

Warren County Veterans Service Officer's Report for July/August 2019

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Farmers Market: FreshConnects (\$20 in Farmer's Market coupons) ARE available **NOW!**

Contact your local NYSDVS Counselor at SUNY Adirondack 518/832-7744 or at the VA Medical Center in Albany NY.

Congress Passes VFW-Championed Blue Water Navy Legislation: On Wednesday, the Senate unanimously passed H.R. 299, *the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019*. "We now urge the president to quickly sign the bill into law so that tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans can have their disability benefits restored, as well as an expansion of benefits to military dependents, veterans of the Korean DMZ, and those exposed to toxic hazards in Southwest Asia. The bill was previously passed by the House with a vote of 410-0.

OIG Finds Veterans Overcharged on VA Home Loan Funding Fees: The Office of the Inspector General released a report this month finding that VA charged exempt veterans approximately \$286.4 million in funding fees from calendar years 2012 through 2017, which affected about 72,900 veterans. The \$286.4 million is broken into "avoidable" charges, when the veteran was eligible at the time of the loan, and "unavoidable" charges, when the veteran became eligible after the origination of the loan, with the majority \$220.6 million in "unavoidable" charges. Veterans who believe they were overcharged should contact VA Regional Offices with Loan Guaranty operations at 1.877.827.3702.

VA to Make Health Care Facilities Smoke-Free: Starting October 2019, VA will implement a new policy restricting smoking by patients, visitors, volunteers, contractors and vendors at its health care facilities. The smoke-free policy applies to cigarettes, cigars, pipes, any other combustion of tobacco and non-Federal Drug Administration approved electronic nicotine delivery systems, including but not limited to electronic or e-cigarettes, vape pens or e-cigars.

Increasing Veterans' access to health care: The **MISSION Act** strengthens VA's ability to deliver trusted, easy to access, high quality care at VA facilities, virtually through telehealth, and in your community. That means you get the care and services you need, where and when you need them.

Beginning June 6, 2019, under the MISSION Act, you'll have more ways to access health care. This includes within VA's network and through approved non-VA medical providers in your community, called "community care providers".