



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Washington DC 20420

December 10, 2021

foia@americanoversight.org

Freedom of Information Act Tracking Number: 21-01196-F

Dear Mr. Evers:

This letter is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated July 28, 2020, which was referred to the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA) on November 20, 2020, in which you seek the following information "All records with the potential to shed light on the activities of the leaders of during the spread of, and response to, the coronavirus pandemic including any calendars maintained on their behalf, reflecting events that took place from January 1, 2020 to the date the search is conducted."

- a. Secretary Robert Wilkie
- b. Acting Deputy Secretary Pamela J. Powers
- c. Acting Chief of Staff Brooks D. Tucker

A search for records responsive to your requests has concluded. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs located a total of 32 pages that pertain to your FOIA request, which is being released to you along with this letter.

Limited portions of the responsive records have been withheld under FOIA Exemption 6 [5 U.S.C. 552(b)(6)] which protects matters of personal privacy. FOIA Exemption 6 protects against the disclosure of information that, either by itself or in conjunction with other information available to either the public or the FOIA requester, would result in an unwarranted invasion of an individual's privacy, without contributing significantly to the public's understanding of the activities of the Federal government. The information being withheld are the names and direct contact information (email addresses, phone numbers) of lower-level VA employees. While the release of this contact information may be permissible if it would serve a significant public interest, you have not identified

Page 2
Mr. Evers

a public interest in disclosing the identifying information of the individuals, nor do we find one.

This concludes our office response to your request. In accordance with VA's implementing FOIA regulations 38 CFR 1.599 (a), (b) and (c), you may appeal this partial denial to:

Office of the General Counsel (024)
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave, N.W.
Washington, DC 20420

If you should choose to file an appeal, please include a copy of this letter with your written appeal and clearly indicate the basis for your disagreement with the determination set forth in this response. Please be advised that in accordance with Freedom of Information act at 5 U.S.C. 1.552 (aa), your appeal must be posted marked no later than ninety (90) days of the date of this letter.

Sincerely,



Lyndon B. Johnson
Chief of Staff

Enclosure

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING SUMMARY

SECVA - IGA Stakeholders COVID-19
Conference Call

Tuesday, 14 April 2020

1:30 – 2:30pm (EDT)

Speaker Dial-In (b)(6) 7) 369-5243

Leader Code 9523908##

POINT OF CONTACT:

Mr. Thayer Verschoor

Executive Director, IGA

(202) 461-7385 – Direct – *Transfers to Mobile*

(b)(6) Thayer.Verschoor@va.gov

Mr. Wolf Wagner

PDAS, OPIA

(303) 378-1020 – Mobile

(b)(6) John.Wolf.Wagner@va.gov

PURPOSE OF EVENT:

■ Conference CALL

SECVA ROLE:

SECVA provide COVID-19 operational status with key emphasis on State Veteran Homes recommended protocols and proactive measures deployed to combat COVID-19.

OVERVIEW OF EVENT:

1. Mr. Thayer Verschoor, Executive Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs introduces the Secretary and each speaker.
2. 14 April Stakeholder Conference Call – Follow-up to 25 March SECVA Stakeholder Call.
3. Mr. Douglas Hoelscher, Deputy Assistant to the President, WH IGA participating.
4. WH/VA commitment to ensure Veterans service delivery and benefits administration remains uninterrupted during COVID-19 Pandemic.
5. WH Task COVID-19 Task Force Updates – 30 Days to Slow the Spread – WH Coronavirus link: www.coronavirus.gov
6. SECVA open-line with Governors – VA 4th Mission FEMA Status & Request Protocols – Governor's Office to FEMA.
7. USDVA operational flexibilities ensuring Veteran Delivery of Services not impacted – Forever GI Bill – Pension Benefits – Loan Guaranty Service – CARES Act
8. VBA Under Secretary IGA Stakeholders Tele-Town Halls
 - 4pm April 7 – PA
 - 4pm April 8 – OH
 - 5pm April 14 – WI
 - 4pm April 17- FL
 - 5pm April 21- CO
 - 5pm April 23 - AZ
9. SECVA emphasizes collaborative partnerships critical in overcoming COVID-19 Pandemic.

SPEAKERS:

1. The Honorable Robert L. Wilkie, Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs
2. The Honorable Douglas L. Hoelscher, Deputy Assistant to the President, White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs
3. The Honorable Paul R. Lawrence, Under Secretary, VBA
4. Dr. Richard A. Stone, Executive in Charge, VHA
5. Mr. Thayer Verschoor, Executive Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

BACKGROUND:

1. (VBA) PRESS & Notifications
2. (VBA) Forever GI Bill
3. (VBA) Stimulus Impact – Veteran Pensions
4. (VBA) Loan Guaranty Service
5. (VHA/VBA) CARES Act Implementation
6. Other Supporting Information

1. (VBA) PRESS & Notifications:

Benefits Administration Flexibilities: Veterans' GI Bill benefits to continue during COVID-19 pandemic

21 March 2020

President Trump signed into law S. 3503, March 21, which will enable the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to continue providing the same level of education benefits to students having to take courses online due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The law gives VA temporary authority to continue GI Bill payments uninterrupted in the event of national emergencies, allowing for continued payment of benefits even if the program has changed from resident training to online training.

Thanks to the law, GI Bill students will continue receiving the same monthly housing allowance payments they received for resident training until Dec. 21, or until the school resumes in-person classes.

In the wake of COVID-19, thousands of students nationwide have been converted to distance learning as many educational institutions are transitioning to technology-based lesson delivery. "I commend President Trump and Congress for their work on this important law," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "It will give Veteran students certainty as they continue their education."

Students receiving GI Bill benefits are not required to take any action. Benefits will continue automatically. VA will work closely with schools to ensure enrollments are accurately certified and processed timely. Updates will be provided to students via direct email campaigns and social media regarding VA's effort to implement these new changes.

Students with specific questions can contact the Education Call Center at: 888-442-4551 between 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday-Friday.

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Financial Relief Actions and Time Limit Extensions

On March 13, 2020, the President declared the COVID-19 pandemic as a national emergency, effective March 1, 2020. While United States Postal Service operations and other mail delivery services continue

uninterrupted, in some cases, local travel restrictions and COVID-19-mandated health and safety precautions may impact Veterans' and claimants' abilities to timely file forms, documents, or other responses in connection with VA claims and appeals.

VA is also sensitive to claimants who wish to have their claims and appeals processed as quickly as possible, and a system-wide extension would negatively affect those who need timely benefits and healthcare. Therefore, VA is providing options for Veterans and claimants to specifically request extensions on filing dates and requested evidence dates, as well as rescheduling of examinations and hearings. VA is also taking steps to provide Veterans and claimants with financial relief.

Financial Relief Actions

VA is suspending all collection actions on Veteran debts under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department. VA will stop all referrals of delinquent debt to credit reporting agencies and will not take any actions to stop Veterans who are in delinquent status from seeking VA Home Loans. However, collection actions will resume after the termination of the national emergency declaration.

VA is also automatically suspending collection action on all new benefit debts and is offering temporary suspension or extended repayment plans for existing benefit debts, whichever the Veteran prefers. To request a suspension or extended repayment plan, or to request a refund on a debt collection that was suspended, contact the Debt Management Center at 1-800-827-0648.

Claims Filing

Claimants and beneficiaries can continue to submit complete claims for compensation, pension, and survivors' benefits by mail, fax, or online. Claimants not yet ready to submit a complete claim may still indicate their "intent to file" a claim by:

1. submitting a completed [VA Form 21-0966, Intent to File a Claim for Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and/or DIC](#),
2. contacting the national call center at 1-800-827-1000, or
3. initiating an online application for benefits via [VA.gov](#).

However, if claimants are unable to file claims, submit evidence or attend hearings or VA C&P examinations due to COVID-19, VA has the authority to grant time limit extension requests and postpone final actions on a claim, provided good cause is shown for the delay. *VA has determined that delays due to COVID-19 constitute good cause.*

Time Limit Extensions Based on COVID-19

Effective March 1, 2020, if a claimant or authorized representative requests an extension of a time limit associated with a required action or notes their inability to attend a virtual hearing or tele-C&P examination based on the COVID-19 pandemic, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) will grant these requests under the good cause provisions, provided the time limit would have expired or situation occurred on or after March 1, 2020 and until 60 calendar days from the date the President ends the national state of emergency.

Requesting Time Limit Extensions for Claims/Appeals Filings Based on COVID-19

As there is no specific form requirement for requesting good cause extensions of time limits, VBA will accept COVID-19 pandemic-related extension requests on any form or written documentation.

To request an extension of filing a claim or appeal due to COVID-19, claimants should:

1. *Note the request on their late-filed application, or*
2. *Attach the request as a separate document to their late-filed application.*

To ensure full consideration of a time limit extension, claimants should simply note in their request that they are requesting an exemption for timely filing because of COVID-19, (or any related reference to COVID-19, coronavirus, the national pandemic, or similar language). No supporting evidence is required.

If the request is submitted after initial submission of a pending claim or appeal, claimants should specify the time limit for which they are seeking an extension to ensure accurate processing. Extensions for legacy appeal and claim filing time limits must be received in writing.

Requesting an Extension for Evidence Submission Based on COVID-19

Claimants who have already filed a claim may continue to submit requests in writing or over the telephone (1-800-827-1000) for extensions related to evidence submissions. A note will be placed in claimants' records stating no final action should be taken until the evidence is submitted or the extension period concludes.

Requesting an Extension for Hearings or Virtual/Tele-C&P Exams Based on COVID-19

VBA will contact claimants who have already filed a claim or appeal and have VBA hearings or C&P examinations to provide options that do not involve in-person communications (such as virtual or telephone options). If alternatives to in-person hearings or examinations are not possible for the claimant, a note will be placed in the record stating no final action should be taken until a hearing or exam is completed.

VBA - MEMORANDUM

Date: April 8, 2020

From: Ronald S. Burke Jr., Executive Director, Pension and Fiduciary Service

To: Regional Office Directors, Pension Management Center Managers

Subj: CARES Act – Economic Impact Payments

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed on March 27, 2020 to provide relief during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The CARES Act includes the 2020 Recovery Rebate, a one-time Economic Impact Payment for qualifying individuals. These payments shall not be treated as income or resources for purposes of determining eligibility for pension under chapter 15 of title 38, United States Code, or any other benefit under a law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Purpose

This letter provides guidance for processing income-based benefits when the claimant or beneficiary received an Economic Impact Payment under the 2020 Recovery Rebate in the CARES Act. The M21-1 Adjudication Procedures Manual will be updated accordingly.

Guidance

Any amount paid to a person under the 2020 Recovery Rebate in the CARES Act will not be treated as income or net worth when determining eligibility or continued entitlement to income-based VA benefits. Income-based benefits include Veteran's pension, Survivor's pension, and Parents' Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC).

Claims processors must exclude Economic Impact Payments when calculating income or net worth for Pension or Parents' DIC benefits.

Questions

Questions can be directed to the P&F Service corporate mailbox VAVBAWAS/CO/Pension & Fiduciary Svc.

2. (VBA) Forever GI Bill:

Colleges & Universities

- VA beneficiaries able to convert to online format for previously approved resident programs will not see reduced monthly housing payments. Current and new beneficiaries can receive the resident housing rate when in school March 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.
- *If the modality change causes the tuition & fees to change, beneficiaries won't be affected.*
- When term length is extended due to a longer than normal 'Spring Break', beneficiaries will continue to receive the same monthly housing rate through the revised end date.
- If a student is unable to attend due to the virus, but school is in session, VA can pay through the last date of attendance, but *not* through the end of the term.

- If some of a student's courses were canceled because of inability to convert to an online format, but the school is in session, VA must reduce the rate of pursuit at the end of the affected month.
- When the school is temporarily closed, VA can continue to pay students the monthly housing allowance through the end of the term or 28 days, whichever is sooner.
- VA is suspending debt collection activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Non-Degree Schools

- VA beneficiaries attending a vocational or postsecondary school able to convert to an online format for previously approved resident programs will not see reduced monthly housing payments.

On-the-Job & Apprenticeship Training

- For training facilities that can convert the training program to an online format, the beneficiary will continue to receive their regular monthly housing payment.

Other Information

- Check VBA social media, GI Bill Facebook page or GI Bill website for the latest updates.
- Education Call Center at: 888-442-4551 between 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday-Friday.
- We are currently monitoring the activities in Congress of a new bill that was introduced and passed in the House, The Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020.
- This bill would allow certain students to continue to receive housing benefits through the end of their term if their program was unable to convert to online, restore entitlement, and extend delimiting dates, as well as address impacts on the work-study program due to COVID-19.

3. (VBA) Stimulus Impact – Veteran Pensions

- **Economic Impact Payments do not affect income-based VBA benefits.**
- The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act provides that stimulus payments to individuals will not be treated as income or resources for pension benefits, or any other benefit administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
- VBA will not consider Economic Impact Payments as income or net worth when determining eligibility or continued entitlement to income-based benefits.
- Income-based benefits administered by VBA include Veteran's pension, Survivor's pension, and Parent's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)
- VBA instructed claims processors to exclude Economic Impact Payments from income and net worth calculations for income-based benefits.
- This information will be posted for our external stakeholders and has been shared directly with the VSO/CSVSO community.

Background

- The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed on March 27, 2020 to provide relief during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The CARES Act includes the 2020 Recovery Rebate, a one-time Economic Impact Payment for qualifying individuals.
- Section 20010 provides that these payments shall not be treated as income or resources for purposes of determining eligibility for pension under chapter 15 of title 38, United States Code, or any other benefit under a law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

CARES Act Stimulus Package

- VA, IRS, and Dept of Treasury are willing to take steps to ensure as many Veterans as possible receive their Economic Impact Payment automatically (without filing a tax return)
- IRS is currently working through the logistics of how they will ingest data from VA and Social Security Administration and generate payments from that data – this capability currently does not exist
- *VA is prepared to create data files which include the Veteran payment information and dependent details*
- In discussion with VA OGC, this data can be shared upon request from Treasury's Bureau of Fiscal Service with IRS for the purposes of making Economic Impact Payments – VA OGC will discuss with IRS OGC to ensure there is no other legal roadblocks in sharing this data and using it to compute Economic Impact Payments

- OFM is standing by ready to meet with IRS to work out the details of the data they will need to make this work
- The bottom-line is we want IRS to use the data files as source information to make payments to qualifying Veterans and survivors to the extent possible.

Debt Relief Notification

- VBA developed a simple, one-page informational insert to accompany all VBA letters which highlights debt relief guidance.
- Allows VBA to be immediately responsive to the Administration's ask
- Does not require any complex systems programming or spending Information Technology funds.
- For consistency, VBA collaborated with the Debt Management Center (DMC) to mirror language DMC used in their debt relief notifications
- DMC provided the verbiage on which the Office of General Counsel reviewed and concurred.
- VBA modified this language slightly to provide:
- Straightforward debt waiver information:
- A general list of things VBA is doing to support Veterans during the pandemic
- A link / phone number for Veterans to utilize as things surrounding the pandemic change
- VBA submitted the updated language to the Veterans Correspondence team on April 7 to finalize. It is currently undergoing final revisions, and VBA anticipates the letter will be released to print on April 10.

4. (VBA) Loan Guaranty Service:

- VA's Loan Guaranty Service is implementing section 4022 of the *CARES Act*, which mandates that holders grant Veteran borrowers a **forbearance up to 180 days** on their VA-guaranteed loan if they are experiencing a financial hardship during the COVID-19 National Emergency and request such forbearance.
- VA released guidance to servicers on April 9, 2020, to ensure that Veteran borrowers are given appropriate and accurate guidance when requesting forbearance under the CARES Act.
- VA is also exploring what options may be available to assist Veteran borrowers when their period of forbearance ends as the CARES Act was silent on how the accrued/deferred payments should be recouped (and understanding that many borrowers may still face financial hardship).
- VA continues to work closely with federal housing stakeholders to determine how they will be interpreting various provisions of section 4022, and what policies they will be putting in place, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD's) Federal Housing Administration (FHA), the Government National Mortgage Association (Ginnie Mae), and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB).
- Section 4022 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), enables Veteran borrowers to **request a forbearance up to 180 days** on their VA-guaranteed loan if they are experiencing a financial hardship during the COVID-19 National Emergency.
- The loan holder must grant the forbearance based solely on the Veteran's affirmation of a hardship.
- The Veteran may also request an extension of an additional 180 days of forbearance.
- During the forbearance period, the Veteran may not be charged additional fees, penalties or interest.
- *Section 4022 of the CARES Act also imposes a 60-day moratorium on foreclosures of VA-guaranteed properties beginning on March 18, 2020. The moratorium does not apply to vacant or abandoned properties.*
- Other sections of the CARES Act that apply to VA-guaranteed loans (but do not result in any change/impact to LGY operations)
- Section 4021: Amends the Fair Credit Reporting Act to prevent credit reporters, such as loan servicers, from reporting a delinquency based solely on the fact that a consumer takes advantage of relief related to COVID-19 (including forbearance under section 4022). Section 4024: Imposes a 120-day moratorium on certain eviction actions for properties that have a federally backed mortgage loan, e.g., a VA-guaranteed loan.

5. (VHA/VBA) CARES Act: USDVA – \$19.6 billion

Medical Services – \$14.4 billion

- Supports increased demand for healthcare services at VA facilities and through telehealth, including the purchase of medical equipment and supplies, testing kits, and personal protective equipment.
- Also enables VA to provide additional support for vulnerable veterans, including through programs to assist homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless veterans, as well as within VA-run nursing homes and community living centers.

Medical Community Care – \$2.1 billion

- Supports increased demand for care in the community, specifically emergency room and urgent care.

Medical Emergency Management – \$100 million

- Supports the Veterans Health Administration's 24-hour emergency management coordination, including overtime, travel, transportation of materials, and training.

Medical Facilities – \$606 million

- Supports development of alternative sites of care and procurement of mobile treatment centers to meet the demand for healthcare services, improvements in security, and non-recurring maintenance projects to existing infrastructure and utility systems at VA facilities (e.g., reconfiguration of space to support care).

Information Technology – \$2.15 billion

- Supports increased telework, telehealth, and call center capabilities to deliver healthcare services directly related to coronavirus and mitigate the risk of virus transmission.
- This includes the purchasing of devices, as well as enhanced system bandwidth and support.

Veterans Benefits Administration – \$13.0 million

- Provides additional software licenses and telework support for staff and enhances cleaning contracts.

Emergency Management – \$6 million

- Expands and maintains 24-hour operations of Crisis Response and Continuity of Operations Plan implementation at various sites.
- Expands cleaning and sanitation service in high traffic facilities.

Grants for Construction of State Extended Care Facilities – \$150 million

- Supports modification or alteration of existing hospital, nursing home, and domiciliary facilities in state homes to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

Office of Inspector General – \$12.5 million

- Supports oversight of VA's efforts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus.

Related Agencies – Armed Forces Retirement Homes – \$2.8 million

- Supports increased healthcare, security, and food services personnel expenses, as well as necessary supplies and equipment at the Armed Forces Retirement Homes in Washington, D.C. and Gulfport, Mississippi.

General Provisions – Veterans Emergency Authorities Tele mental Health Services for Isolated Veterans

- Authorizes VA to expand mental health services delivered via telehealth and enter into short-term agreements with telecommunication companies to provide veterans with temporary broadband services.

6. Other Supporting Information:

NADSVA President Inquiry to IGA – 23 March 2020

1. *"A crucial aspect of your services, however, remains unaddressed: the pending deadlines on claims and appeals for benefits and services that your agency adjudicates. We ask that you suspend these deadlines for the duration of the President's declaration of a national emergency, plus ninety (90) days thereafter, to ensure that Veterans and their family members do not lose the opportunity to attain the vital benefits and services that they have earned. We also ask that you add individuals who test positive for COVID-19 to the list of expedited claims described in Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 1, Section D of the M21-1.*
2. *Claimants and appellants who are sick or caring for someone who is sick during this global crisis or working or volunteering in support of the global efforts to combat this pandemic, should not be*

disadvantaged in obtaining VA benefits and services. Such individuals should not be punished for missing a VA deadline while dealing with their own illness, or while caring for others who are ill

3. *Many Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) are unable to file claims and appeals because their offices — including their locations embedded inside the VA's own Regional Offices.*
4. *Suspend all pending deadlines until ninety (90) days after the federal government has lifted the national emergency status. This includes, but is not limited to:*
 - *The one-year deadline for a claimant to formalize a claim following the VA's receipt of an Intent to File form (VA Form 21-0966)*
 - *All claimant deadlines regarding the commencement of an appellate action (to include higher-level reviews, supplemental claims, and appeals to the Board of Veterans' Appeals)*
 - *All claimant deadlines regarding reimbursement of money paid for emergency medical care*
 - *All deadlines stemming from the Debt Management Center, including audit requests, collections efforts, debt waiver applications, drill adjustments."*

IGA Response to NASDVA President Inquiry – 24 March 2020

1. *"Thank you for your time to touch base and discuss concerns.*
2. *The Secretary sincerely appreciates NASDVA's collaborative efforts on Veterans behalf.*
3. *We appreciate the pertinent suggestions regarding operational flexibilities you have proposed on behalf the NASDVA membership.*
4. *We will attempt to address these and other issues on our call on Wednesday.*
5. *After the 25 March conference call IGA will forward informational links from VHA/VBA/NCA and BVA along with FAQs which will be beneficial to the states.*
6. *Thank you for remaining in close contact and commitment ensuring that Veteran needs are achieved in this unrepresented circumstance surrounding COVID-19 Pandemic."*

16-17 March SECVA Letter to Governors



**THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON**

March 16, 2020

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor of Louisiana
900 3rd Street Capitol, 4th Floor
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Governor Edwards:

President Trump declared a nationwide emergency pursuant to section 501(b) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 United States Code 5121-5207 (the "Stafford Act") on March 13, 2020. This increases Federal support to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in its role as the lead Federal agency for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic response.

HHS remains the lead Federal agency directing the Federal response to COVID-19. When a State, Tribe, or Territory has determined that the maximum capacity of intrastate or interstate resources are exhausted, they may request assistance from the Federal government through their

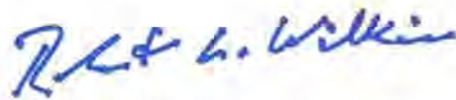
local HHS Regional Emergency Coordinator (REC). The HHS REC will then submit a task order to the HHS Secretary's Operations Center to be resourced by HHS or by one or a combination of the support agencies, including the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

HHS can request that VA provide resources to civilian health care systems or that VA hospital care and medical services be provided to non-Veteran patients in VA facilities, dependent upon the availability of resources and funding, and consistent with VA's mission to provide priority services to Veterans. VA cannot receive direct requests for assistance from State and local governments. The established central coordination function of HHS will ensure an integrated, effective response is provided to those communities that need assistance most.

VA has defined roles in both the National Disaster Medical System and the National Response Framework in the event of national emergencies. VA is standing by ready to support as needed. Our COVID-19 emergency preparedness exercises began weeks before the first case was confirmed in the United States, and VA has plans in place to protect everyone who gets care, visits, or works at one of our facilities.

To request Federal government assistance, please contact your State's HHS REC at [eparedness/responders/rec/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.hhs.gov/emergency-preparedness/responders/rec/Pages/default.aspx). For information on VA's COVID-19 response activities, updates can be found at <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus>.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Wilkie

VA IGA has notified Governor's Chief of Staffs, NASVH, NASDVA, NACVSO on the following:

- WH Coronavirus link: www.coronavirus.gov
- CDC Guidance: [Strategies to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Facilities \(LTCF\)](#);
- CMS Guidance: [Suspension of Survey Activities](#);
- CMS Guidance: [Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention Concerning Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\): FAQs and Considerations for Patient Triage, Placement and Hospital Discharge](#);
- CMS Guidance: [Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) in nursing homes](#)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/whats-new-all.html>
- CMS Announces Findings at Kirkland Nursing Home and New Targeted Plan for Healthcare Facility Inspections in light of COVID-19 ([Click here](#))

(NCA) Guidance:

VA National Cemeteries Remain Open for Interment; Will Adjust Operations in Response to COVID-19

20 March 2020

WASHINGTON — All Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemeteries are open and will continue to provide interments for Veterans and eligible individuals. Effective March 23, 2020, as a matter of public health and safety, committal services and the rendering of military funeral honors will not be conducted until further notice at VA national cemeteries. Immediate family members (limited to no more than 10 individuals) of the deceased may witness the interment if requested.

“VA national cemeteries will continue to perform our essential function – to inter Veterans and eligible individuals” said Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Randy Reeves. “We trust the public understands that we must place priority on the health and safety of Veterans and families and our team members who serve them.”

Those families choosing to continue with interment may schedule a committal service at a later date. Those families wishing to postpone an already scheduled interment to a later date should contact the cemetery as soon as possible to convey their wishes.

VA national cemeteries remain open to visitors. All guests are strongly urged to obey local travel restrictions and avoid unnecessary travel. Visitors should expect that certain portions of a cemetery typically open to the public, such as public information centers or chapels, may be closed to the public. Contact your local cemetery for updates regarding what may be closed.

For more information, contact NCA Public Affairs chief Les’ Melnyk at (202) 891-9987. To make burial arrangements at any VA national cemetery, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at (800) 535-1117.

(BVA) Board of Veteran Appeals:

- In keeping with VA’s primary mission to care for our Veterans, the Board of Veterans’ Appeals is suspending all travel board, video and Central Office hearings through at least May 1, 2020. Virtual hearings are available.
- We are asking Veterans to work with their representatives on rescheduling hearings. Veterans who prefer to wait for travel board, video or central office hearings to resume will receive top priority in hearing rescheduling.
- Click here for information on [Virtual Hearings](#).

USDVA Secretary - IGA Stakeholders Briefing Call – Tuesday, 14 April 2020 @ 1:30 -2:30pm (EDT)



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Office of Inter-Governmental Affairs – COVID-19 Briefing Call

Dear State & Local Leader,

On Tuesday, April 14, 2020 from 1:30 – 2:30pm (EDT), please join *The Honorable Robert L. Wilkie, Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs* and *The Honorable Douglas L. Hoelscher, Deputy Assistant to the President, Office of White House Intergovernmental Affairs* for a COVID-19 briefing call update surrounding the GI Bill – Pension Benefits and the CARES Act implementation. The briefing call will afford opportunity for Q & A. **Please distribute to your memberships to complete online registration.**

SPEAKERS

The Honorable Robert L. Wilkie,
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

The Honorable Douglas L. Hoelscher
Deputy Assistant to the President
Executive Office of the President
White House Intergovernmental Affairs

The Honorable Paul R. Lawrence, Ph.D.
Under Secretary
Veterans Benefits Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Dr. Richard A. Stone, M.D.
Executive in Charge
Veterans Health Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

HOST: Mr. Thayer Verschoor
Executive Director, Intergovernmental Affairs
Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

INVITED PARTICIPANTS

Governors' Chiefs of Staff
Governors' Washington, DC Directors
State Legislative Veterans Committee Chairs
National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA)
National Association of State Veteran Homes (NASVH)
National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NACVSO)
Tribal Veteran Leaders and Veteran Service Representatives
Faith Based Leaders

Briefing Call Registration – *Please note that you will need to register to participate on the call*

Date: Tuesday, April 14

Time: 1:30-2:30 pm EDT (please note time zone)

Participants will receive instructions on accessing the conference after RSVPing to the link below:

RSVP URL: <https://ems9.intellor.com?do=register&t=1&p=901431>

NOTE: You **must RSVP** to join the call. Upon successful registration, you will receive dial-in details to the email address you use to register. **Note** that multiple people cannot dial-in using the same registration information.

The USDVA Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (VA IGA) will continue to share pertinent information as it becomes available. Please do not hesitate to reach out to our office directly if we can be of assistance. As a reminder, VA IGA is the primary liaison between State and local elected officials and Tribal Governments.

AGENDA

1:30pm

The Honorable Robert L. Wilkie
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

1:40pm

The Honorable Douglas L. Hoelscher
Deputy Assistant to the President
Executive Office of the President
White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

1:45pm

The Honorable Paul R. Lawrence, Ph.D.
Under Secretary
Veterans Benefits Administration – VBA
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

2:00pm

Dr. Richard A. Stone, M.D.
Executive in Charge
Veterans Health Administration - VHA
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

2:15pm

Q & A

ATTACHMENTS:

1. SECVA - IGA Stakeholders COVID-19 Invitation/Agenda
[See above in background section](#)
2. Press Release - CARES Act “Helping VA Boost Protections for Veterans”
[See attachment](#)
3. VBA White Papers
[See attachments](#)
4. VHA 9 April COVID-19 SECVA Briefing
[See attachment](#)
5. The Honorable Douglas L. Hoelscher, Deputy Assistant to the President, WH IGA
[See bio below](#)
6. Mr. John Hilgert, NASDVA President –
[See bio below](#)
7. Mr. John Scocos, Executive Director, NASDVA –
[See bio below](#)

The Honorable Douglas Hoelscher
Deputy Assistant to the President
White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs



Doug is a Deputy Assistant to the President and the Director of White House Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA). In this role, he serves as the Trump Administration's liaison to the nation's governors, lieutenant governors, attorneys general, and other statewide, local and tribal leaders.

Doug aims to effectively solve intergovernmental issues and shared challenges by building relationships at each level of the government. He was previously the Deputy Director of IGA and served the Director of the Iowa Office of State-Federal Relations where he represented State of Iowa leaders before the Federal Government and built coalitions with other states and key stakeholders.

Doug chaired the National Governors Association 2016 Summer Meeting Committee, which was hosted in Des Moines, Iowa. Doug previously worked at PricewaterhouseCoopers and held several positions within the George W. Bush Administration – at the White House and at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Director John Hilgert
Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs
NASDVA President



John Hilgert has served, since leaving the State Legislature in 2001, as the Director of the Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs, having been appointed by then Governor Mike Johanns.

Governor Heineman retained John as Director and assigned him additional duties as a Division Director of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services with direct oversight of the Veterans Homes Division. He continued to serve the State in both capacities, having been retained by Governor Pete Ricketts.

In 2017, the Veterans' Homes Division was merged into the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs. He is an Army veteran of the Gulf War, having served with the First Infantry Division.

John Hilgert has served, since leaving the State Legislature, in 2001 as the Director of the Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs having been appointed by then Governor Mike Johanns. Governor Heineman retained John as Director and assigned him additional duties as a Division Director of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services with direct oversight of the Veterans Homes Division. He continues to serve the State in both capacities having been retained by Governor Pete Ricketts. In 2017, the Division was merged into the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs. He is an Army veteran of the Gulf War having served with the First Infantry Division.

Agency Director
2001 to Present

Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs
Lincoln, Nebraska

Appointed by Governor Mike Johanns, November 2001.

Retained by Governor Dave Heineman, 2005.

Retained by Governor Pete Ricketts 2014.

Supervised the delivery of State services to veterans, their families and dependents divided into four divisions; the State Service Division, the Cemetery Division, Veterans Home Division and the Administrative division.

- Championed the replacement of the Thomas Fitzgerald Veterans Home and the Grand Island Veterans Home.
- Established the Nebraska Veterans Cemetery in Alliance.
- Streamlined and coordinated the admissions process for the Nebraska State Veterans Homes.
- Led expansion of State Service Office mission and transferred operations to a cloud based digital environment.

Division Director

2007 to July 1, 2017 when merged with NDVA

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Veterans Homes

Lincoln, Nebraska

Assigned additional position by Governor Dave Heineman, April 2007. Retained by Governor Pete Ricketts in January 2015.

Supervised the creation of the Division as a result of the reorganization of DHHS. Supervise the Administrators of the four state veterans' homes in Nebraska. Accountable for the budget, staffing and quality of care for the division. Created the position of and supervise the first System Clinician as well as the Fiscal Analyst for the Division.

- Supporting system reforms such as consistent staffing, acuity-based staffing, survey readiness and the establishment of new quality indicators.
- Lead the effort to establish the 225 beds, 340,000 sq. ft. Central Nebraska Veterans Home.
- Successfully lead the effort to merge the Veterans Home Division of DHHS into the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs.

State Senator, District 7

1995 to 2001

Nebraska Legislature

Lincoln, Nebraska

Appointed by Governor Ben Nelson, August 1995. Elected 1996. Reelected 2000.

- Represented the culturally and economically diverse legislative district of Downtown and South Omaha in the Nebraska Legislature.

Maintained high ratings in both business and labor communities.

Championed micro-enterprise development as well as supporting major corporate investment in the downtown area.

Senior Director for Government Relations, 1997-2001; Director of Development, 1994-1997; Assistant to Executive Director, 1992-1994.

1992 to 2001

Catholic Charities

Omaha, Nebraska

- Assisted in resource development for the construction and establishment of the Omaha Campus for Hope with specific emphasis on government funding.
- Assisted with various fund raising and development initiatives as well as staffing the Catholic Charities Service League.
- Secured operational funding and resources for various agency programs.

1989 to 1992

Judge Advocate General's Corps United States Army

Legal Assistance Officer in the Staff Judge Advocate's Office, First Infantry Division (MECH), 1991-1992.

Deployed to Kuwait Theater of Operations, December 1990- May 1991, Operation Desert Shield/ Operation Desert Storm. Served in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Republic of Iraq,

Trial Defense Service, Assigned to First Infantry Division, (MECH), Fort Riley, Kansas 1989-1991;

- Represented soldiers in criminal and administrative justice cases.
- Represented a great diversity of clients, issues and situations.

Additional Experience

District Vice-President

2013 to present

National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs

Board Member and Chair

2003 to 2008

Metro Area Transit Authority, City of Omaha

Omaha, Nebraska

Committee Member

2008 to 2011

Advisory Committee for Homeless Veterans, United States Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington D.C.

Education

U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's School, Charlottesville, Virginia J.D., 1989

Creighton University School of Law, Omaha, Nebraska, Admitted to Nebraska State Bar, 1989

B.S., Business Administration, Finance Major, 1986

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, Nebraska

Daniel J. Gross High School, 1982

Affiliations

- Nebraska State Bar Association
- Past Commander, Life Member, American Legion, South Omaha Post No. 331
- Life Member, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 1581
- Member, Knights of Columbus, Council No. 10909
- Member, Board of Directors, Cornhusker Boys' State Corporation 2002 - 2017
- Life Member, Disabled American Veterans and AMVETS, Post 25
- Member and positions of Leadership in numerous Neighborhood Associations and Community groups

Honors

- Hall of Fame, Daniel J. Gross High School
- Eagle Scout, Boy Scouts of America
- Honorary Life Member, Vietnam Veterans of America

Volunteer

Committee Member, Catholic Social Teaching Ministry, St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, Omaha

2012 to 2016; Assistant Scout Master, Boy Scout Troop 408, St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, Omaha

2009 to 2017; Cub Master Cub Scout Pack 408, St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church Omaha 2006

John A. Scocos
Executive Director
National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA)
NASDVA Executive Director



John A. Scocos is a former Secretary of Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, where he served for over 13 years. He also served as the Assistant Deputy Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the department. Prior to serving in the state veterans' agency, John was the Chief Clerk of the Wisconsin State Assembly. Previously, he was employed by the Weber Group in La Crosse, Wisconsin as the Director of Government Affairs. The Weber Group promotes healthy living across multiple industries, including development, hospitality, and healthcare and wellness.

Mr. Scocos is the son of a prisoner of war and is a United States army veteran with 31 years of active and reserve service. He enlisted in 1979 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1981. His service included a deployment during Operation Joint Endeavor (1996), two tours in Iraq (2007 and 2008), and appointment to the Pentagon as a military assistant to the U.S. Secretary of Defense. He retired from the U.S. Army as a Colonel in 2010. His military awards include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star (oak leaf cluster), Meritorious Service Medal (3 oak leaf clusters), and the Combat Action Badge.

Mr. Scocos is active in many community organizations, including as a Troop Scout Master for the Boy Scouts of America, volunteering with numerous veterans' groups, and with the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church.

Mr. Scocos has a bachelor's degree in History from Mankato State University and an MBA from Touro University International. Mr. Scocos is married to Dr. Kelly Williams, a researcher and university professor. They are proud parents with three children and one grandchild. They reside in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING SUMMARY

SECVA - IGA Stakeholders COVID-19
Conference Call

Tuesday, 14 April 2020

1:30 – 2:30pm (EDT)

Speaker Dial-In – (b)(6) (877) 369-5243

Leader Code – 9523908##

POINT OF CONTACT:

Mr. Thayer Verschoor
Executive Director, IGA
(202) 461-7385 – Direct – *Transfers to Mobile*
(b)(6) Thayer.Verschoor@va.gov

Mr. Wolf Wagner
PDAS, OPIA
(303) 378-1020 – Mobile
(b)(6) John.Wolf.Wagner@va.gov

PURPOSE OF EVENT:

■ Conference CALL

SECVA ROLE:

SECVA provide COVID-19 operational status with key emphasis on State Veteran Homes recommended protocols and proactive measures deployed to combat COVID-19.

OVERVIEW OF EVENT:

1. Mr. Thayer Verschoor, Executive Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs introduces the Secretary and each speaker.
2. 14 April Stakeholder Conference Call – Follow-up to 25 March SECVA Stakeholder Call.
3. Mr. Douglas Hoelscher, Deputy Assistant to the President, WH IGA participating.
4. WH/VA commitment to ensure Veterans service delivery and benefits administration remains uninterrupted during COVID-19 Pandemic.
5. WH Task COVID-19 Task Force Updates – 30 Days to Slow the Spread – WH Coronavirus link: www.coronavirus.gov
6. SECVA open-line with Governors – VA 4th Mission FEMA Status & Request Protocols – Governor's Office to FEMA.
7. USDVA operational flexibilities ensuring Veteran Delivery of Services not impacted – Forever GI Bill – Pension Benefits – Loan Guaranty Service – CARES Act
8. VBA Under Secretary IGA Stakeholders Tele-Town Halls
 - 4pm April 7 – PA
 - 4pm April 8 – OH
 - 5pm April 14 – WI
 - 4pm April 17- FL
 - 5pm April 21- CO
 - 5pm April 23 - AZ
9. SECVA emphasizes collaborative partnerships critical in overcoming COVID-19 Pandemic.

SPEAKERS:

1. The Honorable Robert L. Wilkie, Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs
2. The Honorable Douglas L. Hoelscher, Deputy Assistant to the President, White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs
3. The Honorable Paul R. Lawrence, Under Secretary, VBA
4. Dr. Richard A. Stone, Executive in Charge, VHA
5. Mr. Thayer Verschoor, Executive Director, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

BACKGROUND:

1. (VBA) PRESS & Notifications
2. (VBA) Forever GI Bill
3. (VBA) Stimulus Impact – Veteran Pensions
4. (VBA) Loan Guaranty Service
5. (VHA/VBA) CARES Act Implementation
6. Other Supporting Information

1. (VBA) PRESS & Notifications:

Benefits Administration Flexibilities: Veterans' GI Bill benefits to continue during COVID-19 pandemic

21 March 2020

President Trump signed into law S. 3503, March 21, which will enable the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to continue providing the same level of education benefits to students having to take courses online due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The law gives VA temporary authority to continue GI Bill payments uninterrupted in the event of national emergencies, allowing for continued payment of benefits even if the program has changed from resident training to online training.

Thanks to the law, GI Bill students will continue receiving the same monthly housing allowance payments they received for resident training until Dec. 21, or until the school resumes in-person classes.

In the wake of COVID-19, thousands of students nationwide have been converted to distance learning as many educational institutions are transitioning to technology-based lesson delivery. "I commend President Trump and Congress for their work on this important law," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "It will give Veteran students certainty as they continue their education."

Students receiving GI Bill benefits are not required to take any action. Benefits will continue automatically. VA will work closely with schools to ensure enrollments are accurately certified and processed timely. Updates will be provided to students via direct email campaigns and social media regarding VA's effort to implement these new changes.

Students with specific questions can contact the Education Call Center at: 888-442-4551 between 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday-Friday.

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Financial Relief Actions and Time Limit Extensions

On March 13, 2020, the President declared the COVID-19 pandemic as a national emergency, effective March 1, 2020. While United States Postal Service operations and other mail delivery services continue

uninterrupted, in some cases, local travel restrictions and COVID-19-mandated health and safety precautions may impact Veterans' and claimants' abilities to timely file forms, documents, or other responses in connection with VA claims and appeals.

VA is also sensitive to claimants who wish to have their claims and appeals processed as quickly as possible, and a system-wide extension would negatively affect those who need timely benefits and healthcare. Therefore, VA is providing options for Veterans and claimants to specifically request extensions on filing dates and requested evidence dates, as well as rescheduling of examinations and hearings. VA is also taking steps to provide Veterans and claimants with financial relief.

Financial Relief Actions

VA is suspending all collection actions on Veteran debts under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department. VA will stop all referrals of delinquent debt to credit reporting agencies and will not take any actions to stop Veterans who are in delinquent status from seeking VA Home Loans. However, collection actions will resume after the termination of the national emergency declaration.

VA is also automatically suspending collection action on all new benefit debts and is offering temporary suspension or extended repayment plans for existing benefit debts, whichever the Veteran prefers. To request a suspension or extended repayment plan, or to request a refund on a debt collection that was suspended, contact the Debt Management Center at 1-800-827-0648.

Claims Filing

Claimants and beneficiaries can continue to submit complete claims for compensation, pension, and survivors' benefits by mail, fax, or online. Claimants not yet ready to submit a complete claim may still indicate their "intent to file" a claim by:

1. submitting a completed [VA Form 21-0966, Intent to File a Claim for Compensation and/or Pension, or Survivors Pension and/or DIC](#),
2. contacting the national call center at 1-800-827-1000, or
3. initiating an online application for benefits via [VA.gov](#).

However, if claimants are unable to file claims, submit evidence or attend hearings or VA C&P examinations due to COVID-19, VA has the authority to grant time limit extension requests and postpone final actions on a claim, provided good cause is shown for the delay. *VA has determined that delays due to COVID-19 constitute good cause.*

Time Limit Extensions Based on COVID-19

Effective March 1, 2020, if a claimant or authorized representative requests an extension of a time limit associated with a required action or notes their inability to attend a virtual hearing or tele-C&P examination based on the COVID-19 pandemic, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) will grant these requests under the good cause provisions, provided the time limit would have expired or situation occurred on or after March 1, 2020 and until 60 calendar days from the date the President ends the national state of emergency.

Requesting Time Limit Extensions for Claims/Appeals Filings Based on COVID-19

As there is no specific form requirement for requesting good cause extensions of time limits, VBA will accept COVID-19 pandemic-related extension requests on any form or written documentation.

To request an extension of filing a claim or appeal due to COVID-19, claimants should:

1. *Note the request on their late-filed application, or*
2. *Attach the request as a separate document to their late-filed application.*

To ensure full consideration of a time limit extension, claimants should simply note in their request that they are requesting an exemption for timely filing because of COVID-19, (or any related reference to COVID-19, coronavirus, the national pandemic, or similar language). No supporting evidence is required.

If the request is submitted after initial submission of a pending claim or appeal, claimants should specify the time limit for which they are seeking an extension to ensure accurate processing. Extensions for legacy appeal and claim filing time limits must be received in writing.

Requesting an Extension for Evidence Submission Based on COVID-19

Claimants who have already filed a claim may continue to submit requests in writing or over the telephone (1-800-827-1000) for extensions related to evidence submissions. A note will be placed in claimants' records stating no final action should be taken until the evidence is submitted or the extension period concludes.

Requesting an Extension for Hearings or Virtual/Tele-C&P Exams Based on COVID-19

VBA will contact claimants who have already filed a claim or appeal and have VBA hearings or C&P examinations to provide options that do not involve in-person communications (such as virtual or telephone options). If alternatives to in-person hearings or examinations are not possible for the claimant, a note will be placed in the record stating no final action should be taken until a hearing or exam is completed.

VBA - MEMORANDUM

Date: April 8, 2020

From: Ronald S. Burke Jr., Executive Director, Pension and Fiduciary Service

To: Regional Office Directors, Pension Management Center Managers

Subj: CARES Act – Economic Impact Payments

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed on March 27, 2020 to provide relief during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The CARES Act includes the 2020 Recovery Rebate, a one-time Economic Impact Payment for qualifying individuals. These payments shall not be treated as income or resources for purposes of determining eligibility for pension under chapter 15 of title 38, United States Code, or any other benefit under a law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Purpose

This letter provides guidance for processing income-based benefits when the claimant or beneficiary received an Economic Impact Payment under the 2020 Recovery Rebate in the CARES Act. The M21-1 Adjudication Procedures Manual will be updated accordingly.

Guidance

Any amount paid to a person under the 2020 Recovery Rebate in the CARES Act will not be treated as income or net worth when determining eligibility or continued entitlement to income-based VA benefits. Income-based benefits include Veteran's pension, Survivor's pension, and Parents' Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC).

Claims processors must exclude Economic Impact Payments when calculating income or net worth for Pension or Parents' DIC benefits.

Questions

Questions can be directed to the P&F Service corporate mailbox VAVBAWAS/CO/Pension & Fiduciary Svc.

2. (VBA) Forever GI Bill:

Colleges & Universities

- VA beneficiaries able to convert to online format for previously approved resident programs will not see reduced monthly housing payments. Current and new beneficiaries can receive the resident housing rate when in school March 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.
- *If the modality change causes the tuition & fees to change, beneficiaries won't be affected.*
- When term length is extended due to a longer than normal 'Spring Break', beneficiaries will continue to receive the same monthly housing rate through the revised end date.
- If a student is unable to attend due to the virus, but school is in session, VA can pay through the last date of attendance, but *not* through the end of the term.

- If some of a student's courses were canceled because of inability to convert to an online format, but the school is in session, VA must reduce the rate of pursuit at the end of the affected month.
- When the school is temporarily closed, VA can continue to pay students the monthly housing allowance through the end of the term or 28 days, whichever is sooner.
- VA is suspending debt collection activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Non-Degree Schools

- VA beneficiaries attending a vocational or postsecondary school able to convert to an online format for previously approved resident programs will not see reduced monthly housing payments.

On-the-Job & Apprenticeship Training

- For training facilities that can convert the training program to an online format, the beneficiary will continue to receive their regular monthly housing payment.

Other Information

- Check VBA social media, GI Bill Facebook page or GI Bill website for the latest updates.
- Education Call Center at: 888-442-4551 between 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday-Friday.
- We are currently monitoring the activities in Congress of a new bill that was introduced and passed in the House, The Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020.
- This bill would allow certain students to continue to receive housing benefits through the end of their term if their program was unable to convert to online, restore entitlement, and extend delimiting dates, as well as address impacts on the work-study program due to COVID-19.

3. (VBA) Stimulus Impact – Veteran Pensions

- **Economic Impact Payments do not affect income-based VBA benefits.**
- The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act provides that stimulus payments to individuals will not be treated as income or resources for pension benefits, or any other benefit administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.
- VBA will not consider Economic Impact Payments as income or net worth when determining eligibility or continued entitlement to income-based benefits.
- Income-based benefits administered by VBA include Veteran's pension, Survivor's pension, and Parent's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)
- VBA instructed claims processors to exclude Economic Impact Payments from income and net worth calculations for income-based benefits.
- This information will be posted for our external stakeholders and has been shared directly with the VSO/CSVSO community.

Background

- The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed on March 27, 2020 to provide relief during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The CARES Act includes the 2020 Recovery Rebate, a one-time Economic Impact Payment for qualifying individuals.
- Section 20010 provides that these payments shall not be treated as income or resources for purposes of determining eligibility for pension under chapter 15 of title 38, United States Code, or any other benefit under a law administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

CARES Act Stimulus Package

- VA, IRS, and Dept of Treasury are willing to take steps to ensure as many Veterans as possible receive their Economic Impact Payment automatically (without filing a tax return)
- IRS is currently working through the logistics of how they will ingest data from VA and Social Security Administration and generate payments from that data – this capability currently does not exist
- *VA is prepared to create data files which include the Veteran payment information and dependent details*
- In discussion with VA OGC, this data can be shared upon request from Treasury's Bureau of Fiscal Service with IRS for the purposes of making Economic Impact Payments – VA OGC will discuss with IRS OGC to ensure there is no other legal roadblocks in sharing this data and using it to compute Economic Impact Payments

- OFM is standing by ready to meet with IRS to work out the details of the data they will need to make this work
- The bottom-line is we want IRS to use the data files as source information to make payments to qualifying Veterans and survivors to the extent possible.

Debt Relief Notification

- VBA developed a simple, one-page informational insert to accompany all VBA letters which highlights debt relief guidance.
- Allows VBA to be immediately responsive to the Administration's ask
- Does not require any complex systems programming or spending Information Technology funds.
- For consistency, VBA collaborated with the Debt Management Center (DMC) to mirror language DMC used in their debt relief notifications
- DMC provided the verbiage on which the Office of General Counsel reviewed and concurred.
- VBA modified this language slightly to provide:
- Straightforward debt waiver information:
- A general list of things VBA is doing to support Veterans during the pandemic
- A link / phone number for Veterans to utilize as things surrounding the pandemic change
- VBA submitted the updated language to the Veterans Correspondence team on April 7 to finalize. It is currently undergoing final revisions, and VBA anticipates the letter will be released to print on April 10.

4. (VBA) Loan Guaranty Service:

- VA's Loan Guaranty Service is implementing section 4022 of the *CARES Act*, which mandates that holders grant Veteran borrowers a **forbearance up to 180 days** on their VA-guaranteed loan if they are experiencing a financial hardship during the COVID-19 National Emergency and request such forbearance.
- VA released guidance to servicers on April 9, 2020, to ensure that Veteran borrowers are given appropriate and accurate guidance when requesting forbearance under the CARES Act.
- VA is also exploring what options may be available to assist Veteran borrowers when their period of forbearance ends as the CARES Act was silent on how the accrued/deferred payments should be recouped (and understanding that many borrowers may still face financial hardship).
- VA continues to work closely with federal housing stakeholders to determine how they will be interpreting various provisions of section 4022, and what policies they will be putting in place, including the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD's) Federal Housing Administration (FHA), the Government National Mortgage Association (Ginnie Mae), and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB).
- Section 4022 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), enables Veteran borrowers to **request a forbearance up to 180 days** on their VA-guaranteed loan if they are experiencing a financial hardship during the COVID-19 National Emergency.
- The loan holder must grant the forbearance based solely on the Veteran's affirmation of a hardship.
- The Veteran may also request an extension of an additional 180 days of forbearance.
- During the forbearance period, the Veteran may not be charged additional fees, penalties or interest.
- *Section 4022 of the CARES Act also imposes a 60-day moratorium on foreclosures of VA-guaranteed properties beginning on March 18, 2020. The moratorium does not apply to vacant or abandoned properties.*
- Other sections of the CARES Act that apply to VA-guaranteed loans (but do not result in any change/impact to LGY operations)
- Section 4021: Amends the Fair Credit Reporting Act to prevent credit reporters, such as loan servicers, from reporting a delinquency based solely on the fact that a consumer takes advantage of relief related to COVID-19 (including forbearance under section 4022). Section 4024: Imposes a 120-day moratorium on certain eviction actions for properties that have a federally backed mortgage loan, e.g., a VA-guaranteed loan.

5. (VHA/VBA) CARES Act: USDVA – \$19.6 billion

Medical Services – \$14.4 billion

- Supports increased demand for healthcare services at VA facilities and through telehealth, including the purchase of medical equipment and supplies, testing kits, and personal protective equipment.
- Also enables VA to provide additional support for vulnerable veterans, including through programs to assist homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless veterans, as well as within VA-run nursing homes and community living centers.

Medical Community Care – \$2.1 billion

- Supports increased demand for care in the community, specifically emergency room and urgent care.

Medical Emergency Management – \$100 million

- Supports the Veterans Health Administration's 24-hour emergency management coordination, including overtime, travel, transportation of materials, and training.

Medical Facilities – \$606 million

- Supports development of alternative sites of care and procurement of mobile treatment centers to meet the demand for healthcare services, improvements in security, and non-recurring maintenance projects to existing infrastructure and utility systems at VA facilities (e.g., reconfiguration of space to support care).

Information Technology – \$2.15 billion

- Supports increased telework, telehealth, and call center capabilities to deliver healthcare services directly related to coronavirus and mitigate the risk of virus transmission.
- This includes the purchasing of devices, as well as enhanced system bandwidth and support.

Veterans Benefits Administration – \$13.0 million

- Provides additional software licenses and telework support for staff and enhances cleaning contracts.

Emergency Management – \$6 million

- Expands and maintains 24-hour operations of Crisis Response and Continuity of Operations Plan implementation at various sites.
- Expands cleaning and sanitation service in high traffic facilities.

Grants for Construction of State Extended Care Facilities – \$150 million

- Supports modification or alteration of existing hospital, nursing home, and domiciliary facilities in state homes to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

Office of Inspector General – \$12.5 million

- Supports oversight of VA's efforts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus.

Related Agencies – Armed Forces Retirement Homes – \$2.8 million

- Supports increased healthcare, security, and food services personnel expenses, as well as necessary supplies and equipment at the Armed Forces Retirement Homes in Washington, D.C. and Gulfport, Mississippi.

General Provisions – Veterans Emergency Authorities Tele mental Health Services for Isolated Veterans

- Authorizes VA to expand mental health services delivered via telehealth and enter into short-term agreements with telecommunication companies to provide veterans with temporary broadband services.

6. Other Supporting Information:

NADSVA President Inquiry to IGA – 23 March 2020

1. *"A crucial aspect of your services, however, remains unaddressed: the pending deadlines on claims and appeals for benefits and services that your agency adjudicates. We ask that you suspend these deadlines for the duration of the President's declaration of a national emergency, plus ninety (90) days thereafter, to ensure that Veterans and their family members do not lose the opportunity to attain the vital benefits and services that they have earned. We also ask that you add individuals who test positive for COVID-19 to the list of expedited claims described in Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 1, Section D of the M21-1.*
2. *Claimants and appellants who are sick or caring for someone who is sick during this global crisis or working or volunteering in support of the global efforts to combat this pandemic, should not be*

disadvantaged in obtaining VA benefits and services. Such individuals should not be punished for missing a VA deadline while dealing with their own illness, or while caring for others who are ill

3. *Many Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) are unable to file claims and appeals because their offices — including their locations embedded inside the VA's own Regional Offices.*
4. *Suspend all pending deadlines until ninety (90) days after the federal government has lifted the national emergency status. This includes, but is not limited to:*
 - *The one-year deadline for a claimant to formalize a claim following the VA's receipt of an Intent to File form (VA Form 21-0966)*
 - *All claimant deadlines regarding the commencement of an appellate action (to include higher-level reviews, supplemental claims, and appeals to the Board of Veterans' Appeals)*
 - *All claimant deadlines regarding reimbursement of money paid for emergency medical care*
 - *All deadlines stemming from the Debt Management Center, including audit requests, collections efforts, debt waiver applications, drill adjustments."*

IGA Response to NASDVA President Inquiry – 24 March 2020

1. *"Thank you for your time to touch base and discuss concerns.*
2. *The Secretary sincerely appreciates NASDVA's collaborative efforts on Veterans behalf.*
3. *We appreciate the pertinent suggestions regarding operational flexibilities you have proposed on behalf the NASDVA membership.*
4. *We will attempt to address these and other issues on our call on Wednesday.*
5. *After the 25 March conference call IGA will forward informational links from VHA/VBA/NCA and BVA along with FAQs which will be beneficial to the states.*
6. *Thank you for remaining in close contact and commitment ensuring that Veteran needs are achieved in this unrepresented circumstance surrounding COVID-19 Pandemic."*

16-17 March SECVA Letter to Governors



**THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON**

March 16, 2020

The Honorable John Bel Edwards
Governor of Louisiana
900 3rd Street Capitol, 4th Floor
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Governor Edwards:

President Trump declared a nationwide emergency pursuant to section 501(b) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 United States Code 5121-5207 (the "Stafford Act") on March 13, 2020. This increases Federal support to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in its role as the lead Federal agency for the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic response.

HHS remains the lead Federal agency directing the Federal response to COVID-19. When a State, Tribe, or Territory has determined that the maximum capacity of intrastate or interstate resources are exhausted, they may request assistance from the Federal government through their

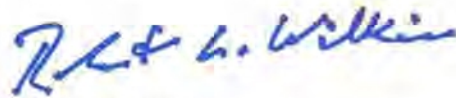
local HHS Regional Emergency Coordinator (REC). The HHS REC will then submit a task order to the HHS Secretary's Operations Center to be resourced by HHS or by one or a combination of the support agencies, including the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

HHS can request that VA provide resources to civilian health care systems or that VA hospital care and medical services be provided to non-Veteran patients in VA facilities, dependent upon the availability of resources and funding, and consistent with VA's mission to provide priority services to Veterans. VA cannot receive direct requests for assistance from State and local governments. The established central coordination function of HHS will ensure an integrated, effective response is provided to those communities that need assistance most.

VA has defined roles in both the National Disaster Medical System and the National Response Framework in the event of national emergencies. VA is standing by ready to support as needed. Our COVID-19 emergency preparedness exercises began weeks before the first case was confirmed in the United States, and VA has plans in place to protect everyone who gets care, visits, or works at one of our facilities.

To request Federal government assistance, please contact your State's HHS REC at [eparedness/responders/rec/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.hhs.gov/emergency-preparedness/responders/rec/Pages/default.aspx). For information on VA's COVID-19 response activities, updates can be found at <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/n-coronavirus>.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Wilkie

VA IGA has notified Governor's Chief of Staffs, NASVH, NASDVA, NACVSO on the following:

- WH Coronavirus link: www.coronavirus.gov
- CDC Guidance: [Strategies to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Long-Term Care Facilities \(LTCF\)](#);
- CMS Guidance: [Suspension of Survey Activities](#);
- CMS Guidance: [Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention Concerning Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\): FAQs and Considerations for Patient Triage, Placement and Hospital Discharge](#);
- CMS Guidance: [Guidance for Infection Control and Prevention of Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) in nursing homes](#)
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/whats-new-all.html>
- CMS Announces Findings at Kirkland Nursing Home and New Targeted Plan for Healthcare Facility Inspections in light of COVID-19 ([Click here](#))

(NCA) Guidance:

VA National Cemeteries Remain Open for Interment; Will Adjust Operations in Response to COVID-19

20 March 2020

WASHINGTON — All Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemeteries are open and will continue to provide interments for Veterans and eligible individuals. Effective March 23, 2020, as a matter of public health and safety, committal services and the rendering of military funeral honors will not be conducted until further notice at VA national cemeteries. Immediate family members (limited to no more than 10 individuals) of the deceased may witness the interment if requested.

“VA national cemeteries will continue to perform our essential function – to inter Veterans and eligible individuals” said Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Randy Reeves. “We trust the public understands that we must place priority on the health and safety of Veterans and families and our team members who serve them.”

Those families choosing to continue with interment may schedule a committal service at a later date. Those families wishing to postpone an already scheduled interment to a later date should contact the cemetery as soon as possible to convey their wishes.

VA national cemeteries remain open to visitors. All guests are strongly urged to obey local travel restrictions and avoid unnecessary travel. Visitors should expect that certain portions of a cemetery typically open to the public, such as public information centers or chapels, may be closed to the public. Contact your local cemetery for updates regarding what may be closed.

For more information, contact NCA Public Affairs chief Les’ Melnyk at (202) 891-9987. To make burial arrangements at any VA national cemetery, call the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at (800) 535-1117.

(BVA) Board of Veteran Appeals:

- In keeping with VA’s primary mission to care for our Veterans, the Board of Veterans’ Appeals is suspending all travel board, video and Central Office hearings through at least May 1, 2020. Virtual hearings are available.
- We are asking Veterans to work with their representatives on rescheduling hearings. Veterans who prefer to wait for travel board, video or central office hearings to resume will receive top priority in hearing rescheduling.
- Click here for information on [Virtual Hearings](#).

USDVA Secretary - IGA Stakeholders Briefing Call – Tuesday, 14 April 2020 @ 1:30 -2:30pm (EDT)



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Office of Inter-Governmental Affairs – COVID-19 Briefing Call

Dear State & Local Leader,

On Tuesday, April 14, 2020 from 1:30 – 2:30pm (EDT), please join *The Honorable Robert L. Wilkie, Secretary, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs* and *The Honorable Douglas L. Hoelscher, Deputy Assistant to the President, Office of White House Intergovernmental Affairs* for a COVID-19 briefing call update surrounding the GI Bill – Pension Benefits and the CARES Act implementation. The briefing call will afford opportunity for Q & A. **Please distribute to your memberships to complete online registration.**

SPEAKERS

The Honorable Robert L. Wilkie,
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

The Honorable Douglas L. Hoelscher
Deputy Assistant to the President
Executive Office of the President
White House Intergovernmental Affairs

The Honorable Paul R. Lawrence, Ph.D.
Under Secretary
Veterans Benefits Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Dr. Richard A. Stone, M.D.
Executive in Charge
Veterans Health Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

HOST: Mr. Thayer Verschoor
Executive Director, Intergovernmental Affairs
Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

INVITED PARTICIPANTS

Governors' Chiefs of Staff
Governors' Washington, DC Directors
State Legislative Veterans Committee Chairs
National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA)
National Association of State Veteran Homes (NASVH)
National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NACVSO)
Tribal Veteran Leaders and Veteran Service Representatives
Faith Based Leaders

Briefing Call Registration – *Please note that you will need to register to participate on the call*

Date: Tuesday, April 14

Time: 1:30-2:30 pm EDT (please note time zone)

Participants will receive instructions on accessing the conference after RSVPing to the link below:

RSVP URL: <https://ems9.intellor.com?do=register&t=1&p=901431>

NOTE: You **must** RSVP to join the call. Upon successful registration, you will receive dial-in details to the email address you use to register. **Note** that multiple people cannot dial-in using the same registration information.

The USDVA Office of Intergovernmental Affairs (VA IGA) will continue to share pertinent information as it becomes available. Please do not hesitate to reach out to our office directly if we can be of assistance. As a reminder, VA IGA is the primary liaison between State and local elected officials and Tribal Governments.

AGENDA

1:30pm

The Honorable Robert L. Wilkie
Secretary
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

1:40pm

The Honorable Douglas L. Hoelscher
Deputy Assistant to the President
Executive Office of the President
White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs

1:45pm

The Honorable Paul R. Lawrence, Ph.D.
Under Secretary
Veterans Benefits Administration – VBA
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

2:00pm

Dr. Richard A. Stone, M.D.
Executive in Charge
Veterans Health Administration - VHA
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

2:15pm

Q & A

ATTACHMENTS:

1. SECVA - IGA Stakeholders COVID-19 Invitation/Agenda
[See above in background section](#)
2. Press Release - CARES Act “Helping VA Boost Protections for Veterans”
[See attachment](#)
3. VBA White Papers
[See attachments](#)
4. VHA 9 April COVID-19 SECVA Briefing
[See attachment](#)
5. The Honorable Douglas L. Hoelscher, Deputy Assistant to the President, WH IGA
[See bio below](#)
6. Mr. John Hilgert, NASDVA President –
[See bio below](#)
7. Mr. John Scocos, Executive Director, NASDVA –
[See bio below](#)

**The Honorable Douglas Hoelscher
Deputy Assistant to the President
White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs**



Doug is a Deputy Assistant to the President and the Director of White House Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA). In this role, he serves as the Trump Administration's liaison to the nation's governors, lieutenant governors, attorneys general, and other statewide, local and tribal leaders.

Doug aims to effectively solve intergovernmental issues and shared challenges by building relationships at each level of the government. He was previously the Deputy Director of IGA and served the Director of the Iowa Office of State-Federal Relations where he represented State of Iowa leaders before the Federal Government and built coalitions with other states and key stakeholders.

Doug chaired the National Governors Association 2016 Summer Meeting Committee, which was hosted in Des Moines, Iowa. Doug previously worked at PricewaterhouseCoopers and held several positions within the George W. Bush Administration – at the White House and at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

**Director John Hilgert
Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs
*NASDVA President***



John Hilgert has served, since leaving the State Legislature in 2001, as the Director of the Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs, having been appointed by then Governor Mike Johanns.

Governor Heineman retained John as Director and assigned him additional duties as a Division Director of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services with direct oversight of the Veterans Homes Division. He continued to serve the State in both capacities, having been retained by Governor Pete Ricketts.

In 2017, the Veterans' Homes Division was merged into the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs. He is an Army veteran of the Gulf War, having served with the First Infantry Division.

John Hilgert has served, since leaving the State Legislature, in 2001 as the Director of the Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs having been appointed by then Governor Mike Johanns. Governor Heineman retained John as Director and assigned him additional duties as a Division Director of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services with direct oversight of the Veterans Homes Division. He continues to serve the State in both capacities having been retained by Governor Pete Ricketts. In 2017, the Division was merged into the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs. He is an Army veteran of the Gulf War having served with the First Infantry Division.

Agency Director
2001 to Present

Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs
Lincoln, Nebraska

Appointed by Governor Mike Johanns, November 2001.

Retained by Governor Dave Heineman, 2005.

Retained by Governor Pete Ricketts 2014.

Supervised the delivery of State services to veterans, their families and dependents divided into four divisions; the State Service Division, the Cemetery Division, Veterans Home Division and the Administrative division.

- Championed the replacement of the Thomas Fitzgerald Veterans Home and the Grand Island Veterans Home.
- Established the Nebraska Veterans Cemetery in Alliance.
- Streamlined and coordinated the admissions process for the Nebraska State Veterans Homes.
- Led expansion of State Service Office mission and transferred operations to a cloud based digital environment.

Division Director

2007 to July 1, 2017 when merged with NDVA

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Veterans Homes

Lincoln, Nebraska

Assigned additional position by Governor Dave Heineman, April 2007. Retained by Governor Pete Ricketts in January 2015.

Supervised the creation of the Division as a result of the reorganization of DHHS. Supervise the Administrators of the four state veterans' homes in Nebraska. Accountable for the budget, staffing and quality of care for the division. Created the position of and supervise the first System Clinician as well as the Fiscal Analyst for the Division.

- Supporting system reforms such as consistent staffing, acuity-based staffing, survey readiness and the establishment of new quality indicators.
- Lead the effort to establish the 225 beds, 340,000 sq. ft. Central Nebraska Veterans Home.
- Successfully lead the effort to merge the Veterans Home Division of DHHS into the Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs.

State Senator, District 7

1995 to 2001

Nebraska Legislature

Lincoln, Nebraska

Appointed by Governor Ben Nelson, August 1995. Elected 1996. Reelected 2000.

- Represented the culturally and economically diverse legislative district of Downtown and South Omaha in the Nebraska Legislature.

Maintained high ratings in both business and labor communities.

Championed micro-enterprise development as well as supporting major corporate investment in the downtown area.

Senior Director for Government Relations, 1997-2001; Director of Development, 1994-1997; Assistant to Executive Director, 1992-1994.

1992 to 2001

Catholic Charities

Omaha, Nebraska

- Assisted in resource development for the construction and establishment of the Omaha Campus for Hope with specific emphasis on government funding.
- Assisted with various fund raising and development initiatives as well as staffing the Catholic Charities Service League.
- Secured operational funding and resources for various agency programs.

1989 to 1992

Judge Advocate General's Corps United States Army

Legal Assistance Officer in the Staff Judge Advocate's Office, First Infantry Division (MECH), 1991-1992.

Deployed to Kuwait Theater of Operations, December 1990- May 1991, Operation Desert Shield/ Operation Desert Storm. Served in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Republic of Iraq,

Trial Defense Service, Assigned to First Infantry Division, (MECH), Fort Riley, Kansas 1989-1991;

- Represented soldiers in criminal and administrative justice cases.
- Represented a great diversity of clients, issues and situations.

Additional Experience

District Vice-President

2013 to present

National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs

Board Member and Chair

2003 to 2008

Metro Area Transit Authority, City of Omaha

Omaha, Nebraska

Committee Member

2008 to 2011

Advisory Committee for Homeless Veterans, United States Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington D.C.

Education

U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's School, Charlottesville, Virginia J.D., 1989

Creighton University School of Law, Omaha, Nebraska, Admitted to Nebraska State Bar, 1989

B.S., Business Administration, Finance Major, 1986

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, Nebraska

Daniel J. Gross High School, 1982

Affiliations

- Nebraska State Bar Association
- Past Commander, Life Member, American Legion, South Omaha Post No. 331
- Life Member, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 1581
- Member, Knights of Columbus, Council No. 10909
- Member, Board of Directors, Cornhusker Boys' State Corporation 2002 - 2017
- Life Member, Disabled American Veterans and AMVETS, Post 25
- Member and positions of Leadership in numerous Neighborhood Associations and Community groups

Honors

- Hall of Fame, Daniel J. Gross High School
- Eagle Scout, Boy Scouts of America
- Honorary Life Member, Vietnam Veterans of America

Volunteer

Committee Member, Catholic Social Teaching Ministry, St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, Omaha

2012 to 2016; Assistant Scout Master, Boy Scout Troop 408, St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church, Omaha

2009 to 2017; Cub Master Cub Scout Pack 408, St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church Omaha 2006

John A. Scocos
Executive Director
National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA)
NASDVA Executive Director



John A. Scocos is a former Secretary of Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, where he served for over 13 years. He also served as the Assistant Deputy Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the department. Prior to serving in the state veterans' agency, John was the Chief Clerk of the Wisconsin State Assembly. Previously, he was employed by the Weber Group in La Crosse, Wisconsin as the Director of Government Affairs. The Weber Group promotes healthy living across multiple industries, including development, hospitality, and healthcare and wellness.

Mr. Scocos is the son of a prisoner of war and is a United States army veteran with 31 years of active and reserve service. He enlisted in 1979 and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1981. His service included a deployment during Operation Joint Endeavor (1996), two tours in Iraq (2007 and 2008), and appointment to the Pentagon as a military assistant to the U.S. Secretary of Defense. He retired from the U.S. Army as a Colonel in 2010. His military awards include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star (oak leaf cluster), Meritorious Service Medal (3 oak leaf clusters), and the Combat Action Badge.

Mr. Scocos is active in many community organizations, including as a Troop Scout Master for the Boy Scouts of America, volunteering with numerous veterans' groups, and with the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church.

Mr. Scocos has a bachelor's degree in History from Mankato State University and an MBA from Touro University International. Mr. Scocos is married to Dr. Kelly Williams, a researcher and university professor. They are proud parents with three children and one grandchild. They reside in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin.