

**Kings County
Military and Veterans Coalition
May 9, 2023 - 2pm PDT**

Microsoft Teams Meeting Agenda

Meeting ID: 266 004 589 548 Passcode: d3WSa9
Join on your computer, mobile app or room device

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Or call in (audio only)

[+1 323-433-2320,,839169384#](#) United States, Los Angeles

Phone Conference ID: 839 169 384#

Introductions

Previous Items

- **Veterans Service Office Status – M-F, 8am – 5pm**
 - **Lobby Hours:**
 - **M/W - 8:30 am -11:30 am and T/Th - 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm; All other times are for appointments**
 - Certain questions may be answered by support staff, without having to speak with a VSR. Feel free to call anytime to ask for assistance. The Kings County Veterans Service Office can still complete the DMV Veteran Status Verification Form (VSD-001) for the Veteran Designation on your California driver's license/ID Card. We are no longer issuing the locally-generated Veteran I.D. cards.
- **Kings County Veterans Support Group– (See Attached)**

Guest Presenter:

Asian American, Hawaiian Native and Pacific Islander Heritage Month: Domingo Cruz, LCDR, MSC, USN (Ret)

New Items

- **VA Budget Cut Proposals – (See Attached)**
- **New VA Mission Statement - (See Attached)**
- **PACT Act Claims Update - (See Attached)**
- **New Beginnings - (See Attached)**

Round Table –

Next Meeting – June 13, 2023 – Location: MS Teams Meeting



Kings County Veteran's Support Group

It's our turn to serve those who serve on our behalf!



Veteran's Support Group

Meets the 2nd & 4th Tuesday
of the month via Zoom & in person

Time: 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

For Zoom link/meeting info call (559) 852-2444

Seating is limited, so please call to reserve your seat.



Due to the nature of the group, we can only allow
adults to participate.



460 Kings County Drive Suite 101
Hanford, CA 93230

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.govFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 21, 2023

Budget Cut Proposals Would Hurt Veterans

WASHINGTON — While the President's Budget details a [plan](#) to honor our country's sacred obligation to care for America's Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors, the proposal to cut a broad range of critical programs by 22% would threaten critical services for Veterans – both at VA and across the federal government. **The proposed 22% budget cut to VA would:**

- **Threaten Medical Care for Veterans.** The proposal would mean 30 million fewer Veteran outpatient visits, and 81,000 jobs lost across the Veterans Health Administration, leaving Veterans unable to get appointments for care including wellness visits, cancer screenings, mental health services, and substance use disorder treatment.
- **Undermine Access to Telehealth.** Access to remote care through telehealth is essential for Veterans, particularly in rural areas. By reducing funding for necessary IT infrastructure and support, the proposal would impair VA's ability to expand video-to-home telehealth services and limit the availability of medical equipment that can be provided to Veterans so they can attend important telehealth appointments from home.
- **Worsen Wait Times for Benefits.** Under the proposal, the Veterans Benefits Administration would eliminate more than 6,000 staff, increasing the disability claims backlog by an estimated 134,000 claims and forcing Veterans and their surviving loved ones to wait longer for the benefits they have earned, including pensions, life insurance, GI Bill educational supports, and employment services.
- **Prevent Construction on the Health Care Facilities that Veterans need.** Veterans deserve to receive care in state-of-the-art facilities, but the median VA hospital was built nearly 60 years ago – compared to just 13 years ago in the private sector. This proposal would cut up to \$565 million for major construction projects, including critical clinical upgrades to hospitals and clinics. These cuts would negatively impact Veteran health care across America.
- **Fail to Honor the Memory of All Veterans.** The proposal would require VA's National Cemetery Administration to eliminate approximately 500 staff, jeopardize NCA's ability to maintain the final resting place of Veterans to national shrine standards, and delay the opening of 5 new national cemeteries that will serve nearly 1.6 million Veterans and eligible family members.

Beyond the direct impact on Veterans who use VA, these proposed cuts would negatively impact Veterans who access critical services across the federal government. **Specifically, these proposed cuts would:**

- **Cut Housing for Veterans.** Every Veteran deserves a good, safe home in this country they fought to defend. The proposal would eliminate funding for Housing Choice Vouchers for as many as 50,000 Veterans, putting them at greater risk of homelessness.
- **Increase Food Insecurity for Veterans.** About 1.3 million Veterans rely on SNAP. This proposal would take food assistance away from Veterans who are older by adding burdensome, bureaucratic requirements, and it would limit states' flexibility to protect especially vulnerable people currently subject to work requirements. That would increase the likelihood that Veterans and their families go hungry.
- **Deprive Veterans of mental health, substance use, and other health services.** This proposal would mean deep cuts to Department of Health and Human Services community mental health centers, mental health and substance use prevention grants, and other public health programs. Supporting Veterans and their families in the community, especially those not enrolled in VA health care, has been a priority for HHS and these cuts could reduce access to timely care and services.
- **Eliminate Job Training and Other Supports to Homeless Veterans.** The proposal would mean that 4,200 fewer Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness would receive job training, counseling, and job readiness services provided through the Department of Labor's Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program.

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This analysis assumes an across-the-board reduction of roughly 22% compared to currently enacted FY 2023 levels for non-defense discretionary accounts. That aligns with proposals to return discretionary spending to FY 2022 levels on an ongoing basis while exempting defense spending.

VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.govFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 16, 2023

New VA mission statement recognizes sacred commitment to all Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors

WASHINGTON — Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced an updated version of its 1959 mission statement. The new mission statement is: “To fulfill President Lincoln’s promise to care for those who have served in our nation’s military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.”

The new mission statement is inclusive of all those who have served in our nation’s military — including women Veterans — as well as Veteran families, caregivers, and survivors. VA currently serves more than 600,000 women Veterans, the fastest growing cohort of Veterans. VA also serves more than 50,000 Veteran caregivers, more than 600,000 Veteran survivors, and millions of Veterans who did not serve in combat.

In crafting the new mission statement, VA surveyed roughly 30,000 Veterans. Among Veterans surveyed, the new version of VA’s mission statement was chosen over the current version by every age group; by men and by women; by LGBTQ+ Veterans; and by white, Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian and American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans.

“Whenever any Veteran, family member, caregiver, or survivor walks by a VA facility, we want them to see themselves in the mission statement on the outside of the building,” **said VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “We are here to serve *all* Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors — and now, our mission statement reflects exactly that.”

In addition to two rounds of surveys, VA conducted dozens of small-group engagements with Veterans to understand what was most important to them in a VA mission statement, then incorporated that feedback into quantitative research. The new mission statement reflects that VA serves all of the heroes who have served our country, regardless of their race, gender, background, sexual orientation, religion, zip code or identity.

The previous mission statement was: “To fulfill President Lincoln’s promise ‘to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan.’” The previous mission statement is posted in roughly 50% of VA’s facilities. Over the coming months, VA’s new mission statement will replace the previous version.

Secretary McDonough will host an event today commemorating the new mission statement, featuring speeches from a woman Veteran, a caregiver and a survivor about what it means to feel included in VA’s mission. The event begins at 2:00pm and can be livestreamed [here](#).

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VAU.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.govFOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 26, 2023

Veterans and survivors have filed more than 500,000 toxic exposure-related benefits claims under the PACT Act

More than 3 million Veterans have received toxic exposure screenings since President Biden signed PACT into law

WASHINGTON — Today, VA announced that Veterans and their survivors have filed more than 500,000 claims for toxic exposure-related benefits under the [PACT Act](#) since President Biden signed it into law Aug. 10, 2022. To date, VA has awarded more than \$1 billion in earned benefits to Veterans and survivors who filed PACT Act-related claims.

VA also announced that more than 3 million Veterans have received VA's new [toxic exposure screenings](#) since President Biden signed the PACT Act into law, with approximately 42% reporting a concern of exposure. More than 215,000 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care during that timeframe, a 15% increase from the same timeframe the year before.

In April, VA also processed its millionth disability compensation and pension claim during fiscal year 2023, putting VA on pace to process a record number of Veteran claims for the third year in a row. Thanks to aggressive hiring and modernization efforts, VA processed a record number of Veteran claims in 2021, exceeded that in 2022, and is on track to exceed it again in 2023. In total, VA has delivered more than \$65 billion in earned compensation benefits to Veterans during FY2023.

The PACT Act is the biggest expansion of Veteran health care and benefits in generations. VA encourages all [eligible](#) Veterans and survivors to [file a claim](#) — or [submit their intent to file a claim](#) — for PACT Act-related benefits now. Most Veterans who do so before August 10 will have their benefits, if granted, backdated to Aug. 10, 2022, the day that President Biden signed the bill into law.

“Thanks to President Biden, the millions of Veterans who fought our wars for the past 30 years — who breathed in debris from sandstorms, fumes from burning trash, and more while overseas — are now taken care of for the conditions that followed them home from war,” said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “We’re proud that 500,000+ Veterans and survivors have applied for their hard-earned benefits to date, but we won’t rest until every Veteran and every survivor gets the VA health care and benefits they deserve.”

VA is delivering health care and benefits at record rates partly due to a dramatic increase in hiring. The Veterans Health Administration welcomed 27,181 new hires in the first six months of the fiscal year, the highest hiring level in the history of VA for that timeframe. The Veterans Benefits Administration’s total workforce grew by 2,040 employees in the first six months of the fiscal year — the highest growth rate in the past 15 years.

For more information on VA’s implementation of the PACT Act, visit the [PACT Act Dashboard](#). VA is publishing this dashboard every other Friday to document the implementation of this legislation and showcase its impact on Veterans and survivors. The next dashboard, which will reflect the 500,000 PACT Act claim milestone and the 3 million toxic exposure screenings milestone, will publish April 28.

Veterans and survivors can apply or learn more about the PACT Act by visiting VA.gov/PACT or by calling 1-800-MYVA411.

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New Beginnings at Circle T Ranch is a non-profit organization formed with a mission to improve the quality of life for people who suffer from PTSD, depression, addiction, and other psychological conditions. Participants of our program interact with horses in a safe, peaceful environment in ways that can help reduce stress, teach productive coping mechanisms, and facilitate solutions to real-life struggles. Participants will work with a certified Equine Specialist to guide you through a safe, positive experience with our horses.

The Horse Is The Key!

Horses have a unique way of making humans feel peaceful and calm. Their herd animal characteristics enable them to be:

- Non-judgmental
- Unbiased
- Sensitive
- Perceptive

The Connection

There is significant evidence of horses having a calming and healing effect on humans. Research suggests that activities and therapies involving interactions with horses can reduce symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and many other psychological conditions. Interactions with horses can improve the quality of life for people who are suffering. Our program aims to provide equine-therapeutic interventions to heal trauma, provide wellness, and provide positive coping strategies.

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