

Veterans Corner
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By: Robert G. Mitchell

Disabled Veterans and those Receiving Pension

Veterans in receipt of service-connected compensation or non-service-connected pension, as well as survivors in receipt of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), will receive a one time stimulus payment of \$250. The legislation orders the Secretary of the Treasury to disburse a \$250 payment to each individual who fulfills the conditions set aside, for any month during the 3-month period ending with the month which ends prior to the month that included the date of the enactment of this Act. Therefore, veterans in receipt of compensation and pension benefits during any of the months of November or December 2008, and/or January of 2009 are eligible for this payment. The legislation also provides this benefit to citizens in receipt of certain Social Security benefits as well as those receiving benefits under the Railroad Retirement Benefit. Citizens are not entitled to receiving benefit from multiple sources. If a veteran is also in receipt of one of these other benefits, the \$250 payment will only be issued once.

VA Health Enrollment to Rise

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) plans to re-open enrollment in its health care system by 1 July 2009 to about 265,000 veterans whose incomes exceeded the current VA income thresholds by 10% or less. Congress provided funds in the VA's FY2009 budget to support the new enrollment. VA's computer systems are being modified to accommodate the changes, and the Department is preparing communication and education materials to ensure that Congress, veteran's service organizations, and the public are aware of the coming changes. The new rule will take effect by 30 June 2009, if the regulatory process proceeds smoothly. FRA has urged Congress to authorize and appropriate sufficient funding to resume the enrollment process for all veterans in its testimony before the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees.

Service members' Group Life Insurance

Since the program began in 2005, over \$309 million in TSGLI benefits has been paid to injured members and their families.

Veterans whose claims for TSGLI benefits were previously disallowed are being contacted if it appears their loss is now eligible for payment due to these changes.

Service Members or veterans who sustained severe traumatic injuries are encouraged to check the VA Insurance website at www.insurance.va.gov for eligibility criteria and contact information.

The Web Site contains a link to the TSGLI application form, more information about the changes to the TSGLI benefit, and a complete copy of the latest review of the program.

For additional information about VA benefits, contact VA's toll-free number at 1-800-827-1000.

VA Health Care Group 8 enrollment restrictions

The Department of Veterans Affairs has received increased funding through Public Law 110-329 to alleviate some of the restrictions on Priority Group 8 enrollment. The adjustment applies to veterans who were not allowed to enroll in the VA health care system in the past because their income fell above the VA's means tests threshold (MTT). This new provision stipulates that the veteran's income cannot fall beyond the limits of 10% and goes into effect June 2009.

Veterans who apply for enrollment starting January 1, 2009, but before Jun 2009 and whose income surpasses the MTT or geographic means test (GMTT) by 10% will not be enrolled in the VA health system. However, the VA will make a re-determination after the effective date. Veterans whose applications were submitted prior to January 1, 2009, and were disapproved due to the MTT and SMTT will have to be re-submitted in order to be considered for the new provision. For more information on eligibility call the VA Medical Center at 518-626-5000.