

# Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 324 - PO Box 18631 - Milwaukee, WI 53218



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# Meeting Notice

20 November, 2024

5555 W. Good Hope Rd.  
 Board Meeting 6:30 p.m.  
 Chapter Meeting 7 - 8 p.m.  
**20 November, 2024**

**Future Meetings 2024**

December 18

Chapter web page: [www.vietnamvetschapter324.com](http://www.vietnamvetschapter324.com)

National web page: [www.vva.org](http://www.vva.org)

**Christmas Party, 18 December**  
**Members and friends are invited**  
**RSVP to Pat Moore**

## VA Disability Pay - 2025

### \*10%-20% Disability

Percentage	Rate
10%	\$175.51
20%	\$346.95

### \*30%-60% Disability

Dependent Status	30%	40%	50%	60%
Veteran Alone	\$537.42	\$774.16	\$1,102.04	\$1,395.93
Veteran with Spouse	\$600.97	\$859.24	\$1,208.64	\$1,524.05
Veteran with Spouse and Child	\$648.12	\$921.76	\$1,286.54	\$1,617.33
Veteran with Child	\$579.44	\$830.54	\$1,172.76	\$1,481.00
Each Additional Child Under 18	\$31.78	\$42.03	\$52.28	\$63.55
Each Additional Schoolchild Over Age 18	\$102.50	\$136.33	\$171.18	\$205.00
Additional for Disabled spouse	\$58.43	\$77.90	\$97.38	\$116.85

### \*70%-100% Disability

Dependent Status	70%	80%	90%	100%
Veteran Alone	\$1,759.19	\$2,044.89	\$2,297.96	\$3,831.30
Veteran with Spouse	\$1,907.81	\$2,215.04	\$2,489.63	\$4,044.91
Veteran with Spouse and Child	\$2,017.49	\$2,340.09	\$2,630.06	\$4,201.34
Veteran with Child	\$1,858.61	\$2,158.66	\$2,426.08	\$3,974.15
Each Additional Child Under 18	\$73.80	\$84.05	\$95.33	\$106.14
Each Additional Schoolchild Over 18	\$239.85	\$263.68	\$308.53	\$342.85
Additional for A/A spouse	\$137.35	\$156.83	\$176.30	\$195.92

# Milwaukee VA employee handed out ‘White Privilege Cards’

By Mary Jo Ola, TMJ4, November 16, 2024  
The Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical

Center has responded to concerns that an employee distributed “White Privilege Cards” to staff, veterans, and visitors.

A veteran contacted TMJ4, expressing concern about the incident and how it might affect their care as someone with a mixed-race background. The individual, who requested anonymity for fear of retaliation, said the worker handed out the cards as a joke.

TMJ4 reached out to the Milwaukee VA Public Affairs Office for comment and received the following statement via email:

“The Milwaukee VA strives to be a safe, inclusive workplace and health care center where veterans from all walks of life receive world-class health care. These alleged actions are unacceptable and do not represent our values as an organization, and we take this matter very seriously. The Milwaukee VA is investigating and, based on the outcome, will take appropriate disciplinary action. We deeply regret this incident and have followed up with the veteran to apologize.”

It is unclear how many people received the cards.

The novelty cards have sparked strong reactions.

“The reaction is a lot of anger, actually, and disbelief,” said Otis Winstead, president and CEO of the Dryhooch Great Lakes chapter.

Watch: Milwaukee VA investigating concern an employee handed out ‘White Privilege Cards’

Milwaukee VA investigating concern an employee handed out “White Privilege Cards”

“It’s not the platform or the place,” said Levi Marker, director of Dryhooch Great Lakes.

Winstead and Marker lead the Dryhooch Great Lakes chapter, a nonprofit that supports

veterans in a safe coffee shop setting. They worry this behavior could deter veterans from seeking care.

“The VA is a great place, and I don’t want any veteran feeling like they shouldn’t go over there,” Winstead told TMJ4 News.

“My hope is that this is a learning experience,” said Patrick Riccards, executive director of Life After Hate, an organization that works to disengage people from violent extremist groups and online hate spaces.

In recent years, similar “White Privilege Cards” have appeared in schools and, in one case, during a police traffic stop.

“Is this violent extremism? Absolutely not, but I think we see, particularly in this country, that it becomes a very slippery slope with folks who begin to joke about ideology and then start adopting some of the thinking,” Riccards said.

Winstead is confident the VA will address the issue but emphasized the need for more cultural competency training.



**NEW YEAR’S EVE IN VIETNAM.  
(OR MOST ANY OTHER NIGHT!)**

# Rural Veterans Are Struggling with Access to VA-Provided Care

By Amanda Flener, The Daily Yonder, November 12, 2024

Amanda Flener and her military veteran husband, John, survived hurricane Helene without a scratch. Their access to Veterans Affairs healthcare for John's medical conditions didn't fare so well.

Four days after the storm passed over their town of Fitzgerald, population 8,900, in south Georgia, Flener and her husband were busy rescheduling appointments with the Veterans Health Administration. With power outages affecting hospitals around Georgia, the Fleners couldn't risk driving 30 to 70 miles for appointments that might be canceled, especially with gas so scarce.

"We had been driving 30 miles just to get gas to power our generator this week, and we were fortunate to be able to do that," Amanda Flener told the Daily Yonder. "But [the healthcare providers] can't guarantee they'll have power tomorrow."

Flener is the primary caretaker for her husband, John, who was wounded in Iraq during his fourth deployment in 2006. His armored vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device, leaving him with traumatic brain injury and other wounds.

"We have a gamut of physical and mental health issues," said Flener, from seizures, migraines, and balance issues to back and knee pain, PTSD, anxiety, and depression.

For almost 20 years, Flener has coordinated her husband's extensive care, which at times has required near-daily medical and therapeutic appointments. Because there are no Veterans Affairs health services in Fitzgerald or Ben Hill County, the Fleners have to drive as long as three hours to reach their appointments, which can be as far as Augusta, Georgia, or Gainesville, Florida. In the two years since she bought her new car, Flener has racked up nearly 72,000 miles, about twice as much as the average Georgian drove in that same time frame.

There are an estimated 14.3 million military and veteran caregivers across the United States, according to a new study conducted by the RAND Corporation and commissioned by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, which supports military and veterans' caregivers. About a quarter of the nation's 19 million veterans live in Census-defined rural areas,

The report included a chapter analyzing differences in demographics and outcomes for rural and urban military and veteran caregivers. One notable finding was that those caring for veterans under the

age of 60 were more likely to live in rural areas than those caring for older veterans. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reports that there are 4.4 million rural veterans, 46% of whom are under the age of 65.

Many of these veterans, like John Flener, were deployed after 9/11. According to the Pew Research Center, post-9/11 veterans are more likely to "have been deployed, seen combat, experienced emotional trauma" than pre-9/11 veterans. Post-9/11 veterans are also likely to struggle with readjusting to civilian life.

The RAND study also found that nearly a quarter of rural military and veteran caregivers did not have access to reliable broadband internet. This means that some solutions for rural healthcare access, like telehealth appointments, are not viable for some of the people who could most benefit from them.

Amanda Flener says telehealth appointments can help fill coverage gaps, for which she is grateful. But she says even with the most expensive internet plan available in her county, the signal isn't always strong enough for telehealth appointments.

Telehealth care is "progress, for sure," Flener said. "So we pay for the best wifi we can get in our area, but it isn't always reliable enough to take the video calls from the VA."

Fitzgerald, Georgia, where the Fleners live, is designated a primary care, dental, and mental health professional shortage area according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This lack of healthcare resources is one of the reasons the Fleners spend so many hours on the road. But transportation to and from a continuous stream of appointments is a challenge for millions of veterans and their caregivers in the VA system, including those in suburban and urban counties.

Tara Plybon and her husband, Todd, live in Taylor, Texas, a small town outside of Austin in suburban Williamson County. Despite their proximity to a major city, Plybon spends at least four hours each week driving her husband to and from appointments.

"My husband, like a lot of other veterans, has a brain injury and can't stay awake to drive," Plybon told the Daily Yonder. "So one of the biggest challenges of caregiving is driving him all over God's green earth to get him to his appointments."

According to the RAND study, just

**Rural vets continued next page**



## ***Rural vets continued***

under half of military and veteran caregivers live in a county without a VA facility, and nearly half live in a primary care provider shortage area. The Department of Veterans Affairs does provide some transportation to health services for rural veterans through their Highly Rural Transportation Grants program. This limits the reach of the program to just 227 counties across 14 states. That's less than 12% of the U.S. counties that are nonmetropolitan under the federal Metropolitan Statistical Area classification system, and an even smaller percentage of counties where at least half the population lives in rural areas using the U.S. Census rural definition.

There have also been attempts to organize transportation help by non-government organizations, such as the charity Disabled American Veterans (DAV). For a while, the Fleners had access to a van service run by local DAV chapters, but it hasn't run in their area since the Covid-19 pandemic.

In February, a bipartisan group of congressional legislators introduced the Rural Veterans Transportation to Care Act, which would expand transportation access to more rural veterans.

"This bipartisan bill would improve how VA measures rurality, helping more veterans living in rural areas get transportation to VA or VA-authorized

health care facilities," according to the website of Representative Marie Glusenkamp Perez (D-Washington-3rd), who co-sponsored the bill. The act was co-introduced in the Senate by John Ossoff (D) of Georgia, where 3 in 10 veterans live in rural communities like the Fleners, according to the VA.

Transportation and access to healthcare services are two of the biggest challenges facing rural veterans and caregivers, but they are far from the only things that set them apart from their urban counterparts.

And options some of her peers take for granted to alleviate the caregiving load, like hiring a cleaner or using an online delivery service for occasional dinners and emergency shopping, isn't practicable in her small town, Flener said.

"Amazon next day delivery, that's not really a thing for us. And just things like somebody saying, 'oh, hire a cleaning service.' There is literally not a cleaning service in our town."

But despite these difficulties, the Fleners have no plans to move to a more urban location. Amanda Flener says rural communities offer veterans like her husband a calmer place to heal, away from crowds.

"If [wounded veterans] can get away to a quieter place where they can hunt or fish, or just find solitude in nature, it goes a long way to help their mental health," Flener said.



WHAT ARE YOU  
GOING TO DO  
WHEN YOU GET  
OUT OF THE  
ARMY,  
BEETLE  
?

I'LL USE THE  
SKILLS I'VE  
LEARNED  
HERE TO GET  
A GOOD  
JOB

YOUR SKILLS AT  
GOOFING OFF,  
MAKING UP  
EXCUSES AND  
ACTING LIKE A  
BIG  
SHOT  
?

YEAH, I THOUGHT  
I'D RUN FOR  
CONGRESS!



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I would like to help Chapter 324 by donating \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to VVA324 and mail with this completed application to:  
 VVA Chapter 324 - Membership, **P O Box 240552, Milwaukee WI. 53224**