

The Front Line



A publication of the Erie County, Ohio Veterans Service Office

Your “Front Line” for Veterans Benefits

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Important Dates

July 4 Independence Day
July 20 First Walk on the Moon
July 27 Korean War Armistice Day
August 4 Coast Guard Birthday
August 7 International Beer Day
August 14 VJ Day
September 2 Labor Day
September 11 Patriot Day
September 18 Air Force Birthday
September 22 Autumnal Equinox
September 29 Gold Star Mothers Day

Have Fun and be Safe

We hope you are enjoying your summer! While you are having picnics with your family or having fun at the “Point” remember to thank a veteran for the freedom we have to enjoy these activities without fear.

The new website will be up and running soon! Our aim is to make information on programs and benefits easy to understand and to access.

Come visit us at the Erie County Fair on August 10th.
Lunch will be served from 12:00 to 1:30.

If you’re a Veteran in a mental health **crisis** and you’re thinking about hurting yourself—or you know a Veteran who’s considering this get help right away. You are not alone.

Veterans Crisis Line

24/7 confidential [crisis support](#)

[Dial 988 then press 1](#) or [text 838255](#)

TTY 800-799-4889

22 a day is too many!



Meet the Commissioners

Todd Christman

Each edition we will be introducing you to the Erie County Veterans Service Commissioners. For this edition we are highlighting Todd Christman.

Hi! I am Todd Christman and I am currently serving the Erie County Veterans Service Commission in my 19th year. I represent the Disabled American Veterans and am serving DAV Chapter 16, John P. Lafene as Commander.

I enlisted in the Army in December 1971 and was sent to “boot camp” at Fort Ord, California. Then I was off to Advanced Individual Training at Fort Knox, Kentucky. My next orders were to the 3/32 Armor Division in Freidburg, Germany for the next 32 months.

After I returned to Sandusky I had a 33 year career with the United States Postal Service as a letter carrier in Huron, Ohio. I have been married to my wife Laurie for 38 years and have two grown daughters, Emily and Claire.

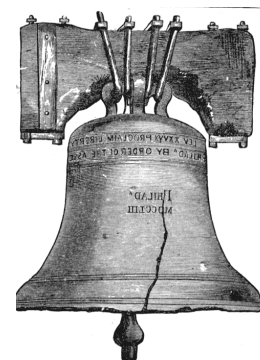
It has been an honor serving our Erie County Veterans.

Community Family Fun and Wellness Expo Ohio Department of Veteran Services

The Ohio Department of Veteran Services is hosting an event on Saturday, September 7, 2024. The event will be held in the Paper District Marina at 611 W. Shoreline D. from 11:00 to 3:00.

Join us for this jam-packed, first-annual event featuring live music by SWAGG, kids’ activities, food trucks, vendors, interactive exhibits and wellness resources. Come and experience a presentation of colors at the start of the morning and a TBM Avenger Flyover later in the day. Check in at the welcome tent to participate in raffles that offer a chance to win great prizes. Active duty military and veterans will receive a special welcome gift. Bring your folding chairs, appetite and the whole family to this free, one-day Community Family Fun & Wellness Expo hosted at the Paper District Marina in Sandusky!

From: dvs.ohio.gov



“Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.” —

John F. Kennedy

Connecting With VA

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to increasing access to earned benefits for veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. VA's Veterans Experience Office, is working to improve the overall experience for all VA customers by providing designated "front doors" for various communications channels. MyVA411 is the VA's telephonic front door. Veterans can speak with a VA representative 24-hours a day, seven days a week by calling (800) 698-2411.

MyVA411 call center agents can answer many frequently asked questions, or these agents can connect customers with a subject matter expert within the Department for further assistance.

Va.gov is the VA's digital front door. This va.gov site contains links to a wealth of information to assist VA's customers in applying for access to all VA benefits and services. Veterans can search for specific information related to a single benefit or explore all the various benefits available, to include health care, disability compensation, education, careers and employment, life insurance, housing assistance, and much more.

VA also developed and deployed VAMobile as VA's app for use on smartphones or tablets. The app can be used to schedule, cancel, or change appointments, chat with VA healthcare providers, and many other purposes. VAMobile features links to numerous mental health and general fitness sites, as well. The app can be downloaded from your device's app store or by navigating to mobile.va.gov/Appstore.

Additionally, the VA Welcome Kit was created to assist customers in directly connecting via phone, internet, mail, or in person to access the benefits and services earned through service to our country.

The VA Welcome Kit can be accessed online at va.gov/welcome-kit.

However you choose to reach out to your VA, the Department is ready to assist.

From Army Echoes, May - July 2024

Through 2027 No Copays for First Three Outpatient Mental Health Care or Substance Use Disorder Visits

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced that Veterans no longer need to pay copays for their first three outpatient mental health care and substance use disorder visits of each calendar year through 2027. This benefit expands Veterans' access to mental health services and lowers their out-of-pocket costs.

This copayment exemption benefits dates back to June 27, 2023 and—by law—will end Dec. 29, 2027. To be eligible for this exemption, the outpatient visit must be with a qualified mental health professional at VA or provided through VA's network of community care providers. VA will automatically refund Veterans for any copays paid to VA on or after June 27, 2023 for these appointments, with no further action required by those Veterans.

In addition to this copayment exemption, VA launched a new policy in 2023 allowing eligible Veterans and certain former service members in acute suicidal crisis to go to any VA or non-VA emergency facility for no-cost emergency health care. Since then, more than 60,000 Veterans and former service members have used this benefit — providing them with lifesaving care and saving millions of dollars in health care costs. The policy increased access to no-cost emergent suicide care for up to 9 million individuals, because eligible individuals do not need to be enrolled in the VA system or go to a department facility to use this benefit.

The copay exemption benefit is part of the Cleland-Dole Act of 2022. For more information on mental health care at VA, visit our mental health website.

From va.gov

Do You Have an ICED Box?

What is an ICED Box? It stands for In Case of Emergency or Death! What would your loved ones need if you became incapacitated or passed away suddenly? It is something that none of us want to think about but, unfortunately, it can, and does, happen.

An ICED Box is something that can save a lot of time, work, and frustration for your family. If tragedy strikes suddenly we do not have time to communicate the location of our most important papers. Having all your information together in one place can save time and frustration.

You need a simple box or a file to consolidate copies of all the necessary information for your family to ensure that your wishes, and their welfare, are cared for.

Here is a list of some suggested documents to have in your ICED Box:

- DD 214 or discharge papers along with the phone number for the Department of Veterans Affairs (800-827-1000). The DD 214 is necessary to get military funeral honors and Flag. Notifying the VA is vital to prevent any overpayment of benefits, apply for survivor benefits, insurance benefits, and burial expense benefits.
- Banking information to include financial institution, account number, and phone number.
- Names, addresses, and phone numbers for your next-of-kin or anyone else that you want notified.
- A copy of your will and/or trust.
- Copies of any Power of Attorney, Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care, and DNA directives.
- Insurance information such as phone numbers and policy information.
- A list of computer files and passwords for any other essential information.

What's Going On?

On-going Activities

VFW Post 2529

Tuesdays Bar Poker at 6:00
 Thursdays Trivia Night at 6:00
 Fridays Karaoke at 7:00

American Legion Post 83

Mondays and Thursdays
 BINGO 7:00 (early bird at 6:30)
 Tuesdays
 Show Me the Money (fun bar poker) 6:00
 Thursdays
 Karaoke at 6:00
 Saturdays
 Karaoke at 6:00

Special Events

VFW Post 2529

Fourth of July Celebration featuring Blaine Bunting and Justin Dukes July 6

American Legion Post 83

Annual Picnic Sunday, August 4 in the shelter house at noon



Finish Your Benefits Claim Within One Year to be Eligible for the Most Backdated Benefits



Last year, more Veterans submitted their “intent to file” (ITF) for benefits claims than ever before. These ITFs are disability compensation claims that Veterans started, but didn’t finish, and they’re an important tool because they help Veterans preserve their earliest possible effective date for their benefits claim, which makes them potentially eligible for backdated benefits.

If you submitted an ITF last year, you must act fast. You only have 365 days from when you submitted your ITF to complete it. Here’s everything you need to know about ITFs and submitting your full claim:

You must finish your intent to file—and submit your complete claim—within 365 days of submitting to preserve the earliest possible effective date for your benefits.

If we grant your benefits under the PACT Act and you submitted your intent to file on or before Aug. 14, 2023, you may be eligible for retroactive benefits dating back to Aug. 10, 2022—the date PACT Act was signed into law.

If we grant your benefits, we’ll provide benefits that likely will date back to at least the date when you began your intent to file. We call this retroactive benefits (or backdated benefits). And this could be thousands of dollars.

The quickest and easiest way to check the status of your PACT Act claim is to sign into your va.gov account with your existing Login.gov, ID.me, DS Logon or My HealtheVet account. If you don’t have any of these accounts, you can create a free Login.gov or ID.me account. Once you are signed into your account, simply follow these three steps to check the status of your PACT Act claim.

- Go to your “My VA” dashboard. You will find the link for this dashboard in the top right corner of the page once you’re signed in.
- Scroll down to the “Track Claims” section. There, you will see a summary of the latest status information for any open claims or appeals you may have, to include open ITFs.
- Click on the “View Status” button for a specific claim. You’ll go to a page with more details about that claim’s status and supporting evidence. Evidence may include documents like doctor’s reports or medical test results.

It’s never too late to file a claim or ITF for the benefits you deserve. You can file one by logging into, or creating, a VA.gov account and submitting online. You can also submit to a VA regional office near you, or work with a trained professional, like a VA accredited representative or VSO, to get help filing a claim for disability compensation. Other options include calling 1-800-827-1000 Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. EST or by fax using 844-531-7818.

Remember, VA will never charge you for assistance filing for benefits. They are your benefits, and you earned them. To protect yourself from predatory claims agents, you have the right to verify anyone’s credentials before filing a claim or providing personal information.

You can still finish your claim anytime, and we encourage you to do so. The only thing that may change is the effective date of your benefits.

For more information about ITFs, visit <https://www.va.gov/resources/your-intent-to-file-a-va-claim/>.

From va.gov

Happy Birthday United States Coast Guard

August 4, 1790

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) is the maritime security, search and rescue, and law enforcement service branch of the United States Armed Forces and one of the country's eight uniformed services. The service is a maritime, military, multi-mission service unique among the United States military branches for having a maritime law enforcement mission with jurisdiction in both domestic and international waters and a federal regulatory agency mission as part of its duties. It is the largest coast guard in the world, rivaling the capabilities and size of most navies.

The U.S. Coast Guard is a humanitarian and security service. It protects the United States' borders and economic and security interests abroad; and defends its sovereignty by safeguarding sea lines of communication and commerce across U.S. territorial waters and its Exclusive Economic Zone. Due to ever-expanding risk imposed by transnational threats through the maritime and cyber domains, the U.S. Coast Guard is at any given time deployed to and operating on all seven continents and in cyberspace to enforce its mission. Like its United States Navy sibling, the U.S. Coast Guard maintains a global presence with permanently-assigned personnel throughout the world and forces routinely deploying to both littoral and blue-water regions. The U.S. Coast Guard's adaptive, multi-mission "white hull" fleet is leveraged as a force of both diplomatic soft power and humanitarian and security assistance over the more overtly confrontational nature of "gray hulled" warships. As a humanitarian service, it saves tens of thousands of lives a year at sea and in U.S. waters and provides emergency response and disaster management for a wide range of human-made and natural catastrophic incidents in the U.S. and throughout the world.

The U.S. Coast Guard operates under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security during peacetime. During times of war, it can be transferred in whole or in part to the U.S. Department of the Navy under the Department of Defense by order of the U.S. President or by act of Congress. Prior to its transfer to Homeland Security, it operated under the Department of Transportation from 1967 to 2003 and the Department of the Treasury from its inception until 1967. A congressional authority transfer to the Navy has only happened once: in 1917, during World War I. By the time the U.S. entered World War II in December 1941, the U.S. Coast Guard had already been transferred to the Navy by President Franklin Roosevelt.

Created by Congress as the Revenue-Marine on 4 August 1790 at the request of Alexander Hamilton, it is the oldest continuously operating naval service of the United States. As Secretary of the Treasury, Hamilton headed the Revenue-Marine, whose original purpose was collecting customs duties at U.S. seaports. By the 1860s, the service was known as the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service and the term Revenue-Marine gradually fell into disuse.



The modern U.S. Coast Guard was formed by a merger of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service and the U.S. Life-Saving Service on 28 January 1915, under the Department of the Treasury. In 1939, the U.S. Lighthouse Service was also merged into the U.S. Coast Guard. As one of the country's six armed services, the U.S. Coast Guard has deployed to support and fight every major U.S. war since 1790, from the Quasi-War with France to the Global War on Terrorism.

From Wikipedia

WE WANT YOU! Joint Honor Guard



Why should I join the Honor Guard? It takes up some of your free time and involves a commitment! You don't get paid (unless we get a small gratuity from the family or funeral home). You may stand out in the cold, heat, or rain waiting for the funeral or ceremony to begin.

But, you get the honor of providing a final tribute to our brothers and sisters who have served our country honorably. You get the satisfaction of providing comfort to the families and showing them that our nation appreciates their sacrifice. You get the joy of being a participant, not just an observer, in patriotic events.

Some of our recent activities, in addition to funerals, included honors for the Submariners at OVH, honors at the Erie County Veteran Memorial in downtown, and honors at OVH and Oakland Cemetery on Memorial Day. We are scheduled to raise the flag at Great Wolf Lodge on July 4th.

If you would like to participate please call Bill Olejniczak at 419-467-7358.

Secret Trivia Test Your Knowledge (answers on page 8)

1. The NATO Phonetic Alphabet associates each letter of the English alphabet with a distinct word, starting with Alfa, Bravo, and Charlie. Of the 26 words present, only two are a single syllable. One is "golf." What is the other?
2. Codenamed Operation Just Cause, which country did the U.S. invade during the winter of 1989-1990? (Hint: One of the big goals was to remove General Manuel Noriega from power)
3. Passwords have commonly been involved in military use for centuries. In the opening of the Battle of Normandy, U.S. paratroopers would use the password "flash" which was required to be answered by what related "counterpassword?"
4. Planned and attempted from July to August 1940, what was the animal code English name for Nazi Germany's in invasion of Great Britain?
5. With a surname meaning "black head," who was the United States Army general who led all coalition forces in the Gulf War?

The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glowes world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Emma Lazarus



Meet the Staff

Executive Director/CVSO - Charles Solander (419) 627-7763
CVSO - Senior CVSO - Michael Lang (419) 627-7763
Service Officer in Training - Anna Fox
Secretary - Lori Abram (419) 627-7763
Drivers - Alan Lonz and Jeffrey Bertram
Email: labram@eriecounty.oh.gov

Veterans Service Commission

American Legion - Kelly L. Moon
AMVETS - Rance B. Snyder
Disabled American Veterans - Todd P. Christman
Vietnam Veterans of America - Mark W. Faust
Veterans of Foreign Wars - James M. Bickley

Veteran Service Commission Meetings

Held on the first and third Monday of each month at 3:00 pm.

2900 Columbus Ave

Sandusky, OH 44870

Second floor, Room 237

Meetings are open to the Public



Answers to Secret Trivia

1. Mike
2. Panama
3. Thunder
4. Operation Sea Lion
5. Norman Schwarzkopf

“Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists.”

Franklin D. Roosevelt

How Are We Doing?

So, how are we doing? Please let us know your thoughts on the quarterly newsletter. Are the articles informative? Is there a topic you would like to see addressed? Do you have a humorous story you would like to share? Please let us know.

We are highlighting activities if we get notification of them, usually via the Post or Chapters Facebook page. If your organization has on-going activities such as karaoke or BINGO please let us know. We will be glad to include the information.

The Erie County Fair is starting on Monday, August 5th. Daily gate admission is free for 2024.

The Erie County Senior Center is having a luncheon on Friday, August 9, from 10:00 to 1:30 in Bldg 1 at the Fairgrounds.

Saturday, August 10th is Veterans Day. Come out and visit with your Veteran Service Representatives from 10:00 to 2:00. Lunch will be served from 12:00 to 1:30.