



The Maryland VETERAN



Maryland Higher Education Leaders Sign Agreement to Make Veteran Services a Priority

Citing controversial essay and suspension as impetus, Lt. Governor Brown brings public colleges and universities together to improve veteran services

ANNAPOLIS, MD – Presidents from 21 community colleges and public four-year institutions gathered in Annapolis on January 31, 2011 to sign a formal agreement to improve on-campus services for veteran students. Lt. Governor Anthony G. Brown—a Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserves, a graduate of ROTC and the nation’s highest-ranking elected official to serve a tour of duty in Iraq—convened the meeting and worked closely with veteran advocates and higher education leaders to forge the important partnerships that will ease student veterans’ transition to campus life. Nearly 15,000 Maryland veterans received GI Bill education benefits during the fall 2010 semester.

During his opening remarks, Brown cited a troubling essay published in the student newspaper at Community College of Baltimore County detailing a student veteran’s war experience and the College’s controversial, but necessary, decision to remove the student until a psychological evaluation could be performed as one of several catalysts to create the Maryland Campus Compact for Student Veterans.

“Veterans bring a unique maturity and life experience to the classroom – an experience that in most cases enhances classroom discussions and benefits every student’s learning. But as each war is different, so is every generation of veteran,” said Lt. Governor Brown. “We have an obligation to serve those who served and we must do more to ease student veterans’ transitions from combat to campus. While the urgency to sign this agreement was sparked by the atypical and unfortunate incident at CCBC, I am proud that higher education leaders from across the state will work together to improve the services we provide to the men and women who served on our behalf.”

The Compact calls on Maryland’s higher education community to do more for the men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces and seeks to ensure the educational success of veterans who choose to return to a

Maryland school through greater awareness and understanding of the unique challenges student veterans face.

Participating institutions pledge to designate an office or staff person as a ‘go to’ for all student veterans to help them navigate everything from GI Bill paperwork to behavioral health counseling. The Compact requires campus officials to provide training for faculty, staff and student leadership to promote greater awareness of veteran issues; and it encourages campuses to create student veteran organizations to provide incoming veteran students with necessary support from their peers who are also transitioning back into our communities.

Today’s veterans face unique challenges. Studies show that one out of every five veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury. Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are also more likely than veterans of any previous conflict to attempt suicide. More than 22,000 Iraq-Afghanistan veterans have returned to Maryland in recent years, and thousands more are coming home. As more veterans enroll in college and training courses, colleges and universities – especially community colleges – must make concerted efforts to better understand the behavioral health challenges many veterans face.



Photo by Jay Baker

Patrick Young, an OIF veteran and director of Veteran Services at Towson University, comments during the signing of the Campus Compact.

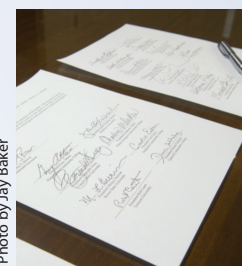


Photo by Jay Baker

Signature page of the Campus Compact.

Governor Martin O'Malley



Dear Friends,

For more than two centuries, untold numbers of Americans, many of them Marylanders, have volunteered their services in times of war and in times of peace to protect life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Our country was founded on the sacrifices of those who came before us, just as our safety and freedom continues to be protected by those who volunteer to serve today.

When these brave men and women return home from serving abroad, it is of utmost importance that they are provided with the highest quality of services. The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) works every day to ensure that Maryland's veterans have the very best resources and support to assist them with any challenges they may face. MDVA collaborates with multiple State agencies, nonprofit organizations and the U.S.

Department of Veterans Affairs (USVA) to ensure that Maryland's veterans' needs are being met today and in the future.

Maryland's veterans have made and continue to make extraordinary sacrifices and contributions to our heritage and freedom throughout history. Our veterans accepted tremendous responsibility as they bravely answered the call to defend freedom and we take great pride in being able to provide for them upon their return.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin O'Malley".

Martin O'Malley, Governor

A Message from Secretary Chow

I am honored to have the opportunity to serve Maryland's more than 465,000 veterans. Maryland has been a leader in supporting veterans as they work in an active duty capacity and then begin the next phase of their lives as employees in our great state. Members of our National Guard and Reserve units are deploying with greater frequency and their families need our support during their absence.

By June of this year, all of our Department positions will be filled. This will allow us to concentrate on key initiatives geared toward ensuring Maryland's veterans and their families are aware of benefits and incentives and received assistance accessing them.

Our state veterans' home in Charlotte Hall provides care for 278 comprehensive nursing home patients (which includes a 42 bed Alzheimer's unit) and 184 assisted living residents. I am very pleased to announce that we recently received approval to open a women's wing at the home. This will ensure we can provide services to the state's women veterans. The veterans' home received five out of five stars in the most recent Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services survey. They were also rated 8.5 on a 10 point scale by a survey of the residents' families.

Two exciting state benefits for veterans include the Military Personnel and Service-Disabled Veterans No-Interest Loan Program and the Veterans Trust Fund. The no-interest loan program is available to businesses owned by military reservists and National Guard members called to active duty, and for small businesses that employ such persons. The state established an interest-free loan program to assist with identifiable costs that result from the call to active duty. Service-disabled veterans, businesses owned by service-disabled veterans, and businesses employing service-disabled veterans are also eligible.

The establishment of the Veterans Trust Fund allows the MDVA to accept private donations and then provide financial assistance to veterans and their family members in need. We have already received the first three applications for grants from this fund.



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Legislative Session 2011 Highlights

The 2011 session of the Maryland General Assembly was very successful for military and veteran related legislation. Listed below are the highlights.

Worcester County – Slot Machines for Nonprofit Organizations

This bill adds Worcester County to the list of Eastern Shore counties in which eligible nonprofit fraternal, religious, and war veterans' organizations may own and operate up to five slot machines at its principal meeting hall. At least one-half of the proceeds must go to charity and the remainder to further the organizations' purposes.

Charlotte Hall Veterans Home – Gifts and Grants – Authority to Accept and Spend

This bill specifies that the Charlotte Hall Veterans Home may accept a gift or grant and may spend the principal and income of the donation for use at the home.

Behavioral Health – Veterans – Coordination and Provision of Services

This bill requires the continuance of the Veterans Behavioral Health Initiative, which was established by legislation in 2008. Managed by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), this program employs Regional Resource Coordinators who ensure that veterans obtain the behavioral health services they need.

Vehicle Laws – Registration and Driver's License Renewal Fees – No Charge for Recipients of Medal of Honor

This bill exempts Medal of Honor recipients from being charged a fee by the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) for the renewal of a vehicle's registration or a Class A, B, C, D, E, or M driver's license.

Recreational Fishing Licenses – Exemption

This bill authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to issue an annual fishing license exemption to a governmental entity or nonprofit organization to take service-disabled veterans and their primary caregivers fishing in State waters.

State Government – Maryland Veterans Commission - Membership

This departmental bill specifies that one member of the Maryland Veterans Commission must be a woman veteran appointed from the State at large. This requirement replaces the current requirement that one member must be a representative of a women veterans organization in the State.

Scholarship Funding

\$750,000 for the Veterans of Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship Program

No-Interest Loan Program Funding

\$300,000 for the Military Personnel and Service-Disabled Veterans No-Interest Loan Program

Veterans Behavioral Health Initiative Funding

\$463,000 to provide behavioral health services and transportation services for veterans who require behavioral health treatment

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Gregory N. Jones,
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BOARDS & COMMISSIONS Maryland Veterans Commission

Fred L. Shinbur, *Chair*

Maryland Veterans Home Commission

Robert M. Johnson, *Chair*

The War Memorial Commission

War Memorial Building
Norman Johnson, *Chair*

Maryland Military Monuments Commission

MDVA Secretary, *Chair*

Changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill



President Obama signed the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-377) on January 4, 2011. This law includes significant changes that may impact how you use your benefits.

Effective March 5, 2011

Individuals utilizing benefits while on active duty are subject to the same benefit level determinations as veterans.

Effective August 1, 2009, but not payable until October 1, 2011

The Post-9/11 GI Bill has been expanded to include Active Service performed by some National Guard members under title 32 U.S.C. Active Guard and Reserve members are included in this change.

Effective August 1, 2011

Tuition and fee payments are simplified for those attending public schools, and a national yearly maximum is created for those enrolled in private or foreign schools.

- Individual state caps are removed; all net public in-state charges are covered
- Private and foreign school costs are capped at \$17,500 annually
- Individuals may use the Yellow Ribbon Program for costs in excess of the new cap

Individuals can be reimbursed for more than one “licensing and certification” test.

Individuals can be reimbursed for fees paid to take national exams used for admission to an institution of higher learning (e.g., SAT, ACT, GMAT, LSAT, etc.).

Individuals who are eligible for both Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment benefits and Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits may choose the Post-9/11 GI Bill’s monthly housing allowance instead of the Vocational Rehabilitation subsistence allowance.

Housing allowance benefits are prorated based upon the rate of pursuit, rounded to the nearest tenth. A student training at a rate of pursuit of 75% would receive 80% of the BAH rate.

Break or interval pay is no longer payable under any VA education benefit program.

Effective October 1, 2011

Active duty individuals may receive a books and supplies stipend.

Monthly housing allowance benefits are now payable to students (other than those on active duty) enrolled solely in distance learning, at one-half the national average BAH for an E-5 with dependents

Individuals may use the Post-9/11 GI Bill for:

- **Non-college degree (NCD) programs:** Pays actual net cost for in-state tuition and fees at public NCD institutions. Pays the actual net cost for in-state tuition and fees or \$17,500, whichever is less at private and foreign institutions. Also pays up to \$83 per month for books and supplies.
- **On-the-job and apprenticeship training:** Pays a monthly benefit prorated based on time in program and up to \$83 per month for books and supplies.
- **Flight programs:** Pays actual net cost for in-state tuition and fees or \$10,000, whichever is less.
- **Correspondence training:** Per academic year, pays the actual net costs for in-state tuition and fees assessed by the school or \$8,500, whichever is less.

Secretary Chow's Message *continued*

The funding for the Maryland’s Commitment to Veterans outreach and referral initiative was continued in the Spring legislative session. It is designed to connect veterans to behavioral health services in a timely manner. If you know of a veteran who is having difficulty coping—whether it is an employee, a relative, a member of your church, a friend or just a friend of a friend, please tell them—or their family

members about this program. The web site is www.veterans.maryland.gov and the toll free number is 1-877-770-4801.

While veterans are often ordinary people who accomplish extraordinary things, it is often an extraordinary family that supports the ordinary veteran. And it is the veterans that have given us this extraordinary country. Thank you for your service to our country.

Homeless Veterans Resources

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has begun an initiative to end veterans' homelessness in five years. A unique, national partnership between the Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA Supported Housing (HUD-VASH) is part of this initiative. The program provides permanent housing and ongoing case management treatment services for homeless veterans who require these supports to live independently. The HUD-VASH program is most beneficial to veterans with families, women Veterans, recently returning Veterans and Veterans with disabilities.

Although not limited to veterans, the state of Maryland offers programs for homeless individuals. The Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) provides non-monetary assistance to households with a pending eviction, and in some jurisdictions, support counselors who work with tenants and landlords to prevent evictions.

The Housing Counselor Program (HCP) operates in five jurisdictions in the state and assists low income families who are homeless, or in imminent danger of becoming homeless to locate, secure, and maintain permanent housing.

The Service-Linked Housing Program (SLH) provides funds in thirteen jurisdictions for resident advocates to link low-income residents of permanent housing to community services. SLH stabilizes households that are in precarious situations, thereby avoiding episodes of homelessness

The Emergency and Transitional Housing and Services Program (ETHS) provides state funding for emergency and transitional shelters for people who are homeless. ETHS funds shelter beds and support services and is administered locally with significant involvement of local homelessness agencies in each jurisdiction.

The Homeless Women - Crisis Shelter Home Program (HW-CS) provides shelter, room and board, counseling, and referral services to homeless women and children. The shelters offer a 24-hour crisis hotline in addition to safe accommodations and meals.

The Directory of Maryland Emergency Shelters and Transitional Housing Programs provides information about programs that provide services to persons who are homeless in Maryland. Included are emergency shelters, providers of transitional housing, and programs providing motel placement. Also listed are additional services such as outreach centers, soup kitchens, and referral services. The most recent version of this directory is available online at <http://www.dhr.state.md.us/transit/pdf/homelist.pdf> Copies of the Directory can also be obtained by calling the Office of Grants Management on 410-767-7719.

Additional Resources

www.va.gov/homeless/hud-vash.asp
www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov

www.va.gov/homeless/
www.dhr.maryland.gov

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (staffed 24/7) 877.4AID.VET
(877-424-3838)

VA Maryland HCS/Baltimore
Homeless Program/VAMC/MH116
10 North Greene St.
Baltimore, MD 21201
Phone Number Ext. 410-605-7264

VA Maryland HCS/Perry Point
VAMC Domiciliary Care Program/
DCHV Ward2
Circle Drive - Building 1H
Perry Point, MD 21902
Phone Number Ext. 410-605-7264

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CROWNSVILLE VETERANS CEMETERY

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410-987-6320

EASTERN SHORE VETERANS CEMETERY

Bruce W. Webster
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Dorchester County
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Toll Free – 866-497-3684

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Baltimore County
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ROCKY GAP VETERANS CEMETERY

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Cemetery & Memorial Programs
Baltimore, MD
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WAR MEMORIAL BUILDING

Douglas W. Henley
Executive Director
Baltimore
410-396-8013

New and Enhanced VA Benefits Provided to Caregivers of Veterans

Unprecedented Law Augments Commitment to Nation's Most Vulnerable Veterans

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is launching the first of a series of new and enhanced services supporting family caregivers of seriously ill and injured Veterans. In May 2010, President Obama signed the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 legislation authorizing VA to establish a wide range of new services to support certain caregivers of eligible Post 9/11 Veterans.

“Caregivers make tremendous sacrifices every day to help Veterans of all eras who served this nation,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “They are critical partners with VA in the recovery and comfort of ill and injured Veterans, and they deserve our continued training, support and gratitude.”

“DAV is happy to hear that caregivers of Veterans are getting additional support and services to care for our Nation's heroes and unprecedented new services for our most recent severely ill and injured,” said David W. Gorman, executive director of the Washington Headquarters of the Disabled American Veterans. “We understand there are challenges to implementing the new law; including ensuring that critically ill and injured Veterans of all eras are similarly supported.”

In addition to the new benefits and services for eligible Veterans who were disabled in the line of duty since Sept. 11, 2001 (Post 9/11 Veterans), VA will also begin providing enhanced benefits and services to caregivers of Veterans of all eras who are already enrolled in VA care, including:

- Access to VA's toll-free Caregiver Support Line: 1-855-260-3274,
- Expanded education and training on

- caring for Veterans at home,
- Other support services such as counseling and support groups and referral services; and
- An enhanced website for caregivers.

Some of the new benefits of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act are restricted by law to the caregivers of the most seriously ill and injured Post 9/11 Veterans. Those additional benefits include:

- A monthly stipend,
- Health care coverage,
- Travel expenses, including lodging and per diem while accompanying Veterans undergoing care,
- Respite care; and
- Mental health services and counseling.

VA will take the opportunity to report to Congress in the future on the feasibility of expanding the enhanced services to family caregivers of Veterans of all eras.

While some of these enhanced benefits are available now, many of the other significant newly-enacted benefits will require the issuance of regulations. These additional benefits include monthly stipends, pay for travel costs, medical coverage, training, counseling and respite care designed to prevent institutionalization of Veterans whenever possible. The law requires

detailed regulations for determining eligibility, designating and approving caregivers, and providing stipends and health care coverage to primary family caregivers. The complex process required to implement these regulations will provide Veterans, caregivers and the general public the opportunity to provide comments before those regulations are finalized.

“VA has supported caregivers of Veterans of all eras for almost eight decades,” said Deborah Amdur of VA's Care Management and Social Work Service, “and we know from our experience and research that Veterans are best served when they can live their lives as independently as possible surrounded by caring family and friends.”

Each VA medical center has designated caregiver support coordinators who will assist eligible Veterans and caregivers in understanding and applying for the new benefits. VA also has a Caregiver Support Web page, www.caregiver.va.gov, which will provide general information once final regulations are published. Should you have questions regarding these, or any other veterans benefits, please call Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Service Program at 1-800-446-4926 ext. 6450.



Caring for a Veteran?
Call VA's Caregiver Support Line for help toll-free:

1-855-260-3274
Monday - Friday, 8:00 am - 11:00 pm ET
Saturday, 10:30 am - 6:00 pm ET

VA Caregiver Support PROGRAM

Department of Veterans Affairs

MDVA Staff Update

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs would like to welcome two new staff members. We are pleased to announce the appointment of Gregory N. Jones as the new Deputy Secretary and Ms. Cynthia A. Mason-Posey as the new Director of Outreach & Advocacy.

Gregory N. Jones

Mr. Jones, a Vietnam era veteran, holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Maryland. He has 31 years of service with the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) holding supervisory positions at several DAV National Service Offices around the country. For the past several years, he has been assigned to the DAV's National Appeals Office at the USVA Board of Veterans Appeals as a Senior National Appeals Officer.

Deputy Secretary Jones has held many elected and appointed local and state offices in the DAV. In June 2008, Mr. Jones was elected as the Department Commander of the Maryland Department of DAV. He was recently elected as the 6th District National Committeeman for the DAV. He actively works in the community to assist his fellow veterans.

Cynthia A. Mason-Posey

Cynthia A. Mason-Posey is a graduate of Bucknell University and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Project Management at UMUC. Ms. Mason-Posey is an accredited service officer and previously served as the Assistant Director for Policy and Research with The American Legion. As a service officer she prepared written briefs and represented veterans before the Board of Veterans Appeals.

From 2001 to 2011, she served in the Maryland Army National Guard. In an active duty status with the Guard, Ms. Mason-Posey served as the manager of the state retention team providing benefits and retention briefings to soldiers throughout the state. She was awarded the Maryland Meritorious Service Medal for her work with the retention team.



Photo by Jay Baker

During the forum at Charlotte Hall Veterans Home, Governor O'Malley toured the facility and also our Service Program office. He is pictured here with MDVA staff members, Tamika Lawson and Nora Bachelder, a US Air Force veteran.



Photo by Jay Baker

Governor O'Malley recently held a forum on veteran issues at Charlotte Hall Veterans Home. He is pictured here with CHVH resident Aubrey Goode, age 102, who served in the USCG-Merchant Marines during WWII.

MDVA Internship Opportunity

We are currently accepting resumes for part-time unpaid volunteer internship opportunities. We have a large outreach project in development and are in need of interns with Access database skills. Please email your resume to cconroy@mdva.state.md.us.

NRD Launches Mobile Site

Wounded Warriors, Veterans, Service Members and their families can now connect to the National Resource Directory on their mobile device. Enter NRD.gov in the browser for access to thousands of resources!

Have you had your benefits check-up?!

If you served in the United States Armed Forces you may be entitled to state and federal benefits. Due to the complexities of veterans' laws, it is always prudent to talk with an accredited veterans service officer about your earned benefits. Find your local veterans service office by calling **1-800-446-4926 x 6450**. Please encourage your fellow veterans to do the same.

MDVA Chief of Staff Receives Award

Jerry Boden was recognized as the 2011 Maryland Veteran Small Business Champion of the Year at a recent Small Business Week Awards breakfast. Congratulations!



**Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs...
Proudly Serving Maryland Veterans**

Office of the Secretary	866-793-1577
Outreach & Advocacy	866-793-1577
Cemetery & Memorial Programs.....	410-923-6981
Charlotte Hall Veterans Home	800-522-8387

VETERANS SERVICE PROGRAM & CLAIMS ASSISTANCE

Baltimore – Headquarters	800-446-4926 x6450
Bel Air – Cindy Smith.....	410-836-4900
Camp Springs – Garry Brown.....	301-248-0463
Charlotte Hall – Nora Bachelder.....	301-884-8171 x7155
Cumberland – Aaron Clark	301-759-5251
Frederick – George Kaufman.....	301-600-2155
Hagerstown – Vacant.....	301-791-0356
Hurlock – Janet Thomas.....	866-497-3684
Salisbury – Vacant	410-713-3480

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www.mdva.state.md.us/news/newsletters.html

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