



Wrong Telephone No.

# HAWAII VETERAN

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

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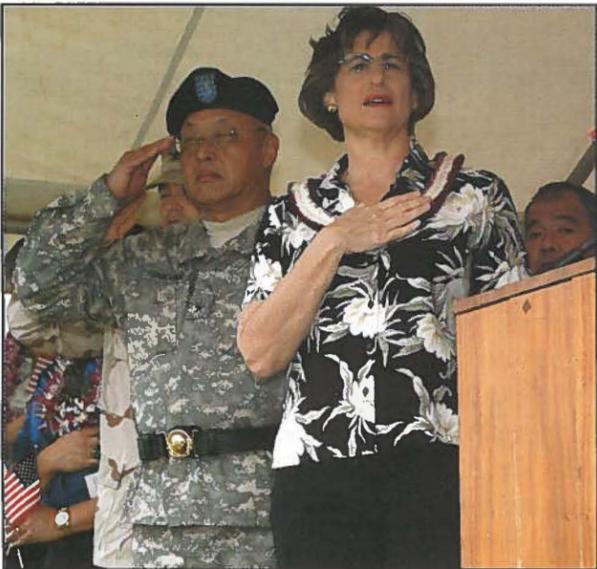
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State of Hawaii Office of Veterans Services

Jan-Mar 2006

## Kauai pays tribute to veterans' legacy

by Shelly Ichishita



Brig. Gen. Gary Ishikawa and Gov. Linda Lingle pay tribute to the national anthem at Vidinha Stadium. Sgt. 1st Class Wayne Iha photo

Kauai celebrated the return of the latest crop of Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans with a parade Saturday, Mar. 4. Nearly 125 soldiers from the Hawaii National Guard participated, marching from Rice Street to Vidinha Stadium.

The parade culminated in a dedication ceremony for the new track at the stadium and speeches from Gov. Linda Lingle, Brig. Gen. Gary Ishikawa, and Kauai Mayor Bryan Baptiste.

Gov. Lingle told the crowd about the rave reviews Hawaii's newest veterans received from the military leaders in the nation's capitol: "I want you to know that each time I would meet with the senior military leaders in Washington D.C., they would always comment to me on the professionalism, the commitment, the bravery, of the members of the 29th Brigade."

After sharing stories of the 29th BCT's accolades she acknowledged the legacy of commit-

ment and excellence in service that the 29th BCT received from an earlier generation of Hawaii troops. "I wasn't surprised when they would talk to me about how well the 29th Bde was doing in Iraq," she shared. "I wasn't surprised at all, because they are the most recent in a long history of commitment to our nation's freedom."

The history Gov. Lingle was referring to was the legacy of the members of the 442nd and the 100th from WWII, some of whom joined the audience in honoring the 29th BCT. Lingle recommended a book called *Japanese Eyes American Hearts*, the story of the 442nd and the 100th Bn military intelligence units, and stated that reading it would help the reader to "understand in a more deep way the sacrifices that they [the 100/442nd] made," and the importance of honoring those who came home as well as those who hadn't "for what they did for us as a state and for us as a country."

## Veterans' center gets new regional director

by Carswell Ross, Veterans Service Coordinator

Mr. Gregory Reed, the new director for the Honolulu Veterans Affairs Regional Office was presented with his certificate of installation on the majestic hill of the Tripler Army Medical Center campus, at 9:30 a.m. the morning of May 2, 2006.

Michael Walcoff, Associate Deputy Under Secretary of Field Operations, Central Office presented Mr. Reed with the certificate. With Certificate in hand the new director spoke to the group of veterans and employees who had come to witness the presentation.

Greg, as he prefers to be called, is a former national commander of the Disabled Veterans Association (DAV). He holds life memberships in the DAV, and Military



Pictured above are, from left to right, Edward Cruickshank, Director, Office of Veterans Services, Greg Reed, Director Regional Office, and Diana Rubens, Director VA Western Area. Courtesy photo

Order of the Purple Heart. He is also a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

He began his career with the Veterans Administration (VA) in Indianapolis working in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Education Division (VR&E) as Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist and Counseling Psychologist. He eventually transferred to Central Office in Washington D.C. where he worked as a Management and Program Ana-

lyst in the Office of Resources Management (ORM) and (VR&E) Service.

Director Reed was born and raised in Indianapolis, Indiana. Following high school he enlisted in the U.S. Marine corps and served in Vietnam. After his discharge from the Marines he attended Indiana University and received a graduate degree from Butler University. He will be residing in Honolulu with his wife Brenda.

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# Director's Message

Col. Edward R. Cruickshank, U.S. Army (Ret.)  
Director, State Office of Veterans Services

As the director of OVS, I would like to welcome all our returning veterans home, and thank

them for doing such a wonderful job representing this great state of Hawaii in Iraq, Kuwait and Afghanistan.

Our warriors did a truly outstanding job in these countries, and in the overall fight against terrorism. It is now our turn to see to it that these unselfish warriors are rewarded for their heroism by ensuring the benefits they earned are made

available to them and their families.

We have gone back to the legislature, and asked for additional operational funding for our cemetery in Kaneohe and for additional workers to supplement our work force there.

With the departure of Michael Oh, we are looking for a Cemetery Operations Assistant to continue to handle day-to-day burial operations and continue to make our cemetery one of the best in the nation. Although we have a way to go, we're getting there fast. You won't find a prettier spot anywhere in the world; with the Koolaus in the background.

For the office, we have requested a floating

counselor position, so that we can not only serve our veterans here on Oahu, but on the neighbor Islands as well. We have also asked for additional funding for our newsletter, so that we will now be able to mail it out to over 15,500 veterans on a quarterly basis.

WE must all keep the faith, trust in our country, and remember how lucky we are to be Americans. Freedom is never free, and we must as a nation realize that if we let our guard down, our freedom could be in jeopardy. This war we're fighting against terrorism must be won because it threatens our survival as a nation. God bless America.

## Veterans Affairs News Updates

### VA REACHS OUT TO VETERANS OF ALL GENERATIONS

One of the VA's highest priorities is ensuring that America's 24 million veterans are aware of the benefits available to them as a result of their military service. VA is reaching out particularly to veterans who have an injury or medical condition they believe is related to their active military service to encourage them to contact their local VA regional office for information about the VA Disability Compensation Program.

VA wants to do everything possible for the Nation's newest veterans coming home from Iraq and Afghanistan, and also make sure that the veterans who served in earlier periods, wartime or peacetime, are not overlooked. Even veterans of conflicts long past who have never filed a claim for disability benefits may still be eligible, and the VA stands ready to assist them.

Veterans who received a VA disability compensation rating many years ago and whose service-related disabilities have progressed in severity should also contact their local regional office for assistance in submitting a claim for increased benefits. VA efforts to inform veterans about their disability compensation benefits face a special challenge with older veterans who may not have been in touch with VA for decades, or who may not be aware of the entire range of expanded veterans' benefits available to them or their families. Veterans should not hesitate to contact VA and apply for the benefits they have earned in service to our country. Call VA toll free at 1-800-827-1000 or visit the veterans benefits Web site at <http://www.vba.va.gov>. Claims for disability compensation may be filed in person at the VA Honolulu Regional Office located in E-Wing on the Diamond Head/Ocean end of Tripler Army Medical Hospital, electronically, or by mail

### VA HEALTH CARE OUT PERFORMS CIVILIAN HEALTH CARE IN PATIENT SATISFACTION

Veterans continue to be more satisfied with their health care than the average American, according to an annual report on customer satisfaction that compares the VA health care system with private-sector health care. The ratings come in the annual American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) which ranks "customer satisfaction" with various federal programs and private-sector industries. The ACSI, an independent survey of customer satisfaction within the federal and private sectors, gave VA's inpatient care a rating of 83 on a 200-point scale. That's 10 percentage points higher than the 73 rating achieved for inpatient care by the private-sector health care industry. VA's rating of 80 for outpatient care was five percentage points higher than the 75 rating for private-sector outpatient care and nine percentage points higher than the average satisfaction rating for all federal services. The latest findings mark the sixth consecutive year VA's health care system has outranked the private sector for customer satisfaction.

Since 1994, the ACSI survey has been a national measurement of customer satisfaction with the quality of goods and services in the United States. ACSI produces indices of satisfaction for seven economic sectors, 41 industries, 200 private-sector companies and two types of local government services. VA's strong showing came after interviews with veterans who have recently used the Department's services. The report is the product of the National Quality Research Center at the University of Michigan Business School, the CFI group, and the Federal Consulting Group.

"Although VA has received many wonderful endorsements recently, the support of our veterans - the people who know us best - is the highest praise," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Health care is just one of the many potential benefits available to those who served in our nation's armed services. If you served, or know someone who did, check on eligibility for benefits and services from VA at the Spark M. Matsunaga VA Medical Clinic for health care, 433-0600, or the Honolulu VA Regional Office, 1-800-827-1000. You can also review benefits and services from the VA website, [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).

### WHAT DOCUMENTS ARE NEEDED FOR GUARD MEMBERS TO SHOW FEDERAL SERVICE?

VA's evaluation of benefit claims made under such circumstances is made much easier by inclusion of military orders stating that the service was performed under a specific section of Title 10 of the U.S. Code and, if available, copies of a presidential proclamation or executive order directing such service. If injured while performing "active service" in the National Guard and the injury is compensable, a federally activated member will meet VA's definition of a veteran if discharged or released from active service. In submitting a claim, the Guard member should include information that documents the call to active duty, the time actually spent on active duty and release from active duty (form DD214). This is normally accomplished by submitting all copies of the individual's military orders, a copy of his or her most recent military leave and earning statement and the member's release papers, which also may provide documentation of the federal nature of the call to duty. Also, the Guard member should submit military and civilian medical records relevant to the injury. Any related military line-of-duty investigation records also would be helpful to VA. For more information on benefits available to National Guard members, contact the VA Regional Office at 1-800-827-1000.



National Guard Benefits Advisor  
Mr. Joseph Flores

Mr. Flores advises Guard members and their families in understanding and obtaining benefits and services through the VA and the military health system.

He is a retired Vietnam Veteran with over 35 years of active duty and HIARNG service. His last assignment before he retired from HIARNG was in the Recruiting and Retention office as a recruiter, MEPS Guidance counselor and Marketing NCO.

Contact information:  
3949 Diamond Head Rd., Rm 118  
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Email: [kamano.flores@us.army.mil](mailto:kamano.flores@us.army.mil)

# VA News Updates

## THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS IS NOW TEAMING WITH THE NATIONAL GUARD RETURNING FROM COMBAT TOURS TO PROVIDE BETTER SERVICE

The VA and the National Guard Bureau have teamed up to improve the coordination of veterans benefits at the state level by training newly created State Benefits Advisors (SBAs) to help ensure a smooth and seamless transition for Guard members returning from active-duty deployments. The 54 new National Guard SBAs, being shared in each of the states and territories are recently returned veterans who will be available to assist their fellow combat veterans. The new advisors are graduates of a special training program at the Veterans Benefits Academy in Baltimore to increase their knowledge of VA services and benefits. The training enabled them to assist returning combat veterans and create coalitions between state veterans affairs offices, veterans service organizations, VA and community groups.

In addition to advising their state's adjutant general and governor, the benefits advisors will serve as the statewide points of contact providing advice to Guard members, their families, the family program office, employer support groups and military personnel. They will participate in the Reserve and National Guard mobilization and demobilization process and provide materials on VA benefits, compensation, education, vocational rehabilitation, life insurance, home loans, and burial benefits.

A National Guard benefits advisor for Hawaii has been hired and is on the job. His office is currently located with the Hawaii National Guard at their Diamond Head facilities. For further information on this program contact the Hawaii State Office of Veterans Services at 433-0420.

## VA HELPS RETURNING SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN FROM COMBAT TOURS TO FIND EMPLOYMENT SHOULD THEY LEAVE ACTIVE DUTY

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs recently announced a new initiative called *Fulfilling the Commitment – Coming Home to Work* to help veterans make the transition from military service to civilian life. This program is an umbrella initiative, a comprehensive intergovernmental and public-private alliance that will ensure separating Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom veterans that they will have employment opportunities when they return home from the war on terrorism. This initiative focus on linking OIF/OEF service members to existing resources through local and regional job markets, regardless of where they separate, where they return, or the career or education they pursue.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in the first three quarters of 2005, almost 15 percent of veterans in the 20-24 year-old age group were unemployed, nearly three times the national rate. Some 200,000 service members separate from active military service annually. This initiative will combine the efforts of federal, state and private sector entities to address their employment needs. VA Secretary James Nicholson stated "It just makes good common sense to hire these highly trained, disciplined young people, who volunteered, served and are now honorably discharged.

## LANDMARK BUDGET INCLUDES LARGEST INCREASE IN HEALTH CARE SPENDING IN HISTORY

President Bush will seek a record \$80.6 billion in the fiscal year 2007 budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), with the overwhelming majority of these resources targeted for health care and disability compensation. The FY '07 proposal represents an increase of \$8.8 billion, or 12.2 percent, above the budget for 2006.

The FY '07 budget proposal calls for \$38.5 billion in discretionary funding — mostly for health care. This budget contains the largest increase in discretionary funding for VA ever requested by a President. For health care alone, the President's request is an increase of \$3.5 billion (or more than 11 percent) over the FY '06 level. The budget proposal also would provide \$42.1 billion in mandatory funding, mostly for compensation, pension and other benefit programs.

The President's FY '07 budget request provides the resources necessary to fulfill our priority that service members' transition from active duty military status to civilian life is as smooth and seamless as possible. Men and women still on active duty will find it easier to access VA benefits when they near the end of their military service because of a program that allows early application for disability claims and other benefits. VA staff are located at 140 military installations around the nation, as well as in Korea and Germany, to assist active duty service members in applying for benefits before they separate from military service.

In health care, VA has already facilitated transfers from military medical facilities to VA medical centers of several thousand injured service members returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The President's budget proposal for FY '07 will enable VA to address the large growth in the number and complexity of claims for compensation and pension benefits, while at the same time increasing the processing accuracy of our most challenging compensation claims. The budget includes funds for these disability payments to nearly 3.7 million veterans in FY '07, or more than 7 percent above the number at the end of FY '05.

Key program improvements will affect both the education and vocational rehabilitation and employment programs. The timeliness of processing original education claims will improve by eight days during the next two years, falling from 33 days in FY '05 to 25 days in FY '07. In addition, VA will increase the percentage of disabled veterans successfully completing the vocational rehabilitation and employment program.

## VA EMPLOYEES ARE TRAINED TO HANDLE THE RETURN OF COMBAT TROOPS

To ensure that the VA's commitment to our returning service members is understood and shared at every level of the Department, VA has developed training materials and other tools for front line staff to assist them in identifying combat veterans so that they can take the steps necessary to ensure the veterans receive timely access to appropriate VA services and benefits. In addition, VA has developed tools to assist VA clinicians in caring for Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraq Freedom (OEF/OIF) veterans. In collaboration with DoD, VA developed Clinical Practice Guidelines on two combat veteran health issues: post deployment health and unexplained pain and fatigue. VA also developed several Veterans Health Initiative Independent Study Guides relevant to veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The long-term goal of the Office of Seamless Transition is to institutionalize the process beyond the OEF/OIF conflicts to all service members transitioning from military to civilian life. For additional information on the seamless transition process and VA benefits and health care, please access the Internet Website at [www.seamlesstransition.va.gov](http://www.seamlesstransition.va.gov).

In addition, the Environmental Agents Service recently announced a new page on its [www.VA.gov/EnviroAgent](http://www.VA.gov/EnviroAgent) web site devoted to the health concerns of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom veterans.

## VA FORMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOADING FROM WEBSITE

Veterans, their family members and VA employees can now find and print electronic copies of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and National Cemetery Administration (NCA) forms through the following VA website: [www.va.gov/vaforms](http://www.va.gov/vaforms). This Intranet site has forms for use by veterans and VA customers to apply for benefits and services and transact business with VA. The site can be searched using the form number, keywords or title. Links to other useful forms websites are also provided. VA has invested in technology which will allow form to be filled and printed and eventually be electronically transmitted. Forms will be added to the site as they are redesigned with this capability. Of course, forms are always available at the Spark M. Matsunaga VA Medical Center and the Honolulu VA Regional Office. Both are located adjacent to Tripler Army Medical Center. For additional information on VA forms, contact the Medical Center at 433-0600 or the Honolulu Regional Office at 1-800-827-1000.

**If you are interested in obtaining a copy of the Hawaii Veteran newsletter please mail your address to OVS at 459 Patterson Rd., E-Wing, Rm. 1-A103 Honolulu, HI 96819-1522. For any change of address please include both old address and new address.**

# VA News

## DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS PREPARED TO HANDLE INCREASED NUMBERS OF WOMEN VETERANS

The VA has established eight Women Veterans Comprehensive Health Centers that develop new and enhanced programs focusing on the unique health care needs of women veterans. In addition, they are involved in research on medical and psychosocial issues of women veterans. The closest ones to Hawaii are at the VA Medical Centers in San Francisco and West Los Angeles, CA. In addition, the Secretary has appointed an advisory committee on women veterans who are actively involved in veterans' issues in their communities for a 2-3 year term. The Committee assesses the needs of women veterans with respect to VA benefit programs and healthcare services. The committee also reviews the program administration of VA activities, research projects and initiatives designed to address or meet the needs of women veterans, and makes recommendations to the Secretary to improve, modify, and affect programs and services for women veterans.

All this is very important because between 1990 and 2000, the women veteran population increased by 33.3 percent from 1.2 million to 1.6 million, and women now represent approximately 7 percent of the veteran population. By the year 2010, it is projected that women veterans will comprise well over 10 percent of the veteran population. Currently women make up 15 percent of the active duty force and approximately 23 percent of the reserve force.

VA has designed services and programs to be responsive to the gender-specific needs of women veterans, offering comprehensive healthcare services including counseling for sexual trauma; Pap smears, mammography and general reproductive health care. There are designated Women Veterans Program Managers at VA medical centers and Women Veteran Coordinators at each Regional Office. For more information contact the VA Pacific Islands Health Care System at 433-0600, or the Honolulu Regional Office at 1-800-827-1000, or check out the VA website at [www.va.gov/womenvet](http://www.va.gov/womenvet).

## STATE ADVISORY BOARD ON VETERANS SERVICES: CHAIRMAN FRANK CRUZ

by Jennifer Aina

The Governor's Advisory Board on Veterans Services is a seven-member board that represents each county in the State of Hawaii. The board members are nominated, approved by the Senate Committee on Education and Military Affairs, and appointed by the Governor. There are four members representing the Oahu district, one member from the Big Island, one from Kauai and another from Maui. These board members represent veterans from each of our counties. Let me introduce you to our Chairman and Kauai representative, Mr. Frank Cruz.

Mr. Frank Cruz, Chairman and Kauai Advisory Board Member, is also the President of the Kauai Veterans Council organization. Mr. Cruz is very active with veterans on Kauai and advocates for veterans issues on a daily basis. He is not only active with assisting veterans with their veterans' benefits but also plays a major role with



The current Advisory Board on Veterans Services pictured from left to right: Ed Cruickshank, OVS Director, Adm. Ronald Hays, Ms. Cynthia Stine, Mr. Lloyd Sodemani, Mr. Frank Cruz, Mr. William Daves, and Mr. Herring Kalua (not pictured: Mr. Marvin Koga). Shelly Ichishita photo.



### Hawaii Veteran

State of Hawaii Department of Defense

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the upkeep of the Kauai Veterans Cemetery.

Mr. Cruz, also the president of the Kauai Veterans Council, is responsible for the Kauai Veterans Center. The Kauai Veterans Center has a wonderful museum with past war artifacts from Kauai veterans. There are memorabilia stemming from WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War and the Middle East wars. The Center has conference rooms and a hall that individuals are able to rent

for parties or meetings.

The Kauai State Office of Veterans Services is also located in the Center. You can visit the office from Monday to Friday; 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mr. Tony Elliott is the Counselor who assists veterans in obtaining their benefits from DVA. Should you need to contact Mr. Elliott, his number is (808) 241-3346. Mr. Cruz can be reached at (808) 246-1135. ?

## We're looking for old photos to publish in our newsletter!

If you have memories of service that you'd like to share, please email an electronic copy (at least 200KB) to [webmaster@dod.hawaii.gov](mailto:webmaster@dod.hawaii.gov), or mail a hard copy to the Office of Veterans Services.