



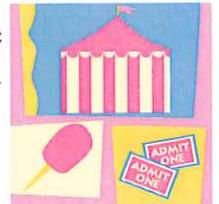
POLK COUNTY VETERANS NEWS- LETTER~SUMMER 2014

Greetings from your Veterans Service Office and hope you have a great 4th of July. Hard to believe we are already half way thru the year 2014. We have had a busy but productive last 3 months assisting a lot of veterans and widows with their benefits. Our Fargo VA hospital is still doing an outstanding job getting our veterans in for appointments and all of the problems that are being uncovered at the larger VA facilities are not occurring at Fargo. In 15 years on the job, I have heard not one complaint, nothing but praise for their care and service. We thank the VAMC health staff for their service.



The Disabled Veterans (DAV) National Service Officer is planning to have the Mobile Service Van in Crookston on August 26th. John hopes to have it set up in the parking lot south of the Government Center and to ready for business by 0:800 A.M.-If nothing else stop by and meet him.

Laurie and I are planning on having a booth at the Fertile Fair this year and the dates are **July 9th through the 13th**. We will be available to answer any questions on the VA system or just stop by to say hi. On with the news.



DATES TO REMEMBER

June 29th—Tops in Blue @ the Chester Fritz Auditorium, Grand Forks, ND. Begins @ 6:00 pm with the doors opening at 5:00 pm. 60 years of Air Force entertainment-free to the public.

July 9th-Drop-In Legal Clinic For Veterans: Child Support & Family, Employment, Benefits, Expungement, Debt Collection, Wills. 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM-@ Fargo VA HCS, 3rd Floor Auditorium, 2101 N Elm St, Fargo.

August 5th—Nite to Unite, 4:00 to 8:00 pm @ Central Park in Crookston. Polk County Veterans Service, Beyond the Yellow Ribbon, Public Health and NW Mental Health Center just to name a few of the tables to be there.

August 12th—Election Day

August 15th—Veterans Ceremony @ University of Minnesota Crookston. Tentative time is 3:00 pm. After the Ceremony there is a flag retirement @ the Green Space, downtown Crookston (time to be determined-check newspaper, radio)

WHAT IS A FULLY DEVELOPED CLAIM?

Veterans submitting compensation and disability claims are being strongly advised to submit a Fully Developed Claim, but it may not be completely clear what an FDC is and how it can impact the processing and decision of your claim.

The FDC was initially launched by the VA as a pilot program in response to the huge influx of claims received between 2008 and 2012. Not only were more claims being submitted, but they were more complex than what was typically seen.

The FDC pilot program was designed to address delays in processing these complex claims.

Basically, the goal of submitting an FDC is that you will get your claim through the processing system faster, because it has all of the needed evidence for a decision to be made quickly. With a properly completed FDC, the VA only has to source federal records and order medical exams that may be needed.

When submitting an FDC, veterans have to certify there is no other evidence that needs to be included.

The VA itself advised veterans the FDC program is the fastest way to get a compensation or disability claim processed, while ensuring quality of service and the veterans right to appeal a decision.

The VA says using an FDC can cut the wait time for a decision by half.

It accomplishes this by doing the following:

- ◆ When a veteran opts to complete an FDC, they certify their intention to do so, which then creates an effective date immediately.
- ◆ Veterans learn right away, directly from the VA, what documents and information is needed for the claim.
- ◆ There are no mandatory waiting periods.

If veterans are unsure of how to complete an FDC, most Veterans Service Organizations have staff on-hand with training to complete this particular type of claim. Also, some veterans opt to seek professional legal help to complete the claim.

In the event an FDC doesn't meet the required criteria, it becomes a claim that goes through standard processing.

The primary difference between an FDC and a standard processing claim is that with an FDC, the veteran bears the burden of gathering most of the necessary information, while the VA does this with a standard processing claim.

The VA reports it takes 175 days, on average, for the department to gather all of the information required for a standard processing claim, although now most claims are being processed much faster.

A public affairs specialist for the VA created the following checklist for veterans submitting a Fully Developed Claim, to ensure they have everything required:

Identify Federal Records, if any (not all of these may apply to your claim)

- If you received VA medical care, tell us where and when.
- Tell us if you receive Social Security benefits for a service related disability.
- Tell us where your Military Treatment or Personnel Records are, if you know, or where your last duty station was.
- Identify any other relevant records in the custody of a federal agency, like federal worker's compensation (OWCP) or the Public Health Service.
- If you have a copy of your Military Treatment or Personnel records, or records from other federal agencies, save time by submitting them with your claim by uploading them to eBenefits. If not, VA will get them, but this will slow down the claim.

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Gather Records (not all of these may apply to your claim) (If you do not use eBenefits find your nearest CVSO-the information is still required)

- * If your private doctor is treating you for a service-related disability, get a copy of those records.
- * If you don't believe the incident is recorded in your military records, get statements from you, your friends or family explaining in detail why you should be service connected.
- * If you are or were a National Guard/Reserve member: include all service medical and personnel records in the custody of your unit (Collecting and submitting these will expedite your decision because they are difficult for VA to collect). **VERY IMPORTANT!!!!**
- * Upload the documents you gathered to eBenefits.
- * Scan the documents.
- * Under the Upload Documents tab, select Manage Files.
- * Upload your documents
- * Verify you have NO More Evidence
- * If you have additional evidence to collect and submit, SAVE your record now. You have one year to collect and upload additional evidence. During this time, a VSO can log-on, view your application online and provide guidance on filing an FDC before you submit the claim. When you have finished uploading your evidence you are ready to submit.

To get the fastest, most accurate claims decision, collect and submit the following evidence along with your online application:

Private health care:

It's important to collect and send all of your relevant private medical records. This reduces the time it takes VA to request and wait for these documents from your private physician.

Statements from friends and family:

These optional statements may be useful to describe when onset of your disability, details about the injury or event that caused your disability (if they were there and saw it), and the disability's impact on you. These types of statements are especially helpful if the disability or event or injury that caused the disability is not recorded in your military records.

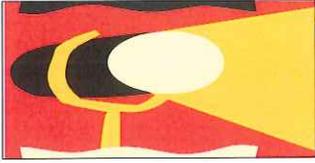
Personal statements:

You are your own best advocate. While VA and VSOs stand by ready to assist, both need to hear from you why you think you should be service-connected, especially if the incident or condition is not recorded in your military records.

Once you have collected all your supporting evidence, log back into eBenefits and upload all your documents. There is no limit to number of documents you can upload, but each file must be 5 megabytes or smaller (about 150 black and white pages at 300 resolution).

Once you verify that you have no more evidence, VA can start processing your claim right away. If you do submit more evidence after you submit the claim, VA will remove your claim from the FDC program and process it through our regular channels.





VETERANS SPOTLIGHT



Dean standing in front of his F-105

It gives me great pleasure to introduce, **Retired Colonel, Dean Vikan, USAF**, as my next Veteran in the spotlight.

Born in Fosston, MN in 1938, He also attended school in Fosston, graduating as Salutatorian in 1956.

Colonel Vikan is a 1960 graduate of the United States Air Force Academy. In October 1962, He was assigned to Kadena AB, Okinawa in the F-100 transitioning to the F-105 in early 1963 - his mission was cold war nuclear alert. In December 1964, he started temporary duty (TDY) tours in South East Asia (SEA) flying combat missions in the F-105 "Thud" from bases in Thailand with targets in North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. He continued TDY to SEA and nuclear alert at Kadena until June 1967.

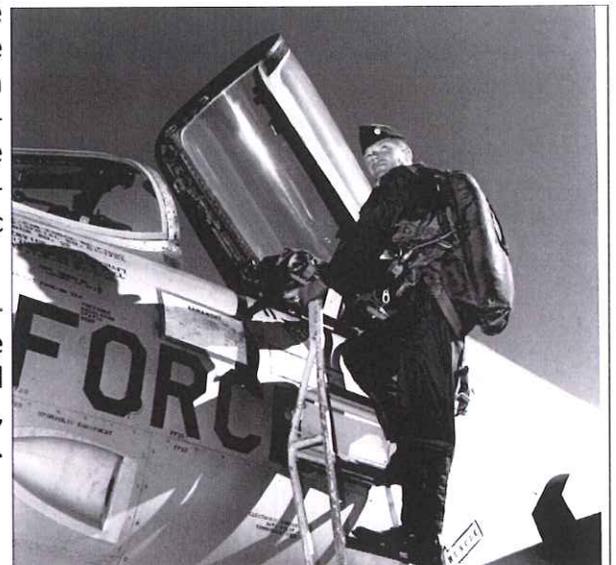
On his return to the States, he attended the USAF Test Pilot School - Class 67B with a follow-on assignment in weapons testing at Eglin AFB, FL. In June 1970, He was reassigned to SEA to complete his combat tour in the F-105. By October 1970, He had flown 68 combat missions - "Counters" - without taking a hit. Upon returning to the States, Dean was assigned to the USAF Test Pilot School as an instructor in the F-104, NF-104, T-38 & T-33 aircraft.

In 1973, Colonel Vikan received his master's degree in Aeronautical Engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology. From there he did a tour in the Pentagon Research & Development Directorate. He went on to fly the A-10 at Myrtle Beach AFB, SC as the Assistant Director of Operations which was his last operational flying assignment. His next tour was at HQ USAF Europe, Ramstein AB, Germany, followed by a tour as Commander, 40th Tactical Group at Aviano AB, Italy. His last assignment was back in the U.S. at Wright Patterson AFB, OH as the Deputy Program Manager for Logistics in the F-16 System Program Office. Colonel Vikan retired from the US Air Force in June 1985.

His decorations include Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross w/One Oak Leaf Cluster, Meritorious Service Medal w/One Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Medal w/One Silver and One Bronze Device, AF Commendation Medal w/One Oak Leaf Cluster, AF Outstanding Unit Award w/One Oak Leaf Cluster, Combat Readiness Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Vietnam Service Medal w/One Service Star, AF Overseas Long Tour Ribbon, AF Longevity Service Award Ribbon w/One Silver and One Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster, Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross w/Palm and Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

Upon entering civilian life, Colonel Vikan went to work for Lockheed Martin Corporation in Burbank, California assigned to the F-22 stealth fighter program for six years. In 1991, Lockheed moved Colonel Vikan along with the F-22 program to Marietta, Georgia and Vikan was with the F-22 for another six years. Vikan retired from this second career in February 1997.

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Following his retirement from Lockheed Martin in Georgia, he moved to Fosston, MN where he currently resides. Since arriving in 1997, Vikan has been Director for Economic Development, owner, editor and publisher of the Thirteen Towns newspaper, past (for 10 years) President of the East Polk Heritage Center in Fosston, President (now Vice President) of Minnesota's Historic Northwest Consortium, a four term president of the Rotary Club of Fosston, a former member of the Fosston - Lengby Lions Club, Chairman of the First Care Medical Services \$500,000 capital campaign committee and currently vice president of the First Care Foundation, President of Essentia Health Fosston Auxiliary, Chairman of the Fosston Area Community Fund, a board member of the Minnesota Alliance of Local History Museums, Board member of the Polk County Historical Society, a Board member of Highway 2 Classic Car Club, a member of the Star Committee, the Memorial Day Planning Committee and commander of American Legion Post 114 in Fosston. In his spare time, he pursues his hobby in photography.

Dean has two children, 11 grandchildren and 5 great grand children, a brother and two sisters.

On March 24, 1966, the then Captain Dean Vikan, in the 44th Tactical Fighter Squadron, as Tactical Fighter Pilot was recommended for decoration and awarded with the Distinguished Flying Cross by Lt Colonel, Richard M. Baughn, USAF. In Lt Colonel Richard M. Baughn's words:

Captain Dean F. Vikan distinguished himself by heroism and extraordinary achievement during aerial flight over



Edwards Air Force Base (1971)

North Vietnam on May 25, 1965, as a strike pilot of a Republic F-105 Thunderchief fighter-bomber. Captain Vikan's flight of four aircraft was assigned the task of bombing the Vinh Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants (POL) Storage and Transfer Point for all POL coming into central North Vietnam. As a result of its vital importance to the war-making capability of both the defensive armed forces and the offensive insurgents in South Vietnam, this target was one of the three most heavily defended areas in North Vietnam. Intelligence reports showed there to be 107 heavy 85mm anti-aircraft weapons; 134 medium and light 57/37mm anti-aircraft weapons, and over 50 multi-barreled automatic firing weapon emplacements, with 20 "Firecan" radar sets automatically directing six to eight guns per set. This defense posture was capable of firing over

30,000 rounds per minute at any attacking aircraft. The defense structure was such that on previous raids the United States had lost six aircraft to ground fire over this target complex. As Captain Vikan's flight approached the target it encountered extremely heavy and well-directed flak, bursting from initial roll-in to pull-out altitudes, including intensive barrage fire at these critical levels.

As he was about to begin his attack, Captain Vikan observed that the first few bomb impacts were off target due to gross errors in forecast bombing winds. As the other members of Redwood flight, after making quick and accurate corrections, dropped their bombs, the target was rendered invisible by dust and smoke. Under such intense fire the normal procedure would have been to pick a section of smoke as the target, complete the run and leave the target area as quickly as possible. Knowing that the first few attacks had missed, leaving considerable part of the target still undestroyed, Captain Vikan delayed his roll-in, despite the heavy flak bursting near his aircraft, until the dust and smoke had partially cleared, thus affording him a more accurate view of the target and allowing him to make maximum use of his ordnance.

Captain Vikan was fully aware that making the necessary attack and adjustments would preclude his taking evasive action and would force him to alter his attack heading and lower his release altitude, putting him even further into the heart of the enemy's most effective firing envelope. Being number four in the last flight, and because of his deliberate delay over the target, Captain Vikan's aircraft was the only one remaining over the target and was the sole object of the entire defense posture of the area. With utter disregard for his own safety, displaying extreme heroism in engaging the enemy forces, he dived his aircraft at the target.

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Presenting an ideal target by refusing to take evasive action, he dived his aircraft to absolute minimum altitude and delivered its bombs, attacking and recovering through what appeared to be a solid wall of flak. The bombs were delivered with deadly accuracy in a direct hit on two large storage tanks, which resulted in large secondary explosions and fires that started a chain reaction and completely enveloped the target area, persisting for over twenty-four hours. Captain Vikan's heroism was manifested by his deliberate exposure to great danger against high odds to successfully execute a mission whose completion was made impractical by the elements of unknown delivery conditions and prohibitive enemy defenses. He achieved extraordinary results when his singular feat resulted in the destruction of significant amounts of critically needed hostile fuel and fuel storage facilities, and made a significant reduction in the enemy's ability to continue its

wartime activities. His exceptional initiative, perseverance and courage while under heavy fire in combat are in keeping with the finest military traditions. The outstanding heroism and extraordinary achievements of Captain Vikan reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



Legion of Merit



Distinguished Flying Cross

Desk of the Commissioner - *Posted on June 13, 2014*

As a Department we continue our mission of supporting Veterans and their families and this is done in part by building awareness in our communities of the sacrifice many of our state heroes have made. This month commemorates the 70th anniversary of D-Day and I can't help but reflect on the sacrifices our troops made during that war. Probably the most recent, mind imprinting, reflection on this most significant day was the opening portion of the movie "Saving Pvt. Ryan."

The world owes much to the heroes of that day and the days that followed as they fought their way through the hedgerows of Europe and the skies above in order to defeat Nazi Germany. We owe much of our way of life to the "greatest generation" that not only saved our way of life but also helped transform that sleeping giant known as the United States of America. I ask all to reflect on what we have been given and to express our eternal gratitude to those before us who worked and gave us the great country we enjoy today.

Here at the Department we share the mantra, "Every Day is Veterans Day." Recently we honored Native American Veterans for their service and sacrifice with a ceremony on the State Capitol grounds. I had the honor of being part of the Native American Plaque dedication. It was a special day, the sky was clear with an eagle flying overhead, as we dedicated the plaque and reflected upon the contributions Native Americans have made in their service to our country. Their contributions to our nation's military were noted by General George Washington and have continued on to today's conflicts. It has also been documented that Native Americans, percentage-wise, are the largest ethnic group to have served in our nation's armed forces. The Department of Defense's research found that this high percentage has been, in part, due to their cultural attributes of strength, honor, devotion, pride and wisdom. I commend and thank our state leaders, community members and fellow Minnesotans for their continued support of our state's heroes.



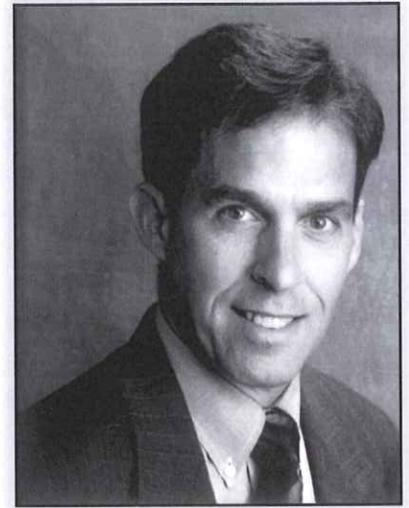
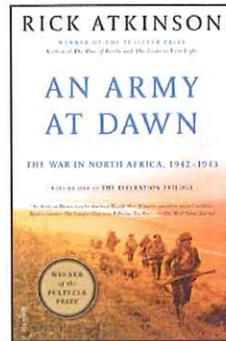
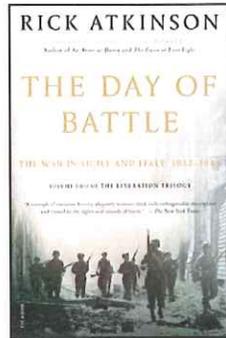
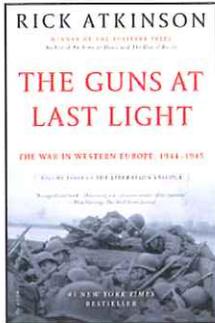
New books added to the Military section of the Campbell Library in East Grand Forks. This trilogy was written by Rick Atkinson.

The Liberation Trilogy:

The Guns at Last Light (Volume Three)

The Day of Battle (Volume Two)

An Army at Dawn (Volume One)



About Rick Atkinson

Pulitzer-Prize Winning Author & Military Historian

Rick Atkinson recently completed *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Europe, 1944-1945*, the final volume of his Liberation Trilogy, a narrative history of the U.S. military's role in the liberation of Europe in World War II. The first volume, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943*, received the Pulitzer Prize and was acclaimed by the *Wall Street Journal* as "the best World War II battle narrative since Cornelius Ryan's classics, *The Longest Day* and *A Bridge Too Far*." The second volume, *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943-1944*, drew praise from the *New York Times* as "a triumph of narrative history, elegantly written...and rooted in the sight and sounds of battle." *The Guns at Last Light*, covering the last year of the European war, from Normandy to Berlin, was published in May 2013, and was a #1 *New York Times* bestseller. Sir Max Hastings in *The Wall Street Journal* called it, "A magnificent book... Atkinson's account of D-Day is both masterly and lyrical."

Atkinson is also the best-selling author of *The Long Gray Line*, a narrative saga about the West Point class of 1966, and *Crusade*, a narrative history of the Persian Gulf War. He also wrote *In the Company of Soldiers*, an account of his time with General David H. Petraeus and the 101st Airborne Division during the invasion of Iraq in 2003; the *New York Times Book Review* called the book "the most intimate, vivid, and well-informed account yet published" on that war, and *Newsweek* cited it as one of the ten best books of 2004. He is the lead essayist in *Where Valor Rests: Arlington National Cemetery*, published by National Geographic in 2007.

Atkinson's many awards include the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for history; the 1982 Pulitzer Prize for national reporting; and the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for public service, awarded to the *Washington Post* for a series of investigative articles directed and edited by Atkinson on shootings by the District of Columbia police department. He is winner of the 1989 George Polk Award for national reporting, the 2003 Society for Military History Distinguished Book Award, the 2007 Gerald R. Ford Award for Distinguished Reporting on National Defense, and the 2010 Pritzker Military Library Literature Award for Lifetime Achievement in Military Writing. Atkinson has served as the Gen. Omar N. Bradley Chair of Strategic Leadership at the U.S. Army War College, where he remains an adjunct faculty member.

Atkinson served as a reporter, foreign correspondent, and senior editor for 25 years at the *Washington Post*. His most recent assignments were covering the 101st Airborne during the invasion of Iraq, and writing about roadside bombs in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2007. Previously he served as the assistant managing editor for investigations, a position that gave him the responsibility of investigative reporting at the newspaper. Atkinson's journalism career began at the *Pittsburg (Kansas) Morning Sun* in 1976; in 1977, he moved to the *Kansas City Times*, before going to the *Washington Post* in 1983. Among other assignments, he served as the *Post's* Berlin bureau chief, covering not only Germany and NATO, but also spending considerable time in Somalia and Bosnia.

Born in Munich, Germany, Atkinson is the son of a U.S. Army officer and grew up on military posts. He holds a master of arts degree in English literature from the University of Chicago. He and his wife, Dr. Jane C. Atkinson, a researcher and clinician at the National Institutes of Health, live in the District of Columbia. They have two grown children.

VA TRAVEL ALLOWANCE UPDATE GENERAL RULES

Here are the general rules as to who gets reimbursement for VA appointments and how it works:

- ◆ If you are 30 percent or more service-connected by the VA.
- ◆ If you are less than 30 percent, then the treatment you are receiving must be for a service-connected condition.
- ◆ If you receive a VA pension, Aid and Attendance or Housebound benefits.
- ◆ If you are traveling in relation to a Compensation and Pension (C&P) exam.
- ◆ Veterans with an annual income below the annual VA pension rate (determined by a means test).
- ◆ The current allowable reimbursement amount is 41.5 cents per mile. There is a \$3 deductible for each one way visit or \$6 for each round-trip visit. Upon reaching \$18 in deductibles per calendar month or six one-way(three round) trips, travel payments made for the balance of that particular month will be free of deductible charges. A waiver of these deductibles is given to eligible veterans with low income.
- ◆ You must have an appointment to be eligible for travel pay. Visits that are solely for obtaining pharmaceuticals or lab tests are not considered appointments. If you have separate appointments on the same day at the same location for different medical conditions, you can only receive one travel pay for the day.
- ◆ Travel reimbursement is not solely given for appointments at the Veterans Affairs' Regional Medical Centers. If you travel to a VA clinic and you meet the requirements as laid out above, your are eligible for travel reimbursement.
- ◆ You qualify for special mode transportation (Ambulance, Wheelchair van etc.) if you meet one of the first 4 eligibility items on this list and :
 - A. Your medical condition requires an ambulance or a specially equipped van as determined by a VA clinician , and
 - B. The travel is pre-authorized (authorization is not required for emergencies if a delay would be hazardous to life or health)
- ◆ It is your responsibility to apply for any VA travel benefits. You can go back normally 30 days to claim any travel reimbursement. You should be able to obtain the travel form at any VA facility. You can complete one online and download it at <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/vha-10-3542-fill.pdf>.
- ◆ You have the option to direct deposit the reimbursement in your banking account.

One Waiter complained to another, "It took Me all morning to fill this salt shaker."
 "How?" the other waiter asked.
 "Do you have any idea how hard it is to get the salt through those little holes on top?"

A Teacher said to her class, "Name five things That contain milk."
 "I know!" a boy exclaimed. "Butter and cheese And ice cream and...and...two cows!"



"I fought the lawn and the lawn won."

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS—2014 SESSION REVIEW (VETERANS SUMMARY)

Below are a few of our greatest achievements this session:

- **Minneapolis Veterans Home:** The bonding bill included \$2,000,000 for asset preservation to the 50+ MDVA building state wide and \$700,00 for restoration and repairs of the Minneapolis deep tunnel.
- **Veteran-Owned Small Business:** This session yielded gains to Veteran small businesses. New law now authorizes Veteran-owned small business and enables them to receive state level certification using rules already in place for small business, socially disadvantaged small business or economically disadvantaged area small businesses. This will lighten the burden on Veteran business certifications and the state can now perform the required certifications to compete for state funded business. Funding to make this an efficient process will need to be sought in the next budget year. Effective date August 1, 2014. (Chapter 312 HF 3172)
- **New Veteran License Plates:** Two new laws were created relative to Veteran specialty license plates. The first was within HF 2092 which authorized a smaller motorcycle version of the existing “Combat Wounded Vet” license plate. In order to get this new plate, payment of the registration tax required by law, and compliance with other applicable law relating to vehicle registration and licensing is required. Effective Date: August 1, 2014 (Chapter 280 HF 2092) The second Veteran specialty plate gained this session is the “Woman Veteran” license plate for both automobiles and motorcycles. Within the language of the bill there are criteria that must be met and approved by the Commissioners of Public Safety, Veterans Affairs the Woman Veterans Initiative Working group as well as any other Veteran service Organization that desires to assist in the design development. These plates will cost \$10 to purchase and the funds will go towards the development and distribution of the plates by the Department of Public Safety. Effective Date: January 1, 2015. (Chapter 207 HF 1916)
- **Military and Veteran Resident Tuition Rates:** Although Minnesota’s state colleges are very supportive of Veteran students and already had internal policies to ensure tuition rates for Veterans were at the most affordable levels, a new law was passed to codify the fact that Veterans from across the nation with an honorable discharge can take advantage of Minnesota’s public post-secondary education opportunities at an in-state tuition rate. Effective Date: academic terms beginning after August 1, 2014. (Chapter 312 HF 3172)
- **De-Escalation Training:** \$50,000 was appropriated in fiscal year 2015 to Peace Officer Standards and Training Board for training state and local community safety personnel in crisis de-escalation techniques for use with MN Veterans following their return from active military service in a combat zone. This is a onetime appropriation. Effective Date: July 1, 2014. (Chapter 312 HF 3172)
- **Taxes:** MS 2012, section 273.13, subd. 34, was amended. this law pertains to the homestead of disabled Veterans or family caregivers. This is the law that allows for a tax exclusion for Veterans with an honorable discharge and a service connected disability of 70 -100%. With that disability rating, one can receive from \$150,00-\$300,000 in market value tax exclusion on their homestead property. In the past years this law has slowly evolved to authorize the surviving spouse to maintain the exclusion after the death of the qualified veteran. This year the surviving spouses’ qualification period was expanded from five years post death to eight years. This new law is effective for taxes payable in 2015, and applies to homesteads that initially qualified for the exclusion for taxes payable in 2009 and thereafter. Effective Date: August 1, 2014 (Chapter 308 HF 3167)
- **Camp Ripley/Veteran State Trail:** Within the final Capital Investment bill, \$1,732,000 was appropriated to further develop the Camp Ripley/Veterans Trail. The Trail is one of Minnesota’s newest state trails, authorized by the Minnesota Legislature in 2009. The trail is envisioned as a multi-use system, accommodating a variety of motorized and non-motorized uses, linking the Soo Line Trail south of Little Falls to Crow Wing State Park and the Paul Bunyan State Trail. Effective Date: Following final enactment. (Chapter 294 HF 2490)

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- **Game and Fish:** There were a few changes in the Game and Fish Omnibus bill pertaining to Veterans. Essentially the changes dealt with MS 97A.441 (free licenses) sub. 5, 6, and 6a, angling, deer and small game hunting. What the changes in law do is authorize a card issued by the state or a driver's license to be used as sufficient evidence to prove eligibility for free deer, small game or fishing licenses to permanently and totally disabled Veterans. A new provision was added MS 171.70 Sub. 15 which requires U.S. Department of Veterans Administration proof of 100% total and permanent disability to be placed on the driver's license or state issued card. The caveat to this law relative to the driver's license is that in order to use the driver's license as proof, Department of Public Safety must first issue new driver's licenses which they currently don't have the capacity to develop. Effective Date: The day following final enactment and applies to applications submitted on or after January 1, 2016, or the date the new driver and vehicle services information technology system is implemented, whichever comes later. (Chapter 290 HF 2852)
- **Active Guard Reserve Taxes:** Currently, members of the National Guard and Reserve are eligible to subtract the payment they receive for military service from their Minnesota income. These payments are taxed at the federal level. This includes payment for drill weekends, annual training and other types of duty. Under current law, this subtraction is not allowed for members of the Active Guard Reserve (AGR). AGR members who are full-time members of the Guard or Reserve are not currently allowed to subtract this income. The new law allows AGR members to subtract all income received for military service from their Minnesota income. This new law also applies to individuals called to state active service by the adjutant general, and employed by the Department of Military Affairs. Effective Date: For taxable years beginning after December 31, 2013. (Chapter 308 HF 3167)

Lastly, in the coming months, MDVA will be promoting its legislative accomplishments by visiting Veterans in their communities and meeting Veterans' groups throughout the state. We look forward to sharing these accomplishments with you and getting your feedback. To review all legislation passed this session, visit: <http://mn.gov/governor/resources/legislation/>.

VA Care-Cold Injuries Service members have been exposed to extreme cold in combat and military training missions. The major cold injuries they suffer include frostbite, non-freezing cold injuries, immersion foot (formerly called trench foot), and hypothermia. The risk of cold injury depends on several environmental conditions including temperature, wind and moisture, in combination with physical activity, the duration of exposure, and amount of protection. The individual's level of fitness and cold susceptibility also contribute to the risk. If you are concerned about health problems associated with cold injuries, talk to your health care provider or local VA Environmental Health Coordinator who can be located at <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp> . Veterans may have been exposed to extreme cold without adequate protection during:

- ◆ World War II: The Battle of the Bulge, fought in December 1944 through January 1945 under conditions of extreme cold
- ◆ Korean War: The Chosin Reservoir Campaign, conducted from October 1950 through December 1950 in temperatures that dropped to 50 degrees F below zero, with a wind chill factor of 100 degrees F below zero.
- ◆ Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan Other campaigns or circumstances during military service, including training.

Health problems associated with cold injuries may result in long-term health problems, including the following signs and symptoms (at the site of exposure):

- ◆ Changes in muscle, skin, nails, ligaments and bones
- ◆ Skin cancer in frostbite scars
- ◆ Neurologic injury with symptoms such as bouts of pain in the extremities, hot or cold tingling sensations, and numbness

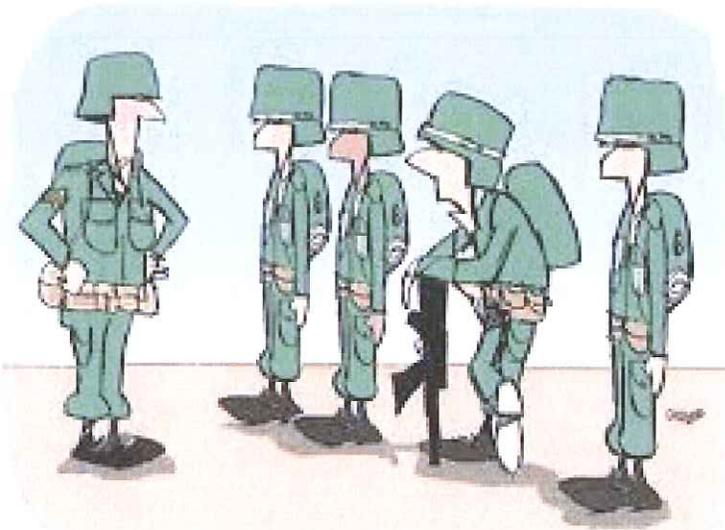
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- ♦ Vascular injury with Raynaud's Phenomenon with symptoms such as extremities becoming painful and white or discolored when cold

VA has developed a guide for clinicians on how to diagnose and treat cold injuries. Veterans and others also may be interested. The guide is available @ http://www.publichealth.va.gov/vethealthinitiative/cold_injury.asp . If you are concerned about health problems associated with cold injuries during your military service, talk to your health care provider or local VA Environmental Health Coordinator. VA offers a variety of health care benefits to eligible Veterans. For additional info in this refer to <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/benefits/health-care.asp> . If you are not enrolled in the VA health care system find out if you qualify for VA health care. Veterans may file a claim for disability compensation for health problems they believe are related to cold injuries during military service. To file a claim online go to <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal> . VA decides these claims on a case-by-case basis.

DISABLED VET SSA CLAIMS ✦ Priority Treatment if Rated 100%

Social Security claims from veterans with a Veterans Affairs department disability compensation rating of 100 percent permanent and total have a new process that will treat their applications as high priority and issue expedited decisions. Carolyn W Colvin, acting Social Security Commissioner, said the new process is similar to the way the agency currently handles disability claims from wounded warriors. "We have reached another milestone for those who have sacrificed so much for our country and this process ensures they will get the benefits they need quickly," Colvin said. "While we can never fully repay them for their sacrifices, we can be sure we provide them with the quality of service that they deserve. This initiative is truly a lifeline for those who need it most." To receive the expedited service, veterans must tell Social Security they have a VA disability compensation rating of 100 percent permanent and total and must show proof of their disability rating with their VA notification letter. The VA rating only expedites Social Security disability claims processing and does not guarantee an approval for Social Security disability benefits, officials emphasized, noting that these veterans still must meet the strict eligibility requirements for a disability allowance. (Source: SSA News Release March 18, 2014)



"I've got attention deficit disorder, Sarge."

