

## Warren County Veterans Service Officer's Report for May 2013

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## Distinguished Warfare Medal cancelled

*The proposed military honor will become a device and not a medal*

WASHINGTON (April 15, 2013) -- Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel announced today that the proposed military decoration which honors drone pilots and cyber warriors, the Distinguished Warfare Medal, has been cancelled and will be replaced by a distinguishing device that can be affixed to previously awarded medals.

Hagel halted production of the medal on April 5 and directed Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey to conduct a review of its ranking. Hagel's decision kept the evolving roles of military combat in proper perspective. "Cyber and drone warfare have become part of the equation for 21st-century combat, and those who fight such battles with distinction certainly deserve to be recognized.

**Help Complete Your Health Record:** According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, seven out of 10 veterans and service members obtain services from a private health care provider, which makes it difficult for the VA and Defense Department to maintain a complete record of a patient's healthcare. That's why VA and DOD actively participate in the eHealth Exchange. Formerly known as the Nationwide Health Information Network, the eHealth Exchange is a partnership between 38 public and private organizations that, with a patient's permission, securely share health information. With the recent addition of the Idaho Health Information Exchange, VA is currently exchanging data with 14 regional private sector partners. As the eHealth Exchange network continues to grow, VA and DOD plan to expand their health information sharing programs into additional regions of the U.S. Learn more at <http://vaww.blog.va.gov/oit360/814/ehealth-knowledge-is-power/>.

## Claims Initiative Fact Sheet

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is implementing an initiative to expedite compensation claims decisions for Veterans who have waited one year or longer. Effective April 19, the VA will begin to make provisional decisions on the oldest claims in inventory, which will allow Veterans to begin collecting compensation benefits more quickly, if eligible. This initiative provides a one-year safety net to submit further evidence should it become available and protects the Veteran's right to appeal the decision.

- For the oldest claims, VA will make a provisional rating based on all current evidence associated with the claim.
- The Veteran has a safety net – up to one year to submit additional evidence or request VA obtain additional evidence to change the provisional decision.
- The most vulnerable Veterans will continue to be fast tracked.

Veterans can learn more about disability benefits on the joint Department of Defense—VA web portal *eBenefits* at [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov).

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