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## DAV Department of Ohio Newsletter September 2020

### Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)

On July 30, 2020, the VA issued its final regulation for the implementation an expanded caregivers Program. Starting October 1, 2020, all caregivers of eligible veterans who served prior to May 7, 1975 will be eligible for a monthly payment. The PCAFA is scheduled to be extended (as Phase Two) to veterans injured between May 8, 1975 and September 10, 2001, with a scheduled implementation date of October 2021. Veterans injured after September 11, 2001 already have their caregivers enrolled on a Program.

The PCAFA broadens veteran eligibility by expanding what is considered a “serious injury” to include illness and disease (such as cancer and diabetes). According to the PCAFA, veterans are required to have either a single or a combined service-connected disability rating of 70 percent (or more) and require personal care for a minimum of six continuous months to qualify. They must also meet other criteria.

There are many World War II, Korean War and Vietnam disabled veterans, who require caregivers but are not at the 70 percent disability level. These veterans will **not** be eligible for the PCAFA. According to a Rand Corporation estimate, across the United States, there are approximately 5.5 million family caregivers assisting disabled veterans. Eighty (80%) percent of those veterans have served in the military before September 11, 2001.

Another change in the PCAFA is the method of calculating the caregiver’s benefit. For caregivers of veterans injured after September 11, 2001, caregiver payments were previously calculated using data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. However, after October 1, 2020, the caregiver’s monthly payment will now be established by a federal rate assigned to where the veteran resides.

For an example, a caregiver's monthly payment for a veteran residing in Detroit, would be significantly higher than a caregiver's monthly payment for a veteran residing in rural southeastern Ohio.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie stated, in issuing the final regulation, "The expanded (PCAFC) regulation addresses the complexity and expense of keeping veterans at home with their families who provide personalized care. This (PCAFC) will allow our most vulnerable veterans to stay with their loved ones for as long as possible."

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) has been lobbying and urging the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to implement the Caregivers Program (PCAFA) ever since it was signed into law in June of 2018, as a vital segment of the MISSION Act of 2018. Although the law took effect in June of 2019, disabled veterans were not able to gain access to the Program because of VA's Information Technology Systems significant problems.

Unfortunately, although the PCAFA is a year late, the VA has not yet announced when or even how caregivers of disabled veterans may apply for caregiver benefits based upon the newly published regulations. The PCAFA cannot begin enrolling the veterans until the VA Secretary has certified that a new Caregiver IT System is fully implemented. There is **no** projected date for this IT System certification to occur.

The DAV Legislative Director Joy Ilem stated, "Research has shown that family caregivers can help disabled veterans delay or avoid the need for high-cost institutional care, and, in certain situations, can actually help transition them out of those facilities. Allowing severely disabled veterans to remain in their homes longer is economically smart and will more efficiently use VA and taxpayer funds, and often results in better health outcomes."

The DAV has made significant strides in getting the Caregiver Program finally enacted by Congress. Now that the PCAFA is signed into law by the MISSION Act of 2018, we must be vigilant in making sure that the VA implements the Program as Congress has intended. Congress should not accept the continuing VA delays in implementing the PCAFC.

## **Slow Mail Delivery Impacts All Disabled Veterans**

On August 6, 2020, U.S. Senator Gary Peters (of Wisconsin), the Chairman of House Committee for oversight of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), launched an investigation into reported delays that are preventing citizens from receiving critical mail on-time, including veteran prescription drugs and business mail. According to ***Connecting Vets***, disabled veterans are reporting long wait times to receive their critical medication.

Although the VA's website states that prescriptions "usually arrive within three to five days," veterans have reported that wait times have "doubled, tripled or even worse." The USPS unions have claimed that this situation has been caused by a cost-cutting directive issued on July 14, 2020 by the new Director of the USPS. This directive eliminates overtime and several other cost saving measures.

We have experienced this slow delivery service in terms of the distribution of the Department's July Newsletter issue, which we mailed on July 17, 2020. We are rectifying the situation at our level, by issuing the Department's Newsletter every two months, starting in September, and mailing via first class mail.

### **Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose's Disinformation Briefing**

As you know, not everything on the internet is true. Sometimes internet information provides a grain of truth, intended to lead to a false conclusion. Other times, it may be nothing more than disinformation, intended to anger us and destroy our morale.

Department Commander and Adjutant recently participated in the Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose's Disinformation Briefing for Veterans Service Organization (VSO) Senior Leadership. Secretary LaRose briefed the VSOs Senior Leadership on disinformation campaigns that have been employed, potential threats ahead of the 2020 General Election and the Secretary's 2020 plans to preserve the integrity of Ohio's election process.

Secretary of State LaRose provided documents, photographs and other evidence of Russian disinformation campaigns designed to destroy U.S. citizens' faith in the government and in one another. His briefing included evidence of Russian operatives "mining" social media, such as Twitter, blogs, Instagram, emails,

Facebook and texting, to garner valuable data. This data is then categorized into groupings of people. Specific disinformation is then fed to those groupings.

He provided several examples to demonstrate how this disinformation can influence people, cause friction between groups and discredit democracy here and abroad. Russia wants to foster dissent and discord among groups. For instance, he showed how Russian groups set up and pay for two separate events, scheduled to be held at adjacent locations and at the same time. They then invite two opposing groups to the events, in hopes that violence will erupt between them. The Russian goal is to cause discord and cast doubts about one another and our own government system.

The Secretary, a former Army Special Forces officer, also asked for volunteers to serve as poll workers for the election. He says that veterans would excel as poll workers and can recognize disinformation when it occurs.

### **DAV Election Season**

November 2020 presents a very contentious election for all Americans. It is our duty as American Citizens to exercise our rights and perform our civic duty and participate in the elections as we choose those to represent our freedoms as leaders of our nation. DAV encourages you, as an individual, to register to vote, to vote in elections and to actively support the candidates of your choice.

However, as a member of DAV, you have the responsibility to ensure your activities as a private citizen do not give the appearance that DAV supports or opposes any specific political candidate. We **cannot** violate our congressional charter, national Constitution and Bylaws and regulations governing DAV's tax-exempt status.

With this in mind DAV Department of Ohio would like to remind our members about the "Do's and Don'ts of Election Season." A DAV flyer on that subject is attached to this Newsletter The flyer and other interesting and timely articles plus related forms can be located found at [www.DAV.org>Veterans>Resources](http://www.DAV.org/Veterans/Resources) and also at [www.DAV.org>Membership>MembersOnly>QuickLinks](http://www.DAV.org/Membership/MembersOnly/QuickLinks).

John Plahovinsak  
DAV Department of Ohio  
State Commander

Michael Stith  
DAV Department of Ohio  
State Adjutant



# Dos & Don'ts

FOR MEMBERS DURING ELECTION YEAR CAMPAIGNS

DAV encourages you, as an individual, to register to vote, to vote in elections and to actively support the candidates of your choice. However, as a member of DAV, you have the responsibility to ensure your activities as a private citizen do not give the appearance that DAV supports or opposes any political candidate. To do so would violate our congressional charter, national Constitution and Bylaws and the law and regulations governing DAV's tax exempt status.

## Dos and Don'ts

- DO** get involved in political campaigns, rallies, forums and town hall meetings, as an individual. It's your right as an American citizen—and a disabled veteran—to support the candidate of your choice.
- DON'T** support a candidate, or attend political events in support of a candidate, in the name of DAV, nor should you give the appearance that DAV is supporting a particular candidate. Wearing DAV caps and shirts can give the appearance of support by the organization.
- DO** hold open candidate forums or town hall meetings so the candidates can discuss their positions on issues affecting disabled veterans, their families and survivors.
- DON'T** forget to invite all candidates to the open forum/ town hall meeting and make reasonable attempts to accommodate their schedules. It is not necessary that all candidates accept the invitation or attend for you to hold the event or that the candidates appear on the same day or at the same time.
- DO** make candidates aware of the issues facing wounded, injured and ill veterans, their families and survivors, either as an individual or as a member/leader of DAV or its subdivision.
- DON'T** forget to review DAV's national resolutions to ensure your position is in line with—and not contrary to or unsupported by—DAV's adopted resolutions when speaking on behalf of the organization.
- DON'T** forget that, while DAV provides services to all veterans, our legislative goals focus on the betterment of wartime disabled veterans their families and survivors.

## DAV National Policies

- "The corporation [DAV] shall be nonpolitical and nonsectarian, and may not promote the candidacy of an individual seeking public office." Title 36 U.S.C. § 50306.
- Under the law and regulations governing the Internal Revenue Service (Title 26 U.S.C.), the federal tax-exempt status of certain charitable, nonprofit organizations, including DAV, shall be withheld or removed if they: "Participate or intervene, directly or indirectly in any political campaign on behalf or in opposition to any candidate for public office...Activities which constitute participation or intervention in a political campaign in behalf of or in opposition to a candidate include, but are not limited to, the making of oral or written statements on behalf of or in opposition to such a candidate.
- DAV National Constitution, Article II - Purpose: "...to advance the interests and work for the betterment of all wounded, gassed, injured and disabled veterans...."
- DAV National Bylaws, Article 2, Section 2.1—Nonpartisanship: The Organization shall be non-political and non-sectarian and the name of this Organization or name of any subdivision thereof shall not be used in representing the desires or wishes of its membership in any political, sectarian or labor dispute, except as provided hereinafter...the forgoing shall not prevent this Organization or any subdivision thereof from participating in political issues which have a direct bearing upon the welfare of America's disabled veterans."
- DAV National Bylaws, Article 2, Section 2.2,—Legislative Activities, Para. 1: No member shall speak in the name of the DAV taking a position contrary to a standing resolution.
- DAV National Bylaws, Article 2, Section 2.2, Para. 2: Federal legislation cannot be sponsored or endorsed without a resolution.

Check out DAV's Legislative Program and approved resolutions at: [dav.org/learn-more/legislation/resolutions](http://dav.org/learn-more/legislation/resolutions)

