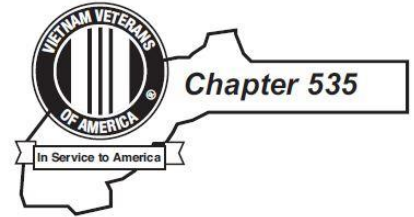




INCOMING

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

CHAPTER 535



Website: www.vva535.org

Volume 34 Issue 4

April 2024

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA
CHAPTER 535
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
April 2024

President

National Vietnam War Veterans Day:
March 29, 2024

U.S. Census Bureau Press Release Number CB24-SFS.39

Hello VVA 535 members,

Meeting time is 5PM.

There is no greater sacrifice than that of one killed in the line of duty while serving in U.S. military.

On April 5, we celebrate **Gold Star Spouses Day**, to honor and grieve with the families of lost military service members. Beginning during World War I, families would hang service flags with blue stars representing each family member serving in the military. And for those family members that gave their all, the blue stars were changed to gold stars; and the service flag was hung as a public display of the price the family had paid for freedom.

In 1945 the government approved the Gold Star Lapel Pin which is presented to spouses and families of those who have lost a member through military service. In 2010, the more inclusive name Gold Star Spouses Day was given, and in 2012 the U.S. Senate designated April 5 as the official celebration date.

Ray James

From The American Presidency Project, [Proclamation 10353—Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War](#) (March 28, 2022)

“On National Vietnam War Veterans Day, we honor all those who bravely served in the Vietnam War and who sacrificed, as did their families and caregivers, on behalf of our Nation...

“In 2012, our Nation launched a 13-year long commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War to ensure that every veteran, family, caregiver, and survivor impacted by the difficult years in Vietnam feels our Nation's gratitude for their sacrifice. Every service member of the Vietnam generation should know that their sacrifices mattered and that their service made a difference. The names etched in The Wall at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial remind us of our loved ones who gave their all and never came home. To the families, caregivers, and survivors of the more than

58,000 service members whose names are memorialized in the black granite, we pledge to never forget the eternal sacrifice of your loved ones and what you have sacrificed for the nation.

“To the families of the over 1,500 service members who remain missing and unaccounted for, know that our Nation's efforts to bring them home will never stop...

“And to each of the 6 million Vietnam War era veterans who are with us today, we honor your service and all that you have done for our Nation.”

Bart Ruud

“Every Day is a Chance to Be Better.” I do not know who coined that phrase, but over time there have been many take-offs with the same intent. We can do more.

Each of us can do more and this is a plea, a calling, for patriots in our VVA 535 Brotherhood to step up and carry our torch into the future as an Officer within our esteemed organization.

Some are weary of serving and it is time for relief. Movement from one chair to another is not relief. Do something that your future self will thank you for doing. Volunteer to become our next Treasurer or Secretary. The opportunity is before you.

Bart Ruud

VVA Chapter 535 Mission Statement

To foster camaraderie among members and assist those with disabling mental and physical injuries, to promote the welfare of our brethren affected by the war, and to engender public understanding of the sacrifice, patriotism, and bravery of those who served, those who gave all, and those left behind.

Veterans Crisis Line
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1
Or text 838255

(Put these numbers into your phone)

Attention

If you do not drive and need a ride to a meeting or any VVA-535 function, please contact Bart Ruud or any local VVA-535 member and we will do our best to arrange transportation for you.

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Upcoming Events

National Vietnam Veterans Day Luncheon
3/28/2024 at Trailblazer Pizza
National Vietnam Veterans Day 3/29/2024
NCCVC Meeting - April 4, 2024
VVA Chapter 535 Meeting - April 4, 2024
Nomination & Election of Officers &
Delegates to serve 2024-25 officers - 4/4/2024
CSC: April 5 - 7, 2024 - Visalia
May 18, 2024 - Nevada County Airfest; Armed
Forces Day
August 7-11, 2024 - Nevada County Fair

Chapter 535 Officers

President Ray James
rjames1087@sbcglobal.net
1-530-273-1087

Vice-President Peter Hidalgo
peterhidalgo45@yahoo.com
1-530-912-1971

Treasurer
Ralph Remick 530-559-7716

Secretary
Bart Ruud 530-305-0493
bruud45@gmail.com

Directors

Doug Becker 530-272-3300
Dick Corn 530-277-8856
Keith Grueneberg 916-425-1121
Ric Sheridan..... 530-274-1413
Corbin Smith 916-833-7860
Enrique Vasquez 530-575-4416
Mel Williams 707-391-7692

Committee Chairs

Finance ...Ralph Remick & Kent Holley
Parade and Honor Guard Dick Corn
Membership AffairsRic Sheridan
Newsletter Interim Editor... Bart Ruud
Victorian Christmas ...Cancelled for 2022; 2023
Nominations Ralph Remick & Dick Corn
Veterans Assistance Ray James
NCCVC Dick Corn
Speakers Bureau Ray James
Web Master Ralph Remick
Quartermaster Dick Corn
Facebook Master Mike Laborico
Nevada County Fair Open
CA State Council Rep... Interim: Bart Ruud

Nevada County Veterans Services Officer

David West II
Nevada County Veterans Service Officer
988 McCourtney Road
Grass Valley, CA 95949
David.West@co.nevada.ca.us
(530) 265-1446 (Office)
(530) 913-5046 (Cell phone)
“Walk-In” opportunities are available M – F.

Placer County Veterans Services Officer

Richard “Steve” Johnson: 916-780-3290.
1000 Sunset Blvd., Suite 115, Rocklin, CA
Mon. – Fri., 8:00 – 12:00 and 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. The
Auburn office, at 11562 B Avenue, Auburn, CA 95603, is open every
Tuesday 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. The Carnelian Bay
office, at 5252 N Lake Blvd, Carnelian Bay, CA 96140, is now open every

County VSO Resource Closet Needs

Sleeping bags, duffel bags, small lightweight tents, socks, briefs, bras, tee shirts (white/olive drab), sweatshirts, sweatpants, jeans, shoes, boots, hygiene supplies, grocery store gift cards, gas cards, blankets.

These kinds of items will become components of life packs to assist those in need that are seen by staff at VSO David West’s office. Thank you for your assistance with this project.

Matters of Interest as outlined at our meeting of February 1, 2024

A VVA 535 site at the cost of \$455 has been reserved for the April 7 – 11, 2024 Nevada County Fair. It has not yet been paid.

VVA 535 will move \$15,000 into a Certificate of Deposit.

Nominations for 2024-25 Officers and Directors were opened.

The Scholarship Committee is reviewing applications for the 2024 Harold K. Graves Jr. Memorial Scholarship.

West Point Removes ‘Duty, Honor, Country’ From Mission Statement



The West Point Academy, a hallmark education and military training institution, has removed the phrase “Duty, Honor, Country” from its mission statement.

The change comes amid concerns that under the Biden administration, the Pentagon has “gone woke” and military readiness and recruitment are in decline, [according](#) to the Gateway Pundit.

Conservative government leaders have questioned the Pentagon’s push for diversity over readiness, their contracts with LGBT activists to encourage enlistment from underrepresented groups, the removal of Bibles in public military buildings and the disciplining of Chaplains accused of intolerance due to their traditional marriage views.

In recent years, the Pentagon has come under fire for compelling West Point students to take classes on critical race theory and attend a seminar titled “Understanding Whiteness and White Rage.”

Defending the update, West Point Superintendent Army Lt. Gen. Steve Gilland stated the school maintains its commitment to instill a sense of duty, honor, and love of country in the cadets they train.

Gilland added that updating the hallmark institution’s mission statement was prompted by a desire to communicate an expanded sense of “Army values.”

West Point’s previous mission statement read: “To educate, train and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of **Duty, Honor, Country** and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the nation as an officer in the United States Army.”

The updated statement reads: “To build, educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets to be commissioned leaders of character committed to the **Army Values** and ready for a lifetime of professional excellence and service to the Army and Nation.”

A statement from West Point’s public affairs office [noted](#) the school’s charter to “train leaders” requires administrators to make regular reassessments and realignments.

The statement added that West Point’s mission statement update heeded recommendations from “external stakeholders” and was approved by the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff.

The statement also noted that West Point’s mission statement has “changed nine times” in the school’s 222-year history.

The update has been met with fierce pushback, with many expressing their dissatisfaction via social media posts.

Writing Your Story for INCOMING

(Ongoing repeat solicitation)

Ideas for your story:

- Think about what you appreciated about the Vietnam experience. There is surely a means to segue into that with very little reflection on the negative aspects of war.
- What did you appreciate about the Vietnamese people during your deployment?
- Can you steer away from the bad stuff and reflect on the best experience you had in the Nam?
- Surely you had a close buddy and you supported each other. Maybe there is a story in that.
- What really got you through the day-to-day anxieties and fears? There might be a positive recollection in that regard.

- How did your experience instill in you a sense of patriotism that you possibly express every day of your life.

So far we have heard from Ruud, Epps, Chaix, Hamer, Chuck Holmes, current Marine LCpl. Jesse Hernandez, Kent Hawley, Mike Laborico and Dave Johnson. (Thank you!)

No writer needs to dwell on the negatives of war. Each of us who was there lived the negatives, and all of us are better people for having served, especially when we look at how we matured as a result of our experiences. Each of us has derived a sense of being and an energy that is different from what it might have been had we not been sent across the pond.

Do share with us, in your own words, something of that chapter of your life. And, thank you for your service.

Forward your story to Bart Ruud at bruud45@gmail.com or hand deliver to Bart.

VVA 535 Member Biographies

Do you know _____

Now, our readership and Brotherhood knows _____ better than we might ever have known this man, this leader.

Who will be next to share?

DO WE NEED TO RECONSIDER WHAT MAKES AN ACE?

Drones have added a new wrinkle to air combat.

By **JON GUTTMAN** 2/21/2024



U.S. Marine Corps Captain Earl Ehrhart V receives signals during flight operations aboard amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD-5) on December 26, 2023. (U.S. Marine Corps/Sgt. Matthew Romonoyse-Bean)

“I never imagined I was going to be doing this when we launched,” said Captain Earl Ehrhart of U.S. Marine attack squadron VMA-231 (“Ace of Spades”) aboard the Marine landing ship *Bataan* (LHD-5). The vessel’s crew had been looking forward to the end of their deployment when Hamas made its mass incursion from Gaza into Israel on October 7, 2023, slaughtering about 1,200 civilians and kidnapping 253.

With that, *Bataan*’s deployment was extended and the ship dispatched to the eastern Mediterranean while Israel Defense Forces launched a draconian counterattack into Gaza. Shortly afterward, Houthi rebels, a Yemeni militant group armed by Iran, began launching Iranian-produced Shahed (“witness”) 136 explosive drones at every cargo ship they regarded as being owned or associated with Israel or the United States that entered the Red Sea via the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. (However, on February 12, 2024, the militants targeted *Star Iris*, a Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier full of corn bound for Iran, for all intents and purposes making the Houthis’ show of solidarity with the Palestinian refugees in Gaza a declaration of war against the world.) In reaction, the *Bataan* transferred to the Red Sea to use its AV-8B Harrier II vertical-takeoff-and-landing fighter-bombers in defense of the endangered merchantmen.

For Earl Ehrhart V in particular, things were about to get controversial. In a BBC interview on February 12, 2024, Ehrhart stated that since December 2023 he had personally destroyed seven

drones before they could strike. “The Houthis were launching a lot of suicide attack drones,” he said. “We took a Harrier jet and modified it for air defense. We loaded it up with missiles and that way, we were able to respond to their drone attacks.” Ehrhart’s claim of seven Shaheds revived a debate of sorts that has been going on since World War I: should this kind of aerial victory be equal to the downing of a manned airplane? And if so, does downing more than five of them make Earl Ehrhart the first American ace since 1972?

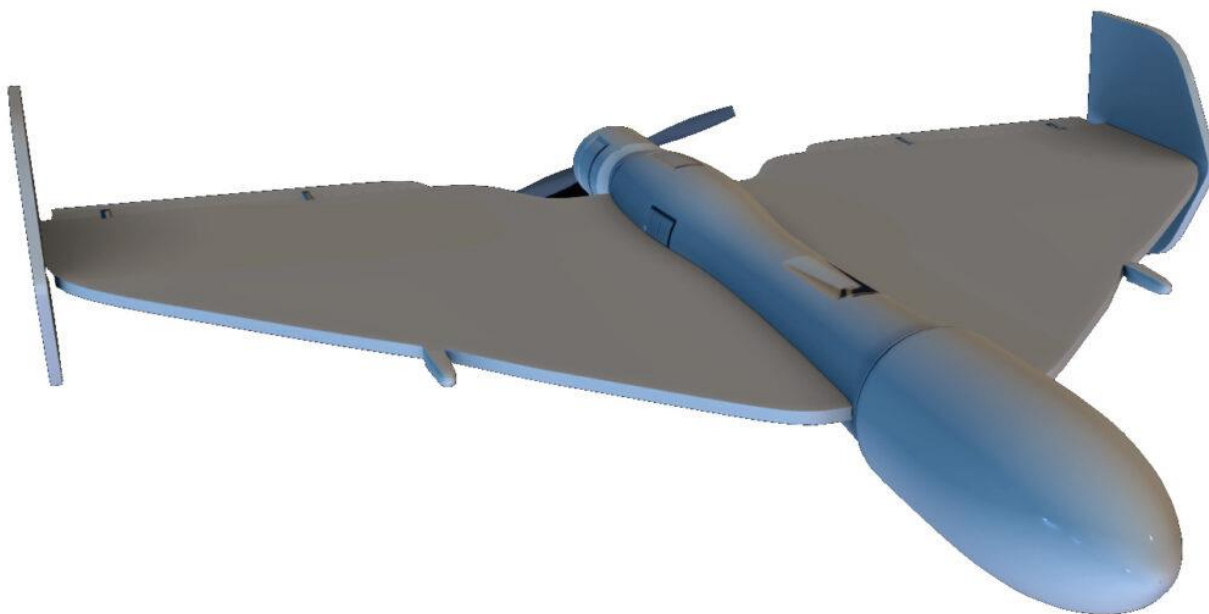


One of the AV-8B Harrier’s distinguishing characteristics is its vertical-takeoff-and-landing capabilities. Ehrhart was flying the Harrier when he downed seven Shahed-136 drones. Does that make him an ace? (U.S. Marine Corps/Sgt. Matthew Romonoyke-Bean)

Although the Harrier’s primary mission involves ground attack and troop support, its British predecessor, the [British Aerospace Sea Harrier](#), had demonstrated its air-to-air capabilities during the 1982 Falklands War, shooting down at least 20 Argentine fighter-bombers without loss. This astounding kill-to-loss ratio was primarily due to the Argentines’ lack of an airbase between their home bases and the Falkland Islands, depriving them of the loiter time to engage the British fighters and limiting their options to attacking the British ships before hightailing it for home. Being remotely controlled unmanned aircraft, the Shahed-136s were likewise unable to fight back against intercepting fighters and had the added handicap of a maximum speed of 115 mph. They also cost only \$20,000 apiece and could be produced in great numbers and dispatched en masse. To deal with them, Ehrhart and his VMA-231 colleagues were often guided to their targets by the radar of accompanying warships and attacked the drones with AIM-120 AMRAAMs (advanced medium range air-to-air missiles) or AIM-9M Sidewinder heat-seeking missiles. In spite of the inherent disparity between a piloted fighter and an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), the low altitudes at which the UAVs could fly over the water could make them difficult targets for the Sidewinders. The more sophisticated AMRAAM was far more likely to score a hit, but at a monetary cost many times that of a Shahed. (The AV-8B could also carry a 25mm GAU-12/U Equalizer automatic cannon and 300 rounds.)

Airplanes have been shooting down other airplanes since 1914, and by 1916 lighter-than-air craft, such as kite [balloons](#) and Zeppelin airships, were added to the “fair game” menu. By observing the front and directing artillery fire, balloons became tactically viable targets. Attacking one could be dangerous, too—they may have lacked their own armament, but they were encircled by anti-aircraft guns and located far behind enemy lines. The Zeppelins bombing British cities were armed, although they relied more on high-altitude climbing to escape interception.

Another aspect of air-to-air combat that was generally settled upon was that a victory scored by more than one airplane would be shared by all involved and go down as a whole victory in each pilot’s logbook. The main exceptions to this were the Germans, who generally stuck to one pilot, one victory, while British policy on the matter followed an inconsistent course. Also during World War I, a victory scored by a two-seater reconnaissance plane or bomber would be shared between the pilot and his observer, who was usually manning a machine gun or two of his own.



Houthi

rebels in Yemen have used the Shahed-136 to attack shipping in the Red Sea. The Iranian-made drones are relatively inexpensive and can be launched en masse. (HistoryNet Archives)

While one-on-one combat ending in a crash or an adversary in flames makes exciting fodder for the movies, a high percentage of “kills” in aerial combat were “moral victories” involving an enemy going down OOC (out of control) or being FTL (forced to land). More aircraft since World War I were “shot up” than “shot down,” but still counted in good faith as a victory. Postwar access to enemy records usually reveals that their real losses were only a fraction of what their adversaries had reported. Aces with complete matches to their claims have always been exceptions to the rule, known examples being Americans [Douglas Campbell](#) (six in World War I) and [Steve Ritchie](#) (five over Vietnam) and North Vietnamese aces Nguyen Tien Sam (five) and Nguyen Duc Soat (six).

By World War II the warplane had matured considerably, and single combat had largely given way to sprawling air battles, which added a few more variations to the tallying process. Some, like Britain, the United States and Finland, logged each pilot's victory in fractions if more than one were involved in a shoot-down. As Allied bombing raids became an increasing threat to the Axis war effort, Germany, Romania and Bulgaria introduced a point system to encourage their fighters to brave the huge bomber wings. Pilots received one point for a single-engine airplane, two for twin-engines and three for four or more. Many fighter pilots from those three air arms kept tally of separate scores, realizing that the point system was a way to get medals but also likely to invite post-war skepticism over claims.

UAVs first appeared in the form of the German *Vergeltungswaffe* (“vengeance weapon”) V-1 against British cities in June 1944. The V-1's debut led to the question of its status as an aircraft. These “divers” or “doodlebugs” were a serious menace to life and industry and had to be eliminated, and they also presented intercepting Allied fighter pilots with the threat of serious damage or destruction if they exploded in their faces. A safer prospect of eliminating the V-1 was for the pursuer to slip a wingtip under the enemy's and raise it to upset the gyro-based guidance system, causing the V-1 to crash in a relatively less vulnerable open area. In spite of the special challenges the V-1 presented, the Royal Air Force chose to put multiple-scoring “diver aces” into a category separate from those who downed manned aircraft.



Shahed-136

drones are stacked on a launcher before an exercise by the Iranian Army.

The United States used AQM-34 jet-powered reconnaissance drones over Vietnam, and North Vietnamese fighter pilots sometimes intercepted these swift, elusive little targets—and sometimes, while chasing them over the hilly terrain, crashed in the process. Many North Vietnamese counted the destruction of drones in their scores, including two by their nine-victory ace of aces, Nguyen

Van Coc. The Americans at that time were not inclined to count them as such and U.S. Air Force ace Steve Ritchie made his own opinion known in an interview: “I don’t count robots.”

Since the Vietnam War, however, advances in technology have brought a new generation of UAVs into play, guided by operators thousands of miles away. The possibility of dueling drones dogfighting for local control of the sky while being flown from office chairs in faraway control centers is no longer science fiction, which seems to be what the USAF had in mind in 2017 when it revised its criteria for air-to-air combat: “The Air Force may award an aerial victory credit to an Air Force pilot or crew that destroys an in-flight enemy aerial vehicle, manned or not, armed or not.”

Which brings us full circle to 2024, in which, according to the USAF, Nguyen Van Coc retains his place as Vietnam’s ace of aces and Captain Earl Ehrhart V, USMC, credited with seven Shahed-136 attack drones, rates as the latest American ace.

What Does It Mean to Be 100% Disabled by the VA?

What Are VA Disability Ratings?

A VA disability rating is a percentage assigned to a service-connected disability based on the severity of the condition. Disability ratings are meant to compensate veterans for the average impairment in earning capacity caused by their service-connected condition(s).

VA uses the **Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD)** to assign diagnostic codes and disability ratings from 0 to 100 percent. Generally, the more severe a disability, the higher the disability rating.

The monthly benefit increases incrementally with each higher rating. A 0 percent rating offers no monthly monetary compensation, but veterans with this rating may be eligible for ancillary benefits, such as health care. A 100 percent rating provides the maximum schedular benefit in monthly compensation.

If a veteran has multiple service-connected conditions, VA combines the multiple ratings together using **VA math**. Importantly, a veteran’s combined disability rating determines their monthly compensation amount.

As of December 1st, 2023 the VA disability rate benefit amounts are as follows:

- **0 percent disability rating:** \$0.00 per month
- **10 percent disability rating:** \$171.23 per month
- **20 percent disability rating:** \$338.49 per month
- **30 percent disability rating:** \$524.31 per month
- **40 percent disability rating:** \$755.28 per month
- **50 percent disability rating:** \$1,075.16 per month
- **60 percent disability rating:** \$1,361.88 per month

- **70 percent disability rating:** \$1,716.28 per month
- **80 percent disability rating:** \$1,995.01 per month
- **90 percent disability rating:** \$2,241.91 per month
- **100 percent disability rating:** \$3,737.85 per month

What Is a 100% Disability Rating?

A 100 percent disability rating, or total disability rating, is the highest percentage that can be given for service-connected compensation purposes. This rating is reserved for veterans with extremely debilitating service-connected conditions that typically make them unable to work and mostly unable to care for themselves. A veteran must meet stringent criteria to qualify for this rating.

As mentioned above, 100 percent ratings also provide the highest schedular amount of disability compensation. Some veterans can get additional compensation if their disabilities are especially severe.

Are 100% VA Ratings Permanent?

VA disability ratings at 100 percent are **not automatically permanent**; however, they can be granted permanent status in certain situations.

For example, if a 100 percent rating is **in place for 20 years or more**, VA is **not going to reduce that rating unless** there is **evidence of fraud** in the initial rating assignment.

If it is less than 20 years, VA **can pursue a rating reduction**, but there needs to be both **material improvement and improvement under ordinary conditions**. Importantly, VA cannot rely on a simple examination showing improvement when issuing a rating reduction.

Having a rating for 20 years does not mean it **automatically becomes permanent**; but, if VA determines your rating cannot be subject to reduction after 20 years, your 100 percent rating will remain the same (i.e., become permanent).

Types of 100% VA Disability Ratings

There are several types of 100 percent disability ratings. These include:

- **100% Schedular VA ratings** – A 100 percent disability rating for one condition or multiple conditions.
- **Total Disability based on Individual Unemployability (TDIU):** Veterans who are unable to secure and follow substantially gainful employment due to their service-connected conditions.
- **Permanent and Total (P&T) VA ratings:** Veterans whose disabilities are total (rated 100 percent disabling by VA) and permanent (have zero or close to zero chance of improvement).
- **Temporary Total VA ratings:** Veterans who are rendered temporarily incapacitated due to a service-connected condition.

- **VA ratings for cancer:** Veterans service-connected for active cancer should automatically receive a 100 percent disability rating. This rating continues for as long as the cancer is active, and then for another six months following the successful completion of a treatment program, such as chemotherapy, radiation, or surgery. VA will then reevaluate based on residuals.

100% Schedular VA Ratings

There are two ways in which veterans can receive a schedular 100 percent disability rating:

1. A 100 percent rating based on one disability alone; **or**
2. Multiple service-connected disabilities that combine to 100 percent.

However, it is important to note that disability ratings are not added together in the traditional way. Instead, as mentioned above, VA uses its own form of math when combining disability ratings. To avoid doing VA math by hand, use our **VA math calculator here**.

Importantly, if the VA math calculator produces an outcome of 75 percent, it means you are likely entitled to an 80 percent combined disability rating. On the other hand, if the VA math calculator produces an outcome of 73 percent, then you are only entitled to a 70 percent combined disability rating.

Can Veterans with Schedular 100% VA Disability Ratings Work?

If a veteran has a schedular 100 percent disability rating for one or more service-connected conditions, they are fully entitled to continue working. However, veterans should keep in mind that the VASRD is based on average impairment to earning capacity. This means that a veteran's ability to work is one of the factors VA considers when trying to determine whether there has been an actual material improvement to a service-connected condition.

Total Disability Based on Individual Unemployability (TDIU)

Total Disability based on Individual Unemployability, or TDIU, is a benefit that allows veterans to be compensated at the 100 percent level, even if their combined rating does not equal a schedular 100 percent. TDIU is awarded to veterans who are **unable to secure and follow substantially gainful employment** as a result of their service-connected conditions.

Furthermore, a veteran may be unable to work due to a combination of service-connected conditions. That is, veterans do not have to show that their depression alone prevents them from working. Instead, veterans can argue that their depression combined with their knee and back conditions make them unable to work.

Schedular vs. Extraschedular TDIU

VA outlines TDIU regulations under **38 CFR § 4.16**, which encompasses schedular TDIU (subsection a) and extraschedular TDIU (subsection b). To qualify for **TDIU on a schedular basis** under 38 CFR § 4.16(a), veterans must demonstrate the following:

- They have one service-connected condition rated at **60 percent or higher**; *or*
- They have multiple service-connected conditions, one of which is rated at least **40 percent** disabling, with a combined disability rating of at least **70 percent**.

Veterans who do not meet the rating requirements for schedular TDIU outlined above may still qualify for extraschedular consideration, or **extraschedular TDIU** under 38 CFR § 4.16(b). In this scenario, VA will determine if a veteran's case should be referred to the Director of Compensation Service. The Director will look at their case and write an opinion on whether their service-connected conditions prevent them from securing and following substantially gainful employment. VA will then agree or disagree with the Director's opinion to either grant or deny TDIU on an extraschedular basis.

Can Veterans Work While Receiving TDIU?

There are certain situations in which VA can still consider and grant TDIU when a veteran is working. Again, the regulation requires that veterans cannot secure and follow *substantially gainful* employment. VA considers jobs that result in annual income less than that of the federal poverty threshold to be **marginal employment**. Importantly, veterans engaging in marginal employment are still eligible for TDIU.

There are additional circumstances where veterans who earn above the federal poverty threshold may still receive TDIU benefits. Here, veterans must be receiving extensive and unreasonable accommodations from their employer, resulting in a **protective work environment**. If the accommodations are afforded due to the veteran's service-connected conditions, and without such accommodations the veteran would not be employed, TDIU should be considered.

Is TDIU Permanent?

Similar to schedular 100 percent disability ratings, TDIU is not automatically permanent; however, it can be granted permanent status. Oftentimes, the veteran must apply for permanent status and demonstrate to VA that their service-connected conditions are not going to improve over time, thereby rendering them permanently unemployable.

100% Permanent and Total VA Disability Ratings

Permanent and total disability ratings mean that VA has determined the veteran is both permanently and totally disabled. It is a classification that means veterans no longer need to attend Compensation and Pension (C&P) exams.

In addition, veterans with permanent and total disability ratings are typically no longer subject to rating reductions. If you believe you are entitled to a permanent and total disability rating, you should apply through VA.

You Know if Your Rating is Permanent?

If a veteran is rated permanent and total for a service-connected condition, there are several ways in which VA may notify them. In most cases, it will be indicated in the decision

letter. On some Rating Decisions, there is a Permanent and Total box that will be checked. On others, there may be language like “eligibility to Dependents Chapter 35 DEA/CHAMPVA are established” or “no future exams are scheduled” – both of which indicate permanence. The exact language may differ between VA Regional Offices.

100% Temporary Total Disability Ratings

Veterans who are rendered temporarily incapacitated due to a service-connected condition may be entitled to receive **temporary and total disability compensation** equivalent to a 100 percent VA rating. VA offers three forms of temporary 100 percent disability ratings:

Prestabilization

A prestabilization rating is a temporary, immediate disability rating assigned to veterans who have recently been discharged from military service with a **severely disabling and unstable condition** that is expected to continue for an **indefinite period of time**. These veterans are considered “most likely in need and least likely to be self-sufficient.”

Prestabilization ratings are assigned in increments of 50 and 100 percent over a period of 12 months following the veteran’s discharge date. Veterans who receive a 100 percent prestabilization rating are suffering from an unstable condition incurred in service that will result in a severe disability. According to **38 CFR 4.28**, a 100 percent prestabilization rating is only assigned if “substantially gainful employment is not feasible or advisable.”

In order for VA to reduce your prestabilization rating, a reevaluation must be conducted to assess the condition’s status. These examinations are scheduled six to 12 months following separation from service. VA will reduce your prestabilization rating if the evidence following a reexamination warrants a reduction.

A prestabilization rating is not assigned if the veteran is immediately eligible for a 100 percent schedular rating “under the regular provisions of the rating schedule,” or a 100 percent rating due to TDIU. To the same effect, a 50 percent prestabilization rating will not be assigned to those who would otherwise qualify for a schedular rating of 50 percent or higher “under the regular provisions of the rating schedule.”

Hospitalization

Temporary hospitalization ratings are assigned to veterans who have been hospitalized for over 21 days as a result of a service-connected condition. This rating is also assigned to those who remain under hospital observation for more than 21 days at the expense of VA. In order to qualify for a temporary hospitalization rating, you must be receiving treatment at a VA medical center or other VA-approved hospital.

If a veteran is assigned a temporary hospitalization rating, their effective date will be that of when continuous hospitalization began. Benefits will continue until the last day of the month in which the veteran stopped receiving treatment for their service-connected condition. According to **38 CFR 4.29**, if a veteran is hospitalized for more than six months,

their “claims folder will be referred to the rating activity for consideration of a schedular 100 percent rating.”

Convalescence

Convalescence is the third and final form of temporary total compensation assigned to veterans by VA. In the case *Felden v. West*, the **United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims** (CAVC) defined convalescence as “the stage of recovery following an attack of disease, a surgical operation, or an injury” and recovery as “the act of regaining or returning toward a normal or healthy state.” *Felden v. West*, 11 Vet. App. 427, 430 (1998.)

Temporary 100 percent convalescence ratings are assigned to veterans who underwent treatment or surgery for a service-connected disability at a VA medical center or VA-approved facility. In order to qualify for a temporary and total convalescence rating, the veteran must have:

- Undergone treatment or surgery with a convalescence time of at least one month; or
- Experienced severe postoperative residuals that resulted from surgery (e.g., surgical wounds are not completely healed, the veteran is rendered housebound, there is a need for continuous use of crutches or wheelchair); or
- Experienced the immobilization of one or more major joints “by a cast without surgery.”

According to **38 CFR 4.30**, entitlement to a convalescence rating can be corroborated by a medical professional if there is a “clear connection between the claimant’s inability to return to previous employment and surgery or cast immobilization,” and if there is no evidence of record to the contrary.

VA Ratings for Cancer: Temporary Total

If you are service-connected for an active cancer, VA should automatically assign a 100 percent disability rating. This rating continues for as long as your cancer is active, and then for another *six months* following the successful completion of a treatment program, such as chemotherapy, radiation, or surgery. Six months after your cancer treatment ends, VA will schedule you for a C&P examination to evaluate the current status of your condition.

If the examination shows that your cancer is no longer active and is in remission, VA will evaluate the cancer based on its residuals. For example, erectile dysfunction and urinary incontinence are common residual symptoms of prostate cancer. If prostate cancer is no longer active, VA will likely reduce the disability rating for that condition and assign new ratings based on the severity of the veteran’s erectile dysfunction and urinary incontinence if present.

Are There Other Benefits Available for 100% Disabled Veterans?

Yes, there are a **variety of benefits** available to veterans rated at 100 percent, aside from disability compensation. These may include:

Priority Group 1 for Healthcare

When veterans apply for **VA health care**, VA will assign you to 1 of 8 priority groups based on:

- Your military service history;
- Your VA disability rating;
- Your income level;
- Whether you qualify for Medicaid; and
- Other benefits you may be receiving (e.g., VA pension benefits)

Veterans with service-connected disabilities are given the highest priority. Importantly, veterans with a 100 percent VA disability rating meet the eligibility requirements for Health Care Priority Group 1. This group includes the following benefits:

- Dental care (e.g., regular cleanings, restorative care such as fillings and crowns, x-rays, etc.)
- Preventive care
- Inpatient (hospitalization) services
- Ancillary services
- Mental health care
- Geriatrics and extended care
- Medical equipment/prosthetic items and aids
- Medications/supplies
- Nursing home placement
- Medically related travel benefits
- Eyeglasses
- Hearing aids
- Automotive adaptive equipment (under certain conditions)
- Home improvement and structural alteration grants (under certain conditions)
- Clothing allowance benefits (under certain conditions)
- Dependents' health care (if not eligible under TRICARE)
- Emergency care at a non-VA facility (under certain conditions)
- Foreign medical care (for service-connected and secondary conditions)

Emergency Care Outside of VA for 100% Disabled Veterans

Veterans in the Priority 1 Group described above that have a P&T disability rating are entitled to emergency care outside of the Veterans Health Administration for any disability. Such emergency care is at VA's expense. Veterans must simply show that VA was not reasonably available to provide the care that they needed at the time.

Dental Care Benefits for 100 Percent Disabled Veterans

If you qualify for VA dental care benefits (i.e., you have a 100 percent schedular disability rating or receive TDIU benefits), you may be able to get some or all of your dental care through VA.

The eligibility for outpatient dental care is somewhat different from the eligibility requirements for most other VA medical benefits. Specifically, eligibility for **VA dental care** is categorized into classes. The class you are in determines the benefits you will receive.

Veterans with 100 percent disability ratings are categorized into Class IV. Importantly, these veterans are eligible for any needed dental care, such as scheduled cleanings and X-rays. It also includes restorative procedures such as fillings, crowns, bridges, dentures. Any oral surgeries that you might require, such as tooth extractions, root canals, and reconstructive surgeries due to trauma or serious illness are covered as well. However, these dental benefits are not afforded to veterans with only a temporary total rating.

Vision Care and Hearing Aid Veterans Benefits: 100% Rating not Required

For vision care and hearing aid benefits, veterans do not actually need a total disability rating. All veterans with any compensable disability rating qualify for vision care and hearing aids. Vision care includes routine eye exams, preventive testing (e.g., glaucoma testing, cost of eyeglasses).

CHAMPVA

The **Civilian Health and Medical Programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA)** is a health care program in which VA shares the cost of certain covered healthcare services that exist for the spouses and children of disabled veterans with 100 percent disability ratings.

This additional benefit is unique insofar as it is not just a benefit that is available to the veterans themselves. Instead, it is also a benefit that they can use to the advantage of their family members. Examples of covered healthcare services under CHAMPVA include ambulatory services, hospice treatment, certain inpatient and outpatient treatments or hospitalizations, family planning, medical services, and medical equipment costs.

Dependents Education Assistance Program

The **Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA)** program offers **education and training opportunities to eligible dependents of veterans** who are permanently and totally (i.e., 100 percent) disabled due to a service-connected condition, currently receiving TDIU benefits, or who died while on active duty, or as a result of a service-connected condition.

DEA benefits may be used for degree and certificate programs, apprenticeship, and on-the-job training. Dependents may receive up to 45 months of education benefits if they began using the program before August 1, 2018. If they began the program on or after August 1, 2018, they have 36 months to use the benefits.

Specially Adapted Housing Program Benefits: 100% Rating not Required

The **Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) program** offers grants to veterans with certain severe service-connected disabilities (which are typically rated 100 percent disabling). The grants

assist with building, remodeling, or purchasing an adapted home. This can provide independent living that might not otherwise be possible.

To be eligible for SAH grants, veterans must be entitled to disability compensation due to:

- **Loss or loss of use** of two or more limbs
- Loss or loss of use of a lower extremity with lasting residuals of an organic disease or injury
 - **Note:** VA sets a cap for how many veterans can get benefits based on the loss of one extremity. Currently, only 120 veterans per fiscal year can receive SAH compensation.
- Blindness in both eyes (i.e., 20/200 visual acuity or less)
- Severe burn injuries
- Loss or loss of use of a foot or leg after September 11, 2001 (i.e., unable to move around without braces, crutches, canes, or a wheelchair)

Vocational Readiness and Employment (VR&E)

Vocational Readiness and Employment (VR&E) is a benefit designed for service members and veterans with service-connected conditions who are looking to increase their likelihood of obtaining employment. VA will evaluate the veteran's interests, aptitudes, abilities, and assess how their disability affects their ability to work. VR&E also provides a range of career services including:

- Career counseling and rehabilitation planning for employment as job training, job-seeking skills, résumé development, and other work-readiness assistance
- On-the-job-training, apprenticeships, and non-paid work experiences

If a veteran is entitled to DEA benefits (or if a veteran was entitled to DEA benefits at the time of their passing), their dependents may be eligible for VR&E benefits as well.

Commissary and Exchange Benefits for 100 Percent Disabled Veterans

Veterans with a 100 percent rating can present their Veteran Health Identification Card to gain entry to Department of Defense (DoD) and Coast Guard installations, some commissary stores/commissaries, exchanges, and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) retail activities where they can shop at discounted rates. These are known as **commissary and exchange benefits**.

Space-A Flights for 100 Percent Disabled Veterans

In 2018, Congress signed the *John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act*, in which 100 percent disabled veterans became eligible for Space Available Travel (Space-A flights). Veterans and their families can use Space-A flights to travel around the country and world at little to no cost. To be eligible for Space-A flights, veterans must have a permanent and total service-connected condition. These veterans must also obtain a DD Form 2765, "Department of Defense/Uniformed Services Identification and Privilege Card (TAN)."

The Space-A Program fills surplus capacity and seating on Department of Defense aircraft. Disabled veterans are in priority group 6, meaning active-duty service members on emergency leave, post-deployment respite, and other important transportation needs will have priority. As such, disabled veterans should have a contingency plan in case of a scheduling change or sudden unavailability.

Nonetheless, the Space-A program offers 100 percent disabled veterans the chance to travel with ease. Eligible veterans looking for flights should review schedules through Air Mobility Command (AMC). Most AMC terminals, on military bases or at commercial airports, have a Facebook page that posts flight schedules and seat availability. Once a flight and destination are selected, the veteran can register in person at the terminal, or by email/fax.

Additional VA Ratings Above 100 Percent

Under the traditional rating scale for compensation, 100 percent is the highest rating you will receive for either an individual service-connected condition or combined service-connected conditions. However, there are certain circumstances in which veterans can receive **additional forms of compensation** due to particularly severe conditions.

For example, **special monthly compensation (SMC)** is awarded to veterans who have severe disabilities that bring them above and beyond the schedular rating criteria.

State-Offered Benefits for 100% Disabled Veterans

Totally disabled veterans should also look into **state-offered benefits**, such as those associated with property taxes and vehicle registration.

Veterans with 100 percent disability ratings may request a property tax waiver, although each state may have different qualification requirements. Veterans may also qualify for free vehicle registration depending on where they live.

CANCER

HOW DOES VA RATE CANCER ?

- **100%** rating while service-connected cancer is active.
- **100%** rating continues for **6 months** following successful completion of treatment (e.g. chemotherapy or radiation).
- Compensation and Pension (C&P) exam is scheduled to evaluate **current status** of the veteran's cancer.
- If the veteran's cancer is no longer active, VA evaluates the cancer based on its **residuals**, if any.



COMMON CAUSES OF SERVICE-CONNECTED CANCER

- Agent Orange
- 🔥 Burn Pits
- ☢ Radiation
- 👤 Occupational (MOS) Hazards
- ☠ Camp Lejeune Water Contamination

● Agent Orange Presumptive Cancers

Chronic B-cell leukemias
 Soft tissue sarcoma
 Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
 Lung cancer
 Multiple Myeloma
 Prostate cancer

🔥 Burn Pits Associated Cancers

Bladder cancer
 Brain cancer
 Chronic B-cell leukemias
 Lung cancer and other respiratory cancers
 Multiple myeloma
 Hodgkin's disease
 Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

☢ Radiation Presumptive Cancers

Bile duct cancer
 Bone cancer
 Breast cancer
 Colon cancer
 Gallbladder cancer
 Liver cancer
 Lung cancer
 Pancreatic cancer
 Pharynx cancer

Ovarian cancer
 Cancer of the salivary glands
 Small intestine cancer
 Stomach cancer
 Thyroid cancer
 Urinary tract cancers
 Various types of leukemia
 Various types of lymphomas
 Multiple myeloma

☠ Camp Lejeune Water Contamination Presumptive Cancers

Bladder cancer
 Breast cancer
 Esophageal cancer
 Kidney cancer

Leukemia
 Lung cancer
 Multiple myeloma
 Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

Application for Membership
VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, INC., CHAPTER 535

P.O. Box 37, Grass Valley, CA 95945

Membership is open to U.S. armed forces veterans who served on active duty (for other than training purposes) in the Republic of Vietnam between February 28, 1961, and May 7, 1975, or in **any duty location** between November 1, 1955 and May 7, 1975.

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone: (_____) _____ Cell Phone: (_____) _____

Email Address: _____ Gender: _____

(Optional) Chapter Number: _____ Sponsor: _____

_____ I am already a VVA member and I want to become a Life Member. My VVA Number is _____.

Membership: Individual Life Membership: \$50. (Effective Oct. 20, 2018)

ATTENTION New members: You must submit a copy of your DD-214 form along with this application and dues payment.

Payment Method: ___ Check ___ Money Order ___ Credit Card (Visa, MasterCard, AMEX, Discover)

Credit Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

Return your completed application, payment and a copy of your DD-214 to:

Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc., Chapter 535
P.O. Box 37
Grass Valley, CA 95945

Revised: January 2022

March

2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7 VVA-535 Board & General Meeting	8	9
10 Daylight Savings Time begins	11	12	13	14	15	16
17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19 First Day of Spring	20	21	22	23
24 Palm Sunday	25 Medal of Honor Day	26	27	28	29 Good Friday National Vietnam War Veterans Day	30
31 Easter Sunday						

April

2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 April Fool's Day	2	3	4 NCCVC VVA-535 Board & General Meeting Nominations for Officers and Directors	5 CSC Visalia	6 CSC Visalia
7 CSC Visalia	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

May

2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 NCCVC VVA-535 Board & General Meeting	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 Ascension Day	10	11
12 Mother's Day	13	14	15	16	17	18 Armed Forces Day (USA) Nevada County Airfest
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27 Memorial Day (USA)	28	29	30	31	

June

2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				NCCVC VVA-535 Board & General Meeting		1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14 Flag Day	15
16 Father's Day	17	18	19 Juneteenth	20 First Day of Summer	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						