Fellow Legionnaires and Legion families,

I’ve had another busy month. First, I was at the Commanders and Adjutants meeting in Indianapolis. Then the DEC on the 21st. I attended Post Gr30’s meeting, GR01’s meeting, and lastly at Post GR03 for a post meeting then to Post GR79 for their pumpkin carving.

I would like to thank Margraten Post NL01 for doing a great job at hosting the DEC. I enjoyed the time spent with all the Legion family. We had some laughs and had a good and productive meeting. I will be looking forward to the next Dec or Convention from Post NL01.

I enjoyed sitting in on the 3 meeting this month and learned more about what our Posts are doing for our Legion family and their communities. Congratulations to the new Commander of PostGR03, Otis Jones. Post GR79’s pumpkin carving was a great event for everyone involved.

We start the direct transmittal on the 1st of November. Please contact Adjutant Rice to get your adjutant’s password if you do not have one. Please contact me if you need assistance in using this process. I am sorry that the class at the DEC was cancelled due to the time. I will still do one on one or Skype assistance to any post that need it.

Coming up is Veterans Day on the 11th and Thanksgiving on the 23rd of November. Drive careful and be safe, winter is upon us.

James Dennis, Commander, Department of France

The American Legion, Department of France website
http://www.amerlegiondeptfrance.org

Also Visit The Department of France Facebook page

WANTED TODAY…pictures and stories of your posts, your members. Share your experiences, let everyone know what you are doing and contributing to your “American Legion Family”
# Department Officers - 2018 Membership Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commander</td>
<td>James Dennis</td>
<td>GR30</td>
<td><a href="mailto:departmentdennis@gmail.com">departmentdennis@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjutant</td>
<td>Maxwell Rice</td>
<td>GR79</td>
<td><a href="mailto:colerrickboy@yahoo.com">colerrickboy@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NECman/Finance Officer</td>
<td>Nola Maloney</td>
<td>GR03</td>
<td><a href="mailto:NECMaloney@gmail.com">NECMaloney@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alt. NECman</td>
<td>James Settle</td>
<td>GR42</td>
<td><a href="mailto:james.settle@kabelow.de">james.settle@kabelow.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCAL</td>
<td>Joe D. Brown</td>
<td>GR79</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vcalbrown50@gmail.com">vcalbrown50@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Commander</td>
<td>Casby Logan</td>
<td>GR07</td>
<td><a href="mailto:casbyf@hotmail.com">casbyf@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VICE COMMANDER</td>
<td>David Etter</td>
<td>GR01</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bigdave59@gmail.com">bigdave59@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VICE COMMANDER</td>
<td>Christopher Buchanan</td>
<td>GR1982</td>
<td><a href="mailto:christopherbuchs@hotmail.com">christopherbuchs@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Commander</td>
<td>Jimmie Dale</td>
<td>GR07</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jimmiedale87@gmail.com">jimmiedale87@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplain</td>
<td>Don Chamberlain</td>
<td>GR79</td>
<td><a href="mailto:chamberlainwz@hotmail.de">chamberlainwz@hotmail.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historian</td>
<td>Raymond Perez Jr.</td>
<td>NL01</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Raymond.perezjr@yahoo.com">Raymond.perezjr@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Officer</td>
<td>Laura Buckner</td>
<td>BE02</td>
<td><a href="mailto:serviceofficerdofr@yahoo.com">serviceofficerdofr@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge Advocate</td>
<td>Keith Abernathy</td>
<td>GR79</td>
<td><a href="mailto:keithabernathy1942@yahoo.de">keithabernathy1942@yahoo.de</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant-at-Arms</td>
<td>Raymond Vincent Jr.</td>
<td>NL01</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rvincent6603@yahoo.com">rvincent6603@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Adjutant</td>
<td>Robert Fuelling</td>
<td>FR01</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Rjfnch1704@aol.com">Rjfnch1704@aol.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IMAGES OF DEPARTMENT OF FRANCE SECOND DEC
HOSTED BY MARGRATEN POST NL01 - BRUNSSUM, NEDERLAND  …21 October 2017
A reminder to all…the Department is holding a Memorial Service in St Avold, France on the 11th of November 2017. Services will be held in the Cemetery Chapel.

TIME: 11:00
LOCATION: Lorrain American Cemetery in St Avold
ADDRESS: Avenue de Fayetteville, 57500 St Avold France

The Department is look forward to seeing Everyone. Should you have any question fill free to contact me.

Max

2018 Membership Year PCC President Gary Thomas (r) and PCC Secretary Susan Houston

Who is eligible to join the Department of France Past Commanders Club?

PAST AND PRESENT Department Commanders, Department Vice Commanders At Large, Department Vice Commanders, Post Commanders, SAL Detachment Commanders, SAL Squadron Commanders, Auxiliary Department Presidents, Auxiliary Unit Presidents...so if you were just voted into office you are eligible to join

Initial dues for the Past Commanders Club is only $25.00
Renewal dues for the Past Commanders Club is only $10.00

Our next meeting is planned in conjunction

with the Department of France Third DEC
Voting fulfills a civic obligation

Dear American Legion Family and Friends,

Even in non-presidential voting years, I look forward to participating in my civic obligation to vote for the candidates of my choosing.

In fact, voting in municipal elections is considered vitally important to our democracy. Whether your city or town is casting ballots this year for mayor, city council, school board or other local offices, those elected will have the power to make decisions that affect you and your neighbors for years to come.

The American Legion strongly believes in citizens exercising their rights to vote. We also encourage Legion posts and American Legion Family members to be active in their communities before and during Election Day. Spreading awareness about where and when to vote in your community is a good first step in our commitment to community, state and nation. One way is to share and distribute this PSA about voting.

More ideas on how to participate can be found in the Get Out the Vote brochure.

As President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, “Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting.”

It’s our duty. For our country. On this Election Day, get out and vote – and help others who may need assistance in getting to the polls.

Family First.

Denise H. Rohan
National Commander
DEPARTMENT VICE COMMANDER AT LARGE _Joe D. Brown_

My fellow Legionaries

Thanks to all the all Posts that went over 70% for October, remember November target date is 75%. Special mention to Stuttgart Post 6, the second largest post in Europe to be at 96%!!! If we continue with the membership renewals and awareness drives, we will easily make the 75% target date! So, don’t let up now. If you need help with membership, please contact your Vice Commander or myself or the Adjutant, we will be more than happy to help. The 2nd DEC had an excellent turn out for post level, and I would like to thank everyone that participated. I take my cap off to NL01 for a job well done. It was my honor to present the charters to NL01, IR01, and GR05 SAL Squadron, I am still awaiting the charter for GR07. GR03 held a general membership meeting on August 28, and in attendance were the Department Commander, NECLady, Nola Maloney, Vice Commander Etter and myself. I would like to congratulate Comrade Otis Jones as being elected as the new commander and at the same time thanks Past Commander Hall For his many years of service to the post.

Post GR45 is in need of a new commander due to his rotation from Germany in the near future. Vice Commander Logan is awaiting a response from the commander to coordinate a meeting and offer his assistance as needed. GR20 will be hosting an awareness drive in Bitburg on November 18th, and EG02 will be hosting a membership awareness drive on November 11th in Lakenheath in conjunction with Veterans Day. As usual on November 11th a Veterans Day Memorial ceremony will be held at Saint Avold, France and I will be in attendance. GR01 will be hosting a meal afterwards at their post after the ceremony and need to know if anyone plans on attending.

The Department Oratorical finals will be held in February in Stuttgart and now is the time to start coordinating with the schools your communities for contestants to compete at post level. I will be holding an awards review for the department to be held at Post GR79 post home, convening at 1100 hours and all Past Department Commanders, Post Commanders, and their adjutants are being asked to attend. I would like to send a special thanks to Honorary Past Commander Gary Miller for his over 20 years as the Department Finance Officer.

The SAL DEC was held on October 7th and the participation was one of the best and I would like to thanks the four Squadrons that were in attendance to make it such a success. I look forward to getting out to each post and assisting in any way I can. Thank you, and as always, remember if you need to contact me I am just an E-mail away vcalbrown50@gmail.com / M-0170-1888034. In closing, please keep those in harm’s way and their families not only in your thoughts but your prayers

New Post Commander GR 03 Otis Jones
# 2017 - 2018 NATIONAL MEMBERSHIP TARGET DATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>EARLY BIRD/NEF KICKOFF</td>
<td>SEPTEMBER 13, 2017</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>FALL MEETINGS</td>
<td>OCTOBER 12, 2017</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>VETERANS DAY</td>
<td>NOVEMBER 15, 2017</td>
<td>65%</td>
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<td>PEARL HARBOR DAY</td>
<td>DECEMBER 13, 2017</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<td>MID-WINTER</td>
<td>JANUARY 18, 2018</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRESIDENT’S DAY</td>
<td>FEBRUARY 14, 2018</td>
<td>85%</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEGION BIRTHDAY</td>
<td>MARCH 14, 2018</td>
<td>90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHILDREN &amp; YOUTH</td>
<td>APRIL 11, 2018</td>
<td>95%</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARMED FORCES DAY</td>
<td>MAY 9, 2018</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>DELEGATE STRENGTH</td>
<td>30 DAYS PRIOR TO NATIONAL CONVENTION</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Target dates fall on the second Wednesday of the month unless there is a holiday on that day or at the beginning of that week.

The November target date will be on the third Wednesday due to Veterans Day falling on that previous Saturday.

To maximize the December renewal notice, and allow for MLK holiday, the January target date will be on the third Thursday of the month.

---

Americanism Chairman Carl Hackworth…

It is requested that all Americanism reports be sent to me prior to our DEC’s.

Carl Hackworth  
Dudenroder Str. 1  
63654 Buedingen, Germany  

carl@hackworth.de / Tel.: 004960425454989 / Mobil: 00491764248922 / Fax: 004960425454987
The American Legion
Oratorical Scholarship Contest

Hosted by the Flanders Field Post BE02 and
Margraten Post NL01

Young orators can earn some of the most generous college scholarships
Develop a deeper knowledge and appreciation for the U.S. Constitution
An academic speaking challenge that teaches important leadership qualities

Eligibility:
High School Freshmen through Seniors (or home-school equivalent)

Location:
SHAPE American Middle School Multipurpose Room

Date & Time:
Saturday, 09 December 2017
Start time: 13:00

For more information, visit the Post BE02 Oratorical webpage
http://postbe02oratoricalcontest.weebly.com/

Or contact us at:
flander_fields.post.be02@gmail.com
Greetings Comrades!
2017 is rapidly coming to a close, and 2018 is looking strong for the Department of France. Congratulations to Posts GR02, GR79 and GR07 for reaching 100%+ on their 2018 membership goals.

Veteran's Day is this month, and the National Commander's challenge for each post to host a dinner for the local veterans is tough for us in the Department of France. It is not too late to ask a dining facility to partner up and your post membership serve those who identify as veterans a drink or help get them seated with their families. Optics are key, wear your Legion cap and talk up your post. You may gain a new member in return!

Graves of American Veterans - help out where you can. Please do not fall into the trap that a certain grave has been cataloged and recorded somewhere. It is easier to discard duplicate info than to recover missing info.

Are you planning a Christmas event for your post? Let us know when and where, I would love to come visit your post and add value to your festivities! And when you do, make sure you have a fresh table display of Legion pamphlets for folks to pick up. Help a fellow veteran out with info on our programs!

Well, I've rambled enough for this newsletter, look forward to seeing you in your area soon!

Dave Etter
The SAL DEC was held on October 7th and the participation was one of the best. I would like to thank the four Squadrons that were in attendance. We still have squadrons out there still have not transmittal…”GR 07”. Thanks to the squadrons that have transmitted. We are number 5 at National, and would be nice to be number 1.

The Third DEC will be hosted by Omar Bradley Post GR42

Time and location TBA

Stuttgart Post GR06

GR06 hosted a retirement function on Patch Barracks. We also recruited 2 new members at the event.

First Commander Post GR06…Marcus W. Briscoe
CHRISTMAS PARTY

SANTA CLAUS, POST GR30 AND UNIT GR30 INVITE YOU AND YOUR FAMILY TO OUR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY AT “MY PLACE” OTTO HAHN STR. 21 KITZINGEN

9 DECEMBER 2017
AT 1300 HRS

COST...ADULT 9.00€ / CHILDREN AGE 7-12 4.50€ / UNDER 6 FREE

WITH RESERVATIONS ONLY!

PLEASE R.S.V.P. NO LATER THAN 23 NOVEMBER 2017
CALL “MY PLACE”...09321-31644

John Wayne Post GR79
GR79 Legion Riders Pumpkin cutting contest
We had a nice trip to the Netherlands for the DEC. The hotel was nice, and the food was great. The Legion family at Netherlands post NL01 did a great job and I thank you for a great time.

The American Legion Auxiliary had 6 members present and could hold a DEC. We had a good meeting and got a lot of work done that we needed to do. We are going to Landstuhl in December to visit the troops at the USO. The flyer is attached. We are asking the Legion family to join us. Please do contact the Auxiliary Secretary Mattson for a head count and if you are donating items. We are also collecting for the Chaplains closet. The flyer is also attached to inform you of items needed. And last, we are looking for a person to be Santa Claus for the troops. I have a suit if needed.

Also attached is Unit GR30’s Christmas party flyer. All are welcome to join us.

Sonja Dennis
The Department of France Auxiliary of the American Legion would like to go to the

US Military Hospital, the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center,

to visit patients and caregivers.

When: Saturday, December 2, 2017

Time: 2-5pm

Where: Meeting point at Gate 3, Landstuhl Regional Medical Center

We would like to bring comfort and cheer and give out European chocolate (no Kinder eggs), candy, homemade cakes/cookies and get-well cards.

Also, we are looking for someone to represent Santa Claus since we have a costume available. So if interested, please let Sonja Dennis, the Department President know because she has the costume and will bring it.

To RSVP, please contact the Secretary, Anna Marie Mattson at ammattson52@gmail.com

Thank you for caring,

Sonja Dennis
President Department of France
The Landstuhl Regional Medical Center is the largest American military hospital outside the USA. All wounded military from downrange (Afghanistan and other theaters) make a stop here to be stabilized before their road to recovery stateside. In Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, US and Coalition military forces have been tasked with the responsibility to train, advise and assist local troops as well as to continue to combat ISIL terrorists by using attack, fighter and bomber aircraft to conduct airstrikes.

*If you make it to Landstuhl, you’re good to go. It was an article of faith among the Marine infantrymen in Iraq that if the corpsman plugged up the hole to keep you from bleeding out...and the Air Force got you all the way to the Army hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, then you’d live... and you’d eventually get home.*

https://www.alaforveterans.org/

### Mission & Vision

**Mission Statement**
In the spirit of Service, Not Self, the mission of the American Legion Auxiliary is to support [The American Legion](https://www.amerlegion.org) and to honor the sacrifice of those who serve by enhancing the lives of our veterans, military, and their families, both at home and abroad. For God and Country, we advocate for veterans, educate our citizens, mentor youth, and promote patriotism, good citizenship, peace and security.

**Vision Statement**
The vision of the American Legion Auxiliary is to support [The American Legion](https://www.amerlegion.org) while becoming the premier service organization and foundation of every community providing support for our veterans, our military, and their families by shaping a positive future in an atmosphere of fellowship, patriotism, peace and security. [Learn More](https://www.alaforveterans.org/)

### What We Do
Our members do incredible work. On average, each year, they...

- Help nearly 3 million veterans
- Contribute $36 million toward veterans and military families
- Volunteer 8.3 million hours to support veterans programs
- Contribute more than $2 million to programs benefitting children and youth
- Volunteer 630,000 hours for active-duty military

### Why We Matter
The 2014 estimated value of one hour of volunteer service is $23.07, according to the Independent Sector, a coalition of charities, foundations, and corporations that publishes research important to the nonprofit sector. American Legion Auxiliary members have volunteered more than 10 million hours for a collective value of service to our veterans, servicemembers, and their families of more than $3.1 billion. That’s quite a global impact, and a powerful number that accentuates who we are, what we do, and why we matter!
VA Photo ID Cards for All Veterans Coming in November

All honorably discharged veterans of every era will be able to get a photo identification card from the Department of Veterans Affairs starting in November due to a law passed in 2015.

The law, known as the Veterans Identification Card Act 2015, orders the VA to issue a hard-copy photo ID to any honorably discharged veteran who applies. The card must contain the veteran's name, photo and a non-Social Security identification number, the law states.

A VA official on Wednesday confirmed the cards are on track to be available nationwide starting in November. Veterans may apply for the card online, but a timeline for how long it will take to receive a card after application has not been finalized, the official said.

No details were released on when that application process will open, what information veterans will need when applying or the web address they will use.

Although the law states that the VA may charge a fee for the card, the official said no fee is planned.

Related content:
- Retirement, Disability Rates Should Increase for 2018, But How Much?
- Some Veteran 'Beta Testers' Can Get Early Access to Online Exchange
- 5 Hero Vets Who Saved Lives in Vegas 'War Zone'

The change comes as the military exchange stores prepare to open online shopping to all honorably discharged veterans starting Nov. 11. Veterans who wish to use that new benefit must be verified through VetVerify.org.

Congress passed the ID law as a way to help veterans prove their service without showing a copy of their DD-214.

“Goods, services and promotional activities are often offered by public and private institutions to veterans who demonstrate proof of service in the military, but it is impractical for a veteran to always carry Department of Defense form DD-214 discharge papers to demonstrate such proof,” the law states.

Some veterans already carry such proof of service.

Those who receive health care from the VA or have a disability rating can get a photo ID VA health card, also known as a Veteran Health Identification Card. Military retirees also hold an ID card issued by the Defense Department.

Veterans are also able to get a proof of service letter through the VA’s ebenefits website. And some states will include a veteran designation on driver's licenses if requested.

Editor's Note: The fourth and fifth graphs have been updated with additional information from the VA.

-- Amy Bushatz can be reached at amy.bushatz@military.com.
Create Your Own
Centennial Logo Items

T-shirts, tacks, license plates, & more!
Customized for you!

Contact us today!

By Mail: Special Orders Representative
American Legion Emblem Sales
P.O. Box 36460
Indianapolis, IN 46236

By Phone: (866) 632-7131
Monday - Friday
8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. ET

By Fax: (317) 630-1250
Attn: Special Orders Representative
The Defense Health Agency recently met a key requirement for implementing these changes, with the publication of a formal document—the called an Interim Final Rule—that establishes the legal “rules of the road” for putting in place changes mandated by Congress. “We are working hard to use the opportunity Congress gave us to continue building a health plan that does even better for our beneficiaries, the warfighter, and the taxpayers who support us,” said Vice Adm. Raquel Bono, director of Defense Health Agency. (DoD file photo) By: Military Health System Communications Office / 10/4/2017

TRICARE beneficiaries will soon have increased access to health care through key changes that are set to take place in January 2018. With the benefit set to undergo some of the biggest improvements in more than two decades, beneficiaries will be able to take command of their health care through expanded choices. These improvements include wider access to network providers, updated enrollment to reduce disruptions in care, and simplified co-payments.

The Defense Health Agency recently met a key requirement for implementing these changes, with the publication of a formal document—the Interim Final Rule—that establishes the legal “rules of the road” for putting in place changes mandated by Congress. The Interim Final Rule is now available for public review and comment.

“We are working hard to use the opportunity Congress gave us to continue building a health plan that does even better for our beneficiaries, the warfighter, and the taxpayers who support us,” said Vice Adm. Raquel Bono, director of Defense Health Agency.

The goal of this change is to keep beneficiaries healthy by providing better health care options. This includes allowing doctors to make the decisions on whether beneficiaries need a referral or specialty care instead of the regional contractors. Urgent care will be available without a referral through either the military hospital or clinic or at a civilian urgent care center in areas the military health facility is not an option.

TRICARE is changing. Here is what beneficiaries need to know:

Some of the key changes that will become effective on January 1, 2018, will affect region consolidation, TRICARE plans, enrollment, and costs. There are currently three TRICARE regions in the United States, including TRICARE North, South, and West. Starting in 2018, these regions will become TRICARE East and West. They will be administered by Humana Military and Health Net Federal Services. This change will allow for better coordination between the military hospitals and clinics and the civilian health care providers in each region.

Several changes will also occur in coverage plans at the start of the new year. TRICARE SelectStarting on January 1, 2018, TRICARE Select replaces TRICARE Standard and ExtraA fee-for-service option in the United States that allows you to get care from any TRICARE-authorized provider. TRICARE Select is a self-managed, preferred provider network plan. TRICARE Select will replace TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra. In the U.S., TRICARE Select will be a self-managed, preferred provider network option. Beneficiaries will not be required to have a primary care manager and can visit any TRICARE-authorized provider for covered services without a referral. Overseas, TRICARE Overseas Select will provide access to both network and non-network TRICARE authorized providers for medically necessary covered services. TRICARE Select, both stateside and overseas, includes additional preventive care services previously only offered to TRICARE Prime managed care option available in Prime Service Areas in the United States; you have an assigned primary care manager who provides most of your care. TRICARE Prime beneficiaries. Beneficiaries can review all available plans at www.tricare.mil/changes under the plan finder.

Starting on January 1, 2018 all current beneficiaries will also be automatically transitioned into their respective plan as long as they are eligible. TRICARE Prime enrollees will remain in this plan. TRICARE Standard and Extra beneficiaries will be converted to TRICARE Select. Beneficiaries will be able to choose to enroll in or change coverage plans throughout the year long grace period in 2018.

Beginning in fall 2018, enrollment will move to a calendar year open enrollment season like federal employee plans. During this time, active enrollment will be required to change plans for the following year. Those who are retiring will have to choose their plan and enroll to retain coverage. The open enrollment season begins on the Monday of the second full week in November and run through the Monday of the second full week in December of each calendar year starting in 2018. All beneficiaries should make sure their information is current in DEERS now so they are converted to the correct plan in January. Learn more about enrollment changes.

Beneficiaries will shift to a copayment structure from the current cost-share structure also starting on January 1, 2018. With fixed costs for specific services, beneficiaries will be able to better predict their health care costs. Updated out-of-pocket costs for 2018 will be available at www.tricare.mil/changes.

While the upcoming changes are significant, the goal of the Military Health System is to continuously improve health care for all its beneficiaries. Beneficiaries can prepare for the upcoming changes by visiting the TRICARE Changes page, where they can sign up for email alerts, complete a beneficiary checklist, and see available plans and updated costs for 2018.

“This marks a major milestone in our effort,” said Bono. “It highlights the opportunity for our beneficiaries to take command of their health plan, and our responsibility to ensure that these historic changes to TRICARE are a success for beneficiaries and the Department.”
Military retirees and those who receive disability checks and some other types of pay from the Department of Veterans Affairs will see a 2 percent pay raise in their monthly paychecks in 2018. It is the biggest cost of living (COLA) increase since 2012, equaling as much as $310 a month for those at the top of the retirement pay charts.

Many Monthly Benefits Going Up
Thanks to the increase, the average military retirement check for an E-7 with 20 years of service will go up by $46 a month, while an O-5 with the same time in uniform will see an $88 monthly increase. Disabled veterans will also see a bump, with the average VA disability check going up about $3 per month for those with a 10 percent rating, and $58 for those rated at 100 percent. Other users, including Survivor Benefit Plan beneficiaries and those who draw Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), can also expect to benefit from the bump.

Related content:
- Military Retirement & Survivor Pay Dates
- 2018 VA Compensation Rates
- Senate Approves 2.1 Percent Active-Duty Pay Raise

Military retirees and VA beneficiaries aren't the only ones who benefit from the COLA increase. Civil service retirees will also see the 2 percent jump in their monthly checks. And for Social Security recipients, the monthly increase will mean an extra $25 per month for the average beneficiary.

Biggest COLA Bump in Years
Most government payments see a COLA increase every year. The increase, which is based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), makes sure payments keep up with inflation. Recipients can thank a big jump in the cost of gasoline due to Hurricane Harvey for the jump in the CPI that caused this year's COLA boost. The COLA affects benefits for more than 70 million U.S. residents, including Social Security recipients, disabled veterans, federal retirees, and retired military members. That's about one in every five Americans. Last year, the COLA increase was 0.3 percent; in 2015, retirees saw their checks remain at 2014 levels.

Lower Than the Active-Duty Pay Raise?
Congress is still hashing out the pay raise currently serving troops will receive for 2018. Both a proposal passed by the Senate and a White House plan mandate a 2.1 percent increase. A measure passed by the House would instead give troops a 2.3 percent increase. A decision on just what those troops will receive -- and whether what retirees and VA users will receive is lower -- has yet to be made. Lawmakers have recently started closed-door negotiations on the proposals. Unlike that active-duty pay raise, the bump received by retirees and VA users does not require an act of Congress to go into effect. Those groups will see their pay raise in January regardless of what Congress does for current troops.

-- Jim Absher can be reached at jim.absher@monster.com.
New military ID card makes it safer and easier for veterans to prove service

A simple way to honor veterans' service is also making it easier for those veterans to prove their military service.

Natassia Paloma, WCNC 10:52 AM. EDT October 15, 2017 © 2017 KENS-TV

SAN ANTONIO - Military veterans can now apply for a Veteran Service Identification Card, making it easier for them to prove their service.

The card is a hard-copy photo ID that eliminates the need to carry around documents with sensitive information. Currently, veterans have to carry a DD-214 form to show proof of service, but it causes a security concern.

"Our social security number is on there," veteran Johnny Ornelas said. "So some guys get a black marker and erase it."

The DD-214 form is an official document issued by the military used to redeem discounts and services. The form contains personal information like a social security number and birth date, which could pose an identity theft threat. Due to these concerns, the Department of Veteran Affairs is issuing a photo ID to all honorably discharged veterans.

The card is the result of the Veterans Identification Card Act of 2015 and will have the veteran's name, photo, and a non-social security identification number.

Ornales says that the card is long overdue.

"It's an inconvenience and a hassle [to carry a DD-214]," Ornelas said. "They should have done this a long time ago."

The ID cards will be available nationwide in November and veterans may apply for the card online.