

Veterans Corner
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By: Robert G. Mitchell

New VA Secretary

President Bush has nominated Retired Lt. General James Peake as the VA Secretary. General Peake was an infantryman that was wounded in Vietnam. He later became an Army Doctor and spent 40 years in uniform before retiring in 2004. After four years as an Army surgeon he will be the first flag officer to serve as VA secretary. General Omar Bradley was Director of the VA before he became a cabinet member.

Walter Reed Army Hospital

If you are considering sending Christmas cards to a recovering soldier at Walter Reed, be advised that the hospital will not deliver them. You must have a point of contact for the letters/cards. If you send to just any soldier, here is the suggested method. Send them to:

The American Red Cross Office
Recovering Soldier
C/O: Walter Reed Army Medical Center
6900 Georgia Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20307-5001

Medicare Premium Rates to rise slightly

The Medicare Part B monthly premium will be \$96.40 in 2008, an increase of \$2.90, or 3.1%, from the \$93.50 part B premium for 2007. It is the smallest percentage increase in the Part B premium since 2000.

Most beneficiaries will continue to pay the standard premium. However, beginning in 2007, beneficiaries with higher incomes (individuals with income exceeding \$80,000 and married couples with income exceeding \$160,000) began paying a higher part B premium based on their income. Depending on their income bracket, these individuals will pay from \$122.20 to \$238.40 for their monthly premium.

Tax Changes for some Veterans

The United States Tax Court recently determined that the payments received from VA's Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) and Incentive Therapy (IT) programs are not taxable because they are tax-exempt veteran's benefits. Veterans who reported CWT or IT work therapy program payments, as taxable income may be eligible to file amended tax returns claiming refunds of the tax they paid on program payments.

Veterans who reported these payments as taxable income are advised to speak with a tax advisor regarding this matter.

House passes Two Vet Health Care Bills

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed Veterans Health Care Improvement Act of 2007 (H.R. 2874). The bill would provide financial assistance for low-income veterans residing in permanent housing and support services as they transition from homeless to housing. Check your congressional office for more information.

Must Know GI Bill Fact

The GI Bill is not Federal Financial Aid. College and University financial aid departments to not consider the MGIB financial aid because it is normally paid directly to you, not the school. This also means that you are eligible for student loans, scholarships, and Pell Grants along with the GI Bill.

New Teacher Site Available

Veterans who are employed or interested in teaching have a new online resource, TheApple.com. TheApple provides free resources to teachers of all ages and stages, including daily news, job listings, lesson plans, articles, education opportunities and career networking.

Job: Border Patrol Agents

The Border Patrol is recruiting Border Patrol Agents. Apply online at: borderpatrolagentsapply.com. Individuals who have applied for or would like to apply for a Border patrol Agent Position, can also call toll-free 1-877-BP-INFO-1.

House Passes Thank You Act

The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 23, The Belated Thank you to the Merchant Marines of World War II Act of 2007. The bill would establish a Merchant Mariner Equity Compensation Fund to provide monthly payments in the amount of \$1000.