



The Communicator

January - March 2021

Dear CACVSO,

I first want to thank Celestina Traver for taking on the responsibility of producing a monthly newsletter. I also want to thank David West for filling in during the time in which the newsletter didn't have a home. This newsletter is an important communication tool that keeps us all connected during this distant and quickly evolving time. My hope is that many of you will be able to contribute to the newsletter on a regular basis, so that we can keep apprised of all the innovative and unique ways that you are serving Veterans.

There is lots to look forward to this year, and hopefully we will be able to have an in-person conference soon. Unfortunately, our conference in Tuolumne County will need to be rescheduled as the venue isn't able to host us under the current COVID-19 restrictions. In the meantime, our training committee and time & place committee are working hard to build a virtual conference for February and to identify an alternative venue for June.

I hope that everyone continues to stay healthy, and thank you for all that you do for our Veterans!

Sincerely,
Nathan D. Johnson
President



"Marine, don't eat that."

Meet your CACVSO Executive Board

President	Nathan Johnson
1 st VP	Rhonda Murphy
2 nd VP	David West
Secretary	Yvette Mason
Executive Director	Marion Moses
Sergeant Of Arms	Andrew Norwood

www.cacvso.org

BREAKING NEWS

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Office of Enterprise Integration

Dat Tran



Mr. Dat P. Tran serves as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS) for the Office of Enterprise Integration (OEI) in the Department of Veterans Affairs. In this role, he advises VA senior leaders regarding strategic planning; performance management; risk management; performance improvements; policy research; data analytics; transformation, and innovations.

Tran, the principal deputy assistant secretary for the VA's Office of Enterprise Integration, **will lead the VA until the Senate confirms Biden's nominee for VA secretary. Biden chose Denis McDonough, a longtime aide of former President Barack Obama, to lead the department.**

Prior to his appointment as PDAS, Mr. Tran served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Data Governance and Analysis. In this role, he oversaw the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics and the Office of the Actuary. Mr. Tran had over a decade of experience leading data analytics and statistical activities in VA. He was a change agent in leading the implementation of data governance across the Department to ensure VA's data is accurate, reliable, and accessible.

From 1995 to 2001, Mr. Tran served as a staff member of the U.S. Senate Veterans Affairs' Committee. He was responsible for oversight activities of VA's Information and Technology programs and coordination of committee hearings and legislative activities for the committee.

Prior to his government service, Mr. Tran served as the Manufacturing Operations Manager for Square D Electrical Company in Milwaukee, WI. He was responsible for managing the manufacturing, business planning, procurement, and customer service operations. Mr. Tran has also served as a Senior Project Manager and Industrial Systems Engineer at several Square D manufacturing facilities.

Mr. Tran graduated from The Ohio State University with a degree in Industrial Systems Engineering.

NEWS OF THE WORLD



US, UK Sign Agreement to Merge Forces for Historic Joint Carrier Deployment

Top U.S. and United Kingdom defense officials signed an agreement this week to merge some military forces in 2021 to form a combined carrier strike group.

The agreement was signed by Active Defense Sec. Christopher Miller and U.K. Secretary of State for Defense *Ben Wallace*. The strike group is scheduled to sail out of Portsmouth, U.K., later this year.

[US, UK Sign Agreement to Merge Forces for Historic Joint Carrier Deployment | Military.com](#)

NEWS BACK HOME

WELCOME TO THE TEAM
YOU ARE AMONGST FRIENDS

Ventura County-

Paulo Iparraguire

Veterans Claims Officer I

Monterey County-

Jack Murphy

Management Analyst III

Jon Brown

Management Analyst I

Please feel free to send all new CACVSO member names for recognition



Veterans Helping Veterans

After Years of Fighting, the Military Has Started Phasing Out 'Widow's Tax'

A long-decried law dubbed the “widow's tax” that reduced the amount of cash support some surviving military spouses could receive each month will begin a planned phaseout this month, a change triggered by a 2020 law.

The so-called tax, officially known as the Survivor Benefit Plan offset, impacted surviving spouses who qualified for both SBP annuity payments and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) allowances from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The law required the SBP payments to be reduced by the amount of the DIC payments. That's because federal law prevented "double-dipping," or receiving two separate federal benefits for the same reason.

SBP is an annuity paid to the surviving spouse of a deceased retired veteran; the monthly payment is a percentage of the vet's retirement pay. **DIC** is a VA benefit paid to the surviving spouse of a veteran who died on active duty or from injuries or illnesses that were a result of military service.

After long and loud public outcry, Congress finally decided that DIC and SBP are two separate benefits, allowing surviving spouses to receive them simultaneously. Beginning this year there will also be an extra monthly payment which is one-third of the normal DIC payment. For 2021 this amount will be one-third of the \$1,357.66 DIC monthly payment; or \$452.55 each month. It will increase to around \$905 in 2022 and further increase to the full DIC amount in 2023.

This means that the SBP/DIC offset will totally disappear in 2023.

Not every surviving spouse who receives SBP payments will see the larger payments. Only those who also receive DIC benefits from the VA are eligible for the increase, that is less than one-third of all SBP recipients. Also, the amount of a surviving spouse's SBP payments, and the presence of dependent children may make a difference in the offset amount. This is why DFAS is sending all affected surviving spouses personalized letters explaining their new payment amounts. The military estimates there are 65,000 people who will be affected by this change.

Those eligible for the increased payments should have received notification from the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, or DFAS, in December 2020, explaining how much their new monthly payments will be. If you didn't receive a letter, you most likely aren't eligible for the increased payment. You should verify your address with DFAS if you believe you should have received notification.

Events to *Watch* For

CalTAP and Shasta College: Navigating the Stressors of Distance Learning - Virtual

[Eventbrite](#)

02/10/2021 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

CalTAP offers online and in-person training to help Veterans connect with federal and state veterans benefits and provide continued support as needs change over time. Today's discussion focuses on the stressors of distance learning and how to cope with them.

Contact:
E-mail:
caltap@calvet.ca.gov

by STEP SoCal - Virtual

[Eventbrite](#)

02/12/2021 11:00 a.m.

Hosted by TELACU Veterans Upward Bound

Contact:
Telephone: (323) 723-2801
E-mail:
vetinfo@telacu.com

We will focus on savings, budgeting, goal setting, paying bills, debt, protecting your money.

STEP builds financial self-sufficiency among junior active duty enlisted members and recently discharged enlisted Veterans and their families facing financial crisis through counseling, education, and grants.

Oakland RO - Northern California VSO Monthly Meeting (FY21)E

[Join Microsoft Teams Meeting](#)

[+1 213-282-6316](tel:+12132826316) United States, Los Angeles (Toll) Conference ID: 321 158 044#

VAVBAOAK/RO/DIR
<DIR.VBAOAK@va.gov>

Please feel free to join your fellow CACVSO members for these meetings

THIRD THURSDAY of every month

Our monthly VBA-VSO meeting will be held on Thursday, January 21st from 1:30 to 2:30 pm. We are excited to have as our guest speaker Mr. Bradley G. Phillips, Executive Director, Pacific District, National Cemetery Administration. We strongly encourage all to attend – please ensure widest dissemination of this invitation as a show of appreciation for the NCA.

REMINDERS-REMINDERS

1. **Please CHECK** the Cal Vet website to make sure contact information for your VSO is correct.

2. **February CACVSO Virtual Winter Conference :**

Wednesday, February 17th from 8:30 am – 3:30 pm w/ 1 hour lunch

Wednesday, February 24th from 8:30 am – 3:30 pm w/ 1 hour lunch

Wednesday, March 3rd from 8:30am – 3:30 pm w/ 1 hour lunch

If more than two staff members will be attending the Cal Vet sanctioned training, please email either **David** (david.lawrence@calvet.ca.gov) or **Nancy** (nancy.noriega@calvet.ca.gov).

*****June 13th – 18th Conference-will be ONLINE*****



October Conference will be IN PERSON
Shasta County VSO is Looking forward to
seeing you all

October 17th-22nd 2021!

February is Black History Month

Here are a few of the many “google worthy” who have scarified and shaped our history

Salem Poor hero of the Battle of Bunker Hill

Harlem Hellfighters - 369th regiment spent 191 days on the front, more than any other Americans, and besides courageously fighting in one of the deadliest conflicts in history, its members also spread a love of jazz and American culture to Europe.

Tuskegee Airmen - 926 all-black Tuskegee Airmen carried out hundreds of escort missions during World War II.

Private William Cathay -Cathay Williams, a female ex-slave -illegally joined the U.S. Army in 1866, she is the only documented female buffalo soldier.

Oleta Crain - was one of three black women who entered officer training and the only female black officer to be retained after the war.

Gen. Roscoe Robinson Jr.- Before Gen. Colin Powell, there was Robinson, who became the first African-American four-star general in the U.S. Army.

Col. Adele E. Hodges - The first woman to command Camp Lejeune, N.C. Hodges oversaw more than 47,000 Marines and sailors. After two years, she joined the Inspector General's Office at Marine Corps headquarters in Arlington, Va.

Col. Guion S. Bluford Jr. - After flying combat missions over Vietnam as a U.S. Air Force pilot, he went on to become one of America's first black astronauts. He flew 144 combat missions, 65 over North Vietnam, as a member of the 557th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam.

Tuskegee Airmen

The Tuskegee Airmen were the first Black military aviators in the U.S. Army Air Corps (AAC), a precursor of the U.S. Air Force. Trained at the Tuskegee Army Airfield in Alabama, they flew more than 15,000 individual sorties in Europe and North Africa during World War II. Their impressive performance earned them more than 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses and helped encourage the eventual integration of the U.S. armed forces.

In September 1940, Roosevelt's White House announced that the AAC would soon begin training Black pilots.

For the training site, the War Department chose the Tuskegee Army Airfield in Tuskegee, Alabama, then under construction. Home to the prestigious Tuskegee Institute, founded by Booker T Washington, it was in the heart of the Jim Crow South.

The program's trainees, nearly all of them college graduates or undergraduates, came from all over the country. In addition to some 1,000 pilots, the Tuskegee program trained nearly 14,000 navigators, bombardiers, instructors, aircraft and engine mechanics, control tower operators and other maintenance and support staff.

In April 1942, the Tuskegee-trained 99th Pursuit Squadron deployed to North Africa, which the Allies had occupied.

The "Tuskegee Experiment" took a great leap forward in April 1941 thanks to a visit by Eleanor Roosevelt to the airfield. Charles "Chief" Anderson, then the chief flight instructor in the program, took the first lady on an aerial tour, and photos and film of that flight helped publicize the program.

In North Africa and then Sicily, they flew missions in second-hand P-40 planes, which were slower and more difficult to maneuver than their German counterparts. After the commander of the 99th's assigned fighter group complained about the squadron's performance, Davis had to defend his men before a War Department committee.

By the time the 332nd flew its last combat mission on April 26, 1945, two weeks before the German surrender, the Tuskegee Airmen had flown more than 15,000 individual sorties over two years in combat.

They had destroyed or damaged 36 German planes in the air and 237 on the ground, as well as nearly 1,000 rail cars and transport vehicles and a German destroyer. In all, 66 Tuskegee-trained aviators were killed in action during World War II, while another 32 were captured as POWs after being shot down.

A popular myth arose during the war—and persisted afterwards—that in more than 200 escort missions, the Tuskegee Airmen had never lost a bomber. The truth wasn't uncovered until years later, when a detailed analysis found that enemy aircraft shot down at least 25 bombers they escorted.

Nonetheless, that was a much better success rate than other escort groups of the 15th Air Force, which lost an average of 46 bombers.

We Honor.....

March is *Women's History*

Month and well over 200,000 women serve on active duty in the U.S. military. The contributions of women to military history (and well beyond) cannot be ignored. While Women's History Month isn't a time to focus exclusively on the contributions of women in military service, the contributions of female veterans are certainly an important part of American history.

There are many observances which usually happen as base-level events and as community-wide observations. Overall, the U.S. military makes a serious effort to raise the awareness level of this important occasion by paying respect to women who have made history whether serving in the military or not.

<https://militarybenefits.info/womens-history-month/#ixzz6ksF4I6Ux>



January 1, 2021 - New Year's Day

January 18, 2021 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February 3, 2021 - Four Chaplains Day

A day set aside to honor the four U.S. Army chaplains who gave their lives to save others when the troop ship *USAT Dorchester* sank during World War II.

February 14, 2021 - Valentine's Day

February 15, 2021 - President's Day

February 19, 2021 - Coast Guard Reserve Birthday

Month of the Military Caregiver

During the Month of the Military Caregiver, Americans recognize and honor military caregivers' sacrifices and successes.

March 3, 2021 - Navy Reserve Birthday

March 5, 2021 - Seabee Birthday

March 13, 2021 - K 9 Veterans Day

A national effort to make March 13 K9 Veterans Day. March 13, 1942 is the official birthday of the *United States K9 Corps*, and so it seems only right to annually honor their service on that date. They served to save, and they deserve to be remembered.

March 14, 2021 - Daylight Saving Time begins

March 17, 2021 - St. Patrick's Day

March 29, 2021 - Vietnam Veterans Day

A day set aside to show honor and respect to our Vietnam Veterans.

A Special way to Honor a Woman Veteran:

Military Women's Memorial is proud to present a revamped digital presence and registration platform to enhance the experience for visitors and registered members. Over the coming months, watch for continued improvements as the military woman's memorial launch more and varied educational programming, events and activities that pay tribute to and tell the stories of the 3 million women patriots, past and present, who have served our nation, beginning with the American Revolution. Help a servicewoman take her rightful and visible place in history for all time. ***Register her service for free!***

<https://womensmemorial.org>

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.

Important VA Phone Numbers

Veterans Crisis Line -----1-800-273-8255 and Press 1

Bereavement Counseling--- 1-202-461-6530

Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA) ---
1-800-733-8387

Caregiver Stipend ---1-877-733-7927

Debt Management Center ---1-800-827-0648

Education---1-888-442-4551

Foreign Medical Program --- 1-303-331-7590

Spina Bifida Program --- 1-888-820-1756

Camp Lejeune Family Member Program ---1-866-372-1144

Headstones and Markers--- 1-800-697-6947

Health Care--- 1-877-222-8387

Homeless Veterans --- 1-877-424-3838

Home Loans ---1-888-827-3702

Life Insurance ---1-800-669-8477

National Cemetery Scheduling Office ---1-800-535-1117

Pension Management Center ---1-877-294-6380

Presidential Memorial Certificate Program ---1-202-565-4964

Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD)--- 1-800-829-4833

VA Benefits ---1-800-827-1000

VA Combat Call Center ---1-877-927-8387

Women Veterans---1-877-222-8387

White House Hotline---1-855-948-2311



Paso Robles Board Retreat

2020

