

THE EASTON REVEILLE

A PUBLICATION OF EASTON VETERANS' SERVICES



JANUARY– MARCH 2022
NEWSLETTER

OUR MISSION

Easton Veterans' Services is here to inform and assist Easton veterans and their families in the navigation of applicable local, state, and federal benefits.

OUR STAFF

Cory Ahonen

Deputy Director of Health and Community Services– Financial and Veterans' Services

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On December 7th, 2021, the Town of Easton recognized and honored **Pearl Harbor Day**. American Legion Post 7 Commander, Theresa Podeiko-Poole led the ceremony at Frothingham Hall in Easton. Also in attendance was Pastor John Polk of the Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Easton as well as Select Board Chair, Dottie Fulginiti and Select Board Vice Chair, Craig Barger. Several veterans and residents attended the ceremony to honor the 80th anniversary of the attack.

The surprise attack effectively ushered the US into World War II as President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed it a "date that will live in infamy" -- and issued a nationwide call to arms. One of the most violent attacks ever against U.S. forces, the Japanese air force had slipped in quietly over Oahu precisely at 7:55 AM to wreak havoc on the air and navy fleet stationed on the Hawaiian island. The raid -- which came with no declaration of war -- destroyed four battleships and damaged four more in just two hours. Among the American armed forces, there were a total of 2,335 killed, including 2,008 navy personnel, 109 marines, and 218 army. 68 civilians also lost their lives in the attack making the total fatalities 2,403 people.

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PICTURED ABOVE 'A Time To Honor'

This book has been generously provided, free of charge, from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Veterans' Services. Please call us today to reserve your copy, you've earned it. On behalf of the Town of Easton, we thank our Vietnam veterans and their families for their selfless service and sacrifice to our country. **WELCOME HOME!**



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UPDATES FOR YOUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Plan to expand medical care, benefits for military toxic exposure could cost nearly \$300 billion.

Congressional plans to dramatically expand disability benefits for military toxic exposure victims could cost nearly \$85 billion in the next five years and more than \$280 billion over the next decade, according to a new analysis from the Congressional Budget Office released Tuesday.

The hefty price tag is likely to cause significant concern among lawmakers considering the legislation, which advocates have argued is needed to properly compensate veterans for the injuries they received while serving overseas.

But in a statement, House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Mark Takano, D-Calif., said he is still committed to passing the measure into law.

"While this cost may raise eyebrows at first, this is but a fraction of what our country spent on the war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan," he said. "When we sent our service members into harm's way, we made a promise to care for them — and pay for that care — when they came home. This is the true cost of that promise."

The plan — dubbed the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act — was

introduced by Takano over the summer.

As many as one out of every five living American veterans could receive some sort of new disability payout or medical care under the proposal.

It includes adding hypertension to the list of illnesses presumed caused by military service in Vietnam and presumptive status for radiation poisoning for thousands more veterans who served in areas where nuclear testing and weaponry was used.

It would also mandate that 23 cancers and respiratory illnesses believed linked to the toxic smoke from military burn pits be covered for medical care and benefits payouts for troops who served during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

And many of the provisions would be retroactive, meaning veterans could see checks of tens of thousands of dollars for previously rejected disability claims related to the newly covered conditions. Paying for that would be costly, however.

CBO officials estimated that about 1 million veterans will be eligible for new medical care options in the next five years under the bill, and more than 2 million will be eligible for new disability payouts.

The \$280 billion price tag — about \$10 billion more than the entire VA budget

request for fiscal 2022 — depends on numerous factors, including how VA implements the new law and how many veterans actually file for the new benefits. But it would create headaches for lawmakers who must offset part of the spending with other budget cuts, and create conflict with fiscal conservatives who have lamented the ever-growing cost of VA benefits programs over the last two decades.

Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee officials offered a similar measure earlier this year which the CBO said could cost \$188 billion over 10 years. That plan includes fewer retroactive benefits and some limits on the toxic exposure payouts.



This article was written by Leo Shane III of Military Times on 12/7/2021.



THE EASTON FOOD PANTRY

Since 1978, The Easton Food Pantry has been dedicated to providing food to our neighbors in times of need. The Easton Food Pantry is located at The Fellowship Church, 604 Foundry St, South Easton. Distribution hours are on Mondays 11:30am-3pm. *please call 508-230-0670 for more information.* Monetary Donations/mailings can be sent to Easton Food Pantry, Inc. PO Box 1481 Easton, MA 02334

Are you missing out on benefits?
Make an appointment today!

YOUR BENEFITS: ARE YOU USING THEM?

ANNUITY FOR MA VETERANS AND FAMILIES

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts provided an annuity to 100% service connected disabled veterans, or to the parents, and or un-remarried spouses (Gold Star) of men and women who gave their lives in the service of their country during wartime. To apply, contact your VSO or visit mass.gov/veterans

BONUSES

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts provides a one-time Welcome Home bonus to eligible veterans who served during wartime from World War II through OPERATIONS Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. Call 617.210.5927 for the Persian Gulf War Bonus. For all other bonuses, contact the Office of the State Treasurer 617.367.3900, ext. 543, or for OEF/OIF ext. 539

MOTOR VEHICLE BENEFITS

The Registry of Motor Vehicles now offers the option of having a "Veteran" designation added to licenses upon renewal. The RMV also provides a variety of veterans' license plates and a registration exemption for certain veteran. Call 617.351.9222 or see massrmv.com. Certain disabled veterans and former POWs are eligible for motor vehicle sales and excise tax exemptions. Contact the Dept. of Revenue at 617.887.6367.

THE EASTON VETERANS DISCRETIONARY FUND is used to sustain daily living for Easton veterans. If you would like to donate or are in need of assistance, please contact the VSO.

DISABILITY COMPENSATION

Federal disability compensation is one of the most common benefits provided by the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA). For additional information visit the Compensation and Pension Benefits section of the VA website at: www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/.

Soldiers' Homes

The Soldiers' Homes in Chelsea 617.884.5660 and Holyoke 413.532.9475 provides a variety of services to veterans, such as acute hospital, domiciliary, and long-term care; physical and occupational therapy and more.

VET CENTERS

Vet Centers provide readjustment counseling, outreach, and referral services to veterans and their families in a relaxed, community based setting. Vet Centers also provide counseling for military sexual trauma and bereavement to parents, siblings, and spouses. Locations include Boston, Brockton, Hyannis, Lowell, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester. For more information visit: www.vetcenter.va.gov

SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides service for veterans in crisis. Call 1.800.273.8255 and press 1 to be connected immediately to VA suicide prevention and mental health professionals. Visit www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

MASSACHUSETTS SAVE PROGRAM

Statewide Advocacy for Veterans' Empowerment (SAVE) program that assists veterans in need of referral services and seeks to prevent suicide and advocate on behalf of Massachusetts' veterans. Toll-free 1.888.844.2838, save@state.ma.us

HOME BASE PROGRAM

Home Base Program is a partnership between the Red Sox Foundation and Mass General Hospital that offers OEF/ OIF veterans & their families diagnostic assessments, treatment & referral services To learn more about the program call 617.724.5202 or homebaseprogram@partnership.org

BURIAL AND MEMORIAL BENEFITS

Most veterans are entitled to state and federal burial benefits and other memorial services. To locate the burial site of a veteran use the VA National Gravesite Locator at http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/j2ee/servlet/NGL_v1.

VA OPERATED CEMETERIES

Massachusetts National Cemetery
Bourne, MA 508.563.7113
Woodland Cemetery Soldiers' Lot
Harvard St., Ayer, MA 01432

GRAVE MARKERS AND HEADSTONES

The VA will provide markers or headstones for eligible veterans buried in private cemeteries at no cost to the veteran or his or her family.

CHAPTER 115 BENEFITS

Chapter 115 provides a needs based means tested program of financial and medical assistance for indigent veterans and their dependents. Qualifying veterans and their dependents receive necessary financial assistance for food, shelter, clothing, housing supplies and medical care. These benefits are available for dependents of deceased veterans as well.

Education Benefits

A variety of programs available ranging from MA Veterans Tuition Waiver to GI Bill (Forever GI Bill), Veterans Vocational Rehabilitation, and Ch. 35 (Dependents of 100% disabled Veterans).

STANDING NOTICES

CH. 115 BENEFITS FOR VETERANS AND SURVIVING SPOUSES

You may be eligible for Ch. 115 benefits if you are a veteran or surviving spouse of a veteran with a single income below \$2,147/month and assets below \$8,400 or if you are a married veteran with income below \$2,904 and assets below \$16,600. Ask your VSO for more details if you may be close to these amounts. This benefit may help with monthly medical and dental costs as well as a monetary benefit to help cover costs necessary to daily living.

THE EASTON VETERANS DISCRETIONARY FUND

accepts donations and provides assistance and gift cards to Easton veterans in need for items and services needed to sustain daily living. If you, or someone you know, are in need please contact: Cory Ahonen, VSO, to find out more about this fund. 508-230-0690.

Easton Age-Friendly Community Update

As you know, Easton is participating in an AARP-sponsored program to help guide the Town through an Age-Friendly assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation process. Soon, everyone will have another opportunity to give your perspective by commenting on the initial results of the work done by the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee. In the coming months, please be on the lookout for ways to access the first report by this committee, hear a presentation of it, and provide comments and ask questions. Thank you for helping us to make Easton Age Friendly.

Contact us:

Cathy Adler | Chair, AFAC
| 508.243.6679 |
EastonAFAC@protonmail.com

SNAP (FOOD ASSISTANCE)

Please call the MA Department of Transitional Assistance at 877-382-2363 and ask to learn more about what type of assistance may be available for you.

MEMORIES...MEMORIES...MEMORIES

Easton Veterans' Services is offering an opportunity for veterans to preserve a cherished memory in print. Stan Siegel, U.S. Army veteran of The Korean War Era, will transform your words and pictures into your own personal or family memoir. Stan is a former Executive Director of The East Norwalk Association Library and now lives in Easton. To begin your journey backward stop by the Easton Veterans' Services office to get your guide to help you start your story in words and pictures. This service is free to anyone who may be interested. Please call 508-230-0690 for more information.

Fuel Assistance

Get the Help You Need Paying Your Heating Bills.

Home Energy Assistance can lower your heating bills through discounts and savings options of the Low-income Home Energy Assistance Program and Heating Emergency Assistance Retrofit Task Weatherization Assistance Program (HEARTWAP) administered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Income guidelines below based on family size:

1: \$40,951 **2:** \$53,551 **3:** \$66,151
4: \$78,751 **5:** \$91,351 **6:** \$103,951

Please contact Self Help at 508-588-5440 or your local council on aging to apply.



MILITARY HONORS AT FUNERAL

The Department of Defense "Honoring Those Who Served" program provides dignified military funeral honors to veterans. To arrange military funeral honors, contact your local funeral home.

DEATH PENSION

The VA provides pensions to low-income surviving spouses and unmarried children of deceased veterans with wartime service.

REPLACEMENT MEDALS, AWARDS, AND DECORATIONS

Veterans and their families may obtain replacements for lost medals or other decorations awarded to the veteran. Requests can be submitted online at www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/.

EDUCATION BENEFITS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Many State and Federal programs are



2022 VA DISABILITY RATES

2022 VA Disability Rates will see a **5.9%** cost-of-living increase based on the Social Security Administration's 2022 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). Congress passed legislation in early October to increase veterans' disability compensation and other benefits in tandem with the Social Security COLA.

Annually, the VA makes cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) to VA disability benefits to ensure inflation does not erode VA benefits' purchasing power.

For a 50% disabled veteran with a spouse and one child who currently receives \$1099.83 per month, this amounts to about \$64.89 more per month. Pay charts can be found online at va.gov to determine your new monthly amount for 2022.

VA disability pay is a monthly tax-free monetary benefit paid to veterans due to their service-connected disability to compensate them for decreased quality of life or negative impacts on their civilian employability. Compensation may also be paid for post-service

disabilities that are related to an injury that occurred during service. Disabilities that arise after you leave the service may also be compensated, if the VA finds they are related to circumstances of your military service. By design, the VA ratings should offset lost compensation and work time due to exacerbations or illnesses.

To file a claim for a disability that you believe may be service connected, please contact your Veterans Services' Officer at your town or city hall.



YOUR LOCAL VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

ROLL CALL

VFW Post 2547

Meets on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 6:30pm

American Legion Post 7

Meets on the 4th Tuesday of every month.

Dinner at 6pm, meeting 7-8pm

Where:

61 Rockland Street, N. Easton

Note: Meeting status has been affected by COVID-19. Please be aware that meetings are subject to change during this time.



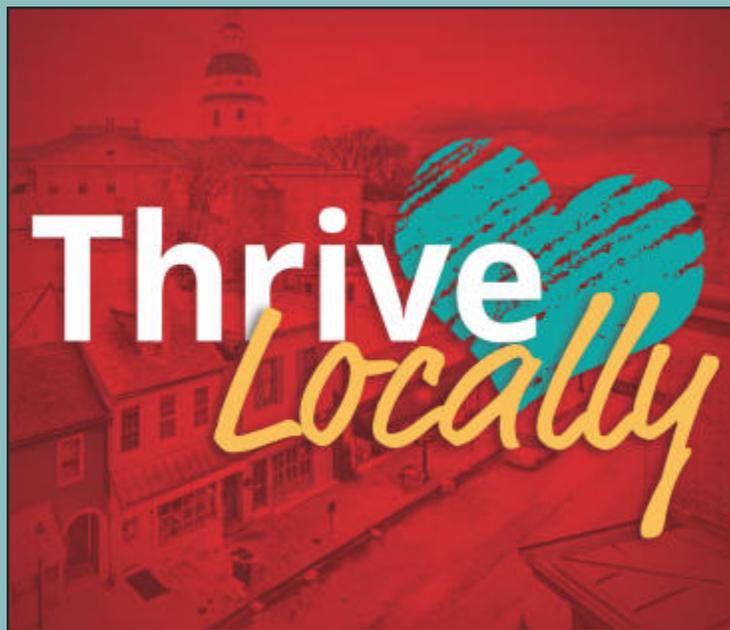
VA AND 'HEROES FOUNDATION' CREATE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS

The VA has recently partnered with the Daniel and Salvador Montoya Heroes Foundation to facilitate corporate hiring opportunities for Veterans and transitioning service members.

The partnership also aims to educate corporate employers about VA resources that can help improve Veterans' health and wellbeing such as benefits, community Veteran engagement boards, Veteran Community Partnerships, and Compensated Work Therapy.

This program will raise employer awareness of the risk factors of suicide and VA suicide prevention tools for Veterans. This is vital, as research shows that lack of employment and low income can contribute to poor Veteran health outcomes, including suicidal ideation and suicide attempts..

Please note that The Easton Reveille is intended for informational purposes only and does not constitute an endorsement by any federal, state, or local government agency. Easton Veterans' Services has compiled this information from a variety of sources



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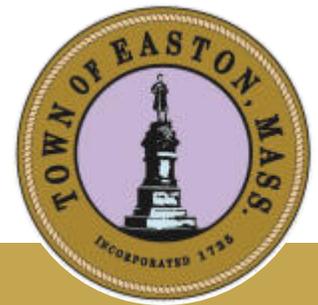


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http://easton.ma.us/departments/veterans_service/index.php



FRONT AND CENTER

In this edition of the Easton Reveille, we would like to call Russell (Russ) Gouldrup Front and Center. Russell Melvin Gouldrup, age 79, passed away unexpectedly on December 9, 2021 after being stricken ill.

He was the faithful and loving husband to his dear wife, Linda R. (McRae) Gouldrup for 55 years. He was a graduate of Brockton High School Class of 1961. After high school, Russell served in the US Army as a Green Beret during the Vietnam Era. He was also a paratrooper at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

He worked for Easton Edison Company for 33 years and over 20 years for the Easton Council on Aging driving a van. Russell was an avid outdoorsman enjoying hunting, hiking, and canoeing the Allagash Region in

Maine. He was involved with Youth Baseball for 40 years coaching and mentoring the youth of Easton where he became a true legend.

Russell will be missed by our Health and Community Services staff here at Frothingham Hall. His positive attitude and kind demeanor were his gift to us all. We thank Russell for his selfless service to our country and our community.

If you know someone who you would like included in our 'Front and Center' section, please let the VSO know!



EASTON VETERANS DISCRETIONARY FUND

The Veterans Discretionary Fund is reserved for the purchase or reimbursement of expenses required to sustain daily living for any veteran who is a resident of Easton, MA. If you would like to donate please contact us at 508-230-0690 x3.

Please send thoughts, suggestions, and ideas to:
Cahonen@easton.ma.us
or call 508-230-0690 x3