



The Communicator

April - June 2021

Hello CACVSO Members! The trees and flowers are beginning to blossom, and beautiful California is showing signs of Spring! Fun adventures and brighter days are ahead, and I hope that you have big plans for 2021.

We had a very successful second virtual conference in February, and I would again like to thank the training committee for all their hard work. As previously mentioned, our June conference will also be virtual, but Shasta County is already making big plans for our in-person fall conference in Redding. We are going to have so much to catch up on!

I wish to highlight our time and place committee. Sam Isdell is the chair and leads all of our association's efforts in coordinating the logistics of planning all of our training conferences. The when & where are important questions that need to be answered three times a year. If you enjoy the conferences as much as I do, please consider how you can also contribute to this essential work.

Until next month, I hope that you enjoy this month's Communicator. Also, please keep in mind that the newsletter needs your monthly article submissions. Remember to apply for a technology grant. This is a small way that our association can support your critical efforts in serving our nation's Veterans. Thank you!

Nathan D. Johnson
President



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Marissa P. Mach, Deputy Director -County of Ventura, Human Services Agency

I am very pleased to announce the selection of our **NEW County Veteran Services Officer (CVSO), James McHugh.**

Prior to HSA, James was the Associate Vice President for Athletic Affairs at Cal Lutheran in Thousand Oaks. As Associate Vice President, James was responsible for the overall leadership of CLU Athletics, consisting of 22 NCAA Division III varsity sports. Prior to his eight-year tenure with CLU James was a proud member of the U.S. Navy. After 26 years of service, James retired as the Commanding Officer for Naval Base Ventura County. In May 1986, McHugh began Naval Flight Officer training at VT 10 in Pensacola, Fla. He was designated a Naval Flight Officer in April 1988. Upon completion of training in July 1988, he reported to VAW 117 in San Diego. While there, he completed an around the world deployment onboard USS ENTERPRISE (CVN 65) and an around the horn deployment onboard USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN 72). In December 1999, he reported to the Joint Staff in the Pentagon. He served as an Operations Officer in the J2 directorate where he participated in the development of policy, preparation and execution of combat operations in the Balkans and the Middle East.

His personal decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, three Meritorious Service Medals, three Navy Commendation Medals, a Joint Achievement Medal, three Navy Achievement Medals and various Unit and Service awards.

James graduated from Pennsylvania State University as an NROTC student with a BS in Biology. He holds two Master of Arts degrees, one in Computer Resources and Information Systems Management from Webster University and a second in National Security and Strategic Studies from the United States Naval War College. He is a dedicated family man who is eager to serve the Veterans in our community and happy to be a part of the HSA team! James will begin his role as the County CVSO on April 5th.

Ventura County VSO New Hire

We have had one new hire since September 2020.

Paulo Iparraguire – Veterans Claims Officer I

Monterey County:

Jack Murphy – Management Analyst III (Office Manager)

Jon Brown – Management Analyst I (Projects Manger)



Veterans Helping Veterans



- Hello CACVSO Members!
- Jim and I hope everyone is staying well and safe and getting their COVID vaccine shot(s) when they are eligible. That will bring us all one step closer to being able to attend in-person conferences again!
- We have received many questions about how VA will implement the 2021 NDAA law that added bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism or Parkinson-like symptoms to its list of medical conditions presumed to be related to herbicide exposure. As you likely know, VA issued some guidance back in early January 2021 that encouraged Veterans to file claims, but also noted that these claims would be deferred or held in abeyance until the three new conditions are officially added to VA's presumptive regulation, 38 C.F.R. § 3.309(e). The same VA guidance makes clear that VA adjudicators are not to deny these claims; rather, they are to be developed as much as possible (e.g., gather additional evidence and, or conduct VA examinations) and then they are to be deferred until the new law is implemented. It's important to note that if a claim for one of these three medical conditions is supported by a detailed medical-nexus opinion, then VA can and should proceed to decide the claim now on a direct service-connection basis.
- **So why did Congress expand the presumptive list, and not VA?** The addition of these three medical conditions to the list of presumptive conditions has been a long and complicated process. Typically, the Secretary of VA proposes a new regulation to add a condition (or conditions) to the list when sufficient evidence linking the condition to Agent Orange has been collected. In this case, however, former VA Secretary Wilkie refused to propose a regulation to add the three conditions, despite evidence from studies dating back to 2016.
- These studies (e.g., [Vietnam Era Health Retrospective Observational Study](#)) concluded that there was "suggestive" evidence linking herbicide (Agent Orange) exposure to each of the above-mentioned conditions. Further, similar studies that met the same threshold of "suggestive" evidence have been used to add presumptive conditions in the past. As a result, a Congressional statute was needed to add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism to VA's list of presumptive conditions, and hence, the section was included in the 2021 NDAA.



- **How long until the three new conditions are added to VA's list of presumptive diseases?** It's impossible to know for sure. Looking back to the last time VA added medical conditions to its presumptive list (i.e., IHD, hairy cell leukemia, and Parkinson's disease), it took nearly a year from the time former Secretary Shinseki made the announcement in October 2009, and the formal implementation announced in the Federal Register in August 2010. However, VBA leadership has mentioned during recent virtual conferences that it may take approximately 18-24 months for the proposed amendments to complete the entire regulatory process. One important aspect that VA will need to define and, or clarify is VA's definition of Parkinsonism, and which Parkinson's like symptoms VA will recognize for the purposes of a claim. For example, even though the medical community recognizes Lewy Body dementia (LBD) as a form of Parkinsonism, VA recently denied one of our client's claims for LBD because it did not recognize it as a form of Parkinsonism. For all of these impacted Veterans and their families, we hope the new VA leadership will find a way to update its regulation as soon as possible.
- **CVSOs have also asked whether this change impacts *Nehmer* class members and other Vietnam-era Veterans?** As you may know, *Nehmer v. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs* was a class action lawsuit brought against VA by the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) in 1986. As a result of that case, VA is required to take certain actions when it recognizes a new condition as scientifically linked to herbicide (Agent Orange) exposure. Specifically, VA must: (1) identify all claims for the recognized condition that were previously filed and/or denied; and (2) pay retroactive disability and death benefits to the veterans or their survivors back to the date of the veteran's initial claim. Thus far, however, VA leadership has taken the position that *Nehmer* does not apply to these three new conditions because VA did not recognize the new conditions, Congress did. We suspect that VA's position will ultimately be challenged and overturned in court. Until then, CVSOs should inform their clients that when VA grants a claim for one of these three new medical conditions, the effective date will likely coincide with the date of the recently-filed claim since VA will interpret the 2021 NDAA as a liberalizing law not subject to *Nehmer* compliance.
- In closing, CVSOs should file claims and inform their clients as to what to expect in terms of how VA will process and decide these claims. We will do our best to keep you provide updates as they become available. As always, feel free to reach out to us if we can help in any way.



TRETA MEMBERS:

As you can imagine, Washington has been in what we call a “wash cycle” since the inauguration on January 20th. Members of Congress and their staff have turned over at a relatively high rate, official appointments in the new Administration have started to trickle in, and legislative priorities have begun to manifest.

As the dust begins to settle entering the 117th Congress, we wanted to provide you with an overview of the legislative and regulatory accomplishments TRETA has worked to secure on your behalf. Below you will find five major priorities that TRETA members have strongly supported, both in written email and over the phone, along with a brief rundown of what we have already accomplished in the first two months of 2021:

Servicemember and Veteran Caregivers

TRETA recently worked with Rep. Richard Hudson (R-NC) and Rep. Kathleen Rice (D-NY) to ensure a successful re-introduction of HR 110, *The Care for Veteran Caregivers Act*, which requires VA to extend stipend payments and CHAMPVA eligibility for caregivers, eliminates unnecessary and redundant re-evaluation requirements, and standardizes the initial and annual eligibility evaluation process.

Concurrent Receipt (Fixing VA Disability Pay + DOD Retirement Pay Offset)

TRETA has successfully secured the re-introduction of the *Major Richard Start Act*, where TRETA was quoted in every major press release as leading advocate on the issue. The bipartisan legislation would finally provide combat-injured veterans that were forced to medically retire with less than 20 years of military service their full benefits, meaning they would receive both their earned DoD Retirement Pay, and their earned VA Disability Pay, with no offset.

Toxic Exposures, Burn Pits, and Agent Orange

As you know, health care eligibility and service-connected claims for those exposed to toxic chemicals and Agent Orange during their military service are critical and time sensitive. As such, TRETA continues to be a leading advocate on Toxic Exposures and was at the forefront during the re-introduction of the *TEAM Act* (S. 927) on March 23rd where TRETA was invited to speak at Senator Tillis and Senator Hassan’s press conference and quoted in every major press release. In addition, TRETA will maintain efforts to have VA and DOD be more proactive in addressing these issues once and for all, especially as future conflicts arise.

TRICARE Benefits

Recent legislation aimed to reform the Military Health System has unintentionally eroded the value of pharmacy benefits and poses a threat to Military Treatment Facilities, access to pharmacies, and zero copay prescription medications. As such, TRETA has begun working with the Defense Health Agency to protect pharmacy benefits, access to Military Treatment Facilities, and to achieve flexibility in TRICARE pharmacy copays for TRETA members.

Suicide Prevention

Last year, TRETA was recognized for our work on passing two major bills to reduce veteran suicide, most notably *the Commander John Scott Hannon Act*. This year, TRETA continues to advocate for suicide and mental health initiatives and remain as an Ambassador on behalf of the PREVENTS Task Force, an interagency effort established by the White House in conjunction with VA to raise awareness and change the stigma surrounding the National tragedy of suicide. In addition, we are ensuring TRETA is a leading advocate on the PAWS Act, which is legislation aimed at pairing service dogs with veterans suffering from mental wounds of war, such as PTSD.

Call to Action Emails

We would like to thank you all for your willingness to participate in our Call-to-Action requests. These efforts are critically important to ensure Congress feels the pressure and hears directly from you. When you see these alerts in your inbox, please consider following the prompts to write to your representatives in support of the highlighted legislative effort. The platform called “VoterVoice” will automatically send it to your respective Senators and Congressman based on the zip code you provide when filling out your contact information.



HR 1282

To amend title 10, United States Code, to expand eligibility to certain military retirees for concurrent receipt of veterans' disability compensation and retired pay or combat-related special compensation, and for other purposes.

H.R. 1282 is a bill in the United States Congress.

A bill must be passed by both the House and Senate in identical form and then be signed by the President to become law.

Bills numbers restart every two years. That means there are other bills with the number H.R. 1282. This is the one from the 117th Congress.



Legislative Consideration

S.334 Major Richard Star Act

To amend title 10, United States Code, to provide for concurrent receipt of veterans' disability compensation and retired pay for disability retirees with fewer than 20 years of service and a combat-related disability, and for other purposes.

SB 665 will amend the Voluntary Veterans' Preference Employment Policy Act to allow private employers to establish and maintain a written veterans' preference employment policy and hiring program.

SB 667 allows the executor or administrator of an eligible disabled veteran's estate to file a disabled veterans' property tax exemption claim with an assessor.

SB 348 requires the Cal Vet, prior to closing a California Veterans' Home, to establish a task force, made up of representatives from the Department, elected officials from the community, residents and staff of the home, and local Veterans groups. This task force would be required to submit recommendations to the Legislature on the home and a review of community input, including efforts to encourage participation in community meetings related to the proposed closure.

SB 363 Dear Senator: Please oppose SB 363-Leyva. This bill is poorly written and unfairly attacks two very successful youth programs that have helped thousands of boys and girls learn about civic engagement. The American Legion, which hosts the Boys State Program, as well as the American Legion Auxiliary, which hosts the Girls State Program; are both opposed to SB 363.

SB 658 authorizes county assessors to offer a property tax deduction to disabled veterans proportional to the veterans' percentage disability rating from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).



AB 1470 This bill would require the California Department of Public Health (DPH) to establish an Ending Military Suicide Task Force to systematically reduce military suicides and to develop a plan to eliminate all military suicides in the state.

AB 107 amends the Business and Professions Code to add all licenses issued by the Dental Board, the Dental Hygiene Board, the Board of Pharmacy, the Board of Accountancy, the Veterinary Medical Board, the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology, the Board of Psychology, the Board of Occupational Therapy, and the Physical Therapy Board.

AB 933 will reform the current rebate structure to benefit the patient, not corporations:

- Will make prescriptions more affordable by requiring patients receive at least 90% of rebates.
- Will not drastically increase premiums – one study demonstrated that even if health insurance companies were required to share 100% of negotiated rebates with patients, premiums would increase at most 1%, while patients could save up to \$800 each year on their medicine costs.

AB 353 will amend the Voluntary Veterans' Preference Employment Policy Act to allow private employers to establish and maintain a written veterans' preference employment policy and hiring program.

Senator Bob Archuleta (D-Pico Rivera), Chair of the Senate Military and Veterans Affairs Committee and Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris (D-Laguna Beach), have submitted budget requests to their respective houses asking that the Legislature increase Local Assistance funding for the CVSOs (AKA Subvention) from \$5.6 million per year to \$11 million per year.

CalVet Events to Watch For

Event	Location	Date / Time	Details
A Survivor Speaks: Navigating Trauma - Virtual	Zoom Meeting	04/21/2021 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.	After a harrowing enlistment, tragic discharge, and the endless battle to come out whole, a survivor reflects and shares her strength, her hope and her inspirational journey to overcome her rape in the military. Register HERE For additional information please visit our CalVet Women Veterans page.
Contact: CalVet Women Veterans Division 916-653-1402 womenveterans@calvet.ca.gov			
Military Sexual Trauma Resources Workshop - Virtual	Zoom Meeting	04/07/2021 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.	Join the CalVet Women Veterans Division and the VA Northern California Health Care System, Women Veterans Health for a detailed, free, virtual webinar to discuss all things about Military Sexual Trauma (MST). This is an informationally rich webinar that will give a little background on the MST crisis, resources for survivors, and how to best file your claim for symptoms related to MST. This webinar is open to anyone who wants to know more about the effects of MST and where survivors can go for support and help. Register HERE For additional information please visit our CalVet Women Veterans page.
Contact: CalVet Women Veterans Division 916-653-1402 womenveterans@calvet.ca.gov			



Volunteering: Building A Community Through Giving

DATE: Wednesday, June 17, 2020

TIME: 1PM-2PM PDT

Join us for a discussion and presentation on Volunteering. Learn how you can be a part of an organization and help alongside your fellow veterans while giving back to your community.



Social Networking Part 2: A Nation At Work, A Community of Support

DATE: Wednesday, June 24, 2020

TIME: 1PM-2PM PDT

Join us for the part-two discussion and presentation on the Social Networking series. Learn how WoVeN provides a unique social network for women veterans.

Military Calendar – Holidays, Events, Observances

April

Month of the Military Child	Month of April
Military Saves Month	Month of April
April Fool's Day	April 1
Good Friday	April 2
Easter	April 4
Gold Star Spouses Day	April 5
National Former POW Recognition Day	April 9
Air Force Reserve Birthday	April 14
Ramadan	April 12 (begins), May 11 (ends), 2021
Purple Up! Day	April 15
Earth Day	April 22
Army Reserve Birthday	April 23
National Military Brats Day	April 30

May

Month of the Military Caregiver	Month of May
National Military Appreciation Month	Month of May
Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW)	First full week in May
National Correctional Officers Week	First full week in May
Silver Star Service Banner Day	May 1
Loyalty Day	May 1
National Day of Prayer	First Thursday of May

National Nurses Week	May 6 (begins), May 12 (ends), 2021
VE Day	May 8
Military Spouse Appreciation Day	Friday before Mother's Day
Mother's Day	Second Sunday in May
Armed Forces Week	Second Sat. Thru 3rd Sun. in May (not official)
Children of Fallen Patriots Day	May 13
Peace Officers Memorial Day	May 15
Armed Forces Day	Third Saturday in May
Maritime Day	May 22
Memorial Day	Last Monday in May

June

PTSD Awareness Month	Month of June
D-Day	June 6
Women Veterans Day	June 12
Army Birthday	June 14
U.S. Flag Day	June 14
National Flag Week	The week that includes June 14th
Father's Day	Third Sunday in June
Veterans Golden Age Games	June 22 (begins), June 27 (ends), 2020
Coast Guard Auxiliary Birthday	June 23
PTSD Awareness Day	June 27



Women Veterans Alliance

is the premier national network focused on directly impacting the quality of life of women veterans. We do this successfully through transforming the way the community networks to bring people and programs directly together through a reliable and resourceful platform.

Our vision is to **CONNECT over 2 million Women Veterans** (and our supporters) globally for the **PURPOSE** of sharing our gifts, talents, resources and experience. We are committed to creating a community that **Equips, Empowers & Encourages** women that have served our country with knowledge, resources, mentorship, and career opportunities to **discover & fulfill their greatest potential**.

We have created a community both online and off-line including local women veteran networking groups, community events and national conferences world-wide which provide opportunities to connect and grow.

Directory of Women Veteran Owned Business to promote or connect with local and global businesses.

Assist women that are looking to start or expand a business.

Allies' directory of networking groups, meetups, support groups, veteran service organizations, councils and advisory committees that are specifically for women veterans

Comprehensive directory of resources for veterans

Online event calendar of nationwide events

Online store of items such as t-shirts, jewelry, hats, books, pins and more!

Our annual Signature event, The Unconference October 8-10th Tropicana Resort in Las Vegas

Wednesday Webinar Series with great information being shared each week.

Women Veterans Alliance is a **woman, disabled veteran owned small business**, that was founded in 2015, by Melissa A. Washington a Navy Veteran who saw a need to bring women veterans together to equip, empower and encourage each other.

Women Veterans Giving the non-profit arm of WVA has a mission to connect, empower, and cultivate growth of professional women veterans. This is done through their commitment to raise funds to award a yearly small business award and send women to conferences. On May 15th their 2 annual fundraisers will take place in Orangevale, California- Red White Blue & Fun and Boots & Ball Gowns Gala. At the Gala, the Beyond the Call of Duty award will be given to a woman veteran and servicemember. Nomination deadline April 26th.

In July the application period will open for the Melissa Washington Small Business Award. This award is given to a woman veteran looking to start or expand her business. To date WVG has awarded over \$10,000.

Both entities offer women veterans opportunities to gain valuable career experience and successfully integrate back into civilian life. This is done through the reliable successful professional resource platform for women veterans. This distinctive infrastructure provides invaluable resourceful knowledge to all veterans.

Stay connected and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Pinterest](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

Join our email list to keep up to date on latest happenings.

WomenVeteransAlliance.com

WomenVeteransGiving.org

Contact Melissa directly: 916.253.7357 melissa@womenveteransalliance.com



Congratulations are extended to Virginia Wimmer-
One of only 27 recipient of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Center for Women Veteran's (CWV) 2021 Trailblazers:
Women Veterans Leading the Way campaign
2021 Women Veteran Trailblazers



Virginia Annette Wimmer is an Air Force Veteran and served her country for more than 25 years. Immediately after retirement, Virginia joined the Solano County Veterans Service Office as a Veterans Service Representative in Fairfield, CA. Her skills and experience allowed her to excel and she was appointed as the Veteran Service Officer (VSO) for San Joaquin County, CA in 2015. As a County VSO, she has played an essential role in prioritizing homeless Veterans in San Joaquin County by partnering with Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) grantees, organizations providing temporary supportive housing through Grant Per Diem (GPD), and the VA Palo Alto Healthcare System to connect Veterans to subsidized housing through the Housing and Urban Development VA Supportive Housing (HUDVASH) program. While she has been in the role of VSO, the San Joaquin County Continuum of Care has approved plans to support two affordable housing developments: Liberty Square in Stockton and Victory Gardens in French Camp. Her leadership on this issue has allowed the county to have a more coordinated effort for aiding Veterans in need of housing. Virginia was instrumental in the establishment of the San Joaquin County Veteran's Treatment Court (VTC) Program. Through the county's collaborative court system Virginia has been able to connect justice-involved Veterans to treatment through the VA Healthcare System, and service-connected compensation through the Veterans Benefit Administration. She has further advocated for a focus on the mental health of Veterans in crisis by providing Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) to service providers throughout the county. She volunteers her time as a mentor to other Veteran leaders in the community. Under her leadership, the San Joaquin County Veteran's Advisory Commission was formed in 2018 and they have since worked to establish a chapter of the Elizabeth Dole Foundation in Stockton, CA. She holds a master's degree in Social Work from the University of Southern California.

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Center for Women Veterans (CWV)

In early 2021, all transitioning Servicewomen and women Veterans will be able to take a self-paced version of the Women's Health Transition Training anytime, anyplace online at TAPevents.org/courses. Subscribe to the Center for Women Veterans emails for more information and updates about upcoming Women's Health Transition Training course opportunities.

[VA Women's Health Transition Training - Center for Women Veterans \(CWV\)](#)

This interactive and high-energy course is taught by a woman Veteran who uses VA health care and is designed to educate transitioning service women about:

- the woman-centric culture and infrastructure of VA to better serve women Veterans
- women's health care services (e.g. maternity care, cancer screenings, whole health, and mental health care services)
- the process and eligibility requirements for enrollment — you don't have to be disabled to receive health care at the VA
- connecting with other women Veterans through women-specific networks, resources, and programs post-service
- how to find your local VA facility and POCs for additional support

This is a voluntary program intended to complement transitional assistance program (TAP) and to provide all service women with specific women's health information that will aid the transition to civilian life.

The goal of the program is that participants leave the course feeling empowered to proactively manage their health care and to be comforted by their new support system at VA who can guide them through the military transition process and help them navigate personal health and wellness for the rest of their lives.

Red, White and Blue Patriotic Mocktail

This delicious, colorful and refreshing Red, White and Blue Patriotic Mocktail is the perfect for every guest at your gathering.

Ingredients:

Strawberry Banana V8 Juice
Mtn Dew, Frost Bite Flavor
Gatorade Zero, Glacier Cherry
Ice Cubes



Instructions:

Start by filling your glass completely to the top with ice cubes. If you would like to use a straw, it's best to insert your straw in the glass before pouring your liquids, otherwise the straw will disturb the layering process.

Pour the Mtn Dew Frost Bite over the ice, filling the glass a little over a third full.

Next, very slowly pour the Gatorade Zero Glacier Cherry over the Mtn Dew Frost Bite, filling the glass about $\frac{3}{4}$ full. If the Gatorade begins pouring too quickly it will mix into the Mtn Dew Frost Bite. A trick to help pour slowly is to hold a spoon with the backside facing up across the glass and pour the Gatorade over the back side of the spoon. It will slowly trickle into the glass and keep it from mixing with the Mtn Dew Frost Bite.

Lastly, pour the Strawberry Banana V8 slowly over the Gatorade Zero Glacier Cherry. The Strawberry Banana V8 will slowly begin to fall until it layers right on top of the Mtn Dew Frost Bite. The Gatorade Zero Glacier Cherry moves to the top, creating a fun patriotic drink everyone can enjoy!