

LYCOMING COUNTY OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

THE LYCOMING VET

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Pat Toomey Speaks to Veterans



Tricare Cost to Increase for Retirees

Forget the Pay Freeze: Start Worrying About Health Care Costs By Kellie Lunney

Buried in the news over the extended federal pay freeze, the impending fiscal cliff and the umpteenth continuing resolution to avoid a government shutdown is this fact: Many military retirees will be paying a little more for their health care as of Oct. 1.

Day 1 of fiscal 2013 means that some TRICARE Prime beneficiaries now will have to pay \$39 to \$79 more than they currently do in annual enrollment fees. Specifically, TRICARE Prime military retirees who enrolled in the health care program before Oct. 1, 2011, will pay an annual fee of \$269.28 for individual coverage as of Oct. 1, 2012; those with the family plan will pay \$538.56 per year under the adjustment. Those beneficiaries -- all under the age of 65 -- currently pay \$260 per year in enrollment costs for the individual plan and \$460 for family coverage. The 2012 National Defense Authorization Act allows for the annual increase of TRICARE Prime enrollment fees for most retired beneficiaries based on the annual cost-of-living increase.

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TRICARE

Those enrolled after Oct. 1, 2011 -- considered new enrollees -- already are paying higher annual enrollment fees (\$260 for individual and \$520 for family), so their rates will increase too but not by as much. After Oct. 1, both groups will pay \$269.28 for individual coverage and \$538.56 for dependent coverage. Beneficiaries can pay the fee in one lump sum, or on a quarterly or monthly basis. Active-duty service members and their dependents in TRICARE Prime do not pay enrollment fees.

No doubt the increase will irk some beneficiaries, but when you compare the out-of-pocket costs for TRICARE beneficiaries to the average health care premium contribution for those outside TRICARE, the differences are stark. In 2011, the average annual health care premium contribution for civilian family coverage was \$4,129, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation, compared to the \$460 enrollment fee for the family plan under TRICARE Prime. TRICARE Prime enrollees do not pay premiums, but they are responsible for co-pays and other costs associated with their coverage.

TRICARE costs are a politically sensitive issue. The expense to the government of providing military health care has more than doubled in the past 12 years and is the most expensive "noncash" benefit the Defense Department provides to service members, retirees and their families. The Obama administration has proposed increases to TRICARE enrollment fees, based on retirement income, and some modest hikes to co-pays and other fees. Lawmakers from both political parties so far have rejected Obama's proposals.

TRICARE Prime retirees aren't the only ones in the military health care system who will see out-of-pocket increases as of Oct. 1. Enrollees in the military's Continued Health Care Benefit Program will see their premiums increase between \$73 and \$165 per quarter. The CHCBP offers temporary transitional health care coverage for 18 months to 36 months after TRICARE eligibility ends. Basically, it acts as a bridge between military health benefits and an enrollee's new civilian health plan. The fiscal 2013 quarterly premiums are \$1,138 for individuals and \$2,555 for families. The current premiums are \$1,065 per quarter for individuals and \$2,390 per quarter for families.

FEHBP Premiums

Don't worry, federal civilian employees, you won't be left out of the premium rate fun. The Office of Personnel Management will announce in the next few weeks the 2013 premiums for the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program. The average amount federal employees paid for their health insurance plans rose 3.5 percent in 2012, after the 7.2 percent hike in 2011. Stay tuned.



SEN. TOOMEY INTRODUCES BILL TO HELP CLOTHE HOMLESS AND NEEDY VETERANS

House passed the Clothe a Homeless Hero Act

Washington, D.C.-U.S. Senator Pat Toomey (R-Pa.) introduced a bill (S.3640) today to require the Transportation Administration to work with the VA and local charities to distribute unclaimed clothing left at airport security checkpoints to homeless and needy veterans and their families.

The house of representatives passed a companion bill (H.R. 6328) Tuesday by voice vote. U.S. Representative Kathy Hochul (D-N.Y.) introduced the house bill.

“Thousands of pieces of clothing are left unclaimed at airport security checkpoints-clothing that could be put to good use. The Clothe a Homeless Hero Act helps our heros by giving unclaimed clothing to those most in need.” **Sen. Toomey said.** I thank Rep. Hochul for her leadership on this issue and I urge my Senate colleagues to join me in supporting this bipartisan common sense measure to help our veterans and their families.”

“As cold weather approaches across much of the country, we must provide for our

Senator Toomey at Lycoming County

nations homeless veterans while we work to end homelessness for good. I am proud to partner with Sen. Toomey to advance my legislation to assist homeless heroes, which passed the House with the bipartisan support of my colleagues,” Rep. Hochul said. “I urge the Senate to support Sen. Toomey's companion bill and to pass the Clothe a Homeless Hero Act without delay.

According to the Veterans Affairs Department, about 75,000 veterans are homeless on any given night, and about 20,000 veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have been homeless within the last five years. Veterans advocates in Pennsylvania praised the legislation.

“I support the continuing efforts of Sen. Toomey to promote bipartisan legislation such as the Clothe a Homeless Hero Act to improve the lives of those who have served our country,” **said Media, Pa., Mayor and retired Army First Lieutenant Bob McMahon (D).**

“I believe that the Clothe a Homeless Hero Act is an important way to show support and thanks to the men and women who have served our country and protected democracy world wide. I appreciate hat items left unclaimed at security checkpoints will be used to benefit those who have served our country and earned gratitude,” **said retired Army Second Lieutenant and Philadelphia City Councilman At-Large David Oh.**

“By Spearheading the effort to bring awareness to the issue of homelessness in the veterans community, we salute Sen. Toomey,” **said retired Army Specialist David Kamioner, executive director of the Philadelphia Veterans Comfort House.**

“This act is a terrific example of how Congress can act effectively in a bipartisan way to address a critical need for our veterans— especially some of our most vulnerable veterans who live outdoors in the city. I hope every senator and member of congress will add their full support behind this piece of legislation,” **said Edd Conboy, director of social services at Broad Street Ministry in Philadelphia and the director of the Council on Relationship's Operation Home & Healing.**

“I think this is a great idea. Items that can be used to help any veteran, but especially homeless veterans, are a huge help.” **said Ronald Conley, manager of the Alleghany County Veterans' Services Department.**

AMERICAN LEGION, VFW & OTHER COUNTY VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS

American Legion Post 1- Garrett Cochran
10 E. 3rd St., Williamsport, PA 17701
Phone: 570-323-9409
Lloyd Brooks, Adjutant

American Legion Post 35- Glenn Sharrow
78 N. Main St., Hughesville, PA 17737
Phone: 570-584-2123

American Legion Post 36 -
George Webster Pepperman
P.O. Box 211, Jersey Shore, PA 17740
Phone: 570-398-4174

American Legion Post 104 - Eugene Grafius
1312 Broad St., Montoursville, PA 17754
Phone: 570-368-8234

American Legion Post 251 - Bower Decker
185 Broad St., Montgomery, PA 17752
Phone: 570-547-2039

American Legion Post 268 - Roland Ritter
515 Legion Rd., Muncy, PA 17756
Phone: 570-546-5210

American Legion Post 617 - Royal P. Steinbacher
901 Market Street, South Williamsport, PA 17702
Phone: 570-327-0255
Gail Eppler, Commander

American Legion Post 999 - West Branch Service Post
Michael J. Jones, Commander; Phone: 323-9421
P.O. Box 1971, 1061 John Brady Rd.,
Pennsdale, PA 17756
George Diffenbaugh, Adjutant; Phone: 570-546-6508
Meets at the Montoursville Presbyterian Church

VFW Post 3428- Edward J. Smith Post
12 N Market St., Muncy, PA 17756
Phone: 570-546-3820

VFW Post 5859- Billy O. Brandt Post
201 N. Lincoln Ave., Jersey Shore, PA 17740
Phone: 570-398-2801

VFW Post 7863- Le Roy O. Buck Post
150 Shaffer St., South Williamsport, PA 17702
Phone: 570-323-9195

VFW Post 844- Howard W. Kahler Post
1260 West 3rd Street, Williamsport, PA 17701

Veterans of the Vietnam War – Post PA 51
P.O. Box 23, Hughesville, PA 17737
Commander: Gary L. Jenney Sr.
Phone: 570-547-2814

**Williamsport Detachment 388
Marine Corps League Inc**
507 Cemetery St. Williamsport, Pa. 17701

Mailing Address:
P. O. Box 3245, Williamsport, PA 17701
Commandant Michael Dunlap
Phone: 570-323-9900 Cell: 570-916-8372

**Korean War Veterans
of Lycoming County, Inc.**
P. O. Box 3232
Williamsport, PA 17701
Commander Fred Schaefer
Phone: 570-323-5627
(to arrange military funerals)

Your Reps in Washington & Harrisburg



U.S. Representative Thomas Marino— 10th Congressional District

Williamsport District Office
1020 Commerce Park Drive, Suite 1A
Williamsport, PA 17701
Phone: 570-322-3961
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Office Hours: M-F 8:30-5
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U.S. Representative Glenn "GT" Thompson— 5th Congressional District

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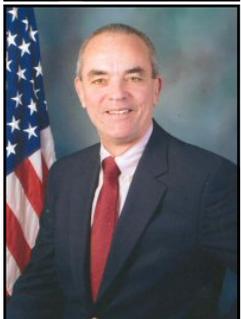


PA State Senator Gene Yaw— Senate District 23

330 Pine Street, Suite 204
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Website: <http://www.repeverett.com/>

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PA State Representative Rick Mirabito— 83rd Legislative District

800 West Fourth Street, Suite GO2
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Phone: 570-321-1270
Fax: 570-327-3719
Office Hours: M-W-F 8-5; T-TH 8-7

Website: <http://www.pahouse.com/mirabito/>

FROM THE LYCOMING COUNTY VA OFFICE:



Beginning January 1, 2012, meetings with the County VA director may be scheduled off-site if the veteran or veterans' widow is physically unable to travel to the office and the court-appointed POA does not live locally. These will be determined on a case-by-case basis.



You must call & schedule an appointment if you would like to meet with the staff at the County VA Office. We take walk-ins on Friday from 9 to 4:30 p.m. When staff is available. Our phone number is 570-327-2365.

FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA DEPT. OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:



Are you rated 100% disabled by the VA? Then you may be eligible for real estate tax exemption and free hunting and fishing licenses. Call 570-327-2365 for more information.



If you or anyone you know are interested in being trained for an Honor Guard position please contact the VA office at 570-327-2367.



2013 COLA Military Retirees and Vets

The 2013 cost-of-living adjustment for military retired pay, SBP annuities, Social Security checks, and VA disability and survivor benefits will be 1.7 percent. The COLA will go into effect on December 1, 2012. The January check will be the first to reflect the increase. Retirees who left the military in 2012 and those who took the REDUX retirement package will not see the full 1.7 percent increase next year

Pennsylvania CareerLink

LYCOMING COUNTY

Contact: Timothy French
 Phone: 570-601-5934
 E-mail: tifrench@state.pa.us
 Online: www.pacareerlink.state.pa.us

The PA Career Link—Lycoming County office is located at 329 Pine Street in Williamsport and is open Monday through Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Fridays.

Vet Center

The Vet Center is located at Suite 104, 49 East Fourth Street, Williamsport, next to the James V. Brown Library. Phone 327-5281. All services provided by the Vet Center are **FREE OF CHARGE**. These include readjustment counseling and outreach services to all veterans who served in any combat zone. Services are also available for their family members. These include:

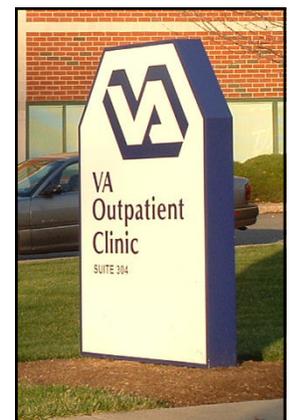
- individual and group counseling: women, spouses, WWII, Korean, Vietnam, OEF/OIF, and other combat veterans.
- group counseling
- marital and family counseling
- bereavement counseling
- substance abuse information and referral
- referral in applying for VA Benefits, job counseling and educational VA benefits
- referral for homeless vets
- military sexual trauma (male and female) counseling & referral
- outreach and community education



VA Outpatient Clinic

The VA Outpatient Clinic was established July 1997 on the Campus of Divine Providence Hospital in the Wenner Building, 1705 Warren Avenue, Suite 304, Williamsport, PA
Phone: 570-322-4791 **Fax:** 570-322-5170 **Open:** Monday—Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
 Scheduled appointments only ~ No Emergency Services/No walk-ins
Services Include: Primary Care, Enrollment/Eligibility forms, Psychiatry, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Social Services, Counseling, Lab, Nutrition services, and Immunizations.

The VA Clinic has a social worker at the clinic on Tuesday and Thursday. Her name is Chris Veach; please call the clinic at (570) 322-4791 to schedule an appointment.





LYCOMING COUNTY OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

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COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

JEFF C. WHEELAND, CHAIRMAN
ERNEST P. LARSON, VICE CHAIRMAN
TONY R. MUSSARE, SECRETARY

Visit our
Web site:



www.lyco.org/VA

for up-to-date news and
information for veterans

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We are here to help you . . .

MSGT George W. Heiges (Ret.)

Lycoming County Director of Veterans Affairs

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- Fully accredited as a Veterans Service Officer by the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Twenty- one years USAF

Ronald K. Poust

Assistant Director of Veterans Affairs

570-320-2365 rpoust@lyco.org

- Fully accredited as a Veterans Service Officer by the Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
- Four years USMC, six years Pennsylvania National Guard

To make an appointment, please call

Kim Sewall at: 570-320-8111

Office Hours

Monday through Friday 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Scheduled appointments only

Walk-ins on Friday 1 - 4 p.m. subject to staff availability

Closed weekends and major holidays.

Do you have announcements or information to share?

The Lycoming County Office of Veterans Affairs invites you to submit articles and items of interest to be published in the next edition of *The Lycoming Vet*.

For questions or to make submissions,
please contact Ron Poust at the Veterans Affairs Office.