
MEARNG RETIREE NEWSLETTER

Volume 4 Issue 1

<http://www.state.me.us/va/defense/retirees.htm>

Jan - Apr 1999

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, VETERANS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

PUBLISHED BY THE MEARNG RETIREE COUNCIL

COMMENTARY This is the tenth Retiree Newsletter, published in Apr, Aug and Dec. Our purpose is to keep you informed and provide you a continuing sense of belonging to the Guard after retirement. We hope the newsletter helps accomplish that purpose. Let us know what you think and how we can improve it. We value your opinion. Please advise the Council of any errors or omissions.

Information is furnished through various sources. If you have an item you would like considered for publication, please send it to the MEARNG Retiree Council, Camp Keyes, Augusta, ME 04333 or e-mail it to gmsk@mint.net or souleda@me-arng.ngb.army.mil

We are constantly up-dating our mailing list to include all MEARNG retirees. If you know any retiree(s) who are not receiving the newsletter, please send their name to a member of the Retiree Council or e-mail us. *Please advise us of mailing address changes due to 911.* If you do not wish to continue receiving the newsletter, contact a council member.

If you'd like to communicate with other retirees by e-mail, please furnish us your address and we'll publish it in the newsletter beginning with the next issue.

RETIREMENT BENEFITS

TRICARE OR CHAMPUS

For the latest information, call CW5 Roussel at 626-4338 or SFC Buck at 626-4283, MENG-HRO-AGR.

ORGANIZATION

Nothing to report at this time.

TRANSITIONS

Retirements through February 1999



MAJ Karl Smith

Taps

LTC Cyril Gilbert

Veterans Corner

By Frank Soares, Director, Bureau of Veterans' Services

Now that the 119th Legislature is in session, there are a number of different initiatives affecting veterans in discussion. I will not attempt to list and explain all of the bills affecting veterans but I will try to highlight the more important ones.

- LD 20** Taxing of Veterans Pensions. **Impact:** Makes Veterans pensions nontaxable. **Status:** Public Hearing March 1.
- LD 60** Income Tax Checkoff. **Impact:** Allows \$1 to be Given to MVMC. **Status:** Not scheduled.
- LD 89** Study Standardized Service. **Impact:** Standardize Benefits for all vets. **Status:** Unanimous, Ought to Pass.
- LD 252** Restrict Recreation in Cemetery. **Impact:** Stops all Recreation in all cemeteries. **Status:** Not Scheduled.
- LD 313** Honorable Discharge Burials. **Impact:** Allows all Vets to be buried at the MVMC. **Status:** Unanimous Ought to Pass.
- LD 416** Ensure Maintenance of Headstone. **Impact:** Fines Towns \$200 for failure to maintain. **Status:** Ought Not to Pass.

Veterans Corner - Continued

- LD 485** Exempt Military Retirees from State Income Tax. **Impact:** Self-explanatory. **Status:** Public Hearing March 1.
- LD 535** Burial at MVMC. **Impact:** Allows private burials At MVMC any time. **Status:** Tabled.
- LD 572** Veterans Property Tax Exemption. **Impact:** Adds \$2000 to exemption for estates, **Status:** Not Scheduled,
- LD 668** Amends the Term "Veteran". **Impact:** Allows all

Veterans property tax exemption. **Status:** Not Scheduled.

LD 773 Require MIA Flag to be Flown. **Impact:** All State Buildings. **Status:** Not Scheduled.

LD 873 Maintenance of Veteran Graves. **Impact:** Combines LD 416 & others; \$500 fine. **Status:** Hearing February 25.

LD 1022 Funding for Commission on Women Veterans. **Impact:** Provides \$25,000 budget. **Status:** Not Scheduled.

LD 1253 Creation of Board of Cemetery and Crematory Services. **Impact:** Creates a Statewide Board: Department recommends MVS to Board. **Status:** Not Scheduled.

For more information on a bill contact me at 626-4464. For schedule see Legislative Page on Internet or Kennebec Journal.

Now for the rest of the news.....

Togus

The IG report is back on Togus. In general, the hospital fared well. However, there were concerns on times to get appointments and the procedure used to determine these times. The IG did not express an opinion on the USDVA policy of sending veterans to Boston for their appointments.

The budget situation at Togus is still critical regardless of what you might read in the newspapers. They need \$5 million to get through this FY. If these funds do not come soon, they might have to take draconian measures to make up their losses by the September 30 (end of the FY).

Representative Ben Gilman (NY) has introduced a bill (HR 24) to the US House to make VA health care more accessible to the NE veterans and to level the playing field between the NE and SW. This bill would add 5 to 6 % to the budgets in the NE. As of this writing, I am not aware of the position of our Congressional Delegates on this bill.

Maine Veterans Memorial Cemetery (MVMC)

The selection of the Architects and Engineers for the new cemetery has begun. I expect that we will make a selection by early March. The expected cost of this facility is \$2.5 million however, some organizations have expressed an interest in participating in some of the facilities. If this happens, the total for the project could reach \$3 million.

The Committee researching the need for a cemetery in Aroostook County has completed their work. They recommended an annex be established in the County. A local veteran has assisted this effort by volunteering to

donate a local golf course for land. The Legal and Veterans Committee of the 119th Legislature was impressed with the proposal.

Upgrading work is being planned for the existing cemetery for this spring and summer. This work includes asphalt work, expansion of sites and headstone leveling. It is possible that some repair work will be done on the existing buildings if enough funds can be found.

Maine Veterans' Services

The Veteran Service Officer position in Lewiston has been announced. Boards will be held for this position early in March. It appears at this time that there are a number of highly qualified people available.

Those veterans wishing to apply for compensation for injuries can expect a delay in processing. The Togus Regional Office for Claims (not related to the hospital portion) is presently 900 claims behind. You should probably plan on 6 months between the time you apply and the time a decision is reached. Homeless or destitute veterans applying for compensation or pension are "walked" through the system and are expedited. If you feel that these delays will adversely affect you, please contact one of my offices in Caribou, Machias, Bangor, Waterville, Lewiston or Springvale.

MISCELLANEOUS

Retiree Council meetings. The Council meets at 0900 in the TAG conference room, Camp Keyes, Augusta. Any retiree is welcome to attend. 1999 meeting dates are: 20 Apr, 15 Jun, 17 Aug, 19 Oct and 21 Dec.

MISCELLANEOUS - Continued

New Members Needed. Membership is open to retirees of all ranks and gender from all parts of Maine. We would especially like to see more enlisted folks participate. If you or another retiree you know are interested please contact a Council member.

Who Are Our Oldest Retirees? We would like to find out who our oldest retirees are so they may be recognized in the newsletter. If you or a retiree you know are in this category, please send a note to the Retiree Council at above address.

Please include birth date and any other information you would like to share with other retirees.

Response #1

CW4 Nathan F. Ford, 85, retired from HQS, 133rd Engr Bn and now resides in Pembroke Pines, Florida.

Response #2

LTC Leonard C. Cabana, 88, retired from HQS, 103rd Inf and now resides at 1 Elm Terrace, Waterville.

UPCOMING EVENTS

1999 NGAME Annual Meeting – Change in Date

Please mark 21 and 22 May 99 on your calendar, rather than 14-16 as previously announced, for the annual meeting of NGAME and the Enlisted Association. See attached.

1999 Armed Forces of the U.S. Retiree Appreciation Day

The Second Annual Armed Forces of the U.S. Retiree Appreciation Day will take place on 14 August 1999 at the Augusta Armory. The event will be sponsored by the Maine National Guard in cooperation with the New Hampshire and Vermont National Guard, the Brunswick Naval Air Station and the Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont Retiree Councils. All military retirees of all branches of the Armed Forces and all reserve components including gray area retirees (under age 60) should plan to attend. You will be able to update ID cards; make address changes; receive legal assistance; prepare wills; and receive information about TRICARE and CHAMPUS, Veterans Administration matters and much more. Additional information will be published in the next newsletter.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

- The Kennebec Valley Chamber of Commerce presented a community service award to the Maine National Guard at a ceremony in Augusta on 27 January. MG Earl Adams, the Adjutant General, accepted the prestigious award.
- The Maine Army National Guard, in January, received an additional \$5.85 million for the Loring Rebuild Center in Limestone. This brings the 1999 total to \$7.35 million. The funds are used for the rehabilitation

of trucks, trailers, bulldozers, and other equipment as directed by the National Guard Bureau.

RETIREE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Romain Savoie	Nathan Grass
Gautrey Musk	Robert Weymouth
Albert White, Jr.	Douglas Welsh, Jr.
James Laflin	Martin Asdourian
Donald Laflin	Dean Soule
Edward Davis	