

Pottawattamie Commission of Veteran Affairs

UPDATES February 2009



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LINKS OF INTEREST

Iowa Department of Veteran Affairs Veterans Needs Study
https://www.iowava.org/images/Veterans_Final_Report_2008.pdf

Department of Veteran Affairs
<http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/>

Des Moines VA Regional
<http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/facility.asp?ID=375&dnum=All>

America Supports You
<http://www.americasupportsyoud.com/>



DATES TO REMEMBER

February 2009

-Age-Related Macular Degeneration/Low Vision Awareness Month— www.preventblindness.org
-American Heart Month— www.americanheart.org,

www.goredforwomen.org

-Black History Month— asalh.org

-Wise Health Care Consumer Month— www.healthylife.com

-Relationship Wellness Month — www.wordsofwellness.com

- 1-7 National Patient Recognition Week – www.nprw.com
1-7 National Burn Awareness Week – www.shrinershq.org,
www.burnawarenessweek.org
2 Ground Hog Day
3 Four Chaplains Memorial Day (1943)
4 Navy Cross Created (1919)
4 USO Founded (1941)
8-14 National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans –
<http://www.volunteer.va.gov/NatlSaluteHospVets.asp>
8-14 Cardiovascular Professionals Week – www.acp-online.org
8-14 National Cardiac Rehabilitation Week – www.aacvpr.org
11 World Day for the Sick – www.nacc.org
12 Lincoln's Birthday (1809)
13 Marine Corps Women's Reserve Created (1943)
13 1st Medal of Honor Awarded (1861)
14 Valentine's Day
15-21 National Engineers Week- www.eweek.org
20 National Woman's Heart Day – www.womansheartday.org
22 Washington's Birthday (1732)
22-28 National Eating Disorders Awareness Week—
www.myneda.org, www.NationalEatingDisorders.org
23 Desert Storm Ground War Began (1991)
24 Fat Tuesday – Mardi Gras
25 Ash Wednesday
26 Chinese New Year
27 Kuwait Liberation Day (1991)

Proposed Resolutions to Iowa Legislature:

1 - 2009A- Provide Full Funding for the Iowa Veterans Home

2 - 2009 F - Gulf War Bonuses

3 - 2009B - Implement improved County Director of the Veterans Affairs Program

4 - 2009D - Continue to Fund the Veterans Trust Fund and protect it from raiding by non Veterans

5 - 2009c - Make Available Matching Funds to assist Veteran Service Organizations in providing service offices.

6 - 2009E - Provide Full Funding for Veterans County Property Tax Exemption

7 - 2009Q - Continue the Military Service Member Home Ownership Assistance Program.

8 - 2009M - Continue the Injured Veteran Grant Program

9 - 2009G - Exempt all Military Income Received by the National Guard, Reserve Forces, or US Armed Forces from State Income Tax while on Active Duty

10 - 2009N - Full Funding for the Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs and Iowa Veterans Cemetery.

11 - 2009I - Limit Change to Primary Residence Property Taxes for Disabled Veterans

12 - 2009X - Funding Post Secondary Education by the State for Dependent Children of Service Connected Disabled Veterans in a State School

13 - 2009Y - State of Iowa Disabled Veterans Set Aside Program

14 - 2009Z - Limit the cost to Veterans to post secondary Education at Institutions in Iowa.

Any questions on the about resolutions please contact the Pottawattamie County Veteran Affairs office.



National Salute To Veterans

Feb. 14 is Valentine's Day — a great time to say thanks to America's veterans. That's why we are observing National Salute to Veterans Week from February 8 through 14. It is also why, for the 17th straight year, the nationally syndicated column begun by Ann Landers, now called Ask Annie, has devoted a column to the National Salute, asking readers to send Valentine cards and letters to hospitalized veterans at VA medical centers. Want to do know how you can take part in this year's National Salute to Veterans?

Shinseki vows 21st-century service to veterans

Thursday, January 29, 2009

Retired Army Gen. Eric K. Shinseki took the oath of office Jan. 21 as the nation's seventh secretary of Veterans Affairs, assuming the leadership of the Department of Veterans Affairs following Tuesday's confirmation by the Senate.

"The overriding challenge I am addressing from my first day in office is to make the Department of Veterans Affairs a 21st-century organization focused on the nation's veterans as its clients," Shinseki said. He plans to develop a 2010 budget within his first 90 days that realizes the vision of President Obama: to transform VA into an organization that is people-centric, results-driven and forward-looking.

Key issues on his agenda include smooth activation of an enhanced GI Bill education benefit that eligible veterans can begin using this fall, streamlining the disability claims system, leveraging information technology to accelerate and modernize services, opening VA's health-care system to veterans previously unable to enroll in it, and facilitating access for returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

Shinseki, a former Army chief of staff, takes the reins of a 284,000-employee organization delivering health care and financial benefits to millions of veterans and survivors under a \$98 billion budget authorized this year, through networks of regional benefits offices and health-care facilities from coast to coast.

Born Nov. 28, 1942, on the island of Kauai, Hawaii, [Shinseki](#) graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1965. He served two combat tours in the Vietnam War and was wounded in action. His military decorations include three Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts. He served with distinction in Europe, the Pacific and stateside, eventually becoming the Army's senior leader from June 1999 to June 2003.

January 30, 2009

Secretary Shinseki Announces Choice for Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON – Today, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki praised President Barack Obama's intent to nominate W. Scott Gould as next Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs. Gould is currently vice president for public sector strategy at IBM Global Business Services and a former intelligence officer in the naval reserve. He has public service experience at both the departments of Commerce and Treasury.

Shinseki said, "Scott and I share a reverence for those who have served in uniform. He is fully committed to fulfilling President Obama's vision and my goals for transforming the Department of Veterans Affairs into a 21st Century organization, and he understands the fundamentals that will drive that transformation: Veteran-centric, results-oriented and forward looking."

Shinseki further said that Gould possesses a unique and wide-ranging set of skills in information technologies, acquisition, budget, human resources and leading the modernization of large, complex organizations. "Scott's expertise in these areas, as well as his broad experience in the public sector, the private sector and the military, will prove invaluable for better serving our Veterans," Shinseki added.

Gould worked in the public sector as the chief financial officer and assistant secretary for administration at the Commerce Department and deputy assistant secretary for finance and management at the Treasury Department from 1994 to 1999. As a White House Fellow, he worked at the Export-Import Bank of the United States and in the Office of the White House Chief of Staff.

Prior to his job at IBM, he was chief executive officer of The O'Gara Company, a strategic advisory and investment services firm, and chief operating officer of Exolve, a technology services company.

As a naval reservist, Gould served at sea aboard the guided missile destroyer Richard E. Byrd and as assistant professor of naval science at Rochester University. He was recalled to active duty for both Operation Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom as a naval intelligence reservist.

During President Obama's campaign and after his election, Gould was co-chair of the National Veterans Policy Team, Obama for America, and co-chair of the Veterans Agency Review Team for the Presidential Transition Team.

A fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, Gould is a former member of the National Security Agency's Technical Advisory Group and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Board of Overseers. He has been awarded the Department of Commerce Medal, the Treasury Medal and the Navy Meritorious Service Medal and is coauthor of *The People Factor: Strengthening America by Investing in the Public Service*. He holds a bachelor of arts degree from Cornell University and a masters in business administration and a doctorate in education from the University of Rochester. Gould is married to Michèle A. Flournoy, and they have three children: Alec, Victoria and Aidan.



Rehbein urges Pelosi to pass economic recovery plan

Thursday, January 29, 2009

January 23, 2009

Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515-6501

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

As you and your colleagues consider the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan, The American Legion offers its full support for those provisions which would invest in America's servicemembers, veterans and their families.

The American Legion applauds the efforts of the leadership to invest \$6 billion for military construction and \$1 billion for much-needed Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities and cemeteries. This package will address military construction projects such as military hospitals and ambulatory centers, barracks and dormitories, and child development centers on military installations. The bill also provides funding to address repairs to VA medical facilities and monument/memorial repairs in cemeteries across the nation.

Nothing will help "jump start" the national economy more than construction and employment programs within the veterans community. The American Legion would encourage Department of Defense and VA to aggressively award these projects to veteran-owned small businesses, especially those small businesses owned by disabled veterans in local communities across the country, in accordance with Public Law 107-288 - the [Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002](#).

Once again, The American Legion supports timely passage and enactment of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan.

Thank you for your continued commitment to America's veterans and their families.

Sincerely,
DAVID K. REHBEIN
National Commander

WHY VETERANS REUNITE

"I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep. Comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted at their best; men who suffered and sacrificed, who were stripped of their humanity. I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate and the military. But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades....such good men."

Author unknown

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Governor Chet Culver ★ Lt. Governor Patty Judge

GOVERNOR CULVER MAKES INTERIM APPOINTMENTS

(DES MOINES) – Governor Culver has made nine interim appointments to fill vacancies on various Boards and Commissions.

"I want to thank these nine Iowans for giving their time and expertise in service to our fellow Iowans," said Governor Culver. "I want to welcome them as the newest members of the Culver-Judge Administration, and I look forward to working with them in the months and years to come."

The appointments are listed below. (only the Veterans Affairs Commission appointees are listed)

VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

Darlene McMartin – Hancock, Republican. McMartin has served as the Administrator for the Pottawattamie County Veterans Affairs Commission for the last seventeen years. She served in the Army MOS MP from 1975-1977. She is active in multiple Veterans organizations in the state, including DAV, AMVETS, TREA, VVA, MOPH and the American Legion. McMartin was nominated by the American Legion and will serve in the position designated for that organization on the commission. Her term will begin immediately and end April 30, 2010.

Lt. Colonel Todd Jacobus – Des Moines, Democrat. Lt. Colonel Jacobus currently serves as the Recruiting & Retention Commander for the Iowa National Guard. He was Deployed in 1991 to Germany in support of Operation Desert Storm, and in 2005 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was nominated by the Iowa National Guard and will serve in the position designated for that organization on the commission. His term will begin immediately and end April 30, 2010.

DOD DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM UPDATE 14: Severely wounded troops returning home now have fewer bureaucratic barriers between them and their veterans' benefits. The Defense and Veterans Affairs departments today announced a new, faster means for handling troops with catastrophic injuries who seek the veterans' status that allows them access to VA medical and other entitlements. Michael L. Dominguez, acting undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness said, "This new policy should allow service members and their families to focus on the essentials of recovery, reintegration, employment and independent living, with the combined assistance from the Defense Department and VA." In the past, injured troops were subject to lengthy reviews under the standard Disability Evaluation System (DES) before being transferred from Defense Department to VA status. Today's announcement waives this requirement for those with catastrophic injuries and reduces their processing time. A catastrophic injury or illness is a permanent, severely disabling injury, disorder, or disease that compromises the ability to carry out the activities of daily living to such a degree that a service member or veteran requires personal or mechanical assistance to leave home or bed, or requires constant supervision to avoid physical harm to self or others. The expedited policy will result in receipt of benefits in three to four months, compared to a recovery and standard DES process that would normally take much longer.

Troops who participate in this optional, expedited process will be given a Defense Department disability rating of 100%, and the VA then will identify the applicable range of benefits, compensation and specialty care. "Service members and their families will be empowered to decide, after counseling on the options and potential concerns and benefits, the most appropriate choice for their situation," Dominguez said. The policy allows members who retire under the expedited DES process to re-enter the service with a waiver if they are capable following their rehabilitation, according to a Defense Department news release. The release notes that the expedited policy differs from the DES pilot program, a new process designed to reduce the amount of time required by the current standard disability processes at the Defense Department and VA, which is administered to troops without catastrophic injury. More than 1,000 troops over the past 14 months have participated in the pilot, which requires one medical examination that yields a single-sourced disability rating. [Source: AFPS John J. Kruzel article 22 Jan 09 ++]

PRESS RELEASE

January 29, 2009

VA Secretary Establishes ALS as a Presumptive Compensable Illness Cites Association between Military Service and Later Development of ALS

WASHINGTON – Veterans with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) may receive badly-needed support for themselves and their families after the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that ALS will become a presumptively compensable illness for all veterans with 90 days or more of continuously active service in the military.

“Veterans are developing ALS in rates higher than the general population, and it was appropriate to take action,” Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake said.

Secretary Peake based his decision primarily on a November 2006 report by the National Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Medicine (IOM) on the association between active-duty service and ALS.

“We are extremely grateful to Secretary Peake, Congressman Henry Brown and Senator Lindsey Graham for standing on the side of veterans with ALS across the country,” said Gary Leo, president and CEO of The ALS Association. “Thanks to their leadership, veterans with ALS will receive the benefits and care they need, when they need them. Thanks to their efforts, no veteran with ALS will ever be left behind.”

The report, titled *Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis in Veterans: Review of the Scientific Literature*, analyzed numerous previous studies on the issue and concluded that “there is limited and suggestive evidence of an association between military service and later development of ALS.”

“ALS is a disease that progresses rapidly, once it is diagnosed,” the Secretary explained. “There simply isn’t time to develop the evidence needed to support compensation claims before many veterans become seriously ill. My decision will make those claims much easier to process, and for them and their families to receive the compensation they have earned through their service to our nation.”

ALS, also called Lou Gehrig’s disease, is a neuromuscular disease that affects about 20,000 to 30,000 people of all races and ethnicities in the United States, is often relentlessly progressive, and is almost always fatal.

ALS causes degeneration of nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord that leads to muscle weakness, muscle atrophy, and spontaneous muscle activity. Currently, the cause of ALS is unknown, and there is no effective treatment.

The new interim final regulation applies to all applications for benefits received by VA on or after September 23, 2008, or that are pending before VA, the United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, or the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit on that date.

VA will work to identify and contact veterans with ALS, including those whose claims for ALS were previously denied, through direct mailings and other outreach programs.

To receive assistance in obtaining the necessary documentation, contact the Pottawattamie County Veteran Affairs Office at 223 S. 6th Street, Court House Annex, Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501, or call 712-328-5797.

To: Legislative Leadership and Members of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees

From: Mary Neubauer

Iowa Lottery

Date: Jan. 29, 2009

Re: Transfers to Iowa Veterans Trust Fund

Today, the Iowa Lottery is making its second quarterly transfer of proceeds to the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund. We are transferring \$449,952.59 to the Trust Fund for the second quarter (October-December) of FY 2009. That brings our total raised for the Trust Fund in this fiscal year to more than \$1.4 million and keeps us right on track to meet our initial proceeds estimates, which were that the lottery would raise between \$2 million and \$3 million annually for the Veterans Trust Fund.

The veterans-benefit games have been tremendously well received by the public and popular with our players. The public is very aware of our games to benefit veterans and is very supportive of them. We have received countless expressions of appreciation for our efforts to help veterans.

Our newest set of games to benefit the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund just began sales this month. They are the \$1 pull-tab game "Land of Liberty" and the \$1 instant-scratch game "Freedom Rings."

Lottery transfer to Iowa Veterans Trust Fund (October)	\$992,772.81
Lottery transfer to Iowa Veterans Trust Fund (January)	\$449,952.59
Total for FY 2009 thus far	\$1,442,725.40

If you have any questions, please let me know.

Best,

Mary Neubauer
Iowa Lottery

New Lottery games will extend progress on veterans issues

The Iowa Veterans Council reported that the 2008 legislative session was "the most successful year for veterans in the Legislature since the 1950s." The Council is made up of several organizations, including the American Legion, Marine Corps League, Vietnam Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Disabled American Veterans.

While I'm proud of that success, I want to keep moving forward. As chair of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, that is my duty and privilege.

One action veterans especially appreciated is the new dedicated source of funds for the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund. We authorized the Iowa Lottery to create two new instant-scratch games and two new pull-tab games each year. All of the profits go to the Iowa Veterans Trust Fund.

The first games were introduced in July, and the Lottery has already deposited nearly \$1 million into the Fund. This month the Lottery rolled out two new \$1 games, "Land of Liberty" pull-tab and "Freedom Rings" instant-scratch.

The Iowa Veterans Trust Fund helps veterans pay for travel for medical care, job training or college tuition, unemployment assistance due to disability resulting from military service, benefits to the children of disabled or deceased veterans who served after 9/11, counseling programs, and other items.

VA FUNDING 2009: Two years after a politically embarrassing \$1 billion shortfall that imperiled veterans health care, the Veterans Affairs Department is still low balling budget estimates to Congress to keep its spending down, government investigators say. The report by the Government Accountability Office, set to be released 23 JAN, highlights the Bush administration's problems in planning for the treatment of veterans that President Barack Obama has pledged to fix. It found the VA's long-term budget plan for the rehabilitation of veterans in nursing homes, hospices and community centers to be flawed, failing to account for tens of thousands of patients and understating costs by millions of dollars. In its strategic plan covering 2007 to 2013, the VA inflated the number of veterans it would treat at hospices and community centers based on a questionably low budget, the investigators concluded. At the same time, they said, the VA didn't account for roughly 25,000 – or nearly three-quarters – of its patients who receive treatment at nursing homes operated by the VA and state governments each year. "VA's use, without explanation, of cost assumptions and a workload projection that appear unrealistic raises questions about both the reliability of VA's spending estimates and the extent to which VA is closing previously identified gaps in non-institutional long-term care services," according to the 34-page draft report obtained by The Associated Press.

The VA did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In the report, the VA acknowledged problems in its plan for long-term care, which accounts annually for more than \$4 billion, or 12% of its total health care spending. In many cases, officials told the GAO they put in lower estimates in order to be conservative in their appropriations requests to Congress and to stay within anticipated budgetary constraints. As to the 25,000 nursing home patients unaccounted for, the VA explained it was usual clinical practice to provide short-term care of 90 days or less following hospitalization in a VA medical center, such as for those who had a stroke, to ensure patients are medically stable. But the VA had chosen not to budget for them because the government is not legally required to provide the care except in serious cases. The GAO noted the VA was in the process of putting together an updated strategic plan. Retired Gen. Eric K. Shinseki, who was sworn in 21 JAN as VA secretary, has promised to submit "credible and adequate" budget requests to Congress. "VA supports GAO's overarching conclusion that the long-term care strategic planning and budgeting justification process should be clarified," wrote outgoing VA Secretary James Peake in a response dated 5 JAN. He said the department would put together an action plan within 60 days of the report's release.

The report comes amid an expected surge in demand from veterans for long-term rehabilitative and other care over the next several years. Roughly 40% of the veteran population is age 65 or older, compared to about 13% of the general population, with the number of elderly veterans expected to increase through 2014. In 2005, the VA stunned Congress by suddenly announcing it faced a \$1 billion shortfall after failing to take into account the additional cost of caring for veterans injured in Iraq and Afghanistan. The admission, which came months after the department insisted it was operating within its means and did not need additional money, drew harsh criticism from both parties. The GAO later determined the VA repeatedly miscalculated – if not deliberately misled taxpayers – with questionable methods used to justify Bush administration cuts to health care amid the burgeoning Iraq war. In the report, the GAO said it had found similarly unrealistic assumptions and projections in the VA's more recent budget estimates submitted in August 2007. According to latest GAO report, the VA is believed to have:

- Undercut its 2009 budget estimate for nursing home care by roughly \$112 million. It noted the VA planned for \$4 billion in spending, up \$108 million from the previous year, based largely on a projected 2.5% increase in costs. But previously, the VA had actually seen an annual cost increase of 5.5%.
- Underestimated costs of care in non-institutional settings such as hospices by up to \$144 million. The VA assumed costs would not increase in 2009, even though in recent years the cost of providing a day of non-institutional care increased by 19%.
- Overstated the amount of non-institutional care. The VA projected a 38% increase in patient workload in 2009, partly in response to previous GAO and inspector general reports that found widespread gaps in services and urged greater use of the facilities. But for unknown reasons, veterans served in recent years actually decreased slightly, and the VA offered no explanation as to how it planned to get higher enrollment.

[Source: AP Hope Yen article 23 Jan 09 ++]

Monthly Service Organization

Meetings:

1st Tuesday – CB Disabled

American Veterans Chapter No. 5

7:30 p.m.

- Avoca American Legion

1st Wednesday -Hancock

American Legion and Auxiliary

1st Thursday – CB AMVETS Post

2nd Tuesday –Treynor American

Legion

AMVETS – Walnut

2nd Wednesday - CB AL Auxiliary

2nd Thursday – Carter Lake VFW

Auxiliary

3rd Monday – CB VFW

3rd Wednesday – CB VVA Post 798

LOCAL PHONE NUMBERS

- **Omaha VAH** – 346-8800
- **DAV VAH Transportation-**
402-449-0659
- **West Central Community Action -**
322-5966
- **Workforce Development Center –**
242-2136
- **Department of Human Services** – 328-5661
- **Vet Center** – 402-346-6735
- **Department of Veteran Affairs** – 1-800-827-1000
- **Legal Aid** – 328-3982
- **Family Housing Advisory Service** – 322-4436
- **Red Cross** – 322-4017
- **Salvation Army** – 328-2088

HAVE YOU HEARD?

Know a veteran who gets a VA check in the mail? They should give electronic deposit a try! Every month, 730,000 veterans or survivors look for their compensation, pension checks or educational assistance payments in their mailboxes. Nearly all receive them, but theft and mail delays cause problems for some veterans, which can be prevented by direct deposits. VA urges those veterans and family members now receiving paper checks to join nearly 3.1 million others whose VA payments are safely deposited electronically. VA is teaming up with the Treasury Department in a new campaign to protect government beneficiaries against the theft of funds and of their identities. Signing up for direct deposit is easy -- call VA toll-free at 800-333-1795 or enrolling online at www.GoDirect.org. Veterans, and family members who receive VA payments, also can sign up by contacting a VA regional benefits office or their financial institution. Information about direct deposits will be included in VA's monthly compensation and pension envelopes throughout 2009. Direct deposits relieve worry about mail delivery being delayed by severe weather or natural disasters. The deposits also eliminate trips to banks or credit unions to deposit checks, while providing immediate access to money at the same time each month.

VA Suicide Prevention Hotline Credited with 2,600 “Saves”

WASHINGTON – As the military deals with a record number of suicides among active-duty forces, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki reminded Veterans and their families that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has an extensive array of services to help Veterans in distress.

“I urge Veterans and their loved ones to take advantage of our suicide-prevention program,” said Shinseki. “Help for these heroes is a phone call away.” Since July 2007, VA has operated an around-the-clock suicide-prevention hotline that has received about 100,000 calls and has been credited with rescuing over 2,600 people. The number for VA's suicide prevention hotline is 1-800-273-TALK.

VA operates the largest mental health program in the country, with special efforts in each of the Department's 153 medical centers and more than 750 outpatient clinics to identify and treat at-risk patients.

In addition to operating the suicide-prevention hotline, VA has given all medical workers training in suicide prevention, created suicide prevention coordinators at each medical center, and given primary care clinics responsibility for mental health screening.

“We are reaching out to our newest generation of heroes – the Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan – to ensure they are aware of the services available to them,” Shinseki added.

New requests or referrals for mental health appointments receive a preliminary evaluation within 24 hours and a comprehensive evaluation within 14 days.

Emergency cases are dealt with immediately.

VA operates Readjustment Counseling Centers, commonly called Vet Centers, in 232 communities, where Veterans can receive care for a wide variety of issues related to leaving the military. Vet Center personnel are trained to identify at-risk Veterans and to counsel and connect them to appropriate VA medical services.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Filing for VA benefits is a “FREE” benefit to the veteran and his or her dependents. If you are paying for these services; STOP!
- Do you require quality nursing home assistance? Are you an Honorable Discharge Veteran or the widow of an honorably discharged veteran? You may meet the requirements to stay at the Iowa Veteran Home.
- A 0% Service-Connected hearing disability can entitle the veteran to hearing aids through the VA Medical Center.
- A 10% Service-Connected rating can entitle the veteran to hearing aids and or eye glasses through the VA Medical Center.
- Purple Heart Recipients are automatically qualified for medical care Priority Group 3.
- A service-connected disability can be increased when the disability worsens and medical documentation is available as proof.
- Pharmacy co-pays through the VA are \$8.00 per 30 day supply, and are refillable by phone.
- VA Pension is designed to assist veterans with non-service-connected disabilities who meet a minimal income threshold
When you apply for a rating increase three things could possibly happen to your rating:
 1. Rating is Increased
 2. Rating is Decreased
 3. Rating remains unchanged

Office Locations And Hours

Pottawattamie County Commission of Veterans Affairs
223 South 6th Street, Court House Annex
Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501
712-328-5797 FAX 712-328-5726

e-mail: veterans@pottcounty.com

Monday –Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 pm closed 12:00-1:00 p.m.
Assistance can be provided by appointment during
nontraditional hours

Avoca Court House Tuesdays 8:00 am – 4:00pm
712-328-5021

Commissioners:

Phillip Jacobs, Chairman
Philip Killion, Secretary
Robert Jorgensen, Member

Staff:

Darlene McMartin, B. S.W., Administrator
Peggy Becker, Case Worker III
Lori Swisher, Case Worker II
Michael Grap, Case Worker II
Pamela Wilke, Receptionist

**The staff of the Veterans Service Office
can assist you in the following areas:**

- **Compensation or Pension**
- **Disability Retirement**
- **Death Indemnity Compensation**
- **Appeal to Board of Veterans Appeal**
- **Hospital and Outpatient Benefits**
- **State of Iowa Benefits – Cemetery Application – Vietnam Bonus – Lifetime Hunting and Fishing License – Veterans License Plate**
- **Educational Benefits**
- **Vocational Benefits**
- **Debt Waivers**
- **Obtaining Lost Military Records**
- **Review of Military Discharge**
- **Claims for Insurance Payments**
- **Burial Allowance**
- **SBP/ChampVA**
- **CRSC/CRDP**
- **Iowa Trust Fund Application**
- **Iowa Veterans Home Application**
- **Military Tax Exemption**

Special Notice: If you are a veteran in emotional crisis and need help RIGHT NOW, call this toll-free number **1-800-273-8255**, available 24/7, and tell them you are a veteran. All calls are confidential.