

# El Dorado American Legion Family

El Dorado Post 119

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER  
FOR GOD, COUNTRY AND COMMUNITY

March 2021

Visit our Website at <http://www.legionpost119.org/>



## Adjutant Corner

To my fellow Legionnaires,

Again this month we are doing the same as last month. Except that we are holding business meetings for post business on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month starting at 1800 or 6pm. **Still NO Bar, NO Dinners and NO Happy Hour on Fridays.** That is in strict accordance with the County Board of Health.

National, Dept. of California and our District 7 Commander would like to have “Buddy Checks” during this pandemic, to let others know that they are not alone, and if they need any help.

That is about it for any exciting news this month since the mandate to the **COVID-19**, shelter in place, social distancing, and self-masking is a must even if you do get vaccinated.

As a REMINDER we are putting news out using modern technology, using emails and information through the post website only. NO “snail mail” at this time.

A little tidbit is that the State DOC is proposing the to hold a virtual convention around June 2021

## Membership Corner

Again, for the month of March 2021, congratulations to all who have paid to maintain your membership during this time of post closure. Here is the monthly tally for March, we have had 533 renewals. This includes PUFL's, HLM's, Annual mail-ins and ONL Memberships. We have 665 assigned and 132 of our membership are late by six months as of December 31, 2020 and now as of February they will be suspended, then by June 30, 2021 their membership will be dropped. Sorry folks we tried to make 100% renewals for FY2020/2021 Percentage wise we are at 87.78%.

Now as of January 1, 2021 annual dues have gone up to \$50.00 from \$45.00, a \$5.00 increase due to National's increase of \$5.00 per post per person. If you do get reminders for your un-paid dues just turn in the amount that is on the reminder.

To those who have not paid and think you have, **PLEASE LOOK AT YOUR MEMBERSHIP CARD** to see the current year, you should have a **2021 card** and not 2020.

## American Legion Riders (ALR) Corner

Chapter Membership is again at 100%, and all chapter reports are up to date and in to ALRDOC Secretary thank you all for your assistance. Congratulation to Critter for her hard work at membership.

Hello Riders by this time you should have gotten emails from Sam Ferguson our Ride and Activity Coordinator about proposed rides and suggestions for rides. We are trying to have at least one ride a month and maybe in the future one ride a week.

Saturday February 27<sup>th</sup> there is a ride. Meet at the post at 1045, KSU at 1100 for a ride through the foothills ending at Chandos Cantina in El Dorado Hills

For future rides we maybe teaming up with Folsom and/or Rocklin HOG Chapter.

TBD for future rides will be posted on the post website calendar.

The State Riders President announced that the April 2021 Riders Convention has been postponed again and is talking about having a virtual convention. Stay tuned more to come on that note.

I also want to add that this will be my last year as your Chapter President ( No Applause) so come together to elect your Chairperson/Director for FY2021/2022. Elections for Chapter Officers will be held at the May Business Meeting.

One last word to all of you riders get out and ride but stay safe. **Your health and life is in your hands.**

## Service Officer Corner

### Three Veterans:

All on one Saturday, but the stories continue as we speak. All females.

#### Veteran one:

About three years of custody in El Dorado county jail. Air Force reserves, not VA health care qualified, but qualified for my services, and other charitable services.

Several jail visits over the years, but with COVID, just emails by tablet.

I seem to be her main connection to the outside world, at least for this kind of stuff.

Contact her attorney. He finally got the Deputy D.A. to agree to letting her get released to Progress House. Contact intake at Progress House, and intake at county, to make sure her state benefits are lined up for her program to be paid for, and a bed is available.

Note to self: Check with inmate services to see if county worker has done her intake work.

Inmate services vouches that she has been a good worker.

This would be a big win.

#### Veteran two:

Husband, also a Marine, recently died. Snowline Hospice connected caregiver granddaughter to us. We had a program just about in place, when I get a call:

“We are in North Carolina.”

Helping granddaughter navigate VA, Adult Protective Services, county Veteran Services Officer, medical, psych, and family issues, state Veterans Homes, all by phone, was not as bad as one would think.

Grandma is a bit of a whacked mess. Latest plan is for them to come back.

To be continued.

#### Veteran three:

I have known her for a while. Homeless. 100% service connected. Self medicating.

Nice, intelligent person.

Totally slippery when it comes to getting her into residential recovery.

The “good news”. She now has a potentially terminal health condition. Maybe she will pay attention to taking care of herself.

The El Dorado County sheriff’s department Homeless Outreach Team were in contact with her. All three, Jenks, Buckman and Sgt. Sorey, went way over and above the requirements of their duty, and saved her life.

Essential to this task was Jenks contacting Todd Smith, El Dorado County Veterans Commissioner, and retired deputy sheriff.

Todd took ownership of saving her life. With Deputy Buckman he transported her to Mather.

That is where she had her heart attack. If not for her being at the hospital when this happened, she may be dead now.

So, to be clear, Todd and the H.O.T. Team saved her life.

Saving a life, means saving it for the moment. We all die eventually. Still saving a life is always the right thing to do.

Iisha Toombs, Mather Drug, Alcohol, homeless specialist, offered her a discharge plan straight to recovery.

“No thanks.”

We spent the next couple days trying to get her into River City Recovery.

Somewhere, there is an epitaph on a gravestone.

“I am not quite ready yet.”

David Zelinsky

Service Officer , American Legion Post 119



### 7 Surprising Facts About St. Patrick's Day

- ♥ The Real St. Patrick Was Born in Britain. ...
- ♥ There Were No Snakes Around for St. Patrick to Banish from Ireland.
- ♥ Leprechauns Are Likely Based on Celtic Fairies. ...
- ♥ The Shamrock Was Considered a Sacred Plant. ...
- ♥ The First St. ...
- ♥ The Irish Were Once Scorned in America. ...
- ♥ Corned Beef and Cabbage Was an American Innovation

## Service Officer Corner Cont..

### Joseph Lynell Hester, R.I.P.

I have followed this guy for awhile.

He was misidentified as having served during intake at his arrest.

No one's fault. He was drunk.

I visited him in custody assuming he had served.

He was very straight up saying that he had not.

We had a nice chat though, and I decided to give him a ride when he was released.

He just wanted to go to the Raley's parking lot.

Close to Placerville Brewing, where he worked.

Handy, when you are an alcoholic.

I check every day the sheriff's 48 hour arrest record to see if any of my Vet buddies got picked up.

At least weekly, there was Joseph, drunk and disorderly.

I asked inmate services if he would accept services.

He had no interest.

While discussing another case with the Homeless Outreach Team, I mentioned Joseph.

"He got hit by a car, and died."

He was homeless. Perfectly nice when sober. I sometimes saw him hanging out in the homeless camps along the trail between the jail and Fulmer's body shop.

I had an impulse to get him into Tree House ministries, where he could live, eat, and work.

Too late now.

I just sent off an email to a deputy public defender letting him know that I had been informed of Joseph's passing so that his pending cases could be dismissed.

Is there anyone else on this planet who mourns him?

David Zelinsky

Service Officer

American Legion Post 119

### What Do Leprechauns Have to Do With St. Patrick's Day?

One icon of the Irish holiday is the Leprechaun. The original Irish name for these figures of folklore is "lobaircin," meaning "small-bodied fellow." Belief in leprechauns probably stems from Celtic belief in fairies, tiny men and women who could use their magical powers to serve good or evil. In Celtic folktales, leprechauns were cranky souls, responsible for mending the shoes of the other fairies.

Though only minor figures in Celtic folklore, leprechauns were known for their trickery, which they often used to protect their much-fabled treasure. Leprechauns have their own holiday on May 13, but are also celebrated on St. Patrick's, with many dressing up as the wily fairies

#### Why do we wear green on St Patrick's Day?

Leprechauns are actually one reason you're supposed to wear green on St. Patrick's Day—or risk getting pinched! The tradition is tied to folklore that says wearing green makes you invisible to leprechauns, which like to pinch anyone they can see.

#### What's a female Leprechaun called?

There aren't any female leprechauns.

As a way of explaining why there is no record of female leprechauns (and therefore no way to procreate in the traditional sense), some sources claim leprechauns are the unwanted children of the fairy community.

Here's health and prosperity,  
To you and all your posterity,  
And them that doesn't drink with sincerity,  
That they be damned for all eternity.

You're not too old when your hair turns gray  
You're not too old when your teeth decay.  
But you'll know you're awaiting  
that final sleep, When your mind makes promises  
your body can't keep.

## Sons of the American Legion



Post 119 Sons of the American Legion I hope your life and daily activities are becoming more active as Spring approaches and as our county continues to open up giving us more opportunities to fellowship with one another. This picture was taken on February 11 when the six of us Sons braved the elements to enjoy some pizza and laughs not to mention some great stories by Post 119 Commander and fellow Son Sam Bradley at Wally's Pizza Bar. With the driving rain and cold temperature, it was quite understandable why some of you chose to stay out of the elements. Besides having a good time together, we decided to purchase a plaque honoring fallen EDCO Sheriff Deputy Brian Ishmael, which will be placed on the Post's bbq. We also had to make the tough decision to once again

postpone our Youth Rifle Safety Program due to COVID restrictions. In order to have an effective training program, our volunteers need to be in close contact with our youth and that is just not possible at this time. We are hoping a September date just after Labor Day and before many people will be actively deer hunting will be a good time to host this event, so more on that in the coming months. Sadly, we said goodbye to another Post 119 Son and wonderful man Mike Stanchina February 8. When Mike first joined Post 119 he was very active in utilizing his talents as a mason on many projects like tiling the bathroom with Mike Young, working on the picnic tables, and helped build the Post's bbq. Pictured in our Wally's photo is a longtime friend of Mike by the name of Aaron Simmons and he shared about the many miles they rode motorcycles together. As an FYI Aaron's newest motorcycle a BMW 1200 GS was purchased from Mike Ross's estate. My last conversation with Mike Stanchina was in late January and he was at peace with dying and where he would be after he took his last breath. Let's stay in touch with one another and check in on those "brothers" who tend to be loners and as Post 119 opens up more freely to gatherings may we all take advantage of the ability to share in building back a sense of community with one another.

For God and Country,

Post 119 Sons of the American Legion Commander Robert Flowers

## The Irish in America

Up until the mid-19th century, most Irish immigrants in America were members of the Protestant middle class. When the Great [Potato Famine](#) hit Ireland in 1845, close to 1 million poor and uneducated Irish Catholics began pouring into America to escape starvation.

Despised for their alien religious beliefs and unfamiliar accents by the American Protestant majority, the immigrants had trouble finding even menial jobs. When Irish Americans in the country's cities took to the streets on St. Patrick's Day to celebrate their heritage, newspapers portrayed them in cartoons as drunk, violent monkeys.

The American Irish soon began to realize, however, that their large and growing numbers endowed them with a political power that had yet to be exploited. They started to organize, and their voting block, known as the "green machine," became an important swing vote for political hopefuls. Suddenly, annual [St. Patrick's Day parades](#) became a show of strength for Irish Americans, as well as a must-attend event for a slew of political candidates.

In 1948, [President Harry S. Truman](#) attended New York City's St. Patrick's Day parade, a proud moment for the many Irish Americans whose ancestors had to fight stereotypes and racial prejudice to find acceptance in the New World.

### What do the colors mean on St Patrick Day?

Traditionally, the green represents the Catholics of Ireland, the orange represents the Protestant population, and the white in the middle symbolizes the peace between the two religions. If you need a little luck in your life, try these St. Patrick's Day traditions that will bring you luck.



# March Birthdays

Name	Service	Era
Barry Lindner	USA	Vietnam
James Leadbetter	USAF	Lebanon/Granada
Christian Vargas	USN	Persian Gulf
Warren Parker	USA	WWII
Stan Sullivan	USMC	Vietnam
Hollia Henderson	USMC	Vietnam
Jesse Juarez	USN	Lebanon/Granada
Donald Edwards	USN	WWII
Peter Bandera	USN	Vietnam
Donald Cook	USN	Vietnam
Cornel Christian	USN	WWII
Lester Linson	USA	Korea
Donald Jackson	USA	Vietnam
James Ayers	USN	Vietnam
Daniel Boals	USA	Panama
Larry Williams	USN	Vietnam
Leo Springer	USA	Vietnam
Lerry Van BusKirk	USA	Vietnam
Garr Eiler	USAF	Vietnam
Donald Bray	USA	Lebanon/Granada
Harvy Andrews	USCG	Vietnam
Henry Barbachano	USAF	Korea
John Beadford	USN	Vietnam
John Kelly	USA	Vietnam

**An Irish Birthday Blessing**  
*May you live a long life  
 Full of gladness and health  
 With a pocket full of gold  
 As the least of your wealth  
 May the dreams you hold dearest  
 Be those which come true  
 May the kindness you spread,  
 Keep returning to you.*  
**Happy Birthday!**

UnshakeableBelief.com

We cannot share this sorrow  
 If we haven't grieved a while.  
 Nor can we feel another's joy  
 Until we've learned to **smile**.

May I see you  
 gray and comb-  
 ing your grand-  
 child's hair.

May the Irish hills caress you.  
 May her lakes and rivers bless you.  
 May the luck of the Irish enfold you.  
 May the blessings of Saint Patrick behold you.

## Slow days.

Even when it's slow:

1. Homeless Combat Veteran gets out of jail Monday. Been committing suicide on the installment plan. Everyone, including his parents working hard. VA Social worker found him a residential program in Woodland. Parents will drive him.

Time pressure. Program wants him by one p.m. He has to be in court at 8:30 a.m. Public Defender will push him to start of calendar. Then processed out of jail. Has to show up with ID, COVID test, TB test, meds and prescriptions. Inmate services at jail will do as much as possible, but parents will have to haul him to Mather ER to finish up. And get him to Woodland by one p.m.

2. She says she told me, but whatever... Have to get veteran to dialysis Friday and Monday. Make a call. Veteran will drive him both times. Got it covered.

3. "Get your COVID shot." Well, his eyes are not so great, and leery of the drive. "Give me a heads up, as to when you can get in, and we will find a driver." Pushed him to call his primary at Mather. Gave him a number for CVS too, which claims to be doing vaccinations now.

We'll get it done.

David Zelinsky  
 Service Officer

Do not resent growing old.  
 Many are denied the privilege.

As you slide down the banister of life, May the splinters never point the wrong way.

# Post 119 Leadership

<p><b><u>Post 119 Officers</u></b>  <i>Commander, Sam Bradley 530/626-3956</i>  Adjutant, Joe Rendon 530/672-1161  1st Vice - Michael Raffety 530/626-8020  2nd Vice -James Leadbetter 916/ 254-7529  Finance - Mike Schiavone 530/409-2710  Sgt. At Arms, Milt Bandera 530/677-4423  Chaplain, Edgar “Bud” Brown 530/677-4135  Judge Advocate — OPEN  Veterans Services, David Zelinsky 530/919-8488  Membership, Joe Rendon 530-672-1161  Historian — OPEN</p> <p>Bar Manager, Barbara Schiavone 530/409-7746  Building Manager, James Leadbetter  916/ 254-7529</p>	<p><b><u>Chapter 119 American Legion Riders</u></b>  <i>President, Joe Rendon 530-672-1161</i>  Vice President, Carlos Navarette 916/204-6038  Secretary, Gary Coverdale 707/339-2362  Treasurer, Jane Fergason 530/409-7487  Acting Sgt. At Arms, James Leadbetter  Membership, Critter Springer-Maxey 530/622-1961  Chaplain, Robert Flowers 530/417-5802  Run Coordinator, Sam Fergason 530/409-7489  Safety Officer - Jim Ayers  Historian — Bob Russell</p> <p><b>Legion Riders meet the second Wednesday of each month at 6:00 p.m.</b></p> <p style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">A drink precedes a story.</p>
<p><b><u>Executive Committee</u></b>  (1) Jim Ayers 916/739-9421  (2) Bud Brown 530/677-4135  (3) John Krahn 530/677-6356  (4) Bob Russell 530/626-5533  (5) Lauralee Flannery 530/903-1965  (6) OPEN</p> <p><b><u>Unit 119 American Legion Auxiliary</u></b>  <i>President, Janie Bandera 530/677-4423</i>  1st Vice, Rebecca Marty 530/677-4423  2nd Vice, Carol McLaughlin 530/642-2153  Secretary, Carol Mueller 530/622-0674  Treasurer — OPEN  Chaplain, Dolores Wadsworth 530/677-1255  Sgt. At Arms, Joy Krahn 530/677-6356  Marshal, Joyce Reynolds 530/350-7740</p> <p><b>Auxiliary meets the first Wednesday of each month at 8:00 p.m.</b></p> <p style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Life is like a cup of tea, It’s all in how you make it.</p>	<p><b><u>Unit 119 Sons of the American Legion</u></b>  <i>Commander, Robert Flowers 530/417-5802</i>  1st Vice, Bill Bryant 530/409-8414  Adjutant, Bill Bryant  Treasurer, Bill Bryant  Membership, Bill Bryant  Sgt. At Arms — OPEN  Historian — OPEN  Chaplain, Robert Flowers 530/417-5802</p> <p><b>Squadron meets the second Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m.</b></p> <p><b><u>40 &amp; 8</u></b>  Chef de Gare, John Krahn 530/677-6356  Commissaire Intendant, Al Rawlin 530/903-6768  Correspondent, Bud Brown 530/677-4135  Conducteur, Bob Russell 530/676-5533  Garde de LaPorte, Leo Cooper 530/306-3969  Chef de Train, Milt Banders 530/677-4423  Lampiste - Open</p> <p><b>40 &amp; 8 meets the first Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m.</b></p>
<p><b>American Legion Post 119 meets the first Wednesday of each month.</b></p> <p><b>Social Hour: 6:00 p.m.</b>  <b>Dinner: 7:00 p.m.</b>  <b>Meetings: 8:00 p.m</b></p> <p style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">Experience is the comb that life gives a bald man.</p>	<p><b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.legionpost119.org/">http://www.legionpost119.org/</a></p> <p><b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:eldoradopost119@att.net">eldoradopost119@att.net</a>  <b>Telephone:</b> 530/626-3956</p> <p><b>Newsletter Editor: Dick Bergin</b>  <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:rjb@rjb1.com">rjb@rjb1.com</a></p> <p><b>Tel:</b> 530/409-8794</p>

# March 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 Post, Aux Unit Meet 6pm	4	5	6
7	8	9	10 Sons, Legion Riders 6pm	11	12	13
14	15	16	17 Bartenders, E- board 6pm	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27

**NO Bar, NO Dinners and NO Happy Hour on Fridays.**

That is in strict accordance with the County Board of Health

## Who Was St. Patrick?

Saint Patrick, who lived during the fifth century, is the patron saint of Ireland and its national apostle. Born in Roman Britain, he was kidnapped and brought to Ireland as a slave at the age of 16. He later escaped, but returned to Ireland and was credited with bringing Christianity to its people.

In the centuries following Patrick's death (believed to have been on March 17, 461), the mythology surrounding his life became ever more ingrained in the Irish culture: Perhaps the most well-known legend of St. Patrick is that he explained the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) using the three leaves of a native Irish clover, the shamrock.

## When Was the First St. Patrick's Day Celebrated?

Since around the ninth or 10th century, people in Ireland have been observing the Roman Catholic feast day of St. Patrick on March 17. The first St. Patrick's Day parade took place not in Ireland but in America. Records show that a St. Patrick's Day parade was held on March 17, 1601 in a Spanish colony in what is now St. Augustine, Florida. The parade, and a St. Patrick's Day celebration a year earlier were organized by the Spanish Colony's Irish vicar Ricardo Artur.

More than a century later, homesick Irish soldiers serving in the English military marched in New York City on March 17, 1772 to honor the Irish patron saint. Enthusiasm for the St. Patrick's Day parades in New York City, Boston and other early American cities only grew from there.

**May the leprechauns dance over your bed and bring you sweet dreams.**

**Time is a great story teller.**

### All Meetings At:

**American Legion El Dorado Post 119**

**4561 Greenstone Rd, Placerville CA 95667**

**(530) 626-3956**

**MEMBERS' SPOUSES ARE ALWAYS WELCOME AT  
OUR DINNERS ON MEETING NIGHT.**

The office at the Post will have someone present between 9am and 11am, Monday, Wednesday and Fridays. (Closed on Monday Holidays).

## Special Days in March 2021

01	MON	Saint David's Day	21	SUN	World Poetry Day
01	MON	Casimir Pulaski Day	21	SUN	World Down Syndrome Day
01	MON	Women's History Month	21	SUN	International Day of Forests
01	MON	National Peanut Butter Lover's Day	21	SUN	National Common Courtesy Day
01	MON	Self-Injury Awareness Day	21	SUN	National Fragrance Day
02	TUE	Vermont Town Meeting Day	21	SUN	National French Bread Day
02	TUE	Texas Independence Day	22	MON	World Water Day
02	TUE	Read Across America	22	MON	National Goof Off Day
02	TUE	World Teen Mental Wellness Day	23	TUE	National Puppy Day
03	WED	Missouri Compromise	23	TUE	World Meteorological Day
03	WED	National Anthem Day	23	TUE	National Near Miss Day
04	THU	National Grammar Day	24	WED	National Cheesesteak Day
04	THU	World Obesity Day	24	WED	World Tuberculosis Day
04	THU	National Hug a G.I. Day	25	THU	Maryland Day
05	FRI	Employee Appreciation Day	25	THU	National Medal of Honor Day
06	SAT	Dred Scott Case	26	FRI	National Spinach Day
06	SAT	National Day of Unplugging	26	FRI	Purple Day
06	SAT	National Dentists Day	27	SAT	Earth Hour
06	SAT	National Dress Day	27	SAT	National Joe Day
07	SUN	National Be Heard Day	28	SUN	Palm Sunday
08	MON	National Proofreading Day	28	SUN	Respect Your Cat Day
08	MON	International Women's Day	29	MON	National Vietnam War Veterans Day
09	TUE	National Meatball Day	29	MON	National Smoke and Mirrors Day
09	TUE	National Get Over It Day	29	MON	National Mom and Pop Business Owners Day
10	WED	National Hug Your Dog Day	30	TUE	National Doctors' Day
10	WED	National Pack Your Lunch Day	30	TUE	National I am in Control Day
11	THU	National Promposal Day	31	WED	César Chávez Day
11	THU	World Kidney Day	31	WED	World Backup Day
12	FRI	National Girl Scout Day	31	WED	National Crayon Day
12	FRI	National Plant a Flower Day			
13	SAT	National K9 Veterans Day			
13	SAT	National Good Samaritan Day			
14	SUN	Daylight Saving Time Starts			
14	SUN	Pi Day			
15	MON	National Napping Day			
16	TUE	National Corn Dog Day			
16	TUE	World Social Work Day			
17	WED	Saint Patrick's Day			
17	WED	Evacuation Day			
18	THU	Awkward Moments Day			
18	THU	National Biodiesel Day			
19	FRI	St. Joseph's Day			
19	FRI	National Let's Laugh Day			
20	SAT	Spring Equinox (Start of Spring)			
20	SAT	International Day of Happiness			
20	SAT	National Proposal Day			
20	SAT	National Kick Butts Day			

<https://www.calendarr.com/united-states/calendar-march-2021/>

### St. Patrick's Day

St. Patrick's Day is celebrated annually on March 17, the anniversary of his death in the fifth century. The Irish have observed this day as a religious holiday for over 1,000 years. On St. Patrick's Day, which falls during the Christian season of Lent, Irish families would traditionally attend church in the morning and celebrate in the afternoon. Lenten prohibitions against the consumption of meat were waived and people would dance, drink and feast—on the traditional meal of Irish bacon and cabbage.

May the road rise up to meet you.  
 May the wind be always at your back.  
 May the sun shine warm upon your face,  
 The rains fall soft upon your fields,  
 And, until we meet again,  
 May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

**The best way to keep loyalty in a man's heart is to keep money in his purse.**



## Message from New SECVA

The U.S. Senate confirmed [VA Secretary nominee Denis McDonough](#) Monday, Feb. 8, and he was sworn in Tuesday, Feb. 9 as the eleventh VA secretary.

"At this moment when our country must come together, caring for you – our country's Veterans and your families – is a mission that can unite us all.

Every decision I make will be determined by a simple principle, that it increases Veterans' access to care and benefits and improves outcomes for them." - Secretary Denis McDonough

*The U.S. Senate confirmed [VA Secretary nominee Denis McDonough](#) Monday, Feb. 8, and he was sworn in today as the eleventh VA secretary.*



Denis R. McDonough has been sworn in as VA Secretary. (VA Photo by Robert Turtill.)

to  
America.

Throughout those experiences I've also been deeply impressed by the dedication and excellence of VA employees. I look forward to being a true partner with the men and women of VA – dedicated, highly-skilled professionals, many Veterans themselves – Veterans serving Veterans who deserve our profound respect and support.

At this moment when our country must come together, caring for you – our country's Veterans and your families – is a mission that can unite us all.

The president has called on every American to embrace our responsibility to support our Veterans and their families. So this administration will work with other federal departments and agencies, with Veterans service organizations, with the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA), and with other state and local organizations, both public and private, who have the best interests of Veterans and their families at heart. We must work together to serve all Veterans.

President Biden has defined our country's most sacred obligation as preparing and equipping the troops we send into harm's way and then caring for them and their families when they return. Here's how we at VA will fulfill our part of that sacred obligation.

Every decision I make will be determined by a simple principle, that it increases Veterans' access to care and benefits and improves outcomes for them.

Our highest priorities will be VA's three core responsibilities: providing all our Veterans timely, world-class health care; ensuring they and their families have access to the benefits they've earned; and honoring our Veterans with a final resting place that's a lasting tribute to their service.

In addition, we'll do everything in our power to help Veterans get through this pandemic; help them build civilian lives through education and jobs worthy of their skills and service; ensure that VA welcomes *all* Veterans, including women, Veterans of color and LGBTQ Veterans; work to eliminate Veterans' homelessness and reduce suicide; and keep faith with their families and caregivers.

Assessments of our efforts will be measured by the outcomes we generate for Veterans and by listening to what Veterans have to say about their experiences. We will be strengthened by the advice and support of Veterans service organizations and by hearing from our partners and respected organizations who share our mission of improving Veterans' lives.

As I begin my tenure at the Department of Veterans Affairs, I want to take a moment to speak directly to Veterans and other VA stakeholders and share my thoughts on VA's mission and the road ahead.

It is the honor of my lifetime to join the VA workforce in serving Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors. We live in peace and security today because of the sacrifices of generations of Veterans. My career has afforded me a privilege available to relatively few Americans: to see up close the excellence of our Armed Forces in the field on my regular visits to Afghanistan and Iraq; to witness the strength and resilience of our wounded warriors at Walter Reed; and to experience the unimaginable grief of military families there at Dover when our fallen heroes come home one final time. From that I have a passion to fight relentlessly every day ensure that VA serves our Veterans as well as they have served

Happiness being a dessert so sweet, May life give you more than you can ever eat.

## Message from New SECVA cont..

We're going to focus on living our core VA I-CARE values in all our interactions. Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence – these values will define who we are, our culture, and how we care for Veterans and other VA colleagues.

This means that all VA patients, staff, their families, caregivers, survivors, visitors and advocates must feel safe in a workplace free of harassment and discrimination. I will not accept discrimination, harassment or assault at any level or at any facility within VA. We will provide a safe, inclusive environment for Veterans and VA employees. Simultaneously, in VHA and VBA, we will redouble our efforts to care for Veterans who are survivors of military sexual trauma, ensuring they can all count on VA's support.

We can achieve our mission only by embracing the incredible diversity that defines our Veteran population and all of America, leveraging everyone's talents and passions. I commit to these principles, and I will make sure that my senior leadership team reflects and embeds them in everything we do.

We are fortunate to have a strong ally and leader in the White House. President Biden gave me a clear mission – to be a fierce, staunch advocate for Veterans and their families. His marching order to me is clear – fight like hell for Veterans. And we *are going to* fight like hell to give our Veterans and their families the benefits, services, respect and dignity they deserve.

I fully embrace this mission, and I know the VA workforce does, too.

May God bless our troops, our Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors – and, as a nation, may we always give them our very best.

## VA COVID-19 Vaccines

Veterans and caregivers can sign up for an easy way to stay informed about getting a COVID-19 vaccine through VA at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/stay-informed>.

VA is prioritizing and offering vaccines to enrolled Veterans actively receiving VA health care. If Veterans are not currently receiving health care through VA, [find out eligibility and how to apply here](#).

As of Feb. 3, 2021, VA is providing COVID-19 vaccine to the following groups:

- Veterans living in VA long-term care facilities  
Veterans who already receive care at VA and are at high risk from COVID-19 based on VA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [risk criteria](#). At many VA health care facilities, this group includes all Veterans who are at least 75 years old. Each facility will determine when Veterans in this group can receive a vaccine. They'll base this decision on vaccine availability, local needs, and the strict vaccine storage and handling requirements of the vaccines.
- Family caregivers who are enrolled in VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). PCAFC Caregivers are eligible for vaccination when the Veteran they care for becomes eligible. VA will tell the family caregiver if they can get a vaccine when VA invites the Veteran to get one.
- VA health care personnel. Vaccinating VA health care personnel helps continue to provide care for Veterans.

VA is first prioritizing Veterans who are actively receiving health care from VA. If Veterans are not currently receiving health care through VA, [find out eligibility and how to apply here](#).

### How can Veterans find out when they can get the vaccine?

Veterans and caregivers can sign up for an easy way to stay informed about getting a COVID-19 vaccine through VA at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/stay-informed>.

When Veterans and caregivers sign up, VA will also ask about vaccine plans. A local VA health facility may use this information to determine when to contact Veterans and caregivers once their risk group becomes eligible.

**Note:** VA will contact every eligible Veteran in each risk group. Veterans don't need to sign up to get a vaccine.

May you escape the gallows, avoid distress, And be as healthy as a trout.