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NEWS BRIEFS

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President's 2010 Budget Request Strongly Supports VA Programs

The President's first proposed budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs expands eligibility for health care to an additional 500,000 deserving Veterans over the next five years. The proposed 2010 budget will also meet the need for continued growth in programs for combat Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, and will provide the resources to deliver quality health care for the Nation's 5.5 million Veteran patients.

If accepted by Congress, the President's budget proposal would increase VA's budget from \$97. billion this fiscal year to \$112.8 billion for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, 2009. This is in addition to the \$1.4 billion provided for VA projects in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

The gradual expansion in health care enrollment that the proposed budget would support will open hospital and clinic doors to more than 500,000 Veterans by 2013 that have been excluded from VA medical care benefits since 2003.

The new budget provides greater benefits for Veterans who are medically retired from active duty, allowing for the first time all military retirees to keep their full VA disability compensation along with their retired pay. The VA Centers of Excellence will receive funding to support additional specialty care in areas as prosthetics, vision, spinal cord injury, aging and women's health.

The 2010 budget will also expand a pilot program with non-profit organizations that is aimed at helping America's homeless veterans. Finally, the President's budget plan will improve health care services by increasing the number of Vet Centers and mobile health clinics in rural communities.

Severely Injured Active Duty Service Personnel Eligible for Immediate VA Pre-stabilization Compensation Benefits

If a veteran files a claim within 6 months from the date of separation and service medical records show the existence of an unstabilized condition from any disease or injury for which service connection may be granted by the VA, a pre-stabilization rating of 100 percent or 50 percent may be assigned immediately by the VA.

The 100 percent pre-stabilization rating applies when there is an unstabilized condition with severe disability and substantially gainful employment is not feasible or advisable. The 50 percent pre-stabilization rating is applicable when there are unhealed or incompletely healed wounds or injuries and material impairment of employability is likely.

The VA pre-stabilization disability rating is effective for at least 12 months from the veteran's date of discharge. During this period the VA will re-evaluate the disability and award a new rating.

For assistance in applying for VA benefits please visit your County Veterans Service Office.

Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) Chapter 1607

The Reserve Educational Assistance Program is a Department of Defense education benefit program for members of the Reserve components called or ordered to active duty after September 1, 2001, in response to a war or national emergency as declared by the President or Congress.

Disabled service members who are injured or have an illness or disease incurred in the line of duty and are released from active duty before completing 90 consecutive days are also eligible.

The payment amount for REAP is determined by the number of days a Reservist serves on active duty with a maximum monthly benefit of \$1,056.80 for up to 36 months of full time entitlement.

To find out more about REAP, contact your school's financial aid office, or call the VA GI BILL office at 1-888-442-4551.

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) Family Coverage

The Veterans' Opportunities Act of 2001 extended insurance coverage to spouses and children of members insured under the SGLI program, effective November 1, 2001. Eligible dependents may purchase up to \$100,000 of SGLI coverage for a spouse, increments of \$10,000.

Family coverage is available for the spouses and children of active duty service members and members of the National Guard and Reserves.

For information about the insurance coverage and premium cost, call the SGLI toll free number at 1-800-419-1473.

VA Provided Medical and Dental Care Available to VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program Participants

Veterans participating in the VA vocational rehabilitation program, known as Chapter 31, are eligible for VA healthcare treatment to include medical and dental care for nonservice-connected conditions. For further information, please contact your nearest VA medical facility.