

HOUSE PASSES COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT ACT FOR 2012

The House of Representatives has passed H.R. 4114, which is the Veterans Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2012.

If the bill is passed into law, the annual cost-of-living rate for veterans would be increased, effective December 1, 2012. It is expected this year's COLA will be around 1.9 percent

There have been several years in the past where veterans did not receive a cost-of-living increase. If there was an increase then it was not usually known until closer to December.

"Veterans have enough to worry about without the added stress of not knowing if their cost-of-living adjustments will be held up in a political tug-of-war," said Rep. Jeff Miller, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.



VA DEPLOYS NEW MODEL FOR COMPENSATION

The Department of Veterans Affairs has announced that it would deploy a new model for processing compensation claims at 16 regional VA offices.

The new model is meant to ensure that veterans with the most need receive priority attention, and is part of a comprehensive transformation plan by the VA, intended to lead an additional 150,000 to 200,000 additional compensation claims each year.

The new model is part of a comprehensive plan to eliminate the compensation claims backlog. The new model will consist of 3 segmented processing lanes: Express, Special Operations and Core.

The model means that those cases involving veterans facing the most serious hardships, injuries or illnesses will be handled uniquely, ensuring that they get the fastest attention. The plan should be fully implemented throughout the VA by the end of 2013.

OCTOBER 2012

PRESIDENT OBAMA SIGNED “HONORING AMERICA’S VETERANS AND CARING FOR CAMP LEJEUNE FAMILIES ACT OF 2012” INTO LAW

President Barack Obama has signed into law a new piece of legislation affecting veterans. The “Honoring America’s Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012” provides a package of benefits to military personnel and also serves to place restrictions on protests of service member funerals.

Obama said “We have a moral sacred duty to our men and women in uniform. The graves of our veterans are hallowed grounds. “

In addition to protest restrictions, the law also provides veterans, their families and survivors benefits that will mean improved healthcare, housing, and education and memorial services. It also expands the level of accountability and transparency of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The law provides Camp Lejeune veterans who lived on the base between 1957-1987 to receive healthcare through the VA for certain medical conditions, if they or their families have become ill as a result of contaminated water that was found on base.

The law also calls for a temporary expansion of the VA’s specially adapted housing program to meet the need of the increase in levels of wounded warriors.

Individuals or organizations wanting to protest military funerals or at national cemeteries will be subject to new restrictions. If there is a violation, protestors will be punished by criminal action.





REMINDER

Veteran's Day is just around the corner. Please join us on Monday, November 12, 2012, for our annual Veteran's Day Open House. This event will be held in the 2nd Floor Meeting Room of the Government Center in Newton. There will be lots of food and some great fellowship!

"HONORING AMERICA'S VETERANS" CONTINUED:

In order to increase the levels of oversight and transparency in the VA, the legislation requires the VA to review and revise its skills and competency thresholds for Veterans Benefits Administration employees, as a way to ensure claims are not being affected by poor employee performance. The VA is also now required to submit quarterly reports to Congress on VA conferences.

H.R. 1627 will require the Department of Labor to publish data for government contractors that shows their record of veteran hiring. A "VetStar" program will also be established to recognize companies making significant contributions to veterans hiring.

Under the Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA), the time period banks are prohibited from foreclosing on or evicting servicemembers due to late payments will be extended from 9 to 12 months after their military service.

The VA is also being required by the new law to protect federal funding from unnecessary fees, and will only provide reimbursement for ambulance services to and from VA facilities. Attributable income for veterans reporting to the VA will also now refer to the most recent year information available.

For more information on this new law please visit:

<http://veterans.house.gov/hr1627>