



# Ohio Department of Veterans Services

★ *Monthly Update* ★

December 2012



Ohio became the first Purple Heart State in the nation with the signature of Governor Kasich on House Bill 459 on December 20th. The bill was one of seven veteran-related bills signed by the Governor that day.

## Questions about veterans benefits?

Call 1-877-OHIOVET  
(1-877-644-6838)

*Welcome to the twenty-first edition of the Ohio Department of Veterans Services e-newsletter! The newsletter is a key source of information about issues of interest to our community of veterans in Ohio.*

We thank you for your service to our country. Because you're a veteran, you've earned a number of benefits that you may not be aware of. Most of these benefits originate at the federal level with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Based on the time you served, you may be eligible for compensation for injuries, health care, educational assistance, home loans or many other benefits. There are also a number of state benefits available to Ohio veterans, to include the Ohio Veterans Bonus as well as direct financial assistance from the county to veterans in need.

The place to find out what you've earned and to apply is your county veterans service office. You can locate yours in the interactive map on our department home page, [www.ohiovet.gov](http://www.ohiovet.gov), or by calling 1-877-OHIO-VET (1-877-644-6838).

We will continue to provide you this newsletter each month. We hope it's of value to you and your family.

## Governor Signs Bills to Benefit Veterans...

Governor John Kasich signed a total of seven bills in Statehouse ceremonies Dec. 20 that benefit Ohio veterans and families in a number of ways. These new laws mandate that a veteran's service be taken into account during court sentencing, make it easier for certain military children to receive scholarships, and streamline professional licensure for one type of medical specialist, among several other measures.

The bills, the legislator(s) who sponsored them, and a brief synopsis of their provisions, are below:

**House Bill (HB) 197 (Slesknick): Military Sentencing**, specifies that a defendant's military service must be considered by a judge during sentencing for a misdemeanor crime and a felony crime.

**HB 280 (Dovilla) & HB 555 (Stebelton): War Orphan Scholarship**, expands eligibility for this scholarship to all children of military veterans who participated in an operation for which the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal was awarded.



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The bill also authorizes the administrators of both the Ohio National Guard Scholarship Program and the Ohio War Orphans Scholarship Program to apply for and receive grants and to accept gifts, bequests, and contributions from public and private sources.

**HB 284 (Gonzales): Physician Assistants**, allows an individual seeking a certificate to practice as a physician assistant from the State Medical Board to qualify for the certificate without holding the otherwise required master's or higher degree, if the individual has (1) a degree from an accredited educational program for physician assistants and (2) at least three years of active duty experience practicing as a physician assistant in the United States armed forces or the national guard of any state.

**HB 325 (Landis): Road Naming**, designates a number of local highways to be named after several Ohio military service members who were killed in action.

- Branch Rickey Memorial Highway
- Lance Cpl. Aaron Reed Memorial Highway
- David A. Gibson Memorial Highway
- Sergeant David Kreuter Memorial Highway
- Staff Sgt. Jesse Ault Memorial Highway
- Army 1st Lieutenant John Runkle Memorial Highway
- Sheriff's Lieutenant John P. Gisclon Memorial Highway
- Lance Corporal Peter James Clore Memorial Highway
- U.S.M.C. Sgt. Daniel J. Patron Memorial Highway
- Staff Sergeant Joshua Gire Memorial Highway
- U.S.M.C. LCpl. Jonathan Etterling Memorial Highway
- LCpl. Luke C. Scott Memorial Highway
- Pfc. Seth Blevins Memorial Highway
- First Lt. Ashley White-Stumpf Memorial Highway
- Sgt. Michael Barkey Memorial Highway
- Captain Daniel Stiles Memorial Highway
- Sgt. James L. Smith Memorial Highway
- Army Specialist Jesse Adam Snow Memorial Highway
- Pfc. Douglas E. Dickey Memorial Highway
- Specialist Damon G. Winkleman Memorial Highway
- Sergeant Brian Dulle Memorial Highway
- U.S. Army Spc. Zachary Grass Memorial Highway
- Lt. Jason S. Manse Memorial Highway
- Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Trail
- Staff Sgt. Kevin J. Kessler Memorial Highway
- Boone Coleman Memorial Highway



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- Bill Burgett Highway
- Sgt. Mark T. Smykowski Memorial Highway
- Dulle Memorial Highway
- Grass Memorial Highways, Spc. Zachary Grass
- Master Sergeant Shawn Hannon Memorial Highway
- Rozanski Memorial Highway

**HB 459 (Hottinger): Purple Heart State**, makes Ohio a "Purple Heart State," the first officially codified state in the nation to be so designated in honor of veterans and serving military who received the Purple Heart.

**HB 532 (Kozlowski): Medal of Distinction**, clarifies current law pertaining to this medal to specify that it be awarded to Ohioans killed as the result of combat action after September 10, 2001. The bill also permits the spouse and parents of an eligible service member to receive a duplicate of the medal at no cost, and for other family members to request a duplicate medal for a small cost.

**Senate Bill 222 (Burke): Flag Display**, requires that the POW/MIA Flag be displayed at rest areas along the state's interstates and the Ohio Turnpike.

## Employment for Veterans in Ohio...

A national movement to hire veterans by big-name corporations as well as local businesses and government entities is well underway, one that veterans in Ohio need to prepare themselves to benefit from. There are both on-line and in-person tools to help.

"Ohio Means Jobs" is the state's job web site which has a real advantage for veterans by getting them to the front of the line for available jobs. The site is the result of a partnership between Ohio and Monster.com, and is on the web at [Ohiomeansjobs.com](http://Ohiomeansjobs.com).

Once on the site – at <https://ohiomeansjobs.com/omj/> – veterans should go to the "Job Seekers" area, and that's where the opportunities open up.







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First, veterans need to post their resume and indicate that they *are* a veteran. What this does is present veterans' resumes first for any job that matches the qualifications they've posted in their resume. The resume should be reviewed every month and electronically "updated" – whether any additional information is added or not – to keep it refreshed and at the front of the line for jobs.

This site has a searchable data base of thousands of jobs across Ohio, with private business, federal, state and local government, and schools. While it's still advisable to check local ads in the places in Ohio you'd like to be, the Monster.com system will capture the great majority of employment ads from throughout the state.

There's also a military widget on [Ohiomeansjobs.com](http://my.ohiomeansjobs.monster.com/VetCenter/InfoCenter.aspx) that will automatically links to additional information for veterans. This includes resources to help build a resume by translating military experience to civilian terms. It also includes links to veteran-friendly employers – companies that have made a commitment to hire veterans – as well as other resources:

<http://my.ohiomeansjobs.monster.com/VetCenter/InfoCenter.aspx>



**In-Person Assistance:** If you want to start a face-to-face job search, there's employment assistance available not far home. The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) is in an active partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor to operate Job Centers in each county, usually centrally located in the county seat; contact information is easily accessible by searching online or in the phone book.

While the Job Centers are open to all residents, but are also staffed with counselors who specifically assist veterans. Their primary clients are veterans with barriers to employment, of which long-term unemployment definitely qualifies. Counselors can assist with skills translation and



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resume preparation. The Job Centers also have resources to assist disabled veterans with qualifying for, finding and keeping meaningful employment.

Periodically, the Job Centers work with local partners to host regional job fairs across the state, which we'll tell you about here and in our social media.

**Be Prepared for Interviews, and Know Your Skills:** Before you attend any job fair or visit any employer, remember these common tips:

- Have a current resume;
- Have a cover letter that's geared to the type of job being sought;
- Present a professional appearance, e.g., suit and tie, or dress/skirt or pantsuit.

To prepare an effective resume, you have to be able to translate military experience to civilian experience. The Army and the Navy have developed online "cool" web sites that help veterans translate their military skills into terms civilian employers can understand. The sites, which stand for "credentialing opportunities online," allow a veteran to select their military skill code and then see the types of jobs their training and experience translates to, as well as any certifications that are needed. There is no Air Force, Marine, or Coast Guard "cool" site. However, the Air Force does offer similar resources on its Community College of the Air Force site, at the Credentialing and Education Research Tool (CERT) page; Marine skills are similar to those found in the Army and Air Force; and Coast Guard skills are similar to those found in the Navy.

The "cool" sites are below:

<https://www.cool.army.mil/index.htm>

<https://www.cool.navy.mil/overview.htm>

<https://augateway.maxwell.af.mil/ccaf/certifications/programs/>







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**Help from the Ohio Guard and AMVETS:** The Ohio National Guard knows the importance of full-time jobs for part-time soldiers. To help, they've joined forces with AMVETS to find employment for Guard men and women who are looking.

The Guard has partnered with AMVETS to create the web site below. It features statewide job postings for veterans:

<http://ohiovetscan.com/>

The Guard is also actively working with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (JFS) to help soldiers returning from deployments. The Guard is surveying soldiers in deployed units before they return home to determine how many need employment when they get back. JFS Job Center Counselors are then contacting these soldiers when they return home to work with them and help them find work.

**VRAP is Out There for Eligible Veterans:** The second phase of the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) is underway, and veterans who are eligible should not delay in signing up.

VRAP is intended to get unemployed veterans aged 35-60 re-trained and re-employed in high-demand occupations nationwide. VRAP is part of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011. The program offers up to 12 months of job training assistance under the Montgomery G.I. Bill at the rate of \$1,473 per month.

A second phase of the VRAP program began with the new federal fiscal year on October 1, 2012 and continues through March 31, 2014, but is open to only 54,000 eligible veterans – including those who were too late to be accepted for the first phase. The program's success so far is an indication that any veteran who is thinking about applying should take action quickly to do so.

The first phase began in May 2012 and was open to 45,000 veterans. This number was exceeded prior to the September 30 deadline. Applications pending at that time are being considered for the second phase.

**Please note** that applications must be made online through the VA's eBenefits program. A web tool will assist veterans in working through this.

For more information, see: <http://benefits.va.gov/vow/education.htm>



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## Ohio Veterans Home Gets Grant to Preserve Final Resting Place...

The Ohio Veterans Home-Sandusky was awarded a \$798,987 grant to improve and maintain the Home's cemetery at a November 20 ceremony. The grant, presented in the form of a "big check" from the VA, provides for 100 percent of the allowable costs associated with upgrade of the cemetery.

The cemetery holds the remains of the earliest residents of the Home, who were veterans of the Civil War, up to those of many recent residents who their families chose to have interred there.

The project will improve the cemetery by replacing, realigning and cleaning the headstones; maintaining the turf; and filling in and replacing turf where needed in low spots throughout the cemetery due to poor drainage. Several nearly-illegible headstones will be replaced. Any headstones that crack or break during the project will also be replaced.

The contract for the work was awarded to Hoty Enterprises of Sandusky. The actual work within the cemetery will be performed by Avatara Services LLC, a service-disabled veteran-owned business in Asheville, North Carolina.



Work began in late November with tree removal and an assessment of the total scope of work to be done. Improvements to the headstones and turf are scheduled to begin the second week in March 2013 and last for approximately 90 days.

Officials at the Home believe the grant will help to preserve the cemetery as an appropriate memorial for the veterans of the past, today and into the future.



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## List of Ships Exposed to Agent Orange Expands...



For the past few years, the VA has made presumptive determinations that a number of diseases afflicting Vietnam veterans were caused by exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam – making these veterans, as well as some family members who were affected, eligible for compensation and health care. Navy and Coast Guard veterans, however, who were not primarily serving with “boots on the ground” have often had a tough time proving a link between their service and Agent Orange exposure.

But the list of ships whose sailors were exposed to the herbicide has recently been expanded to now

include a total of 244 ships, from “Brown Water Navy” ships that operated primarily on inland waterways to “Blue Water Navy” and Coast Guard ships that docked at various ports.

To view the list and learn more about the benefits available, see:

<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/index.asp>

Veterans can apply for these benefits at their local Veterans Service Office in their home county.

To find out the location, see the Ohio map and select the appropriate county at: <http://dvs.ohio.gov/>

## Pension Verification Just Got Easier...

The VA is making it easier for veterans who receive a VA pension to prove their continued eligibility. Beginning in January 2013, the VA is eliminating the requirement to complete an annual Eligibility Verification Report (EVR). Instead, the VA will implement a new process to confirm eligibility, in coordination with the Social Security Administration and the IRS.

There's also another benefit to this move. The VA is reassigning the staff members who had been responsible for processing the EVR's – they will be dedicated to work on the compensation claims backlog.







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Read more about this change at: <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2414>

## Crossword Enthusiasts Take Note...

Here are the answers to last month's brain-teaser:



S	P	U	M	E		M	A	X		P	B	A	I	R
A	R	L	O	S		A		M		A	U	R	A	E
K	E	N	N	E	D	Y			L	I	N	C	O	L
I	Z	A	R		R	A	T		N	I	H	I	L	
			O	V	E	N		A	N	N	A			M
C	O	P	E	C	K		M	C	K	I	N	L	E	Y
A	H	A			R		R	A	R	E		A	L	A
T	A	N	G		C	O	S	E	Y		N	A	G	I
C	R	I	A		A	B	O	S		B		M	E	A
H	A	R	R	I	S	O	N		S	E	W	A	R	D
Y			F	A	S	T		R	H	E	A			
	H	A	I	T	I		M	A	E		L	I	N	O
G	E	N	E	R	A	L		J	A	C	K	S	O	N
O	B	O	L	I		E		A		R	E	L	I	C
T	A	N	D	C		A	S	H		T	R	A	D	E

## This is a Special Month...

December is the month when we pause to celebrate Christmas, this year's Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa, and then we'll all bring down the curtain on 2012 and prepare to ring in 2013. Families will reunite in Ohio from throughout the country for a joyous time of gift-giving and merry-making.

But many of those who can't be with their families will be spending time with a larger, but nonetheless very tight-knit family – the men and women serving in our military. From Afghanistan to Okinawa, from the surface of the Pacific to the skies above Europe – or from a lonely barracks in California or Texas – our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen will join together and make the most of the holidays. Whether in harm's way or standing guard at a lonely place, this band of brothers and sisters will join in religious services, carol-singing, sharing packages from home along with family stories, putting up trees in unlikely places and eating whatever holiday meal that's available. We can be sure that it will be a memorable time for all of them, wherever they serve.

And for those of us who miss them, or just wish them well, let us never forget that it is their service – and their sacrifice – that make it possible for the world to enjoy this truly most wonderful time of the year. ***Happy Holidays!***