



Veterans' Update

Your quarterly newsletter on Veterans' Issues from
Congresswoman Ginny Brown-Waite

September, 2006

Greetings,

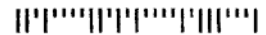
The Veterans' Update is a newsletter created to keep you abreast of issues and legislation important to the veterans of Florida's 5th Congressional District. I hope that you find this issue informative and educational. If you need any help with the benefits or care you receive from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), please do not hesitate to contact my Brooksville district office at (866) 492-4835.

Sincerely,



Rep. Ginny Brown-Waite

*This mailing was prepared, published, and mailed at taxpayer expense.
It is provided as a service to 5th Congressional District constituents.*



M.C.

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0903
OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

NEW VETERAN HEALTHCARE ID CARD PROTECTS YOUR PRIVACY

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is now providing new Veteran Identification Cards (VIC) for your use in the VA Healthcare System.

Only veterans who are eligible for VA Medical benefits will receive the VIC card.

Veterans can now have their digital picture taken at any one of the 11 sites. The VIC card will be transmitted to a vendor and mailed to the veteran within 5-7 days (note: sites no longer have embossing machines and cannot produce the card locally).

The new version of the VIC protects a veteran's sensitive information by no longer containing a social security number or date of birth on the face of the card. This will help protect a veteran from identity theft. Additionally, the veteran's picture is now larger and in color. The new version will also annotate if a veteran is in receipt of the Purple Heart medal and will list service connected, if applicable.

All older versions of the VIC card will be obsolete as of July 2007 (e.g. the white/blue cards, white/purple, and the old version that only has a black & white picture and still contains the SSN and DOB on the face of the card).



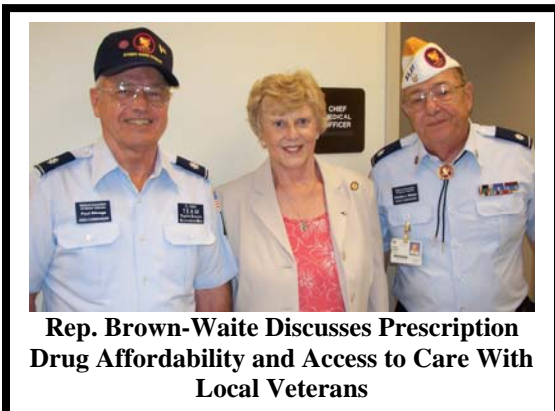
The VIC card cannot be used as a credit or insurance card and it does not authorize payment for care at a non-VA facility.

If you lose your card or did not receive a new VIC card in the mail, please contact the VA where your picture was taken to request a new card. You may also contact 1-877-222-VETS (8387) to check the status of your card.

Be sure to ask about the VIC cards at your next scheduled visit to a VA Medical facility.

PROTECTING TRICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG ACCESS

Many veterans have contacted me with questions about signs posted in local pharmacies urging people to call my office regarding their Tricare covered prescription drugs. This newsletter gives me the chance to provide veterans in the 5th District with the latest information on this issue.



On May 11, 2006, the House passed H.R. 5122, the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007*. This legislation would encourage, not require, TRICARE beneficiaries to use the program's mail-order pharmacy by eliminating fees for drugs purchased through the mail, while authorizing an increase in the co-pays required at retail pharmacies. However, some worry that these measures would hurt retired military personnel seeking quality health coverage.

As a member of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, I am committed to improving healthcare for those who have served in the armed forces. I oppose any measure that would adversely affect the care provided to our nation's veterans. As such, I am a cosponsor of H.R. 4949, the *Military Retirees' Health Care Protection Act*,

introduced by Congressman Chet Edwards. This bill would prohibit the Department of Defense's proposed increases to the TRICARE pharmacy benefits program.

Currently, the House and Senate are involved in negotiations to reconcile the different versions of the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007*. Rest assured that I will closely monitor the conference negotiations on this legislation to ensure that any changes to TRICARE do not adversely impact our military retirees.

IN-COUNTRY VIETNAM VETERANS GET AUTOMATIC ACCESS TO VA HEALTH CARE

Many veterans who served during the Vietnam era have contacted my office seeking access to VA medical care. Some of these veterans have been denied access in the past based on their incomes and not their service.

The good news is that if you served in country in Vietnam, you are entitled to VA healthcare. The current income based restrictions do not apply to combat veterans who served in-country during the Vietnam War. If you have been denied access to VA healthcare and served in country in Vietnam, please contact my Brooksville office at (866) 492-4835. You will need to provide a copy of your DD-214.

POW-MIA National Recognition Day

On the third Friday of September each year, Americans pause to observe National Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Recognition Day. The Armed Forces, former POWs, MIA families and veterans across the nation gather to observe this solemn day.

Friday, September 15, was set aside as a day of recognition for America's prisoners of war and those servicemembers missing in action. On this day of remembrance, we honored those who have given their freedom for the security of our nation. In their service to our country, prisoners of war and those who are missing in action have sacrificed mightily to maintain the promise of liberty that we hold dear.

America remains a beacon of strength and inspires hope in these uncertain times because of the commitment and ultimate sacrifice our fighting men and women are willing to make. We will forever keep alive the memory of our missing Marines, soldiers, sailors, airmen and coastguardsmen as we relentlessly pursue a full accounting of our servicemembers.



INTRODUCING LEGISLATION TO EXPAND COMBAT ACTION RIBBON ELIGIBILITY

On September 7, 2006, I introduced H.R. 6039, a bill that would allow more veterans to be eligible for the Army's Combat Action Badge. Current eligibility for the badge is limited to those soldiers who engaged the enemy in combat after September 18, 2001.

For those veterans who served their country in theater during the Global War on Terror from September 18, 2001 to the present, the Combat Action Badge is available from the Department of Defense. The badge provides special recognition to soldiers who personally engage the enemy, or are engaged by the enemy during combat operations.

My new bill would allow the thousands of brave veterans who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War and in other conflicts around the globe to be eligible for the badge. H.R. 6039 would expand eligibility to any member of the Army who personally engaged the enemy between December 7,

1941 and September 18, 2001. The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Armed Services, where it awaits Committee action.

HELP RECEIVING YOUR SERVICE MEDALS

One of the proudest things I get to do as a Member of Congress is help veterans receive the medals they earned during their service. Especially for those veterans whose records were stored at the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Missouri that was destroyed by fire in 1973, reconstructing your service history can be challenging.

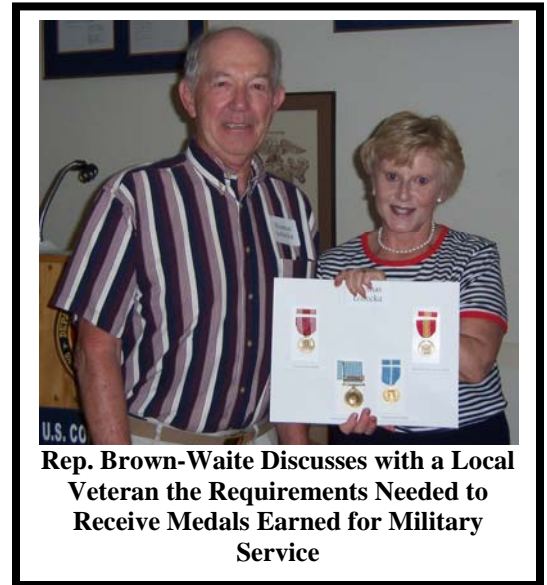
My staff and I are here to help you work with the Department of Defense and apply for those medals you are entitled to receive. I am always happy to personally present these to you when I am traveling throughout the 5th District. If you do not think you have received all of the medals you deserve, or have questions about your eligibility for certain medals or badges, please contact my Brooksville office toll-free at (866) 492-4835.

VETERAN'S HISTORY PROJECT

With the second most veterans living in the 5th Congressional District than any other District in the United States, I have worked hard to ensure that veterans' military service gets the attention it deserves.

One way to recognize this service is to take part in the Veterans History Project. This Project seeks to record the stories and histories of our nation's veterans, before they are lost forever. The Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. has collected hundreds of thousands of personal stories from veterans around the nation.

When I am back in Florida, I have scheduled times to meet with individual veterans at the Hernando County Broadcasting studios and helped take down their histories. This is a wonderful opportunity for veterans to record their memories from their service days and ensure that future generations of Americans will never forget their sacrifices. If you would like more information about the Veterans History Project, please contact my Brooksville office at (352) 799-8354.



Rep. Brown-Waite Discusses with a Local Veteran the Requirements Needed to Receive Medals Earned for Military Service

###



**Congresswoman Ginny Brown-Waite, 20 North Main St., Room 200
Brooksville, FL 34601, toll free 1-866-GWAITE-5
<http://brown-waite.house.gov>**

Also, be sure to sign up on my Congressional Web site to receive my weekly e-newsletter. All you need to do is submit your name and e-mail address to receive it each Friday.