

VVA CHAPTER 1069 BENEFITS PRESENTATION, 1/11/2017 (Page 1 of 3)

By: Dwight Winkler

1. CONTACTS: To help you obtain information about claims or other needs:

- **VETERANS CRISIS LINE:** Veterans and loved ones can call (800) 273-8255, 24/7, and then press 1 with total anonymity to speak to a professional counselor. A Houston Vet Center counselor, **James Bailey**, is available in Don Montoya's office on Thursdays for veterans and their families. Call Don's office at (979) 532-1311 for an appointment to see James Bailey. See forms on my desk for information. You may also use the link below to read more about James and the Houston Vet Center on our chapter's website.
<http://www.vva1069.org/meetingreports/mreport-11-9-2016.html#JBPresentation>
- **Dwight Winkler:** 2254 CR 291, East Bernard, TX 77435; (979) 335-4464; lerwinkdd@aol.com. Or, visit my webpage: <http://www.vva1069.org/wcvso/wcvso.html>
- **Don Montoya:** Wharton County Veterans Service Officer, 1017 N. Alabama Road, Wharton, TX 77488; (979) 532-1311, don.montoya@co.wharton.tx.us; NEW OFFICE HOURS: MON, TUES, THUR (Wharton), 8:00a.m.-12:00 noon & 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.; FRI (Wharton), 8:00a.m.-12:00 noon by appointment only & 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. (Administrative time); On WED (El Campo library), 9:30 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. Use the link below to see maps showing the location of Don's offices.
<http://www.vva1069.org/wcvso/wcvso.html>
- **Vanessa Hicks-Callaway:** (Congressman Blake Farenthold's Veteran Advocate), (361) 894-6446, Vanessa.Hicks-Callaway@mail.house.gov
- **Matt Minor:** (Texas State Representative Phil Stephenson's Veteran Advocate), (281) 232-7900, Matt.Minor@house.state.tx.us
- **VA INQUIRY ROUTING & INFORMATION SYSTEM (IRIS):** <https://iris.custhelp.com>
- **NEW VA PHONE NUMBER (1-844-698-2311):** This new national toll-free number is a go to source for Veterans and their families who do not know what number to call at the VA. It is identified at the VA as "myVA311". I sent this to Bob Supak and he posted it on our VVA 1069 web site on 12/10/2016. Use the following link to read more details: <http://www.vva1069.org/wcvso/wcvso.html#OneVAphoneNumber>

2. VA PARTNERS WITH PROSTATE CANCER FOUNDATION: The VA has partnered with the PROSTATE CANCER FOUNDATION (PCF) to prevent, screen and promote research to speed the development of treatments and cures for prostate cancer among Veterans. I sent this information to Bob Supak and he posted it on our VVA 1069 web site 12/10/2016. Read the entire article on our web site using the link below. <http://www.vva1069.org/wcvso/wcvso.html#VAExpandsProstrateCancerResearch>

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3. BLOOD PRESSURE STUDY AND VIETNAM ERA VETERANS: A recent study by VA researchers found a link between service-related occupational exposure to herbicides and high blood pressure (hypertension) risk among U. S. Army Chemical Corps (ACC) Veterans, a group of Veterans assigned to do chemical operations during the Vietnam War. The VA will review the results from this study, along with findings from other similar studies and recommendations from the recent National Academies of Science report on Vietnam Veterans and Agent Orange when considering whether to add hypertension as a presumptive service condition for Vietnam Veterans. I sent this information to Bob Supak and he posted it on our VVA 1069 web site on 12/10/2016:
<http://www.vva1069.org/wcvso/wcvso.html#VAstudyOnHighBloodPressure>

4. ONE NUMBER TO CALL TO REACH THE VA (1-844-698-2311): The VA is introducing a new number called 1-844-MyVA311 (abbreviated in VA terms as MyVA311) as a go to source for Veterans and families who do not know what VA number to call. Information about disability, pension, healthcare eligibility, and burial benefits can be accessed as well as any other VA topic. This information was sent to Bob Supak and he posted it on 12/10/2016 on our VVA 1069 web site:
<http://www.vva1069.org/wcvso/wcvso.html#OneVAphoneNumber>

5. VA NATIONAL CEMETERIES OFFERING PRE-NEED ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATIONS: The VA announced it now provides eligibility determinations for interment in a VA national cemetery prior to the time of need. Through this program, individuals can learn if they are eligible for burial or memorialization in a VA national cemetery. Interested individuals can submit VA Form 40-10007, *Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a VA National Cemetery*. I sent this to Bob Supak and he posted it on 12/10/2016 on our VVA 1069 web site:
<http://www.vva1069.org/wcvso/wcvso.html#VAcemeteriesOffersPreNeedEligibility>

6. NEW REGULATION DECREASES COST OF OUTPATIENT MEDICATION: Effective February 27, 2017, copayment amounts for Veteran's outpatient medications for non-service connected conditions will be amended and in most cases will save Veterans money. Currently non-exempt Veterans are charged \$8 or \$9 for each 30-day or less of out-patient medication. New amounts for a 30-day or less supply: Tier 1, Preferred Generics, \$5; Tier 2, Non-Preferred Generics including over-the-counter medications, \$8; Tier 3, Brand Name, \$11. Medication copayments do not apply to former POW's, catastrophically disabled Veterans, or those covered by other exceptions. Copayments stop each calendar year for Veterans in Priorities 2-8 once a \$700 cap is reached. This information was sent to Bob Supak and he posted it on our VVA 1069 web site on 12/12/2016. <http://www.vva1069.org/wcvso/wcvso.html#VAdecreasesMedCopayCost>

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7. NEW VETERANS CRISIS CALL CENTER OPENING IN ATLANTA: A new satellite crisis line office has opened in Atlanta allowing the life-saving hotline to expand capacity by nearly 600 Veterans each day. This nearly doubles the VA's ability to help Veterans in need. Call 1-800-273-8255 and Veterans chose Option 1 (as noted above) to speak to a counselor. The text number is **838255** or you can chat with a trained professional online at **VETS.gov**. This information was sent to Bob Supak and he posted it on 12/20/2016 on our VVA 1069 web site.

<http://www.vva1069.org/wcvso/wcvso.html#NewVACrisisLineAtlanta>

8. VA INSURANCE POLICIES: I recently discussed a Veteran's VA life insurance with him. I suggested he place the policy in a location that his family could readily access it. Each year the VA sends out a summary of the VA life insurance policy that the Veteran has in effect and it is titled *Annual Insurance Policy Statement*, VA Form 29-0259. This annual statement should also be kept with your VA insurance policy.

9. NO CALL LIST: You can add your name, address, and telephone number(s) to a state-sponsored "NO CALL" list that is intended to limit telemarketing calls. The "NO CALL" list, maintained by the Public Utility Commission of Texas, prevents telephone solicitations to residential or wireless telephone numbers from all telemarketers operating in Texas. Register for **NO CHARGE** at www.texasnocall.com. This is good for three years from the date it was published on the no call list. You can expect to stop receiving telemarketing calls within 60 days after it is placed on the "NO CALL" list.

10. FREE TAX SERVICES: Liberty Tax Service, 301 N. Mechanic, El Campo, is offering free tax services for the first year to veterans. Call (979) 578-8295 for more information.

11. AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (ACA) FORM 1095: You will again this year be receiving ACA Form 1095 A, B, or C. This form documents your healthcare coverage for 2016 in case you are audited by the IRS. Again, put the form in a location that is secure but readily accessible.

12. ELECTRICAL PROVIDERS: There are approximately 416 electrical provider plans in the state of Texas. I recently renewed my plan with a provider that I researched at www.powertochoose.org. I was able to cut the cost of my electricity by almost 50%. You should research what is best for your situation to include average usage per month, fixed or variable rate, length of contract, etc. I do not endorse any one provider.

VVA Chapter 1069, El Campo, Texas

<http://www.vva1069.org> OR <http://www.vva1069.com>