



EAGLE NEWS

The official Newsletter of The Retired Enlisted Association (TREA) Central Minnesota Chapter 115

January, February & March 2007

TREA Minnesota Legislation Bulletin

If you have never contacted your legislators **now is the time** to do it! We are entering a critical stage and soon our tax exemption bill will start the journey to become a reality. It won't happen if you don't get involved and make the effort to get everyone behind our bill. There are over 14,000 retirees in Minnesota with 10,000 of them that are enlisted. We only have a little over 800 that belong to TREA. That amounts to 8% of the retirees. In the last mailing that we sent out to you we added a membership application and asked that you find one new member. Our office in Colorado informed me that we only had one new member from Minnesota in the past month or so.

<u>File #</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Bill Title</u>	<u>File #</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Bill Title</u>
SF 30	Vickerman	Income Tax for Military retirement pensions	HF 137	Haws	
HF 29	Seaverson	Senate hearing on 22 Feb!	HF 30	Seaverson	
SF 33	Wergin	Income Tax sub for Military retirement pensions	SF 489	Koering	Firearm Training Exemption for hunting license
HF 82	Erickson		HF 629	Seaverson	
SF 160	Vickerman		HF 761	Ward	
HF 300	Haws		HF 272	Haws	
HF 14	Heidgerken		HF 260	Kalin	
SF 253	Lynch	MN GI Bill	SF 375	Kubly	War Orphan Extension
HF 162	Haws		HF 279	Haws	
HF 265	Seaverson		HF 390	Rukavina	Property tax exemption for disabled veterans
SF 255	Wergin	Veteran owned small business designation	HF 142	Wardlow	Property tax refund military disability pay

Subject: Legislative Update for **WEDNESDAY, February 28**

Good snowy Friday to everyone! Due to the weather, the house and senate did not hold committee meetings on Friday, March 2. The bills that were scheduled to be heard are in the process of being rescheduled. Attached to this email is the bill tracking document and the list of bills for the upcoming week of March 5, 2007 as currently known. Below is an update on the bills that were heard in committee this week.

House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veterans Affairs

H.F.533 (Lieder) Veterans' tuition and fee assistance and reimbursement provided for military veterans and their surviving spouses and children at public colleges and universities, and money appropriated. This bill creates a tuition reimbursement program at Minnesota's postsecondary colleges and universities for veterans, spouses and children of veterans who have died in active military service or who have VA rated total and permanent service-connected disability. The reimbursement is structured to cover any gap between the full cost of tuition, fees and any other administrative expenses, and the amount of tuition assistance the person receives from all other sources. The committee passed the bill to the House Finance Committee.

H.F.162 (Haws) Minnesota GI Bill program established to provide postsecondary education assistance to veterans and money appropriated. This bill establishes the Minnesota GI Bill Program in the Office of Higher Education and determines eligibility criteria as including certain military veterans and certain long-term Minnesota National Guard and Reserve members, as well as the surviving spouse and dependents of veterans who have died or become totally and permanently disabled as a direct result of their military service. The grant amount is based on the cost-of-attendance at the eligible institution being attended, and is intended for tax purposes to be the last-dollar-in. The committee passed the bill to the House Finance Committee.

H.F.300 (Haws) Military pay tax deduction expanded and military pension subtraction including survivor benefits created. This bill will change the current subtraction for military pay received for service outside the state to exempt all compensation earned, regardless of location, except compensation received under the active Guard Reserve Program or by members of the National Guard serving in the administration of the Military Department. This bill also provides a subtraction from federal taxable income for pensions or retirement pay for military service. The exemption is phased in over a four-year period. The bill was passed, as amended, to the House Tax committee. The amendment added to the bill clarified that members of the Minnesota National guard qualify for the exemption.

H.F.390 (Rukavina) Disabled veteran or surviving spouse homestead property tax exemption provided. This bill exempts a 100% total and permanent service connected disabled veteran or the surviving un-remarried spouse of the disabled vet from ever having to pay homesteaded property taxes. The committee passed the bill to the House Tax Committee.

H.F.142 (Wardlow) Property tax refund household income definition modified to exempt the amount of any military disability pay received by a veteran from the federal government. This bill exempts the amount of any military disability pay received by a veteran from the federal

government from being calculated in when determining property tax refund under the household income definition section of the MR-1 property tax form. The committee passed the bill to House Tax Committee.

H.F.284 (Ruth) Special assessment deferments authorized for members of the armed forces, and grants from the Support Our Troops account authorized for eligible individuals to pay special assessments. This bill authorizes counties, cities, and towns to formulate and adopt policy by which they may authorize the deferral (but not forgiveness) of payment of a special assessment on the homestead property of any veteran who has been ordered into federal active military service for whom it would be a hardship to make the payments. The bill passed to the House Local Government Committee.

THURSDAY, March 1

Senate Higher Education Finance Committee

S.F. 408 (Erickson-Ropes) Veterans' tuition and fee assistance and reimbursement provided for military veterans and their surviving spouses and children at public colleges and universities, and money appropriated. This bill creates a tuition reimbursement program at Minnesota's postsecondary colleges and universities for veterans, spouses and children of veterans who have died in active military service or who have VA rated total and permanent service-connected disability. The reimbursement is structured to cover any gap between the full cost of tuition, fees and any other administrative expenses, and the amount of tuition assistance the person receives from all other sources. The committee approved this bill for inclusion in the Senate Higher Education Omnibus bill.

Have a great weekend, and please feel free to call or email me with any questions you may have.

Christine Kiel, Director of Legislation, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs, 651-296-6728

44th Annual Convention in Charlotte North Carolina the week of 10 Sept 2007.

Just a reminder to make your reservations early. The hotel is the Charlotte Marriott City Center. The convention will end on Sunday afternoon this year. I would encourage anyone interested in TREA to go to the convention and have your voice heard. MALs as well as chapter members can each have two (2) votes by bringing one proxy vote to the convention with them. I think this convention will be important to the future of TREA.

PRESIDENT RALPH SAYS,

Candidates for State TREA President are being request at this time. We need someone who can represent TREA on the Commander Task Force at the capital and other Veteran committees in the Twin Cities area. If you are interested please contact one of the Chapter 115s officers.

Check out our web site (www.trea115.org) for the latest chapter news, State Legislation updates, meeting schedule (next meeting May 5th) and Chapter Officers.

We are mailing this newsletter to all Minnesota Chapter members and Members At Large (MAL's). If you "do not" wish to receive information from our chapter please contact one of our officers and we will make sure that your name is removed from future mailings.

Gathering of Eagles

"A helpless sparrow can drift with the wind. It takes an "Eagle" to fly against the storm."

The anti-war/anti-America groups are planning a "march to the Pentagon" on March 17, 2007...this group has intentions that defenders of freedom cannot overlook or allow to occur...there must be a challenge.

Here's a portion from the "anti-war" web site March 17 – March on Pentagon: Time to Turn Up the Heat! that causes considerable concern: *"The biggest single group of new volunteers and activists are soldiers and marines who have returned from Iraq. Their family members and other veterans are also organizing to March on the Pentagon. **The opening rally will assemble at the Vietnam Memorial (Constitution Gardens) at noon.**"*

Many are encouraging a "Gathering of Eagles" (symbolic of our freedom) at the Viet Nam Memorial Wall on March 17, 2007 at 1000 hours, as a signal that a segment of America does not agree with the "anti-war/anti-America" rally on the same day. Based on the input received, here is what is suggested as a means to identify those of us attending/visiting the Viet Nam Memorial wall and other Memorials on March 17, 2007 opposing the anti-war distortions.

- Wear a **Red Armband** on the right arm (**Red** often symbolizes/represents courage, revolution, hardiness, blood, and/or valor).
- On the armband each person should print something, e.g. WWII, Korea, Nam, Iraq, spouse, widow, POW, Vet, Legion, patriot, citizen, etc., or other respectful phrase one wants to help us identify one another.
- Many of us will be wearing favorite caps, shirts, jackets, jungle fatigues, desert dress, medals, etc. to include the **Red Armband**

2007 RECRUITING AND RETENTION

As the chapter 1st Vice-President, I'd like your help in contacting other veterans and military groups, particularly in the Twin Cities area. Most American Legions and VFWs have speakers at their monthly meetings. If you get me a name, telephone number or e-mail address, I'll contact these groups to share TREA information and membership applications at their meetings. But I need the initial contact information from my fellow TREA members. Call me, Mark Davidson, at 952-884-6077 or e-mail me at: LDavidson77@msn.com with the information. Thank you!

TREA CHAPTER 115 MEETING MINUTES

The meeting of 3 February 2007 was called to order by Ralph Donais, President. Mark Davidson led the Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes - Motion to approve minutes posted in the last newsletter made by Del 2nd by Dave. Motion Passed

Treasurer's Report - 2nd and 3rd quarter rebates have been received. The balance in checking as of today is \$2,516.83 and Savings is \$3,026.21. The cost of mailing and printing of our last newsletter to all Chapter and MAL TREA members in Minnesota was \$177.29 for printing and \$140.66 for postage.

Legislative Report: PNP Riddle has spent all of the Legislative Fund and ran over by \$2,800.00 in the red. The last mail out that he did cost around \$5,000.00. No response from PNP Riddle has been received as of today. Problem was discussed with our National President and he stated that PNP Riddle was in charge of that money and that National had nothing to do with it. Also several of the Board of Directors has been contacted and discussion held on this topic. President Donais has been attending meetings each month since the Legislative Session ended last spring. There are legislators at the capital that don't seem to understand how important it is to get the Governor's veteran friendly bills passed. So far he has visited most of the legislators on the Veteran's committees. Discussion was held on the newsletter that was sent out to the entire state of Minnesota retirees. The TREA office in Colorado stated that there were complaints of solicitation from members in Minnesota. So we will only receive the names of members who are MALs or 115 chapter members. This issue has been discussed with the National President.

Membership Report - Mark Davidson. As of December 2006 we have 295 members in our chapter. The end of January report has not been received as of today. Mark has been making mail outs to various retirement groups around the state. We requested that they put TREA information in their newsletters. Mark will be interviewed on a radio program 17 Feb near Fargo to help promote TREA.

Chaplain's Report & Metro Vets Report: No Report

Old Business:

Election of Officers: The following people were nominated for the 2007 Board. President Ralph Donais, 1st Vice Mark Davidson, Membership Linda Davidson, Treasurer Tom Hair, and Secretary Rod Erickson. Motion to elect board was made. Board elected by acclamation.

New Business:

2007 Budget was discussed at this time. The following limits were made at this time. Postage: \$600.00, printing: \$800.00, RAD: \$100.00, Web Site 166.80 (which is due every two years), UVLC membership \$50.00/yr. Motion to approve budget made by Dave and 2nd by Del. Motion Passed.

Good of the Order

Check out our web site for the latest chapter news and State Legislation updates, www.trea115.org. Our internet site is doing very well. We need to thank David Hammer for the great job that he is doing. A brochure is being worked on to get the right information to widows and widowers. MOAA has a nice brochure and Ralph has contacted them for permission to use their information. It was mentioned that if someone doesn't want to receive our newsletter to please notify a chapter member to have their name removed from our listing. Newsletter: Dennis Rock and Victoria have been doing a great job with our news. We thank them both for their efforts to make our chapter one of the best!

Motion was made by Mark to adjourn and a 2nd by Tom. Motion passed. Next meeting will be on the 5th of May.

MILITARY TRAVEL DISCOUNTS

MilitaryVacationTravel.com is pleased to announce that Celebrity Cruise Lines and Royal Caribbean military discounts are now available to military veterans with at least 2 years of service (or six months in a theatre of war) and an honorable discharge. A copy of the military veterans DD214 will be needed at the time of booking. This is the same discount program we currently have available for active and retired military. We are pleased to announce that Celebrity and Royal Caribbean are now allowing us to extend these discounts to our military veterans. For more information military veterans are invited to visit www.militaryvacationtravel.com and click on the veteran's link for a complete list of all cruise discounts currently available to military veterans including Carnival, Cunard, Holland America, MSC Cruises, NCL and Princess. Veterans are also invited to sign up for the MilitaryVacationTravel.com veteran email list for weekly vacation discount specials for veterans. Military veterans are also invited to check out the Fisher House Fundraising Cruises on Holland America offered by MilitaryVacationTravel.com which are going to help raise money for our wounded servicemen and women served by the Fisher House Organization.

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www.trea115.org

National HQ:
www.trea.org

FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

Saturday, May 5, 2007

Saturday, August 4, 2007

Saturday, November 3, 2007

Saturday, February 2, 2008

All meetings are held at 1100 hours at the VFW Memorial Complex, 7350 Quaday, Otsego, Minnesota. Phone 763-241-5225. As always, spouses and guests are invited to attend!

From I-94 in Rogers:

Go north on highway 101 towards Elk River to CR 37. Turn Left at the light. Second road on the Left is Quaday Ave NE and turn Right.. You will see several brown buildings which are the VFW Sport complex on your Right..

From Highway 10 in Elk River:

From Elk River take Hwy 101 South towards Rogers to CR 37. Turn Right. Second road on Right will be Quaday. Turn Right. . You will see several brown buildings which are the VFW Sport complex on your Right.

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Analysis: Part B Premiums Could Offset Entire COLA For As Many As Half Of Medicare Eligible Beneficiaries In 2008

Summary: The most recent Congressional Budget Office (CBO) budget and economic report forecast that annual Cost-Of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) for Social Security recipients will increase by just 1.5 percent in 2008(a). The CBO also estimates that Medicare spending in 2007 will rise ten times faster, by 15 percent this year. (b). If these forecasts prove to be correct, it spells trouble for millions of seniors and the disabled who have Medicare premiums automatically deducted from their Social Security checks. According to this analysis for TREA Senior Citizens League, the increase in projected Medicare Part B premiums for 2008 would require the entire annual COLA in 2008 for as many as 22 million beneficiaries – about half of all Social Security beneficiaries.

Background: Part B premium rates are supposed to be set to match program costs. However, in recent years Congress has routinely enacted legislation that substantially affects program costs after the premium rates for the year have been set. This ongoing problem has made it very difficult to achieve adequate levels of funding for Part B. The 2006 Medicare Trustees Report on pages 22 and 23 describes this in detail (c). Last year in May, and again in July, Medicare Trustees estimated the Part B premium for 2007 would be \$98.20 (d). The actual base premium announced in September was \$93.50, or \$4.70 less per month. One reason cited for the lower premium was lower payments to physicians. However, before adjourning for 2006, Congress increased reimbursements to physicians and certain other providers, affecting costs for 2007 after the September announcement of the 2007 premiums. In their 2006 report, however, the Medicare Trustees forecast that correcting Part B's deficit would require an 11 percent increase in the 2007 premium. The Trustees further said that should legislative changes block pending physician reimbursement reductions (which they did); the premium increase would need to be even larger. Instead of 11 percent, however, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services announced a premium increase of only 5 percent.

Assumptions: Based on this, this analysis assumes there is a 6 percent unaccounted for premium increase still pending. Part B premiums have increased on average about 11.6 percent over the past five years. When the unaccounted for 6 percent premium increase is added to the 11.6 percent average Part B premium increase a premium increase of at least 17 percent would appear to be required in 2008.

Findings: This analysis projects the base Part B premium for 2008 could increase \$15.90 to \$109.40 per month. Average benefits in 2007 are \$1044 (e). A 1.5 percent COLA would increase the average benefit in 2008 to \$15.70 per month. However, if Part B premiums increase \$15.90, the entire COLA would be needed to help pay the increase in premiums.

By Mary Johnson, Social Security and Medicare Policy Analyst
TREA Senior Citizens League as of February 6, 2007

IF your mailing label contains incorrect information, contact Mark Davidson at
ldavidson77@msn.com