

## Warren County Veterans Service Officer's Report for February 2014

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HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

**POSSIBLE DONATION SCAMS!!!** I received another call this week from a lady asking about donating to a group to help disabled Veterans. They immediately asked her for a \$15 donation via debit/credit card. My response to her was that I could not confirm nor deny whether this group was legitimate, however, I suggested if she wanted to do something for the Veterans there are plenty of local organizations right here to donate to and I could give her information on them. Please be aware **EVERYDAY** of who is cold calling you for a donation. **DO NOT** release your debit/credit card number over the phone, unless you made the call to a legitimate organization to which you wanted to contribute to.

**Removal of Penalty for Breaking Appointments:** The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) amends its regulations to remove an outdated regulation that stated that a veteran who misses two medical appointments without providing 24 hours' notice and a reasonable excuse is deemed to have refused VA medical care. VA removes this penalty because we believe it is incompatible with regulatory changes implemented after the regulation was promulgated, is not in line with current practice, and is inconsistent with VA's patient-centered approach.

**Set-aside program for service-disabled Veteran small business owners:** In the State of the State, Governor Cuomo discussed a set-aside program for service-disabled Veteran small business owners to participate in state contracting in a manner modeled on the program for Minority and Women Owned Businesses. More information will come out over the coming year and updates will be provided as the details and plans develop.

**COLA Penalty Fight Update:** More than a dozen individual pieces of legislation have now been introduced in the House and Senate to remove the COLA penalty from the two-year bipartisan budget agreement that was signed into law Dec. 26. The penalty, which impacts working age military retirees and medically-retired troops, is an automatic one-percent reduction from annual COLA increases until age 62. If left unchanged, the penalty would be phased in over three years, beginning with a quarter-percent reduction in 2015, then a half-percent reduction in 2016 and the full one percent in 2017. Budget reduction advocates say the penalty would only reduce an E-7's lifetime compensation from \$1.8 million to \$1.7 million, but left unsaid is an E-7 retiring today only earns a taxable retirement of \$25,200, which for a family of four is borderline poverty level, and that the E-7 would have to live another five decades or more to accumulate anywhere near those totals.

**FYI:** DEC website listed free hunting licenses for veterans with disability ratings **greater than 40%** (It should read 40% or greater). DEC acknowledged the information was incorrect and they are making the necessary changes. The law has not changed, but licensing has. **Fishing licenses are now 365-days from date of license issue.**