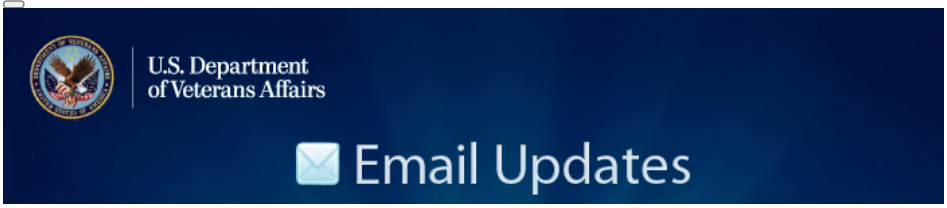
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THE VOICE November 2026

Center for Minority Veterans Newsletter View as a webpage

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Message from the Executive Director

Jacquelyn "Jacquie" Hayes-Byrd



This November, we are recognizing two observances that matter deeply to our office and to the communities we serve.

On November 11, we celebrate Veterans Day. This is a day to pause, reflect, and express our deepest gratitude to the men and women who have served our nation. Throughout my journey, I have been honored to meet countless Veterans whose experiences have inspired me, challenged me, and strengthened my understanding of what service truly means.

As we recognize and honor our Veterans, we must also acknowledge the families, caregivers, and loved ones who have stood beside them, providing steadfast support, encouragement, and strength throughout their service and beyond.

To every Veteran, please know that we value you, and we thank you. Your service has made a lasting difference. Your stories continue to inspire us. And your sacrifices will never be forgotten.

November is also National Native American Heritage Month; a time to recognize the rich histories, vibrant cultures, and contributions of Native peoples across our country. We'll be sharing some of that history throughout the month, and we encourage you to explore it with us.

Reflecting on this observance, I am reminded that some of our greatest lessons come from listening. Over the years, I have had the privilege of learning from Veterans and community leaders whose stories have deepened my appreciation for the strength, resilience, and traditions that continue to shape our nation.

While you explore this month's newsletter, you will see more about the remarkable legacy of Native American and Alaska Native military service. We highlight the extraordinary contributions of Native American Code Talkers, the service of Native women Veterans, and the significance of the National Native American Veterans Memorial. We also share information on access to VA enrollment for health care, benefits, and pre-needs burial eligibility, and recognize the enduring impact Native Veterans continue to have on our Nation and within their communities. These stories remind us that service takes many forms, and that honoring the past helps to guide our future.

I encourage all of us to take time to learn something new, reflect on our shared history, and express gratitude for the people and communities that continue to inspire us.

All the best,

Jacquie

Jacquelyn Hayes-Byrd
Executive Director
Center for Minority Veterans



Celebrating National Native American Heritage Month

Each November, the Center for Minority Veterans joins the nation in observing National Native American Heritage Month, a time to recognize the rich and diverse cultures, histories, and contributions of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Native Americans have served in the U.S. Armed Forces at one of the highest rates per capita of any population group, continuing a long legacy of service and sacrifice that predates the founding of the United States itself. From the Code Talkers of World War I and World War II to the service members defending our nation today, Native American Veterans have shaped our military history with courage, skill, and an enduring commitment to protecting their communities and country.

This month, we honor that legacy and recommit ourselves to ensuring Native American Veterans have full access to the benefits, health care, and support they have earned. VA's Center for Minority Veterans continues to work alongside Tribal governments, Native-serving organizations, and VA partners. This includes VA's Office of Tribal Government Relations, which serves as VA's primary liaison to Tribal governments and works to strengthen the government-to-government relationship between VA and Tribal Nations.

We invite you to take time this month to learn more about Native American Veterans' history, connect with local Tribal and Veteran organizations, and share in recognizing the contributions of Native peoples to our nation's defense.

Office of Tribal Government Relations

National Museum of the American Indian

FEATURED



From Uniform to Unforgettable:

Your Service. Your Story. Your Legacy.

In honor of National Native American Heritage Month, the CMV is inviting Native American, Alaska Native, and Indigenous Veterans to share their stories through CMV's Veteran Spotlight: *From Uniform to Unforgettable*. Your experience can help preserve the legacy of service and inspire other Veterans and families. Learn more about From Uniform to Unforgettable

Share your story

DID YOU KNOW?

National Native American Heritage Month

Did you know?

American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans have a distinguished history of military service, with contributions spanning generations and major conflicts throughout U.S. history.



- **A Proud Legacy of Military Service.** According to military personnel data published in the 2025 U.S. Air Force and U.S. Space Force Almanac, published by *Air & Space Forces Magazine*, approximately 13,900 American Indian and Alaska Native Service members served on active duty across the U.S. military. This figure does not include the many American Indian and Alaska Native sevice members serving in the National Guard and Reserve.

- **Generations of Courage and Commitment.** Native people have served in every major U.S. military conflict, from the Revolutionary War through today's operations overseas.

- **The Legacy of Native American Code Talkers.** During World War I and World War II, Native American service members from more than 20 tribes used their Indigenous languages to transmit secure military communications, creating codes: a contribution that helped save lives of brother and sister service members, and shape the outcome of both wars.

- **Women Who Served.** Native American and Alaska Native Veterans include a higher share of women than the veteran population as a whole; roughly 11.4 percent.

- **A National Tribute to Native Veterans.** It wasn't until 2020 that the National Native American Veterans Memorial opened on the grounds of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. It is the first national landmark dedicated specifically to honoring Native Veterans' service.

- **Accessing Earned VA Health Care Benefits.** According to a 2018 fact sheet published by VA Office of Health Equity, approximately 74.3% of American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans with service-connected disabilities utilized VA health care. This historical figure reflects health care utilization among service-connected Veterans rather than enrollment among all Native American and Alaska Native Veterans.

HONORING YOUR SERVICE, CELEBRATING YOUR DAY!



Happy 99th Birthday, Mr. Remigio “Rey” Cabacar!

Born on October 20, 1927, Mr. Cabacar proudly served in the U.S. Navy during WWII and the Korean War. In 2017, he and other Filipino-American WWII Veterans were honored with the Congressional Gold Medal for their bravery and sacrifice.

Now based in the Greater Washington, D.C. area, "Rey" shares his life with his wife of 72 years, Carolina. At 99 years young, his heart for service has not slowed down a bit. He is still going strong as an active member of VFW 5471, showing up for his fellow Veterans and his community.

This November, he and Carolina will celebrate an incredible 72 years of marriage!

Please join us in celebrating his remarkable life and service.

MINORITY VETERAN RESOURCES

Minority Veteran Program

1995	50+	100%
Program launched	States & territories reached	VA medical centers now staffed w/ MVPC



The Minority Veteran Program traces back to a 1995 directive from then-VA Secretary Jesse Brown, calling on facility directors to partner with the Center for Minority Veterans in identifying and addressing the specific needs of minority Veterans nationwide.

The mission is simple: build local awareness of issues affecting Veterans and turn that awareness into real strategies that boost participation in the VA benefits and programs already available to them.

Meet your Minority Veteran Program Coordinators!

- MVPCs are stationed at VA Regional Offices, Health Care Facilities, and National Cemeteries
- They act as a bridge between minority Veterans and VA resources, services, and staff
- Every VA medical center is now required to have an assigned MVPC, under Section 101 of the STRONG Veterans Act

Culturally responsive outreach is essential to ensuring that every Veteran, regardless of background, understands the benefits and services they have earned and knows how to access them.

Find Your Local MVPC

Reach out to the National Minority Veteran Program Manager to get connected.

Email MinorityVeteranProgram@va.gov

Support The Resiliency of Our Nation's Great Veterans (STRONG Veterans) Act of 2022

Strengthening VA's Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Efforts



Mental health care is a top priority at VA, and the STRONG Veterans Act, signed into law in December 2022, is helping push that mission forward. The law was created to address mental health care provided by VA, with a direct line to supporting Veterans' well-being and saving lives.

The Act strengthens VA's response in several key ways:

- It reinforces existing mental health outreach and suicide prevention efforts for American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans, as well as Veterans in rural, remote, and underserved communities.
- It enhances training, quality management, pilot programs and research to bolster the Veterans Crisis Line and improve outcomes for Veterans at high risk of suicide or substance use and overdose.
- It supports VA's effort to recruit and retain a strong workforce through enhanced training, scholarships, loan repayments and paid trainee opportunities.

Together, these efforts help VA deliver more effective treatment, better equip its workforce, and strengthen crisis response. The result is that all Veterans have access to the lifesaving resources they've earned.

VA Native American Direct Loan (NADL) Program



Helps eligible Native American Veterans finance the purchase, construction, or improvement of homes on federal trust land, with no down payment required in many cases.

Visit VA's Native American Direct Loan site.

Native American Direct Loan



VA–Indian Health Service (IHS) and Tribal Health Program Agreements

VA partners with the Indian Health Service (IHS), Tribal Health Programs (THPs), and Urban Indian Organizations (UIOs) through reimbursement agreements that support access to care for eligible American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans. These agreements help Veterans receive care closer to home while allowing participating facilities to receive reimbursement from VA.

VA I/T/U Agreement Program

VA's American Indian and Alaska Native Veteran Copayment Exemption Program



VA's American Indian and Alaska Native Veteran Copayment Exemption Program continues to make a meaningful impact:

- 6,534 Native Veterans approved
- Approximately $8 million in copayment charges canceled

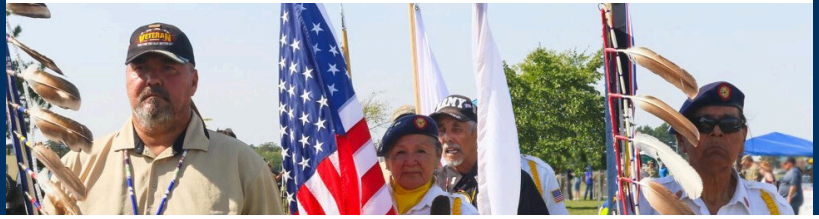
This important benefit helps reduce financial barriers to VA health care for eligible American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans, ensuring greater access to the care and services they've earned.

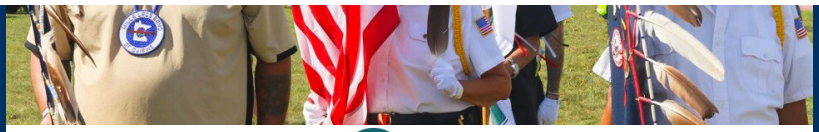
🔗 To learn more about the Native Veteran Copayment Exemption Program and eligibility requirements, visit VHA's Office of Tribal Health at https://www.va.gov/health/vha-tribal-health.asp.

Together, we can help ensure that Native Veterans are aware of the benefits and resources available to them.

VA Office of Tribal Health

Native American Veterans - VA's Burial Benefits at a Glance





Eligible Veterans have earned burial benefits at a VA national cemetery for themselves, their spouses, and qualifying family members.

- 155+ VA national cemeteries
- 110+ VA grant-funded state and territorial cemeteries
- 14 VA grant-funded tribal cemeteries
- 50 states
- 3 territories (Guam, Saipan, and Puerto Rico)

Honoring Your Heritage

When choosing burial in a VA national cemetery or VA grant-funded state or tribal cemetery, the cemetery staff can try to accommodate desired cultural practices. VA recommends families notify staff as soon as possible when planning a burial. Government headstones and markers allow families to create inscriptions in native languages and choose from many emblems of belief. Learn more about VA's burial and memorial benefit items and emblem of belief options:

VA's Burial and Memorial Benefits

Tribal Cemeteries



There are 14 VA grant-funded tribal cemeteries built and operated by tribes on tribal trust land. VA works closely with tribal leadership to make sure tribal culture and traditional preferences are represented within the cemetery's design elements and the features reflect the unique heritage of each tribe. Tribal standards for burial eligibility apply.

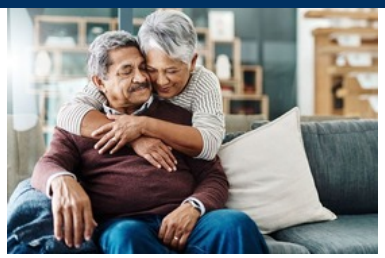
Pre-need burial eligibility application

Veterans and spouses who want to be buried in a VA national cemetery can apply to find out in advance if they are eligible. Completing the simple, online pre-need burial eligibility application is the starting point in end-of-life planning with your family. Learn more about VA's pre-need burial eligibility application by scanning the QR code below.

Plan Today.
Honor Forever.

VA RESOURCES

VA Office of Survivors Assistance (OSA)



While you serve or have served, you've likely spent time thinking about your own benefits, but have you thought about what happens to your family if something happens to you?

The VA Office of Survivors Assistance (www.va.gov/survivors/) exists to make sure

that the sacrifices you've made translate into real support for the people who depend on you. Taking a few minutes now to understand what's available and making sure your loved ones know where to turn can spare your family confusion and hardship during an already difficult time. Whether it's a spouse, child, or dependent parent, knowing about OSA and VA's survivor benefits can bring you peace of mind today and real support for your family tomorrow.

OSA monitors how VA delivers benefits to survivors, makes referrals to the right VA offices, and works to reach eligible survivors who aren't yet receiving benefits including education assistance, home loan guaranties, health insurance, Survivors Pension and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). It also partners with Department of War agencies, Veterans Service Organizations, and nonprofits to ease survivors' transition into the VA system.

How it helps connect families to VA:

- **Navigation hub:** The website helps survivors understand available benefits and take next steps to apply.
- **Direct inquiries:** Questions can be emailed to officeofsurvivors@va.gov or submitted through ask.va.gov.
- **VSO referrals:** Survivors are encouraged to work with a Veteran Service Organization or County Veteran Service Officer for free benefits counseling and application help. Find one at www.va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative/find-rep/.
- **Resources and guides:** Tools include the 2026 Survivor Benefits Booklet (digital edition), with updated eligibility, financial, educational, and health resources for survivors.
- **Survivor Series & Forum:** Monthly educational sessions and periodic forums keep families informed.
- **Scam awareness:** VA will never charge a fee for benefits survivors are entitled to.





Reliable access to food can help Veterans build stability when facing homelessness

VA's Food Security Office helps Veterans experiencing or at risk of homelessness with access to food, nutrition and local resources for long-term stability. In fiscal year 2025, more than 100,000 Veterans experienced food insecurity — a serious challenge that can affect health, stability and overall well-being.

Read More

Learn how VA is helping Veterans build a path toward lasting stability: Read more on VA News

Veterans worried about accessing food can call 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411) to connect with nutrition, social work, and other VA services.

VA Launches Pilot Program to Speed Veterans' Access to Services, Care, Benefits



The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched a new pilot program at six VA medical centers:

Atlanta, Georgia;

Brooklyn, New York;

Orlando, Florida;

Palo Alto, California;

San Juan, Puerto Rico;

Washington, D.C.

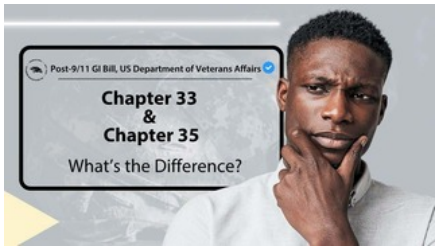
These locations will help Veterans establish VA.gov accounts faster than ever before. VA partnered with CLEAR, a secure identity company, to offer in-person identity verification through CLEAR Pods for Veterans who prefer face-to-face support or who may face mobility, connectivity, or device challenges when signing up online. A VA.gov account gives Veterans easier access to scheduling health care appointments, finding community care providers, checking claims status, and managing benefits: all in one secure place.

Learn More

Your GI Bill, Your Path:

The Differences: Chapter 33 (Post-9/11 GI Bill) and Chapter 35 (Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance)

Understanding the difference between Chapter 33 (Post-9/11 GI Bill) and Chapter 35 (Survivors and Dependents Educational Assistance) can help beneficiaries make informed decisions about education and career opportunities.



GI Bill Benefits



Got GI Bill® questions? We've got answers!

Join us for GI Bill Benefits 101, a live webinar designed to help Veterans and eligible beneficiaries make the most of their VA education benefits!

✅ Explore benefits, eligibility, and VA resources—all in one session!

Plus, get your questions answered during a live Q&A! Secure your spot today and take the next step toward maximizing your GI Bill benefits!

REGISTER NOW: https://www.benefits.va.gov/.../employmentwebinars.asp

Preserve Their Legacy:

Share Your Veteran's Story on VLM



The Veterans Legacy Memorial (VLM) is the nation's largest digital platform dedicated to honoring the memory of Veterans and servicemembers. VLM is currently home to memorial pages for more than 10 million individuals interred in VA national cemeteries, VA-funded state, tribal and territory Veteran cemeteries, and other partner cemeteries nationwide.

On VLM, families and fellow Veterans can search for a loved one by name, then contribute stories, photos, biographies, and historical documents to build a lasting, publicly visible tribute — ensuring their legacy extends far beyond the cemetery grounds.

VLM also offers a **Living Veterans** feature, allowing Veterans to privately prepare their own story now: images, autobiography, military timeline, and historical documents, which will automatically populate their memorial page when the time comes.

VLM for Living Veterans

Until next time, stay connected.

Thank you for being part of the Center for Minority Veterans community. We hope this edition of The Voice has provided meaningful stories, helpful resources, and opportunities to stay connected. Visit our website and Facebook page throughout the month for additional Veteran stories, VA updates, and upcoming events. We encourage you to share this newsletter with our fellow brother and sister Veterans, families, and community partners.

Center for Minority Veterans
Inform. Connect. Empower.

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