

SHOULD THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY “SHUT DOWN”, RETIREES WILL RECEIVE THEIR RETIREMENT CHECK IN MARCH AS USUAL AND VA DISABILITY, IF ELIGIBLE. WE ARE NOT CLEAR OF THE IMPACT IF THE SHUT DOWN LASTS INTO ANOTHER MONTH, BUT I WILL KEEP YOU POSTED AS I HEAR.

Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is undertaking one of the most significant changes in the philosophy and practice of health care ever embarked upon by an organized health care system. The mission of VHA is “to honor America’s Veterans by providing exceptional health care that *improves their health and well-being.*” VHA declared its number one strategic priority to provide **whole health care** to Veterans that is personalized, proactive, and patient-driven.

To deliver this care, VHA is working to enhance both the experience and practice of health care. The foundation of an optimal “experience of care” is the healing relationship, where providers can use the power of their words and the strength of their caring to support healing, even when physical curing is not possible. The experience of care also includes physical environments with attention to making the spaces feel safe, comfortable, and peaceful. VHA leaders across the country have made this cultural transformation a priority and national training programs that improve the way care is practiced and delivered. VHA’s “practice” of care” model is personalized, beginning with the Veteran and exploring *their* values and goals and *their* vision of health.

To this end, the VHA Office of Patient Centered Care & Cultural Transformation has created the [Story of Health for Life](#). This narrative report details many achievements and aspects of how VA is improving the health care experience and practice for Veterans. You can explore more of what VA is doing by visiting the [VHA Office of Patient Centered Care & Cultural Transformation website](#).

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), new chairman of the Senate armed services’ subcommittee on military personnel, has signaled he will defend retirement reforms proposed for a new generation of service members by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

Graham on Wednesday led Commission Chairman Alphonso Maldon Jr. carefully through the logic that fueled its retirement proposals, having him underscore that current retirees would be unaffected and those currently serving would be free to keep their current plan or choose the new one.

Graham then called a second panel of witnesses, representatives of military associations, to share their concerns. But as he closed the hearing, Graham addressed those worries, finding nothing significant to block a plan that would lower annuities for 20 or more years’ service in return for a Thrift Savings Plan with government matching of contributions plus early vesting.

The new plan also would use GI Bill transferability to entice members to serve to 10 years, and offer a continuation bonus at 12 years in return for four more years of service. At 16 years,

the plan assumes most members will stay to earn an immediate annuity at 20, though the annuity would be set at 40 percent of basic pay, not 50 percent as under the current plan.

This combination of features, Graham said, would be more “fair” to the vast majority of members who now leave service short of 20 years with no employer-paid retirement benefits. It also would be fairer to the current force because they could stay under the existing plan or shift to the new one

Read more: <http://militaryadvantage.military.com/2015/02/graham-defends-pay-commission-after-hearing-its-critics/#ixzz3SbQkYB9l>

There is a 12-page newsletter for TRICARE Standard beneficiaries. This issue includes articles on the Affordable Care Act, emergency vs. urgent care, the Nurse Advice Line, updating life events in DEERS, TRICARE eCorrespondence on milConnect, notice of privacy practices, regional contractors providing help, costs, provider choice, submitting claims, TRICARE’s newly designed website, preventive services and vaccinations, prior authorizations, covered services, filling prescriptions, accessing the TRICARE Pharmacy Program on your phone, reporting other health insurance, and benefit updates. Contact information is also provided.

To download a copy of this newsletter, go to: <http://go.usa.gov/3qQdH>.

Below are web-sites that provide information on Veterans benefits and how to file/ask for them. Accordingly, there are many sites that explain how to obtain books, military/medical records, information and how to appeal a denied claim with the VA. Please pass this information on to every Veteran you know. Nearly 100% of this information is free and available for all veterans, the only catch is: you have to ask for it, because they won't tell you about a specific benefit unless you ask for it. You need to know what questions to ask so the right doors open for you and then be ready to have an advocate who is willing to work with and for you, stay in the process, and press for your rights and your best interests.

Appeals http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/mr/part1/ch05.doc
<[Board of Veteran's Appeals <http://www.va.gov/vbs/bva/>
<\[CARES Commission <http://www.va.gov/vbs/bva/>
<\\[CARES Draft National Plan <http://www1.va.gov/cares/page.cfm?pg=105>
<\\\[Center for Minority Veterans <http://www1.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/>
<\\\\[Center for Veterans Enterprise <http://www.vetbiz.gov/default2.htm>
<\\\\\[Center for Women Veterans <http://www1.va.gov/womenvet/>
<\\\\\\[Clarification on the changes in VA healthcare for Gulf War Veterans
<http://www.gulfwarvets.com/ubb/Forum1/HTML/000016.html>
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Classified Records - American Gulf War Veterans Assoc

<http://www.gulfwarvets.com/ubb/Forum18/HTML/000011.html>

<[Compensation for Disabilities Associated with the Gulf War Service](http://www.gulfwarvets.com/ubb/Forum18/HTML/000011.html!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<[\[Compensation Rate Tables, 12-1-03 <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates/comp01.htm>\]\(http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/part6%20/ch07.doc!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=\)](http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/part6%20/ch07.doc!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<[Department of Veterans Affairs Home Page <http://www.va.gov/>](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Rates/comp01.htm!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<[Directory of Veterans Service Organizations](http://www.va.gov!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<http://www1.va.gov/vso/index.cfm?template=view>

<[Disability Examination Worksheets Index, Comp](http://www1.va.gov/vso/index.cfm?template=view!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<[<http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Benefits/exams/index.htm>](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Benefits/exams/index.htm!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<[Due Process \[http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/mr/part1/ch02.doc\]\(http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/mr/part1/ch02.doc\)](http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/Benefits/exams/index.htm!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<[Duty to Assist \[http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/mr/part1/ch01.doc\]\(http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/mr/part1/ch01.doc\)](http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/mr/part1/ch02.doc!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<[Electronic Code of Federal Regulations <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/ecfr/>](http://www.warms.vba.va.gov/admin21/m21_1/mr/part1/ch01.doc!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<[Emergency, Non-emergency, and Fee Basis Care](http://www.gpoaccess.gov/ecfr!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/fedben.pdf>

<[Environmental Agents <http://www1.va.gov/environagents/>](http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/fedben.pdf!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<[Combat Veteran Eligibility](http://www1.va.gov/environagents!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=315

<[Fee Basis, PRIORITY FOR OUTPATIENT MEDICAL SERVICES AND
INPATIENT HOSPITAL CARE](http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=315!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=206

<[Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents 2005](http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=206!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/fedben.pdf>

<[\[http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.htm\]\(http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.htm\)](http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/fedben.pdf!@#?>?#@! OR,</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<[Forms and Records Request <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/>](http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.htm!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

<[General Compensation Provisions](http://www.va.gov/vaforms!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)

http://www.access.gpo.gov/uscode/title38/partii_chapter11_subchaptervi_.html

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Geriatrics and Extended Care <http://www1.va.gov/geriatricsshg/>
<[Guideline for Chronic Pain and Fatigue MUS-CPG
\[http://www.oqp.med.va.gov/cpg/cpgn/mus/mus_base.htm\]\(http://www.oqp.med.va.gov/cpg/cpgn/mus/mus_base.htm\)
<\[Guide to Gulf War Veteran's Health
<http://www1.va.gov/gulfwar/docs/VHlgulfwar.pdf>
<\]\(http://www.oqp.med.va.gov/cpg/cpgn/mus/mus_base.htm!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=\)](http://www1.va.gov/geriatricsshg/!@#?>?#@!</p></div><div data-bbox=)