



# Good of the Legion

Items to share with your post members at your next post meeting or to display on the bulletin board.

## **Blue Water veterans are finally getting their due, spread the word.**

Who should be seeing an Accredited Veteran Service Officer about the Blue Water issues?

If you are a Vietnam Veteran who served on a ship in the blue waters surrounding Vietnam, the law states 12 nautical miles, but don't worry if you do not remember, they have created a list of ships that qualify. Unfortunately, they are not giving that list out for us to publish, the veteran needs to apply first.

If you are the widow of a Vietnam Veteran who served on a ship in the blue waters surrounding Vietnam and they may have died due to a heart condition, cancer, or a disease in one of the 14 categories listed should speak to an accredited veteran service officer. To be sure if the disease is covered, talk to an accredited service officer.

Any veteran or widow who previously filed a claim for Agent Orange, but was denied due to not having service on the ground in Vietnam.

Korean war veterans or widows should speak with an accredited veteran service officer if the veteran served on or near the DMZ in South Korea in the

1950s and 1960s and suffers or died from one of the 14 categories listed.

Who is an Accredited Veteran Service Officer?

An accredited veteran service officer is employed by a veterans service organization, like The American Legion, a county veteran service office, or state veteran service officer. The cost to see an accredited veteran service officer is ZERO dollars to the veteran or widow.

Do not see an attorney; they will charge you money for a service you can receive for free.

How do you find an accredited service officer near you?

Call The American Legion Department of Michigan Veteran Service Officer at (313) 964-6640.

Call the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency hotline at (800) MICH-VET

Visit Michiganveterans.com look for a benefits counselor by county.

## **Commissary, Military Service Exchange, and MWR access extended to more Veterans beginning January**

According to the Department of Defense, starting Jan. 1, 2020, all service-connected Veterans, Purple Heart recipients, former prisoners of war (POW), and individuals approved and designated as the primary family caregivers of eligible Veterans under the Department of Veterans Affairs Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) can use commissaries, exchanges, and morale, welfare and recreation (MWR) retail facilities, in-person and online.

For more information regarding these privileges and access to military installations, visit <http://www.militaryonesource.mil/expanding-access>

Who is eligible Jan. 1, 2020?



## **Cont. Commissary, Military Service Exchange, and MWR access extended to more Veterans beginning January**

- Veterans
- Purple Heart recipients
- former prisoners of war
- Veterans with 0-90% service-connected disability ratings

*(For former service members who have not yet sought disability compensation from VA, visit <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/>)*

- Medal of Honor recipients and Veterans with 100% service-connected disability ratings are already eligible under existing DOD policy.
  - Caregivers
  - On Jan. 1, individuals approved and designated as the primary family caregiver of an eligible veteran under the PCAFC will be eligible for these privileges.
  - For information about primary family caregivers in the PCAFC, visit <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/>.
- Required credentials.

- Veterans
- On Jan. 1, Veterans eligible solely under this act who are eligible to obtain a Veteran Health Identification Card must use this credential for in-person installation and privilege access. The card must display the Veteran's eligibility status (i.e., PURPLE HEART, FORMER POW or SERVICE CONNECTED). Apply here: <https://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhic/index.asp>.
- Veterans eligible solely under this act who are not enrolled in or are not eligible to enroll in VA health care, or who are enrolled in VA health care, but do not possess a Veteran Health Identification Card will not have access to DoD and Coast Guard installations for in-person commissary, exchange, and MWR retail privileges, but will have full access to online exchanges and American Forces Travel.
- Medal of Honor recipients and Veterans with 100% service-connected disability ratings are eligible for DoD credentials under DoD policy.
- Caregivers
- Eligible caregivers will receive an eligibility letter from VA's Office of Community Care.
- If you are a primary family caregiver under the PCAFC and lose your eligibility letter, please call 1-877-733-7927 to request a replacement. Please allow two weeks for processing.

Find out more about military resale privileges.

Army and Air Force Exchange Service (<https://www.shopmyexchange.com/vets>)

Coast Guard Exchange (<https://shopCGX.com>)

Defense Commissary Agency (<https://www.commissaries.com/>)

Navy Exchange (<https://www.mynavyexchange.com/>)

Marine Corps Exchange (<http://www.mymcx.com/>)

MILITARY STAR Card (<https://www.myecp.com/>)

American Forces Travel (<https://www.americanforcestravel.com>)

## **Are you the Post Service Officer?**

Greetings from the Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Committee:

In 1919, The American Legion was founded on four pillars, with the Veteran Affairs & Rehabilitation, VA&R, being the first pillar. We are the largest Veteran service organization in the State. The Department has over 380 chartered posts and 65,000 members. The purpose of the VA&R Committee is to formulate and recommend policies, plans and programs as they concern our veterans. The VA&R Committee oversees the effectiveness of Department programs.

The Department of Michigan requires for our Post Service Officers and District Service Officers to submit an annual report. This requirement was a failure for FY 18-19. Service Officer Reports submitted were 19 Post and 4 District. Department Commander Wood and Adjutant Runyan wondered why there were so few? The Director of the VA&R along with the VA&R Committee is addressing this problem to help improve submission of these required yearly reports.

In order to resolve a problem, we must recognize the problem. Many posts do not have a Post Service Officer appointed. If they do, the majority of the posts do not have effective Post Service Officers. It is the goal of the VA&R Committee to:

1. Have EVERY POST appoint a Post Service Officer.
2. Provide training to enable the Post Service Officer to fulfill the duties to assist veterans with benefits and programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and other military-related matters.
3. Build a resource guide to assist veterans in your area.
4. Monthly/annual reports.

The VA&R Committee is committed to assist your post and district to succeed. We can provide 6 hour workshop within your district to help the Post and District Service Officer learn how to fulfill the duties of their position.

The point of contact for a district workshop is  
Tom Sheppard  
[Tomanita53@gmail.com](mailto:Tomanita53@gmail.com)  
989-621-0107

Mark your calendar. Our next Annual Post Service Officer School will be held again at Ralph MacMillan Conference Center, Higgins Lake, 2-4 September 2020. We hope to see you there.

DON HOWARD  
CHAIRMAN  
VA&R Committee

## **National Commander's Pin Incentive Program**

American Legion National Commander James W. "Bill" Oxford will award his national commander "A Foundation for the Future" membership excellence pin to any Legionnaire who obtains three new members into The American Legion.

A new member is any eligible person joining for the 2020 membership year who was not a member of The American Legion during the 2019 membership year.

Each member listed must be eligible for membership in The American Legion. Forward names of Sons of The American Legion members or Auxiliary members to your detachment or unit for use in their respective incentive programs.

Only one pin will be awarded per individual. Upon receipt, national membership staff will confirm the names and mail the pin directly to the person who earned it.

More information can be found at [www.legion.org/commander/pin](http://www.legion.org/commander/pin)

### **Important numbers:**

Don't Face the VA Alone! Use an American Legion accredited Veteran Service Officer. Find one near you by calling 313-964-6641.

Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency: 800- mich-vet (642-4883)

Veteran Suicide Hotline—800- 273-8255

VA Veteran Homeless resources—877-424-3838

Department of Michigan Headquarters:



**Banquet reservations must be made by January 13, 2020.**

**Visit [michiganlegion.org](http://michiganlegion.org) to register.**

## **Important dates for 2019-2020 American Legion Programs**

### **January 2020**

January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020-Law Officer of the Year submission deadline

January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020-Firefighter of the Year submission deadline

January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020-Brewer Scholarship Application submission deadline

January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020-Wilson Scholarship Application submission deadline

### **February 2020**

February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020-All Zone Oratorical Contests must be completed before this date.

### **March 2020**

March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020-Eagle Scout of the Year Award submission deadline (applications available from National Oct. 2019)

March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020-Oratorical State Contest at Gerald R. Ford Museum in Grand Rapids, MI.

### **April 2020**

April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020- Teacher of the Year Submission deadline

April 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, 2020-National Oratorical Contest

### **May 2020**

May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020- Baseball insurance purchase deadline

May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020-Student Trooper Application Submission deadline

May 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020-Boys State Application Submission deadline

### **June 2020**

June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020- Final day for Baseball teams to register

June 14-20<sup>th</sup>, 2020-Boys State Program at Grand Valley University- Allendale Campus

### **July 2020**

July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020-Robert Turner Baseball Scholarship Submission deadline

July 12-17<sup>th</sup>, 2020-Student Trooper Program

July 22<sup>nd</sup> – July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020- Class AA Baseball State Tournament in Midland, MI

July 26<sup>th</sup>-August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020- Class A Baseball State Tournament in Marquette, MI.