



HAWAII VETERAN

Lawelawe i na kōa kahiko me ka ha 'aheo: "Serving veterans with pride"

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State of Hawaii Office of Veterans Services

2003

VA news

Concurrent receipt or combat-related special compensation

Concurrent receipt is the ability for military retirees with VA disability compensations to receive their full retirement checks and full compensation.

For nearly 100 years, retirement pay has been reduced by the amount of the disability compensation.

For years, legislation has been introduced to allow full payment of both retirement and VA compensation.

Last year, Congress came very close, but a last minute compromise authorized a special pay called "Combat Related Special Compensation," which was signed by the President on Dec. 2, 2002, as part of the Defense Authorization Act of 2003.

Who is eligible?

A military retiree must have completed 20 years or more of service and have a qualifying combat-related disability.

What does that mean?

A qualifying combat-related disability has two qualifications:

1. A disability that is attributable to an injury for which the member was awarded the Purple Heart and is rated by the VA as

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Proud to serve those who served our country

What services does OVS offer veterans?

This is a question that is asked by a number of veterans. Veterans who have not used the Office of Veteran Services (OVS) think that the OVS duplicates services offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). As most of you may be aware, both the OVS and the VA accept new claims filed by veterans. The OVS specializes in handling appeals and denials-of-benefits. Most veterans who seek the services of the OVS do so because their claims are in the appeal/denial process or they want to reopen a claim for a service-connected condition that has become worse. The OVS is the single office within the State government responsible for the welfare of veterans and their dependents. It acts as a liaison between the governor and veterans' groups and organizations; its role is to act as an advocate for veterans' issues. The following are interesting facts about OVS and its offered services.

- Client base includes individuals seeking verification of military service, including National Guard and Reservists who performed training during a period of war, so they can receive military service credit for retirement from the State or counties.
- Clients include individuals who are applying for a State Special Housing Grant for totally disabled veterans for the purpose of purchasing or remodeling a home to improve handicapped-accessibility; those requesting

necessary verification of disability status to apply for County tax exemptions on real property owned and occupied as a home by a totally disabled veteran or their spouse; those inquiring about tax exemptions on passenger cars owned by totally disabled veterans; veterans seeking veterans' license plates; and those seeking to obtain free copies of death and marriage certificates, when needed for a veteran's claim.

• Offices are located in each neighbor island county and is staffed by a counselor and clerical support providing the same services as the Oahu office.

• OVS is also responsible for the Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe and is tasked to provide funds for the maintenance and repair of the seven veterans cemeteries located on the neighbor islands. This role was assigned to the OVS when the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) closed to casket burials; the Federal response to Hawaii's need for this type of burial was that space could be made available in Washington or California for Hawaii's veterans. Veterans throughout the State wanted another solution - the creation of a veterans cemetery that could accept casket burials on Oahu.

• OVS is currently involved in a cooperative effort to build a 200-bed, long-term care State Veterans Home in Hilo. This facility will utilize funds from the VA and the Hawaii Health Systems Corporation to develop, construct, maintain and operate this facility.

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POW-MIA REMEMBRANCES -- Frank Vellegas, Clarence Young, and Robert Freitas render a salute to troops captured or missing in action at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl), April 9.

Derek R. Inoshita photo



Dear Comrades,

The Governor's Office has notified me of my reappointment as the director of the Office of Veterans Services (OVS). I want to share this news with you and thank you again for your support in making this reappointment a reality. I am so fortunate to have community leaders and fellow veterans supporting my quest for this position

The Office's mission remains the same, to work for and with our veterans and their family members, to ensure that our State and country remember the sacrifices and services of veterans and to assist all veterans in acquiring the benefits they are entitled to through their service to this Country.

I, and the OVS team of Ms. Jennifer Aina and Mr. Carswell Ross, together with the Cemetery, Administrative and Counseling staff, will continue to act as advocates for all veterans and their families.

Mahalo Nui Loa for your kokua,

Irwin K. Cockett, Jr.
Director, OVS



Dear Veterans:

I am delighted that the Spark M. Matsunaga VA Medical and Regional Office Center (VAMROC) has partnered with the State Office of Veterans Services in once again publishing the "Hawaii Veteran."

The past year was an exciting one for VAMROC Honolulu. The facility achieved a perfect score of 100 in its Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations survey placing us in the top 2 percent of all public and private healthcare organizations in the nation. We were one of four VA facilities selected by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to receive the Department's highest recognition for quality service, the Robert Carey Quality Award. These achievements reflect our commitment to providing you with the highest quality medical care and readjustment benefits that you have earned and deserve.

All that our facility has achieved this past year was possible with the dedication and hard work of each of our employees. Through their outstanding efforts, professionalism and dedication VAMROC Honolulu is truly number one in the nation and we proudly stand ready to serve you.

H. David Burge
Director, VAMROC Honolulu

OVS services -- *Continued from page 1*

One unique feature of this facility is that both veterans and their spouses will be able use it.

- Act 63, passed in 1995, by the 18th Legislature, State of Hawaii, and amended in 1997, tasks the OVS to: "inspect every three years all state war memorials and veterans' cemeteries for repair and maintenance deficiencies, and report all repair and maintenance problems at these memorials and cemeteries to the adjutant general, comptroller, and the legislature prior to the start of the next regular session." The purpose of these inspections is to ensure that these war memorials and cemeteries are in good repair and worthy of the honor and respect due the memories of those they represent.
- The OVS maintains an official copy of the DD214 (the Discharge and Separation Document) given to each individual discharged from the military, including Reservists and National Guard members, listing Hawaii as their home of record.
- OVS offers assistance with name changes, discharge upgrades, short term counseling and notary public services.
- OVS, as a State agency, is able to refer individuals who do not qualify for VA services to State services.

- OVS is co-located with the VA benefits office because it offers direct benefit services to veterans and their family members.
- In fiscal year 2002, over 22,000 veterans found value in services offered by the Office of Veterans Services.
- OVS is one of 56 similar offices with names such as the Office of Veterans Services, State Department of Veterans Affairs, or Commissions for Veterans. They are located in each state as well as Puerto Rico, Guam, Virgin Islands, American Samoa, North Mariana Islands, and Washington D.C.
- OVS helps Hawaii's economy by obtaining VA payments for veterans who qualify for either pension or compensation.
- OVS also ensures that veterans eligible for VA medical care or prescription drugs are aware that they may be eligible for this service for free or with a co-payment.
- In fiscal year 2001, the VA provided \$226,122,374 in total expenditures for treatment, care, and monetary payments to veterans and their family members in Hawaii.
- The staff of the OVS is "Proud to serve those who served our Country."

calendar/notices

On the Internet at: <http://www.dod.state.hi.us/ovs/calendar.html>

First Sundays, until further notice: *Military Appreciation Sundays*, Honolulu Academy of Arts; free admission on the first Sunday of every month for active duty personnel, reserve personnel, veterans, and their families, 1 to 5 p.m.; for more information call the Academy at 532-8700.

May 26, Monday: *Memorial Day Services*, National

Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl at 9 a.m. and Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe, 1 p.m.

July 25, Friday: *Korean War Armistice Commemoration Luau*, Disabled American Veterans Hall, 5 p.m.

July 26, Saturday: *Korean War Armistice Commemoration Parade*, Waikiki, 10 a.m.

July 27, Sunday: *Korean War Armistice Memorial Service*, National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific at Punchbowl, 10 a.m. *Tribute to Korean War Veterans*, Waikiki Shell, 5 p.m.

Homeless veterans stand down held at Ala Moana Beach Park

VA, OVS, State, County & community agencies held their Fourth Annual Homeless Veterans Stand Down, March 28, at the McCoy Pavilion in Ala Moana Beach Park.

The purpose of the Stand Down is to identify homeless veterans and offer them a range of social and supportive services.

Participating agencies included VA benefits and OVS counselors, VA and community medical staff that determined medical needs, homeless housing assistance, substance abuse workers, and other homeless providers ready to offer intake, assessment and referral services. Clothing and other comfort items were distributed. Military bands and other local performers provided music for the soul.

Those seeking to contribute monetary donations can still write a check to the Department of Veterans Affairs with "Homeless Veterans Program" annotated in the note section. Those who wish to volunteer for future events can contact Fred Ballard, VA Public Affairs Office at 433-0049. We are accepting donations of small size food items, socks, underwear (for females and males – unused), soda and bottled water. Contact Carswell Ross at 433-0426 to coordinate donations.



BENTO BARGAIN -- Free meals were passed out by 25th Infantry Division (Light) volunteers during the Homeless Veterans Stand Down held at McCoy Pavilion in Ala Moana Park in March. *Derek R. Inoshita photo*



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2003 OVS Advisory Board: Delbert Nishimoto (Big Island), Edward Kawamura (Kauai), Dania Krawec (Chair, Oahu), William Daves (Oahu), Irwin Cockett (OVS director), and Roger Evangelista (Maui). Missing are Thomas Joaquin and Ramona Greman.

We're rebuilding our mailing list and need to know if you want to receive future notices or publications - Call, fax, mail or e-mail information to:

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Type or print clearly

Name

Yes No Veteran Number of years served _____

Yes No Retiree

Yes No Spouse/Dependant

Yes No Veterans group member

Address

City/State/Zip Code

E-mail address