

Newsletter for SGT Michael A. DiRaimondo Chapter 750 Military Order of the Purple Heart moph-chapter-750.com



From the Commander

Next Meeting for 2017: The March 9th meeting will be held at the Ventura County Veterans Home; regular day and time: 2nd Thursday at 6:00 P.M. Please respond if you intend to attend, it is simple courtesy to extend to dinner contributors to tell them you are coming.

Nomination of the 2017/2018 Unit and Chapter Officers

Nominations will be held at the March meeting. Elections will be held at the April meeting. The installation of elected and appointed officers will be at the May meeting, the Annual Family Picnic. Officers up for nomination:

Commander	Judge Advocate
Senior Vice Commander	SGT Arms
Junior Vice Commander	Trustees (3)
Finance Officer	

2017 Thanksgiving Food Basket Drive

We now need leadership and volunteers for this year's effort. Names, please?

For those who do not attend meetings, Chap. 750 is a known charity and we are all about vets helping vets. Veterans come to us for help. The chapter has veteran assistance requests for consideration, plus chapter charitable programs in place. All members should be part of the decision process and even kick in some manual or other labor to help. Maybe a donation, too. Come to meetings and see what interests you, it's good to help others, and you may need it someday. You probably have been helped in your life; someone did you a good deed, you cannot always repay that person so you repay it to others. This is what we do at Chapter 750. See you at the meeting.

Our Saturday February 11 Getaway to the Richard Nixon Library

Patriot Jon Williams suggested this chapter group tour and lunch at a museum and it was a great outing. With Jon three chapter members attended, Jon bought tickets for many more members. Below is the Uher 5000, the tape recorder that Rose Mary Woods deleted 18½-minutes of audio on September 29, 1973.



Below is the flight deck of former President Nixon's Marine One helicopter.





Chapter 750 was represented at the dedication of a Purple Heart monument at the Camp Pendleton 5th Marines Garden of Honor on Wednesday February 22. L. Jon Williams, R. Bill Hutton.

Here are 10 ways Shulkin plans to shake up the Veterans Administration.

1. Firing bad employees

At the top of Shulkin's to-do list is improving accountability at VA centers across the country. Most of the VA's 365,000 employees do terrific work every day, he said. But when even a small number deviates from the department's ethics and values, they need to go. "We're going to make sure that the secretary has the authority to make sure that those employees ... are leaving the VA system," Shulkin told the cheering crowd.

2. Extending the Choice program

The Veterans Choice program created after the wait-time scandals allows VA patients to seek private doctors closer to home, but it's about to expire. Shulkin said he'll ask lawmakers in Washington to extend it beyond its Aug. 7 expiration date. "If Congress doesn't act, we will see a significant amount of resources that are dedicated to caring for veterans be removed," he said. "We can't let that happen."

3. Choice 2.0

Beyond the extension, Shulkin said Veterans Choice needs to be simplified. The goal: To make it work better for veterans. Thirty-one percent of VA patients' care is now delivered in their communities, Shulkin said. He wants to continue coordinating with local health care facilities so their systems are further integrated with the VA's.

Shulkin also plans to get rid of rules that restrict veterans from seeking care outside the VA to only those who face more than a 30-day wait or live more than 40 miles away from a VA facility, *Stars and Stripes* reported Sunday.

"This is not privatization," Shulkin said. "This is actually [getting] the veteran the very best care in the VA and the very best care in the private system and then working to build that into an integrated system of care."

4. Improving VA infrastructure

During his speech, Shulkin shared slides showing two aging VA facilities: one built in 1895 and another in 1932. “Our buildings are too old,” he said. “Many of the facilities frankly should’ve been remodeled or even torn down and rebuilt.”

Veterans deserve the best equipment, facilities, and health care professionals, he said, which means “reinvigorating our efforts to rebuild our infrastructure.”

5. ‘World-class’ services

Some health care requirements are unique to the veteran community, and Shulkin said the VA needs to continue enhancing those services. That includes specialized programs for spinal cord or traumatic brain injuries and treatment for post-traumatic stress. “[These areas] are really important for veterans [and] don’t exist in ways that are easily accessible to veterans outside of the VA,” he said. “We’re going to make sure that we are focusing on having those to be world class.”

6. Better VA-DoD partnerships

VA and Defense Department officials need to examine ways to leverage existing facilities, Shulkin said. “When you take a look at the DoD and VA, we have maps where we know that our facilities are close together,” he said. “We could be working closer together.” That could extend to other federal facilities, he said, as agencies look for ways to share resources and cut expenses.

7. Better electronic records

Towering stacks of paper medical records clogging up the VA system will be a thing of the past if Shulkin gets his way. The VA has made a lot of progress when it comes to integrating electronic medical records with DoD’s system, but there’s still work to be done. “We are now focused on modernizing our information technology systems, so you’re going to see some new and bold proposals to be able to make sure that VA continues to have high-quality modern IT systems.”

8. Stopping suicide

Too many veterans are taking their own lives, and the VA is on a mission to stop it - but they can’t do it alone, Shulkin said. “We need everyone’s help,” he said. “We need to work with the community and we need to get the messages out to get people help.” Shulkin said VA officials will release new anti-suicide campaigns in coming weeks, and the VA will be “taking a leadership role in this across the country,” he said. “Suicide prevention is our top clinical priority right now,” Shulkin said. “It’s an area where we are not satisfied.”

9. Appeals modernization

Appealing a VA claim can take years, and it’ll require an act of Congress to fix that. “We know the appeals process is broken - we can only fix it through legislation,” Shulkin said. “We’re going to make sure that we work hard to get that done this year.”

VA officials need to partner with Congress to get many of the department’s programs fixed. That can be difficult for Shulkin, who admits he doesn’t like to sit around and wait for progress. “I used to always say to my teams when I worked in the private sector, ‘What’s it going to take to get this done, an act of Congress?’” he said. “Now, of course, the irony is that everything that I do takes an act of Congress.”

10. Internal improvements

Despite some of the roadblocks that cause things to move slowly within the VA, Shulkin said there's still room for internal improvements. While veterans' satisfaction in the VA has been on the rise, the secretary said their work is far from done. "We are not satisfied with our performance," he said. "Even though we've made terrific progress on bringing down our backlog, we think we can do a lot better."

From: MOAA veterans organization www.moaa.org. Sent to me by Col. Ed Dewey USA (ret).

V.A. Pre-Need Burial Eligibility Determination

The V.A. implemented the pre-need burial eligibility program to assist anyone who wants to know if they are eligible for burial in a V.A. national cemetery. The V.A. encourages Veterans and their eligible family members to plan in advance to use V.A. burial benefits that Veterans have earned through their military service.

Upon request the V.A. will make eligibility determinations in advance of need. Eligible individuals are entitled to burial in any open V.A. national cemetery which includes opening/closing of the grave, a government-furnished grave liner, perpetual care of the gravesite, and a headstone or marker all at no cost to the family. Veterans are also eligible for the Military Funeral With Honors Program and Presidential Memorial Certificate.

Eligibility

Burial in a V.A. national cemetery is open to all members of the armed forces and Veterans who have met minimum active duty service requirements and discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. Also eligible for burial are service members and former service members who were eligible for retired pay at the time of their death. Spouses, minor children and, under certain conditions, dependent unmarried adult children are also eligible for burial even if they predecease the Veteran.

How to Apply

Interested individuals may submit V.A. Form 40-10007 Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a V.A. National Cemetery, along with a copy of supporting documentation of military service such as a DD214, if readily available, by: toll-free fax at 1-855-840-8299; email to Eligibility.PreNeed@va.gov; or mail to the National Cemetery Scheduling Office, P.O. Box 510543, St. Louis, MO 63151.

Authorized representatives can also apply on behalf of eligible claimants. An authorized agent or representative is an individual authorized by the claimant to make decisions on the claimant's behalf. An authorized representative first needs to be recognized by V.A. as an authorized representative or agent by filing a V.A. Form 21-22 Appointment of Veterans Service Organization as Claimant Representative or V.A. Form 21-22a Appointment of Attorney or Agent as Claimant Representative. Written authorization should be included with the V.A. Form 40-10007, Application for Pre-Need Determination of Eligibility for Burial in a V.A. National Cemetery, if available. A notarized statement is not required.

Notification and Time of Need

The V.A. will review pre-need burial applications and provide written notice of a determination of eligibility. V.A. will store the pre-need application, supporting documentation, and the decision letter to expedite burial arrangements at the time of need. We encourage you to keep the decision letter with supporting documentation with your important papers in a safe place and to discuss your burial wishes and final arrangements with your loved ones or other representatives.

Applicants may indicate a preference for a V.A. national cemetery on the application form, but a pre-need determination of eligibility does not guarantee burial in a specific V.A. national cemetery or a specific gravesite. V.A. assigns gravesites in cemeteries with available space once death has occurred and the burial is scheduled.

At your time of need, your next-of-kin, funeral home or other representative responsible for making your final arrangements should contact the National Cemetery Scheduling Office at (800) 535-1117 to request burial. V.A. will locate your pre-need decision letter and validate our determination. Because laws affecting V.A. burial eligibility and individual circumstances may change, upon receipt of a burial request, V.A. will verify pre-need decisions in accordance with the laws in effect at that time including bars to receipt of burial benefits.

Chapter Meeting Schedule for 2017

Upcoming Meetings

March 9 (unit/chap. nominations) – April 13 (elections) - May Annual Family Picnic (TBA)