

FILE NUMBER:

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS BENEFITS INCREASED

Congress has passed, and the President has signed into law, an act increasing benefits payable for service-connected disability(ies) or death from December 1st.

Your new monthly rate of compensation is _____; however, your actual deposit may be less if you currently have amount deducted from your benefits, e.g., insurance premiums.

The provisions of the new law apply to veterans entitled to service-connected disability compensation, as well as surviving spouses and children entitled to dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC).

Please advise us immediately if you return to active military service or if your address or marital status changes. If you are receiving additional benefits for dependents, notify us immediately of any change in status.

VA will match benefit information from your records with the following agencies for the purposes described below:

1. Department of Defense: to verify a return to active military service.
2. Department of Defense: to identify veterans receiving disability compensation who are also receiving military pay and allowances (drill pay) as members of the National Guard or Reserves.
3. Social Security Administration: to identify veterans in receipt of substantial earned income who are also rated totally disabled based on unemployability for VA purposes.
4. Social Security Administration: to assist in determining eligibility for benefits under the Supplemental Security Income program.
5. Social Security Administration: to verify a beneficiary's self-certification of eligibility for prescription drug subsidy assistance under the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization act of 2003.
6. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: to assist states in determining eligibility for public assistance programs.
7. Department of Education: to verify veteran status of applicants for financial assistance.
8. Federal and State law enforcement agencies: to identify VA beneficiaries who are fugitive felons.
9. Bureau of Prisons and Social Security Administration: to identify beneficiaries who are incarcerated more than 60 days.

A surviving spouse who is at least 57 years old and remarries on or after December 16, 2003, may continue to receive DIC.

A beneficiary may be entitled to additional benefits if permanently housebound or in need of the regular aid and attendance of another person in performing certain activities or daily living. For information about these benefits, call 1-800-827-1000.

STATE BENEFITS: You should contact your State office of veterans' affairs for information on any tax, license, or fee-related benefits for which you may be eligible as a veteran (or surviving dependent of a veteran). State offices of veterans' affairs are available at www.va.gov/statedva.htm.

TAX CREDITS: The Internal Revenue Service has asked us to encourage you to take advantage of certain tax credits, deductions and services for which you may qualify. Special deductions and credits can benefit disabled taxpayers or their families. Free tax help is available for low income, elderly, disabled or individuals who do not speak English. Returns can be filed electronically to speed receipt of refunds and increase accuracy. The Earned Income Tax Credit may be available to low or moderate income workers, depending on the amount of earned income and the number of children in the household. Even when income is below the threshold for filing a tax return, eligible individuals can file a return and claim the credit to receive a refund. Education credits and deductions for non-reimbursed expenses may be available to individuals when they or members of their family are pursuing post-secondary or job-related education. Child tax credits may be available to those with children under age 17. To find out more and to see if you qualify for the credits, call the Internal Revenue Service at 1-800-829-1040 toll-free or visit the IRS web site at www.irs.gov.

CONTACTING VA: Any questions or correspondence should be submitted to the VA Regional Office handling your account. If you do not know which regional office handles your account, contact the office nearest your home. For telephone inquiries, dial the following toll-free number: 1-800-827-1000. If you are hearing impaired, dial 1-800-829-4833.

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