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Veterans could be getting more

The Department of Veterans Affairs has seen demand for its services soar, but many veterans don't know what's available to them. So this week, the Department rolls out its first ad campaign in 30 years. Jessica Lussenhop reports.

TEXT OF STORY

STACEY VANEK-SMITH: After five years of war in Iraq and nearly seven in Afghanistan, The Department of Veterans Affairs has seen demand for its services soar. But many veterans don't know what's available to them. So this week, the Department rolls out its first ad campaign in 30 years. Jessica Lussenhop reports.



American flags arranged on a lawn
(iStockPhoto.com)

JESSICA LUSSENHOP: TV spots like this one featuring actor Gary Sinise will tell veterans about programs and benefits.

GARY SINISEVA cares about you . . .

Paul Rieckhoff is executive director of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. He says until recently the VA was banned from advertising. All it could do is put posters and pamphlets in hospitals and outreach centers.

PAUL RIECKHOFF: That's great if you get into the VA center, but most veterans who've served in Iraq and Afghanistan haven't been to the VA yet.

He says many vets don't even know what they can get from the government.

Lisette Mondello is an official at the VA. She wants veterans to know what they're entitled to.

LISETTE MONDELLO: We're talking about various services that the VA might have to offer and to increase awareness about health care, about home loans, about education loans, about burial benefits.

Mondello says she doesn't know how much the ad campaign will cost. She says the VA is in the early stages of finding an agency to help.

In New York, I'm Jessica Lussenhop for Marketplace.

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