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Commissioner

NEWS BRIEFS

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Recent Veterans Can Request Military Physical Disability Review

Veterans who have been medically separated from military service between September 11, 2001, and December 31, 2009, with a combined disability rating of 20 percent or less, and not found eligible for retirement, will have the opportunity to have their disability ratings reviewed to ensure fairness and accuracy.

The Department of Defense's new Physical Disability Board of Review will examine each applicant's medical separation, compare DoD and VA ratings, and make a recommendation to the respective Service Secretary.

A disability rating cannot be lowered, and any change to the rating is effective on the date of final decision by the Service Secretary. Information about the Physical Disability Board of Review is available on the DoD's Military Health System Web site at www.health.mil/pdbr.

VA Suicide Prevention Hotline Credited with 2,600 "Saves"

Since July 2007, VA's 24-hour suicide prevention hotline has received about 100,000 calls and has been credited with saving the lives of 2,600 people. The VA's suicide prevention hotline is 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

As the military deals with a record number of suicides among active-duty forces, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki reminds Veterans and their

families that the VA has an extensive array of services to help Veterans in distress. The secretary urges Veterans and their loved ones to take advantage of the VA's suicide-prevention program.

In addition to the suicide hotline, VA medical workers have had suicide prevention training and VA medical centers are staffed with suicide prevention coordinators.

Alabama Veterans also have access to Readjustment Counseling Centers, commonly called Vet Centers, at three locations in Birmingham, Mobile and Montgomery.

Veterans and family members can call their local County Veterans Service Office for assistance, or by calling the VA's toll free number at 1-800-827-1000.

Individual Unemployability

Individual Unemployability is part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation program that allows VA to pay certain veterans compensation at the 100% rate, even though VA has not rated their service-connected disabilities at the total rate.

A veteran must be unable to maintain substantially gainful employment as a result of his or her service-connected disabilities. The veteran must also have a 60 percent or greater disability or two or more service-connected disabilities with at least one disability ratable at 40 percent or more with a combined rating of 70 percent or more.

For more information about Individual Unemployability benefits, contact your County Veterans Service Office.

Social Security Work Credits Awarded for Military Service

Your active duty, or active duty for training, in the U. S. Armed Services has counted towards Social Security credits since January 1957. Since January 1, 1988, members of the Armed Forces Reserve components, while on inactive duty for training, also earned Social Security credits.

At the time of your application for Social Security benefits, you or your survivor must present your service discharge papers as proof of your military service.

For further information about Social Security credits due to ones military service, please contact your local Social Security office.

Personalized License Plates are Available to Members of the Alabama National Guard

Eligible active or retired members of the Alabama National Guard or Air National Guard are authorized to be issued a personalized National Guard License Plate. For more details on this benefit, please contact your county licensing official.