



MOPH May 2010 Department of Pennsylvania News Bulletin

John David Fry Scholarship:

Public Law 111-32, the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry Scholarship, amends the Post-9/11 GI Bill (chapter 33) to include the children of service members who die in the line of duty after Sept. 10, 2001. The benefit is effective 1 AUG 09; the same day the Post-9/11 GI Bill took effect. Eligible children attending school may receive up to the highest public, in-state undergraduate tuition and fees, plus a monthly living stipend and book allowance under this program. Children of an active duty member of the Armed Forces who has died in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001, are eligible for this benefit. A child may be married or over 23 and still be eligible. Eligible children:

Are entitled to 36 months of benefits at the 100% level.

Have 15 years to use the benefit beginning on his/her 18th birthday.

May use the benefit until his or her 33rd birthday.

Cannot use benefit before age 18, even if he or she has completed high school.

Are not eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program.

Rules for eligible children serving, or who have served, in the Armed Forces:

If the child is eligible under the Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty, Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve, and/or the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP), then he or she must relinquish eligibility under one of those programs to receive benefits under Post-9/11 GI Bill.

A child's character of discharge from his or her own service does not impact eligibility resulting from the line of duty death of a parent.

A child on active duty will receive benefits at the active duty benefit rate (eligible for unlimited tuition and fees but not eligible for monthly housing allowance or books and supplies stipend).

A child who meets the service requirements to transfer entitlement under Post-9/11 GI Bill may be eligible to transfer up to 36 months of entitlement to his or her dependents.

VA must begin issuing payments under this benefit no later than 1 AUG 10. This includes retroactive payments for eligible children enrolled during the period of 1 AUG 09 through 31 JUL 10. VA will begin accepting applications for this benefit 1 MAY, and will begin issuing payments to eligible children by 1 AUG 10. Children enrolled from 1 AUG 09 through 31 JUL 10 may receive retroactive payments for that time. Note: Children currently enrolled in school may apply for benefits under VA's Dependents' Educational Assistance Program. The program offers up to 45 months of

education benefits. The application for this benefit is available online, and there is a link on the GI Bill website, www.gibill.va.gov. The link takes the user to VONAPP, the online application. Select VA Form 22-5490, Application for Dependents' Educational Assistance, to apply. If you are a son or daughter, under legal age, a parent or guardian must sign the application. For more information, call 1 (888) 442-4551 or visit the VA GI Bill Website at <http://www.gibill.va.gov>.

[Source: www.gibill.va.gov/documents/Fry_Scholarship.pdf Apr 2010]

SBA Vet Issues Update 10:

The Obama administration is renewing efforts to expand opportunities for veteran-owned small businesses, hoping that a little aid to those who own or want to own their own businesses will help fuel a larger boost in the U.S. economy. Two executive orders signed 26 APR by President Obama create task forces that will recommend specific improvements in how small businesses are created, including expanded access to capital, advice on how to cash in on lucrative federal contracts and better counseling so that businesses remain on a strong economic footing. One of the two task forces specifically will look at veteran-owned small businesses, including those owned by disabled veterans. Veterans' Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki said veterans, especially those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, have training and experience from the military that make them potentially strong small-businesses owners, including the ability to remain calm and innovative in a crisis, knowing how to take risks and knowing how to run a competent organization. There are, he said, "significant opportunities for good outcomes" if the federal government can provide assistance. Helping one veteran become a small-business owner has larger impacts on the economy, he said, because "veterans hire veterans. They know what they are getting."

Shinseki said the Veterans Affairs Department and other federal agencies have been trying to help small businesses through contracting. About 19% of VA contracts last year went to small businesses, 80% of them owned by veterans, he said. Karen Mills, head of the Small Business Administration, said one of the task forces being created by Obama will look at ways to improve outreach to small businesses so they can learn about more opportunities to compete for federal contracts. Mills noted that over the past 15 years, 64% of all new jobs created were created by small businesses. The two task forces are interagency groups that in some cases will be able to make policy changes to help small businesses. But some recommendations could require a change in law or additional funding to take effect.

[Source: Marine Corps Times Rick Maze article 26 Apr 2010 ++]

Military Discounts Update 02:

All these businesses offer military discounts; all you have to do is ask:

Restaurants

Arby's · A&W · Back Yard Burgers · Burger King · Captain D's · Chick-Fil-A · Cotton Patch
Denny's · Dunkin' Donuts · Farmers Boy · IHOP (20 percent discount with military identification)
Java Café · KFC · Long John Silver · Pancho's Mexican Buffet · Pizza Hut · Quizno's · Sizzler
Sonic · Taco Bell · Whataburger

Services

AT&T · California Cryobank · Geico · Jiffy Lube · Meineke · Sears Portrait Studio

Travel and Leisure

Blockbuster · Movie theaters · Ripley's attractions and museums · Professional Sports teams

Products

Apple Computers · AutoZone · Barnhill's · Bass Pro Shop · Bath and Body Works
Big 10 Tires · The Buckle · Champs Sports · Copeland's Sports · Dell
The Discovery Channel Store · Dress Barn · The Finish Line · Foot Action · Footlocker
Gadzooks · GNC · Goody's · Great Party · Happy Harry's · Home Depot · Hot Topic
Jockey · Lerner · Lowe's · Michael's · NAPA Auto Parts · New York & Company · Pac Sun
Payless Shoes · Play It Again Sports · Pure Beauty · Sally Beauty Supply · Spencer's Gifts
Suncoast · Timberland Outlets · Wilson's Leather

Cell Phone Service Discount

All Federal employees are able to get a 15% discount on their personal cell phones by calling their carrier and mentioning the "Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 - Discount to Federal Employees Past and Present." You will need to know the military member's supervisor's name, phone number, and full address, so that his/her military status can be verified. Use the following contact numbers:

Cingular - 800-319-6393
Sprint - 877-812-1223
T-Mobile - 866-646-4688
Nextel - 800-639-6111
Verizon - 800-865-1825

[Source: VA Frederick Service Office Maryland VSO msg. 26 Apr 2010 ++]

VA Suicide Prevention Update 09:

Troubling new data show there are an average of 950 suicide attempts each month by veterans who are receiving some type of treatment from the Veterans Affairs Department. Seven percent of the attempts are successful, and 11% of those who don't succeed on the first attempt try again within nine months. The numbers, which come at a time when VA is strengthening its suicide prevention programs, show about 18 veteran suicides a day, about five by veterans who are receiving VA care. Access to care appears to be a key factor, officials said, noting that once a veteran is inside the VA care program, screening programs are in place to identify those with problems, and special efforts are made to track those considered at high risk, such as monitoring whether they are keeping appointments. A key part of the new data shows the suicide rate is lower for veterans aged 18 to 29 who are using VA health care services than those who are not. That leads VA officials to believe that about 250 lives have been saved each year as a result of VA treatment.

VA's suicide hotline has been receiving about 10,000 calls a month from current and former service members. The number is 1 (800) 273-8255. Service members and veterans should push 1 for veterans' services. Dr. Janet Kemp, VA's national suicide prevention coordinator, credits the hotline with rescuing 7,000 veterans who were in the act of suicide - in addition to referrals, counseling and other help. Suicide attempts by Iraq and Afghanistan veterans remains a key area

of concern. In fiscal 2009, which ended 30 SEP, there were 1,621 suicide attempts by men and 247 by women who served in Iraq or Afghanistan, with 94 men and four women dying. In general, VA officials said, women attempt suicide more often, but men are more likely to succeed in the attempt, mainly because women use less lethal and less violent means while men are more likely to use firearms. Suicide attempts among veterans appear to follow those trends, officials said.

[Source: Army Times Rick Maze article 23 APR 2010 ++]

Vietnam Memorial Wall Update 05:

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial was initially conceived with one overriding purpose -- to bring long overdue honor and recognition to the men and women who served and sacrificed their lives in Vietnam. Because so many veterans met with ridicule and contempt upon returning home, it was hoped that the Memorial would be a place where that injustice could at long last be rectified. And, in great measure, it has been. Healings, restorations and reunions have all occurred there. The Wall has long spoken a silent but eloquent message for those who participated in the war as well as for all those whose lives were impacted by it. Today, the Memorial has transcended its role as a national symbol of reconciliation and stands as a living history lesson. The Memorial is unique in its ability to inspire exploration and reflection about this critical time in our nation's past, with a wiser eye toward the future. The more than 80,000 items that have been left at The Wall by visitors since its dedication in 1982 also offer a compelling picture of the Memorial's impact on society. As the founders of The Wall, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund works to preserve the legacy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, to promote healing and to educate about the impact of the Vietnam War.

Each year, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund honors men and women whose noncombat deaths are related to their service, through either emotional suffering caused by their service or complications associated with exposure to Agent Orange. Nearly 2,000 veterans have been honored since the annual memorial service began. This year services were held on 19 APR. For many of the participants, seeing their loved ones honored was an overdue but appreciated recognition for their sacrifice. Sisters, brothers, wives, daughters, sons, grandchildren, friends and volunteers took turns at the memorial service reading the names of 97 members of the armed forces who died as a result of their service in Vietnam. As family members read aloud the names of their loved ones, many noted the branch of service they were in, their rank and the dates served. Most also tacked on a too-common postscript: Agent Orange. These service personnel, many of whom died of cancer decades after the war ended, don't qualify to have their names etched onto the actual Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall in Washington. Under Defense Department guidelines, only men and women who died from wounds suffered in combat zones are eligible. The wall contains 58,261 such names.

[Source: Army Times Malia Rulon article 19 Apr 2010 ++]

COLA 2011 Update 02:

Inflation jumped by half a percent in February. If that trend keeps up for the rest of the fiscal year, retirees would see about a 1.4-percent COLA for 2011. The Bureau of Labor Statistics announced the March CPI-W of 213.5 which is an increase of 0.5% from the January CPI-W of 212.5. The March CPI-W of 213.5 is now down 0.9% from the 2008 COLA base of 215.5. The 2008 COLA base will be used to calculate the 2010 COLA since there was no 2009 COLA as a result of negative inflation from the third quarter of 2008 to the third quarter of 2009.

[Source: MOAA COLA Watch Apr 2010 ++]