

## **Recent News for Veterans**

Under provisions of recent Federal legislation, more Veterans will be eligible to shop at commissaries. Formerly eligibility was limited to military retirees, 100 percent service-connected disability rating and Medal of Honor recipients. Now the eligibility also includes Veterans with VA service-connected disability rating, Purple Heart recipients, Veterans who were prisoners of war and primary family caregivers of those eligible Veterans under the VA caregiver program.

As the national unemployment rate continues to be very low, so do rates for Veterans in 2019. The rate never topped 3.5 percent for the year and was 2.3 percent in April the lowest since 2000. Health issues facing Veterans in the first year after leaving the military continues to be a major concern. While most Veterans said they were satisfied with their health, more than half reported having a physical health problem and a third said they had a mental health condition. The study, conducted by the VA also found that women Veterans had a higher rate of mental health conditions than men while enlisted Veterans reported poorer health and work satisfaction than officers. Not surprising, Veterans who saw combat reported more issues than those who did not. Veterans in a relationship were less likely to report mental health issues. More than 200,000 people leave the military each year and experts say the first year in civilian life is critical to their well-being.

Some of the purchase limits have been increased or removed for Veterans using VA backed home loans. Veterans using the program should talk with lenders about the increases. Nearly 625,000 Veterans used the program in 2019. This represents a 43 percent increase in Veterans using the program since 2014.

The VA hospital in Minneapolis was cited in both 2018 and 2019 for not taking steps to prevent a suicide of a Veteran under their care. In 2018, a Veteran repeatedly told staff, "I want to die." and no preventative action was taken.

Charles Sexton turned 100 years of age in early 2020 and finally received his Purple Heart after he was shot in the right leg during WWII. When he got his medal he said about his service 'It's not something I would want to do again. One time was enough.' He also referred to his WWII service as "a nice experience." In Reading, MA, at age 103 former medic Peter Fantasia was finally awarded his WWII medals. During WWII Fantasia was taken prisoner because he refused to leave his wounded men. 'I wouldn't go, I stayed in the foxhole.' he said. He was a POW from 12 November 1944 until liberated by Russian forces on 28 April 1945.