



## Veterans Journal

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# Veterans groups waste no time lobbying President-elect Obama

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Veterans groups are already lobbying President-elect Barack Obama to send a strong message as commander in chief that he is committed to honoring the nation's newest generation of heroes as well as maintaining and improving benefits for all veterans.

Paul Rieckhoff, an Iraq War veteran and executive director and founder of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, recently published an open letter to the president-elect and listed four priorities that he hopes Obama will focus on during his administration.

Rieckhoff would like to see a summit meeting of leading veterans' groups from across the country to help screen candidates for top positions in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Candidates should have a proven track record of innovation and reform, and should be ready to address the urgent needs of new veterans, he says.

Also, Rieckhoff says veterans' health care should be funded one year in advance and that the advance-funded VA budget presented to Congress should match the independent budget recommendations made by leading veterans organizations.

The implementation of GI Bill transferability is also a must for Rieckhoff, especially since the Department of Defense has yet to release guidelines for how the new benefits, approved last summer, will be transferred from service members to their spouses or children.

Finally, Rieckhoff would like to see a national call for the VA to recruit and retain sufficient mental health professionals to combat the high rates of posttraumatic stress disorder and major depression among returning troops along with incentives and benefits.

### Pearl Harbor Day rites

The World War II Memorial Commission will dedicate a plaque next Sunday, Pearl Harbor Day, at 11 a.m. in World War II Memorial Park, at South Main and College streets in downtown Providence.

James Brennan, of Pawtucket, a survivor of the Bataan death march, will place a wreath. And an account of the Feb. 3, 1943, sinking of the Army transport ship Dorchester and the four chaplains who gave their lives to save other soldiers by giving up their life jackets will be read. The public is invited. For more information, call Mike Minutelli at (401) 253-9036.

Also on Sunday, Battleship Cove, in Fall River will commemorate the 67th anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor with a brief ceremony at 12:55 p.m., the exact time in New York that the attack in the Pacific began.

The ceremony, on the battleship Massachusetts, will include wreath-laying rites prefaced by brief remarks. The public is invited. For more information, visit online at [www.battleshipcove.org](http://www.battleshipcove.org).

#### Navy Band concert

Navy Band Northeast's Concert Band will perform its free annual holiday concert for the public on Sunday, Dec. 14, at 2 p.m. in the auditorium of Newport's Rogers High School. For more information, visit [www.cnic.navy.mil/Newport/navyband](http://www.cnic.navy.mil/Newport/navyband).

#### Cardi's aids Toys for Tots

Cardi's Furniture Superstores is collecting donations at all of its stores through Dec. 23 for the Marine Corps' annual Toys for Tots drive. Bring unwrapped new and like-new toys and clothing. A special drive-through toy drive with the Marines will be held from 9 a.m. to noon this Saturday at the West Warwick (Route 2), Swansea and South Attleboro stores.

#### Reunion set

The annual holiday breakfast buffet of the 102nd Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron Association will be held at 9:30 a.m. Sunday, Dec. 14, at the Chelo's restaurant on Post Road in Warwick. Admission is \$12 and reservations must be made by Dec. 7. Call Hank Connors at (401) 437-1482 or e-mail him at [Hank.Connors@juno.com](mailto:Hank.Connors@juno.com).

#### •American Legion

Post 15 meets at 7 this evening at 1016 Main St., East Greenwich. The Christmas party and luncheon for disabled veterans at the Rhode Island Veterans Home will be held at the post on Dec. 13 at 1 p.m.

#### •Fleet Reserve Association

Blackstone Valley Branch 132 meets this evening at 7 in VFW Post 306, 171 Fountain St., Pawtucket. Fall River Branch 72 will meet Wednesday at 2 p.m., in the Pine Street veterans building.

#### •Veterans of Foreign Wars

Gilbert-Burton Auxiliary 4487 will host a bingo at the Rhode Island Veterans Home, on Metacom Avenue in Bristol, at 1:30 p.m. tomorrow. On Thursday, Smithfield Memorial Auxiliary 2929 will sponsor a blood drive from 2 to 8 p.m., at the Stop & Shop on Putnam Pike in Smithfield; donors will receive a free pound of coffee. The Department Auxiliary will hold a council of administration dinner meeting at 6 p.m. Thursday at Perella's restaurant, 311 Metacom Ave., Warren, honoring national historian director Dorothy Irving; for \$20 tickets, call Charlotte at (508) 678-8185. At 1:30 p.m. Friday, the Department Auxiliary will visit patients at Heatherwood Nursing Home in Newport. Gatchell Auxiliary 306 will hold its Christmas bingo at 171 Fountain St., Pawtucket, at 1 p.m. Sunday.

- NUSC/NUWC

The group will meet at noon on Wednesday at McGovern's restaurant, 310 Shove St., Fall River; call Dan at (508) 673-1558 or Bob at (401) 625-2531.

- Marine Corps League

The Kent County Detachment will meet at 7 p.m. Wednesday in VFW Post 449, Providence St., West Warwick.

- Destroyer Escort Sailors

Destroyer escort sailors along with DER and FFG veterans will hold a luncheon meeting at noon Thursday at the Wharf Tavern, in Bristol; call Roland at (508) 995-1566.

- Vietnam Veterans of America

Chapter 325 will meet Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at 1958 Kingstown Rd., Peace Dale.

- Pawtucket Veterans Council

The council will hold its Pearl Harbor remembrance ceremony at 1:35 p.m. Friday in VFW Post 306, 171 Fountain St., Pawtucket. A two-bell ceremony for deceased veterans will be performed by William Nobrega of the Fleet Reserve. Dinner for members and guests will follow at 2 p.m. For dinner reservations, call Moe Trottier at (401) 723-4365.

Send meeting notices and veterans' news items to George W. Reilly at [VeteransColumn@verizon.net](mailto:VeteransColumn@verizon.net) or write to The Veterans Journal Column at The Providence Journal, 75 Fountain St., Providence, R.I. 02902.