat and Cold Exposure, Weight Bearing, Sand, Dust Particulates, Pesticides, Rodenticides.....

If you are unsure about exposures or their effects, the Wisconsin State Council of the Vietnam Veterans of America request your participation in a Town Hall Meeting.

**LEARN:** About the various toxins and their effects— Agent Orange and beyond. How exposures have affected others, yourself and your spouse. How your children and grandchildren are, or could be, suffering from abnormalities resulting from your exposures.

Let's Share our Stories!

SATURDAY APRIL 21, 2018  
12 PM –4 PM  
D.J. BORDINIA CENTER-  
FOX VALLEY TECHNICAL  
COLLEGE  
ROOM 112 A & B  
5 SYSTEMS DRIVE  
APPLETON, WI 54912

(Directly across the street from Fox Valley Technical College.)

Sponsored by:

Vietnam Veterans of America-  
Wisconsin State Council and  
Associates of Vietnam Veteran  
of America, Inc.



RSVP THRU:

Eventbrite with number of attendees requested but not required:

<http://www.eventbrite.com/e/agent-orange-toxic-exposure-tickets-42776240888>

INFO Contact:

Joseph Eiting at (920)205-1565  
OR:

jeiting67@gmail.com

PUBLIC IS WELCOME  
SATURDAY APRIL 21  
12PM-4 PM  
APPLETON, WI 54912

A wonderful piece of news appeared in the VA's 2018 Budget in Brief and announced by Secretary Shulkin-by the end of this year all VA enrolled veterans who are infected with Hepatitis C who are willing to be treated and able to be treated should be cured. Of course that follows the wonderful news in 2014 that a 12 week/1/pill a day cure (not merely treatment) had been diagnosed.

Many veterans of the Vietnam War had been infected with Hep C. It had stayed silently in their bodies for years but was by 2014 causing liver disease, cirrhosis and liver cancer and death. And then Gilead developed Sovaldi, and we had a cure. But it was a cure that cost \$1000 a day or \$84,000 for the full course.

In 2014 146,000 enrolled veterans were infected with Hepatitis C and many believe that the VA could or would not pay such a bill. But this would save thousands of lives.

With new drugs on the market and the VA's ability to negotiate with various companies the price dropped. Last week Dr. Shulkin announced that in 2017 the drugs cost \$748.8 million for 31,200 treatments and will increase to \$751.2 million for 28,000 in 2018.

This means that the last 59,200 infected U.S. Veterans will be cured with drugs costing \$25,300 a person rather than \$84,000 it cost just 3 years earlier! TREA Newsletter

*80% of people infected with Hepatitis C do not know that have it. A simple blood test from your doctor can not only detect if you have it, but also lead to a cure before it turns to cirrhosis or cancer of the liver. GET TESTED TODAY!!!*



## DOD Tuition Assistance Update:

Service members could use their military tuition assistance for training programs outside of traditional colleges and universities under legislation being introduced 12 MAR in the House and Senate. The plan, offered by a bipartisan group of lawmakers in each chamber, would allow eligible troops to use the money for licensing, credentialing and certification programs offered outside of institutions of higher education. Backers said the change is needed to help better prepare service members for post-military life, and recognizes that not all civilian jobs require a traditional four-year degree. “We have an obligation to ensure service members have access to the resources they need as they transition to civilian life,” said Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA) who is co-sponsoring the Senate proposal with the chamber’s Veterans’ Affairs Committee chairman, Johnny Isakson (R-GA) and ranking member Jon Tester (D-MT).

“Service members possess unique skill sets that make them great candidates for many in-demand jobs, but the current system makes it difficult for service members to obtain the licensing or credentialing needed for those jobs. As many skills based jobs do not require four-year degrees, [this bill] would allow service members to receive the [assistance] they need in a more expedient manner.” Veterans can already use their post-military education benefits for a host of non-college certification programs, particularly for specialties such as truck driving and emergency medical training. But tuition assistance provided to currently serving troops has a separate set of rules and restrictions. Nearly all of the funding supplied under current initiatives is based on how many credit hours service members complete as part of degree programs.

Tester called it a “commonsense measure” that provides more flexibility in preparation for a modern civilian workforce. “The jobs of the 21st century evolve quickly, and today’s workers never stop learning,” he said in a statement. “We’re committed to helping our service members succeed at every stage: on active-duty, in the reserves or as a veteran.” Transition assistance for troops has been a major focus for lawmakers in recent years, with a focus on allowing service members to more easily transfer their military skills to civilian-sector jobs. [Source: MilitaryTimes | Leo Shane III | March 12, 2018 ++]

## Helicopter War Memorial-Arlington

Arlington National Cemetery will have a new stone monument which pays tribute to Vietnam helicopter pilots and crew members who died in the Vietnam War. Formal Dedication takes place on Apr 18, 2018. The cost of the project was funded entirely by the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association. Army officials approved an initial request by the Association for a memorial tree which was dedicated August 28, 2015, and when asked to place a granite monument at their cost, it

was denied. Eventually with the help of Congressman Matt Cartwright the bill passed the House unanimously. 5,000 pilots and crew deserved to be thanked for their sacrifice.



## Job Potentials

Marquette County is looking for an part time Assistant CVSO at the Veterans Service Office in Montello, Contact Marquette County CVSO for details. They should have it posted on their website. (608) 297-3182

Also not officially posting at this time, until Job Description is approved at the County Board, there will be a full time Asst. CVSO opening in Waushara County and will be posted in April early May, watch the Argus newspaper for the announcement. Both positions require that you be a veteran.



## Vet Voiced His Concern at His Annual Check up

**Get Screened! Take Ownership Of Your Health.**

Phoenix resident Dave English turned 53 not that long ago. Normally birthdays are happy events, but turning 53 for Dave was a bit different. And maybe a bit ominous. “I had two cousins die of heart attacks,” he reported. “Both were 53. My grandfather died of a heart attack at 53. Last July another cousin died of a heart attack at 50. My great grandfather died of a heart attack at 54...” For Dave, the writing on the wall was there to see. “My family’s cardiac history is like a train wreck,” he said. “So when I went to the Phoenix VA for my scheduled physical I told the doctor I was a little creeped out and wanted to get my heart checked...”



“It’s a good thing I did,” he continued. “I had absolutely no symptoms, but my angiogram revealed multiple blockages.” Dave said the good folks at the Phoenix VA jumped into action immediately. “They didn’t mess around,” he said. “Dr. Joel Kupfer, chief of cardiology at Phoenix, came in to see me and said I needed surgery right away. He said I was in bad shape. I was still a bit shocked at how the day was unfolding, so I

asked if I could go home and get my stuff in order.” “The doc told me, ‘You have a very serious condition. Please promise you will be there this evening.’ So I gave my word as an Annapolis grad and Marine officer that I would report back as scheduled.” Dave said his surgery, which took place two days later, was a great success: “Dr. Mark Tasset was my surgeon, and he was fantastic. He gave me a quadruple bypass. Later they told me that if I had waited another week, it’s likely I would have had a massive heart attack.”

The Marine Corps officer said he wants to share his story with as many of his fellow Veterans as possible. “It seems the media are filled with negative coverage of the VA,” he observed. “Stories like mine are seldom heard. But through this experience and after, I have seen how the VA is working hard to be proactive. Today I’m feeling healthy and enjoying my new lease on life. And for that, I thank the helpful doctors, nurses and staff at the Phoenix VA.” Dave said he has one simple message for Veterans everywhere: “Get screened!” he urged. “Take ownership of your health.” [Source: VAntage Point | March 5, 2018 ++]

This man listened to his family history and asked his Doctor to examine his heart. Even though he had NO symptoms, he was a week away from a major heart attack.

Knowing his family history, and asking for the testing, helped prevent his heart attack.

**Get involved with your health!! Ask questions of your doctor!**

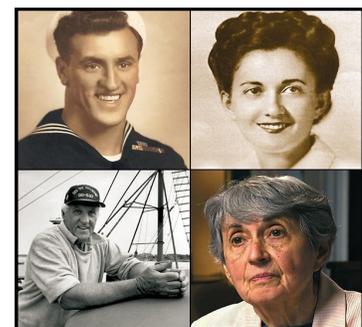
## The Kissing Sailor



George Mendonsa and Greta Zimmer Friedman on the left.....Mendonsa and wife Rita of 71 years on the right.

*It was the day the WWII ended, Navy quarter master George Mendonsa was about to catch a train back to the West Coast when he heard the announcement that WWII was over. New York City was going mad. In a moment of relief and thanks, George grabe a woman in a nurses outfit and kissed her. (Picture at Left) George and his wife of 71 years Rita Picture at right. )*

George Mendonsa survived some of the hardest fought navel battles of WWII. In what is considered to be one of the most iconic photos of the 20th Century, Life Magazine’s photographer, Alfred Eisenstadt captured the image, while Navy photographer Lt Victor Jorgensen also caught the moment in a widely published variation. But neither photographer stopped to get the names of the sailor or the nurse in the image. Mendosa and Greta Zimmer Friedman the other half of the brief romance were proven 13 years ago through forensic science to be the pair in the image. Friedman passed away in September 2016. Mendonsa recently celebrated his 95th birthday surrounded by family and friends at the assisted living center he and his wife Rita now call home.





## Tuskegee Airmen

The Tuskegee Airmen is the popular name of a group of African-American military pilots (fighter and bomber) who fought in World War II. They formed the 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Bombardment Group of the United States Army Air Forces. The name also applies to the navigators, bombardiers, mechanics, instructors, crew chiefs, nurses, cooks and other support personnel. All black military pilots who trained in the United States trained at Moton Field, the Tuskegee Army Air Field, and were educated at Tuskegee University, located near Tuskegee, Alabama. The group included five Haitians from the Haitian Air Force, and one pilot from Trinidad. It also included a Hispanic or Latino airman born in the Dominican Republic.

Although the 477th Bombardment Group trained with North American B-25 Mitchell bombers, they never served in combat. The 99th Pursuit Squadron (later, 99th Fighter Squadron) was the first black flying squadron, and the first to deploy overseas (to North Africa in April 1943, and later to Sicily and Italy). The 332nd Fighter Group, which originally included the 100th, 301st, and 302nd Fighter Squadrons, was the first black flying group. It deployed to Italy in early 1944. In June 1944, the 332nd Fighter Group began flying heavy bomber escort missions, and in July 1944, with the addition of the 99th Fighter Squadron, it had four fighter squadrons. The Tuskegee Airmen were the first African-American military aviators in the United States Armed Forces. They were subjected to discrimination both in and out of the military.

## One of the Last Tuskegee Airmen

Floyd Carter Sr., one of the last of the Tuskegee Airmen, dedicated his remarkable life to serving his country and his city. The decorated veteran of three wars and 27 years with the NYPD died Thursday at age 95, leaving a long legacy as a groundbreaking hero pilot and a city police detective. Carter, who simultaneously rose through the ranks of the U.S. Air Force Reserves and the police, was honored in 2007 with the Congressional Gold Medal by President Bush for breaking the color barrier in Tuskegee. "We mourn the loss of a true American hero," read a tweet from the 47th Precinct in his adopted home of the Bronx. "Our community & nation has lost a giant."



Floyd Carter Sr. (seen in 2012)

Carter rose to the rank of Air Force lieutenant colonel years after joining the group of African-American pilots at Tuskegee University. He met his wife Atherine there, where the Alabama native was working as part of an all-female repair crew. Carter wooed his bride-to-be on several dates in his plane, and they were married at the air base in 1945. In 2012, he joined "Star Wars" filmmaker George Lucas for a screening of his film "Red Tails" about the Tuskegee Airmen — the first black aviators in the U.S. military, trained in Alabama as a segregated unit. In addition to serving during World War II, Carter flew during the Korean and Vietnam wars and led the first squadron of supply-laden planes into Berlin during the famed Cold War airlift of 1948-49. During the Tet Offensive, Carter flew U.S. troops and supplies into South Vietnam.

His NYPD duties included work as a bodyguard for visiting heads of state, and Carter spent time with Cuban leader Fidel Castro and Soviet head Nikita Khrushchev, recalled his son Floyd Jr. He earned a half-dozen citations for his outstanding police work, and survived a number of shootouts with armed bandits. "He's got a little history," said Floyd Jr. "We were blessed, we sure were. He went from what I call the outhouse to the fine house. The Lord blessed him."

The Yorktown, Va., native joined the Army Air Corps in 1944, and was commissioned a year later as a 2nd Lt. bombardier navigator. In 1946, he received his pilot wings and transferred a year later to the Air Force Reserves. By the end of his tenure in 1974, he was commander of the 732nd Military Airlift Squadron at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. Carter joined the NYPD in 1953, earned his detective's gold shield within three years, and retired in 1980. He once recalled talking politics with Castro, and believed the federal government needed to open a dialogue with the bearded Communist. Oddly enough, Carter was called up for active duty during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

Carter remained active into his 90s, serving in November 2015 as the grand marshal of the annual Veterans Day Parade in the Bronx. He was honored by ex-Congressman Charles Rangel in 2005 with a proclamation for his lifelong achievements. He is survived by his wife of more than seven decades and their two children, Floyd Jr. and Rozalind, along with grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Funeral arrangements were not yet finalized. [Source: New York Daily News | Thomas Tracey | March 10, 2018 ++]

(The last original Tuskegee Airman Willie Rogers died at 101 in Nov 2016)



## Military Food Stamps/Senate Legislation Proposed

A bipartisan group of senators is pursuing a legislative effort that would give low-income military service members and their families access to federal food assistance programs, a concern that has impacted more than 20,000 people in recent years. Because of a quirk in the law, some service members can be disqualified from programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which might be more widely known as "food stamps." Service members can be considered ineligible because of certain military pay, such as housing benefits. Their effort is similar to the Rep. Susan A. Davis [D-CA-53] H.R.1078 - Military Hunger Prevention Act legislation introduced in the House 15 FEB 2017.

The new Senate legislative proposal introduced by Sens. Tammy Duckworth, D-IL), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), and Tom Udall (D-NM) would help such military families struggling to pay for food, they said 2 MAR in an announcement. "Our military is weakened when servicemembers go hungry and are unable to feed their families," said Duckworth, a combat pilot veteran who lost both legs in the Iraq War. "As someone whose family depended on food stamps after my father lost his job, and who served in uniform for most of my adult life, this is personal for me. We are the wealthiest nation in the world. Our service members shouldn't be forced to rely on food stamps to feed themselves -- but at the very least, we must ensure that those who need food stamps have access to them." A 2013 Census Bureau survey found about 23,000 active-duty service members depend on food stamps the senators

said. A Government Accountability Office report found service members spent roughly \$21 million in SNAP benefits between September 2014 and August 2015, "indicating that many service members are having difficulty making ends meet," they said. The military has not collected data on how many military families struggle with hunger, making it difficult to determine the overall scope of the food insecurity problem in the services. However, the 2018 National Defense Authorization Act, which directs policy for the military, will require the Pentagon to finally collect the data to determine how many service members rely on federal hunger assistance programs.

Udall called the effort to provide members with the resources that they need a "solemn obligation." "Military families across the country are struggling with food insecurity -- and at the same time facing down unacceptable and unnecessary barriers to accessing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program," he said. "Our troops should not have to worry that their families are well fed. Congress should live up to its promise to servicemembers and pass this common-sense legislation to remove needless roadblocks preventing military families from being able to put food on the table." The proposed legislation fixes language in federal law and eliminates inconsistencies that prevent servicemembers in need from accessing the federal food assistance programs, the senators said. A flaw in federal law often forces such military families to instead rely on food pantries and food banks for emergency assistance "when the nation they are serving owes them much more," they

said. Service members who are disqualified from federal food assistance programs include ones receiving basic allowance for housing or pay to live off-base or private military residences. Because of calculations in qualifying for federal food assistance programs such as SNAP, low-income service members who receive the housing allowances can be excluded from food assistance benefits. "Our military families have enough to worry about as they defend our nation's security," Murkowski said. The legislative proposal has been endorsed by several advocacy groups, including Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger, the Greater Chicago Food Depository, the St. Louis Area Foodbank, the National Military Families Association, Blue Star Families and the Western Center on Law and Poverty. "Food insecurity among currently serving military families is a real but preventable reality," Mazon President and CEO Abby Leibman said. The legislation "will remove a major barrier that prevents tens of thousands of military families from putting nutritious food on the table."

The senators' bipartisan legislation is cosponsored by nine Democratic senators, including Sens. Cory Booker (D-NJ), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Kamala Harris (D-CA), Doug Jones (D-AL), Patty Murray (D-WA), Tina Smith (D-MN), and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD).

[Source: Stars & Stripes | Claudia Grisales | March 2, 2018 ++]

## Mental Health, Energy Assistance   Homelessness/Job Counseling

Julie Powers 608-264-5342 of the Madison Vet Center Free Counseling to combat veterans and sexual trauma veterans. 5 sessions to non-combat veterans. Marriage counseling, also offered. Please call and arrange an appointment with Julie.

**If you have been denied Energy Assistance, and you are a veteran, you may have one more option to seek help. Heat for Heroes will first need a denial from Energy Assistance and they might be able to help you with your energy bill. If you have been denied by Energy Assistance, please call 800-891-9276**

**Center for Vet Issues: (Homeless/Near Homeless) Angela Kalsbbeck MSW 920-906-4779**

**JOBS!!! Low Income/Disabled/ Newly Returned or Vets between the ages of 18-24. Corey Skaags DWD counsels & helps with resume' building for jobs at Waushara Co. Court House on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays each month 9am-2pm. Call 920-251-4761 for appt.**

**Issues many different, AODA, Mental Health and other issues: Cal Stammer 715-409-3767**

**SUICIDE PREVENTION** Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, text to 838255, or chat online 24/7/365



**Waushara County Veteran Services**  
**PO BOX 159**  
**230 W. Park St**  
**Wautoma, WI 54982**  
**veterans.parkstreet@co.waushara.wi.us**  
**(920)787-0446 Fax (920)787-0423**

~~Berlin Public Library~~

121 W Park Ave  
Berlin, WI 54923