



New York State Board
Ancient Order of Hibernians
Office of the Chairman of
Veterans Affairs
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Worthy National, State, County and Division Officers:

Donations to programs supporting our Service Men and Women have been going very well. Many Counties and Divisions have run fundraisers to support the Wounded Warrior Project and, just prior to the holidays, Project Christmas tree. If you or your County and Division have not done so, I strongly urge you to give them your support. The WWP Backpack costs \$99 each and contains essential care and comfort items including clothing, toiletries, calling card, CD player and playing cards, all designed to make their hospital stay more comfortable. Checks and other donations can be made to:

**Wounded Warrior Project, National Processing Center, P.O. Box 758516,
Topeka, KS 66675-8516**

The next project that we suggest you lend your support to is the **Fisher House Program**. The Fisher House Foundation donates comfortable lodging near-by or on the grounds of major Military medical centers. They enable families to visit loved ones during their time of hospitalization. So far they have provided lodging to some 145,000 families in their time of need. The nearest Fisher House is located at:

**Fisher House, Stratton VA Medical Center, 113 Holland Ave., Albany, N.Y.
12208**

Information for Veterans

There is a new addition of “**Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents**” by the Department of Veteran’s Affairs available. It updates the rates for certain federal payments and outlines a variety of programs and benefits for American Veterans. The booklet is 153 pages and can be downloaded at va.gov/OPA/vadocs/current_benefits.asp. It can be ordered by mail from the US Government Printing Office for a fee of \$5. Call 866 512-1800. They accept credit cards.

PRIORITY 8 EXPANSION BEGINS

VA healthcare eligibility rules changed on Monday, June 15, 2009, making it easier for more veterans to enroll in VA's health care system. This expansion opens VA health care to an additional 266,000 veterans who were previously barred from access to veteran's facilities. When you visit the new web page you will find a calculator to enter your income information, number of dependants, and zip code to determine if your income falls within the new income threshold adjustments.

To check and see if you qualify under the new rules go to the website:

<http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/> You are also encouraged to contact the **Health Resources Center** at 1-877-222.VETS (8387) if you have further questions.

Freedom Team Salute

Say "Thank You" with a **Freedom Team Salute Commendation**. Freedom Team Salute is sponsored by the Secretary of the Army and the Army Chief of Staff. There is no cost to participate. Anyone can honor a discharged U.S. Army Veteran and those individuals who support Soldiers and the Army mission. Active Duty Soldiers can honor their parents, spouses, and other supporters. Guard and Reserve Soldiers can honor their parents, spouses, employers and other supporters. Register on line at www.FreedomTeamSalute.com or by mail at U.S. Army Freedom Salute, P.O. Box 529, Shawnee Mission, KS 66201-9706.

An Interesting Publication for Veterans

Vetjobs Vetern Eagle is a recent publication that contains a great deal of information on benefits for veterans, transitioning military, and their family members. It contains information on free SAT & ACT test prep software, unemployment benefits, the VA Data Theft Class Action Suit, Camp Lejune Water Study, how to re-open claims using the VA's Missing Document Program, Military related Job-fairs and a brochure on Veteran's Benefits. You can access this newsletter at: www.info@vetjobs.com.

History of the Pledge of Allegiance

The original Pledge of Allegiance was written by Francis Bellamy. It was first given wide publicity through the official program of the National Public Schools Celebration on Columbus Day which was printed in *The Youth's Companion* of Sept. 8, 1892, and at the same time sent out in leaflet form to schools throughout the country. School children first recited the Pledge of Allegiance this way: "*I pledge allegiance to my Flag and to the Republic for which it stands one Nation indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.*" "The flag of the United States replaced the words "my flag" in 1923 because some foreign born people might have in mind the flag of the country of their birth instead of the U. S. flag. A year later, "of America" was added after "United States".

No form of Pledge received official recognition by Congress until June 22, 1942, when the Pledge was formally included in the U.S. Flag Code. The official name of The Pledge of Allegiance was adopted in 1945. The last change in language came on Flag Day 1954, when Congress passed a law, which added the words "under God" after "one Nation". (from an American Legion publication)

Please keep all our Veterans in your prayers. God Bless America. I am yours in our motto,

Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity,

John M. Ryan

Chairman of Veteran's Affairs

