

EAGLE NEWS

The official Newsletter of the Central Minnesota Chapter 115
The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA)

June 2006

STATE LEGISLATURE PASSES MULTI-PART VETERANS PACKAGE

A portion of Gov. Tim Pawlenty's veterans package, made it through the Minnesota Legislature. The \$9 million original package sought by the governor was aimed at helping returning veterans adjust back to civilian life and be successful.

The final version totaled \$3.4 million in new money for the programs. Expenditures include:

1. \$2 million for the State Soldier's Assistance Program, a general program for financially supporting veterans as they make the transition back to their communities.
2. \$100,000 to create a new veterans website that will provide a one-stop source for information and benefits.
3. \$200,000 for grants to counties to enhance services provided by the County Veterans Service Officers.
4. \$600,000 to establish a group of representatives at Minnesota colleges and schools who can help returning veterans get into school.
5. \$500,000 in additional money to serve veterans, particularly minorities and women, who may have not been aware of the benefits they have coming.
6. \$80,000 to the VFW, the DAV, the Military Order of the Purple Heart and the Vietnam Veterans of America for veterans services.
7. \$12.1 million to the Veterans Homes in bonding money that includes \$6 million in asset preservation; \$637,000 for a Fergus Falls special care unit; \$700,000 for a Hasting supportive housing unit; \$600,000 for a dementia wander area at Luverne; \$2.46 million for an emergency power system at the Minneapolis Veterans Home, and \$1.7 million for a Silver Bay master plan.

In other action, the lawmakers:

1. Requested the colleges, universities and the University of Minnesota to treat all military veterans as residents of the state for tuition purposes.
2. Stops late charges on veteran students who are waiting for government educational assistance.
3. Gave military personnel on leave free access to all State parks.
4. Provided employment leave for family members of an injured or killed soldier. Employers must also provide unpaid leave for family members to attend a military ceremony.
5. Authorized two plaques in the Court of Honor at the Capital, one for Medal of Honor recipients and one for military war dogs and their handlers.

Part of the new funding plan will be to put the veterans outreach program on regular state funding, rather than depend on license plate money. The plate money will now be used for the Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans and other programs. The extra money for the Soldier's Assistance program will mean that it will provide a stronger and wider safety net for returning veterans, and also for older veterans who meet the guidelines. Another program funded was the Income Tax Credit for Recent Veterans bill. The Legislature provided up to \$708 in income tax credit for those veterans who served up to a year in a combat zone since 2001; this will not take the place of a bonus program at some point for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

SENATE APPROVES AMENDMENT BARRING TRICARE RETAIL PHARMACY HIKES

The Senate on Wednesday **June 15, 2006**) approved an amendment by Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) that would bar the Department of Defense from increasing pharmacy co pays in the Tricare retail network through Fiscal Year 2007.

The Lautenberg amendment was introduced in opposition to a provision in the FY 2007 Defense Authorization Bill (S.2766), as drafted by the Senate Armed Services Committee that would allow the DOD to increase fees by about 67 percent for drugs purchased in retail pharmacies starting Oct. 1.

On the other hand, S.2766 would bar most other Tricare fee increases for at least a year and, in the pharmacy area, it would actually reduce co pays to zero for most drugs ordered through the Tricare mail-order pharmacy system. Members of the military retiree community are urged to follow S.2766, as amendments affecting the military are debated through the rest of the week and perhaps longer.

TREA CHAPTER 115 MEETING MINUTES OF SATURDAY, 6 MAY 2006

Ralph Donais called the meeting to order at 11:15 am. Del Fuller gave the Invocation and Ralph led the pledge of allegiance. Past President Dick Habeck swore in new chapter officers, Ralph as President and Mark Davidson as 1st Vice according to National policy.

Announcements & Welcome any Guests: None

Approval of Minutes: The Minutes of the 3/18/06 meeting were read by Ralph, moved by Dick, seconded by Del and approved by the membership.

Treasure Report: The profit at the recent Brat Sale at CUB was \$521. One quarterly rebate 2005 last quarter was received. Rebates are still in question. Dick discussed the problem with TREA Chairman in charge of rebates. TREA office had decided not to send it out. Discussion was held on National Holding the funds for the mail-out that our chapter sent out on Minnesota's tax exemption. National had donations of \$4,891.37 to be used to inform our members. National has spent \$1650.41 for two mail-outs. Our chapter spent \$555.00 to send out two mailings. The question was raised if National paid or outsourced the mail-outs. That might be a reason for the high cost of their mail-outs. We had a member of our chapter who passed away by the name of William Clark from Mankato. He left our chapter a gift of \$5,000.00. It will several months due to probate and such before we actually receive the money.

Dick made the motion to reimburse Ralph for printing of Legislative Newsletters of \$213.00 and \$95.32. Seconded by Dennis Rock. Motion Carried.

Legislative Report: Our tax exemption still hasn't passed in the house. Senate approved the tax exemption. The Exemption has been delayed in the house due to the Tax Committee.

Membership Report from Mark Davidson:

We had 294 members in the chapter at the end of March. I am checking on termination reports. Linda Davidson will be co-chairing the Membership Committee. 150 mail outs were made to Air Force Retirees. The question came up about the member addresses from National being outdated or bad!

Chaplin's Report & Metro Vets No report due to absence of Frank Buhl.

Health Benefits Advisor Rod Erickson is at the DAV conference being held this weekend so no report was given.

Presidents Report: Chapter Positions: We have volunteers in several areas that we didn't have before. We have sent out two bulletins state wide to keep our TREA members in the state abreast of what is going on at the capital.

TREA National Convention: Registration is due before the first of June or there is an extra fee. President stated that he would be going for sure.

Old Business: None at this time.

New Business: Meeting Schedule for 2006 was discussed at this time. Motion to have meetings on the first Saturday of each quarter with a bi-monthly newsletter made by Dick and seconded by Del. The next meeting will be the 5th August. The last meeting of the year will be on the 4th of November for 2006. Next years schedule will still be on the first Saturday of the following months, Feb, May, August and November.

News Letter was discussed at this time. Number of pages is an important issue. A motion had already been passed that made the newsletter a bi-monthly event. I was suggested that Office Depot could print and fold the newsletter. Several members will discuss what we need to put into the newsletter following the meeting.

Received a fund raising promotion from Chapter 29. Money will be used to pay for members to attend convention. Contact President for more information.

Motion made by Dick to help pay Presidents registration and expenses for the National Convention, transportation, and lodging not to exceed \$750.00. 2nd by Dennis. Motion carried

Motion to adjourn at 1:05 pm made by Del and second by Richard Garty. Attendees enjoyed the Chapter picnic.



Ralph Donais receiving congratulations from Dick Habeck on his election as Chapter President



New Chapter Officers, Mark Davidson 1st Vice, Ralph Donais President, Tom Hair Treasurer and Ron Erickson (absent) as Secretary

FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

Saturday, August 5, 2006
Saturday, November 4, 2006
Saturday, February 3, 2007
Saturday, May 5, 2007
Saturday, August 4, 2007
Saturday, November 3, 2007

Membership by Mark Davidson

Everyone is a membership recruiter in our chapter. My challenge to everyone in the chapter is to talk to just ONE enlisted retiree before July 4th and tell them about TREA. Give them our national website: www.TREA.org Tell them about the pro-active and positive lobbying TREA does on our behalf in Washington D.C.

If this person wants to join give them a membership application or refer them to the TREA website because there is a membership application on-line. OR give them my contact information, which is in this newsletter, and I'll send them a membership application. If you or the possible new member tells me, I'll list you as the recruiter and you'll get a pin from TREA.

We also need your e-mail address to send you late-breaking information about legislative action that needs all our attention. Please send your e-mail address to Ralph Donais. See his contact information in this newsletter. If you have any questions about membership please contact me.

FACT SHEETS COVER VARIED TRICARE TOPICS

Release No. 6-04-06
June 9, 2006

A series of fact sheets have been written to help anyone who needs detailed information on particular Tricare topics.

Beneficiaries, beneficiary counseling and assistance coordinators, customer service representatives and others responsible for explaining or understanding Tricare are encouraged to print out and save all the Fact Sheets to assist with questions or issues at hand, or to use for future reference.

All of the Fact Sheets reflect the most current information, and print versions are available at the bottom of each fact sheet. Fact sheets may be viewed at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/factsheets/index.cfm?fx=show> www.tricare.osd.mil/factsheets/index.cfm?fx=show

VA beefs up data security procedures, top official tells Congress

By Steven Donald Smith
American Forces Press Service
Release No. 6-03-06 dated June 9, 2006

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs is revamping its data security procedures following last month's theft of a VA laptop computer that contained personal information of veterans and military personnel still in uniform, the secretary of the VA told a congressional committee Thursday.

On May 3, the Montgomery County, Md., home of a 34-year VA employee was burglarized and a laptop and hard drive containing personal data of 26.5 million veterans and more than 2 million active-duty, Guard and Reserve members, was stolen. The laptop also contained some spousal and dependent information. The data included birth dates and Social Security numbers, VA officials said.

The stolen laptop did not contain any health records, Nicholson said.

The area where the robbery occurred has witnessed a recent spate of home burglaries and officials do not think the data on the laptop was the target. "We remain hopeful that this was a common, random theft and that no use will be made of this data," Nicholson said.

The VA employee, who worked as a data analyst, was not authorized to take the information home.

"I have initiated several actions to strengthen our privacy and data security programs," he said. "On May 24, we

launched the data security, assessment and strengthening program, a high-priority focus plan to strengthen our data privacy and security procedures."

Also, all VA employees must complete privacy and cyber security training by June 30. A task force of senior VA leadership was put together to review all aspects of information security and assess which employees need access to certain data, and the agency has suspended the practice of allowing veterans benefits employees from removing claimant files from agency work areas.

Another issue raised by Nicholson during today's hearing was the difficulty in punishing misconduct.

"I believe the policies we have and the legislation under which they are promulgated is generally adequate. But it is too hard in my opinion to discipline people in the civil service," he said. "I think we should consider putting ... teeth into an enforcement mechanism for careless and negligent handling of personal information."

Another issue he raised was the lack of repeated background checks. He said the employee who had his laptop stolen had not had a background check in 32 years.

"This has been a painful lesson for us as the VA," Nicholson said. "Ultimately our success in changing this is going to depend on changing the culture. And that depends on our ability to change the attitudes of our people. It's our duty to do this."

The VA has set up a manned call center that veterans and active-duty personnel can call to get information about the situation and learn more about consumer identity protections. The toll-free number is 1-800-FED-INFO (333-4636).

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Directions to Chapter BOD meeting and the General Membership meeting at 11:00 am the first Saturday on August 5 & November 4, 2006 and February 3 & May 5, 2007

VFW Memorial Complex
7350 Quaday, Otsego, Minnesota
763-241-5225

From I-94 in Rogers:

Go north on highway 101 towards Elk River. After crossing the Crow River, the VFW is located to the left of Highway 101. Turn left on County Road 42 at the signal light. Then, take the next left on Quaday. The VFW will be about ½ mile on the left. You will see several brown buildings on the left.

From Highway 10 in Elk River:

Go south to Highway 101 towards Rogers. After crossing the Mississippi River, the 2nd signal will be County Road 42. Take a right at County Road 42 and then left on Quaday. The VFW will be about ½ mile on the left. You will see several brown buildings on the left.

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