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Rear Admiral W. Clyde Marsh, USN, (Ret.)  
Commissioner

## NEWS BRIEFS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **Basic Eligibility for VA Health Care Benefits**

A person who served in the active military and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable may qualify for VA health care benefits. Reservists and National Guard members may also qualify for VA health care benefits if they were called to active duty (other than for training only) by a Federal order and completed the full period for which they were called or ordered to active duty.

Veterans who enlisted after Sept. 7, 1980, or who entered active duty after Oct. 16, 1981, must have served 24 continuous months or the full period for which they were called to active duty in order to be eligible. This minimum duty requirement may not apply to veterans discharged for hardship, early out or a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.

Contact your County Veterans Service office for information about VA's health care benefits.

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### **VA Relaxes Healthcare Enrollment Policy**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has changed the eligibility rules for veterans healthcare. On June 15, 2009, the VA made it easier for more Veterans to enroll in VA's health care system.

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Additional funding allows the VA to expand enrollment opportunity for certain Priority 8 veterans who may have been previously denied enrollment in VA's health care system because their income exceeded VA's means tests thresholds.

The new provision allows the VA to enroll Veterans whose income exceeds current means-tested thresholds by up to 10 percent. Veterans who have applied for VA health care but were rejected due to income at any point in 2009 will have their applications reconsidered under the new income threshold formula. A new application is not required.

Veterans who applied before 2009, but were rejected due to income, must reapply. VA will contact these Veterans through a direct-mail campaign.

Veterans are encouraged to contact VA's Health Resource Center at 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visit the VA health eligibility website at [www.va.gov/healtheligibility/](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/).

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### **VA's Life Insurance Program for Eligible Disabled Veterans**

Veterans who are found by the VA to be disabled due to their VA rated service-connected injuries may be eligible for up to \$10,000 in valuable Service-Disabled Veterans Life Insurance coverage. This eligibility criteria includes being in good health, except for your service-connected disability, and applying for this insurance within two years of the VA granting you of your service-connected disability rating.

Call you County Veterans Service office for more information about this VA benefit.

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### **Updating Retired Pay Records Important**

To ensure that your survivors are not denied their Survivor Benefit Plan benefits, known as SBP, or your unpaid retired pay for the month in which you died, it is critical that your records are current. Always notify the Defense Finance and Accounting Service of key changes in your family status such as your getting married, divorced, widowed or gaining a child. Additionally, Veterans should ensure that designated beneficiaries are current and on file at the Finance Center.

Veterans with questions about their retirement pay records can call the DFAS toll free number at 1-888-332-7411.

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## **Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs Expands Scholarship Benefits**

The Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs is expanding educational benefits for dependents of eligible Veterans who qualify for the Alabama G.I. Dependents' Scholarship.

Students initially enrolling in school beginning Fall 2009 will receive an additional two semesters of entitlement. The change extends the amount of entitlement from eight semesters to ten semesters for dependents whose parent was killed on active duty; died from a service-connected disability; was declared MIA; was a former POW; or has a 20% or greater disability rating and entered the military from the State of Alabama.

The new entitlement also extends scholarship benefits from four to six semesters for spouses of Veterans who have a 20% to 90% VA rated disability.

For more information about the Alabama G.I. Dependents' Scholarship, contact your County Veterans Service office, or go to [www.va.state.al.us/schlarship.htm](http://www.va.state.al.us/schlarship.htm).