

## VA strengthens care and benefits for Veterans with \$243 billion budget request for fiscal year 2021

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has a proposed \$243.3 billion budget for fiscal year (FY) 2021.

The 10.2% increase from FY 2020 will allow VA's continued commitment to provide Veterans with high quality health care and timely access to benefits and services.

"The budget request will ensure Veterans and their families experience health improvements and technological modernization advancements," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "That's evidenced by the increase in budget funds we're receiving — that not only increase health care services and benefits to Veterans — but allow VA to lead the way in forward thinking innovation."

### Budget highlights

The FY 2021 budget provides robust funding for the secretary's top priorities. It includes \$109.5 billion (an increase of \$13.5 billion or 14.1% above 2020) in discretionary funding and resources for health care, benefits and national cemeteries. Additionally, there's \$133.8 billion (an increase of \$9 billion or 7.2% above 2020) in mandatory funding for benefit programs, specifically: compensation and pensions, readjustment benefits, housing and insurance.

**MISSION Act:** Beginning June 6, 2019, VA launched its new and improved Veterans Community Care Program giving Veterans a choice about how best to meet their health care needs. More than 5,000 Veterans per week are accessing the new urgent care benefits provided through the MISSION Act. The FY 2021 request would provide resources to support expansion of the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family to eligible Veterans seriously injured in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975.

**Preventing Veteran Suicide:** \$10.2 billion (\$682 million above 2020) for mental health services includes \$313 million for suicide prevention programs, a \$76 million increase (32%) over FY 2020. Part of this funding will support President Trump's Executive Order, President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) program.

**Women's Health:** \$626 million (\$53 million or 9% above FY 2020) for gender-specific women's health care. This increase will expand access to gynecology, provide more primary care services for women and enable VA to continue to identify and serve the health care needs of women Veterans.

**Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM):** \$2.6 billion (\$1.2 billion above FY 2020) to continue implementation of a single longitudinal electronic health record (EHR) from active duty to Veteran status and ensure interoperability with the Department of Defense. In addition to funding continued EHR deployment to further sites, the FY 2021 request will accelerate nationwide deployment of the Centralized Scheduling Solution.

**Transforming Business Systems:** \$221 million in the request will support the continued deployment of a modern integrated financial and acquisition management system. The request also includes \$236 million for VA to transform its supply chain system through the implementation of the LogiCole solution (formerly Defense Medical Logistics Standard Support) and other supply chain improvements.

**Blue Water Navy (BWN):** \$137 million to continue implementing the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 (BWN) by ensuring sufficient staff are hired to support claims processing, handle call center activity, and conduct quality reviews. In FY 2021, VA expects to receive an estimated 70,000 BWN claims and appeals. VA has received more than 14,000 BWN claims — since Jan. 7 — and has already issued \$7.5 million in retroactive benefit payments to 218 BWN Veterans and survivors.

**VA National Cemeteries:** \$360 million for increased burial access, partnering with stakeholders and preserving Veterans' legacies. In 2019 the National Cemetery Administration achieved the highest customer satisfaction index for any organization in either the public or private sector from the American Customer Satisfaction Index.

**Capital Investments:** \$1.9 billion for VA's total construction program, including funding to complete the American Lake (Tacoma, Washington) and Long Beach (Long Beach, California) projects.



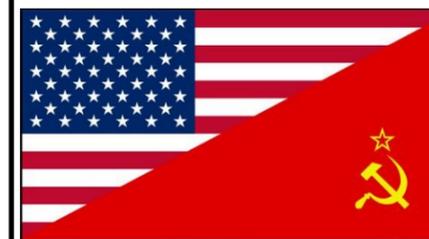
## The 21 Gun Salute

Today, the national salute of 21 guns is fired in honor of a national flag, the sovereign or chief of state of a foreign nation, a member of a reigning royal family, and the President, ex-President, and President-elect of the United States. It is also fired at noon of the day of the funeral of a President, ex-President, or President-elect, on Washington's Birthday, Presidents Day, and the Fourth of July. On Memorial Day, a salute of 21 minute guns is fired at noon while the flag is flown at half mast. Fifty guns are also fired on all military installations equipped to do so at the close of the day of the funeral of a President, ex-President, or President-elect.



Gun salutes are also rendered to other military and civilian leaders of this and other nations. The number of guns is based on their protocol rank. These salutes are always in odd numbers. For example, the Vice President of the United States, Secretary Defense, and Secretaries of the Army, Air Force, and Navy all rate 19 guns. The highest-ranking generals in the services (Commandant of the Marine Corps, Chief of Naval Operations, and the Army and Air Force Chief of Staffs) all rate 17 guns. Other 4-star generals and admirals rate 17 guns. Three-stars rate 15, two-stars rate 13, and one-stars rate 11. At military funerals, one often sees three volleys of shots fired in honor of the deceased veteran. This is often mistaken by the laymen as a 21-gun salute, although it is entirely different (in the military, a "gun" is a large-calibered weapon. The three volleys are fired from "rifles," not "guns." Therefore, the three volleys isn't any kind of "gun salute," at all). Anyone who is entitled to a military funeral (generally anyone who dies on active duty, honorably discharged veterans, and military retirees) are entitled to the three rifle volleys, subject to availability of honor guard teams. As I said, this is not a 21-gun salute, nor any other type of "gun salute." They are simply three rifle volleys fired. The firing team can consist of any number, but one usually sees a team of eight, with a noncommissioned officer in charge of the firing detail. Whether the team consists of three or eight, or ten, each member fires three times (three volleys). The three volleys comes from an old battlefield custom. The two warring sides would cease hostilities to clear their dead from the battlefield, and the firing of three volleys meant that the dead had been properly cared for and the side was ready to resume the battle. The flag detail often slips three shell-casings into the folded flag before presenting the flag to the family. Each casing represents one volley.

## Cold War Certificate Program



In accordance with section 1084 of the Fiscal Year 1998 National Defense Authorization Act, the Secretary of Defense approved awarding Cold War Recognition Certificates to all members of the armed forces and qualified federal government civilian personnel who faithfully and honorably served the United States anytime during the Cold War era, which is defined as Sept. 2, 1945 to Dec. 26, 1991. To apply for this

certificate you can visit [www.coldwar.army.mil](http://www.coldwar.army.mil) or call (703) 325.5864 and submit the application with proof of service. Individuals requesting a certificate will certify that their character of service was honorable. For more information, visit the above website or call the above listed phone number.



## Voice Of A Non-Combat Veteran

They always talk about the unsung hero's, the faceless, nameless hero. Most people think a "veteran" is someone who fought in a war. They always emphasize on the fighting veteran when they honor "veterans". They only talk about the fighting veteran's loyalties and sacrifices.

Well I am going to tell you about the forgotten (the unsung heroes). Through the years there were and are thousands, maybe millions of veterans who willingly gave up a part of their lives to serve their country.

I salute you. I thank you for your loyalty and sacrifice as well.

First of all, when we enter service to our country, at that moment, we make sacrifices willingly. We are transformed from civilians to military personnel. We live by a new set of rules. (strict rules). We become government property. We lose a lot of civil liberties we all enjoy today because of the veterans such as:

Freedom of speech:

\*We are limited on what and how we speak out

\*when and where we can come and go

\*our family's come second, long separations

\*where we live and for how long

\*what we can or can not do or get involved with

\*we are subjected to dangerous places, people and situations

\*we can't say no, just follow orders

We do it willingly for our love of our way of life, families and homeland.

Some of our jobs are extremely dangerous, but all of our jobs are equally important. Without even one of us filling the billet we could not do the job of preserving our countries freedoms and existence. Some of us even died or were permanently disabled for life. Without us, the fighting veteran could not successfully do their jobs.

Veterans do all types of professions: medical, clergy, food service, administrative, mechanics, security/police, disaster rescue, financial, safety, fire fighters, teachers, supplies, weapons experts, and much more.

Every one of us could have been called to fight. Some of us were very fortunate that we did not have to, but we feel the losses too.

Don't misunderstand me; I have the highest respect for the fighting veteran, especially for those who made the ultimate sacrifice, those who endured life long injuries, those who endured unbelievable torture and those who live with lifelong mental torture and anguish. I hold them in the highest place of honor.

I am a non-combat veteran. I am nameless, faceless but I honor those by doing my duty to the best of my ability, and in my civilian life, I tried to honor my fellow veterans by being a good citizen, helping other veterans and their families, paying tribute and honor to my fellow veterans thru public ceremonies, and educating the young people.

I only want to bring to light that all veterans are equally important because one cannot do without the other. That is why we have a Veteran's Day, to honor and see the importance of our veterans as a whole.

Non-combat Veteran



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO SAFEGUARD YOUR DD214

Your DD214, this piece of paper is your key to veteran's healthcare, veterans' benefits, VA home loans and membership to veterans' organizations. I'm sure there are many more examples, but I think you get the message on its importance. Now I'm sure that military members are told to go register this document with their local veterans service office and county recorder's office, but this was not always the case with our older veterans. We just took the 214 and stuck it in a drawer or box and forgot about it. But, as luck would have it, when we needed it, guess what, it wasn't there. Now what, "Hey honey, do you know where my DD214 is?" What was the response, "What is a DD214?" Need I say more? This piece of paper is the single most important document related to your military service. We have had many folks come into the office for benefits with a copy of their Honorable Discharge certificate. The only thing this certificate is good for is to put it in a frame and hang it on the wall. What we recommend is that if you haven't already done so, bring a copy of your DD214 to your local Veterans Service Office so we can make a copy and start a file on you. We do this in case you would require and services through our office. Also, go to your local County Recorder's office so this document can be recorded. They will copy the document, certify it and enter it into their library. Once they are finished, they will return your document to you along with a certified copy for your records. This is all accomplished free of charge to the veteran.



If you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to contact our office or the County Recorder's office at 393-6755.

## American Heart Association praises VA genetic research

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) earned national recognition for its impact on heart disease and stroke science in VA studies published in 2019.

The American Heart Association (AHA) lauded the research as top examples of how gene studies expand knowledge.

The studies were based on VA's Million Veteran Program (MVP) landmark research effort. MVP is a national research program to learn how genes, lifestyle and military exposures affect health and illness.

"This acknowledgment is a testament to the scientific and medical impact of VA research," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "More than 30 studies are underway that use MVP data, and the work is expected to lead to many advances in health care for Veterans and all Americans."

One of the studies focused on peripheral artery disease, a common circulatory problem in which narrowed arteries reduce blood flow to limbs. The other study looked at venous thromboembolism, in which a blood clot forms in the deep veins of the leg, groin or arm and travels in circulation, lodging in the lungs.

Both studies pinpointed gene targets that could lead to new drugs to treat the conditions, which affect millions of Veterans and other Americans.

MVP-based studies focus on topics including PTSD, suicide prevention, heart disease and diabetes. Findings from several studies have appeared in high-impact medical and scientific journals. More than 800,000 Veterans are already enrolled in MVP, and the recent launch of online enrollment has made it easier for more Veterans to take part.

AHA has recognized other major advances in which VA played a role. They included a major finding on blood pressure control and a study using smartwatches to warn of irregular heartbeats.