

# Did You Know?

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That this year our Annual Washington D.C. conference was well attended and Legionnaires from all Departments met over a 3 day period. During this time we were furnished with a wealth of information from our National VA&R staff and also the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Keynote speakers from the Veterans Benefits Administration, Veterans Health Administration and the National Cemetery Administration updated us on changes and proposed laws. Here are some of the highlights:

The Veterans Administration budget for fiscal year 2021 is estimated to be 243 Billion and 54% of their workforce are veterans.

Under the Colmery Act veterans will get an additional 9 months of educational benefits if their goal is a Technical degree.

Over 200,000 veterans still get a paper check or are paid by a debit card. The new Vet Benefits Banking Program will offer free checking accounts to eligible veterans.

Eleven Army cemeteries have been turned over to the VA to manage.

Of all suicides, 50% are by firearms. Free gun locks can be obtained from any Veterans Health Administration hospital. Audie Murphy had thoughts of suicide daily.

The crisis hotline (formerly the suicide hotline) now has 900 full-time employees and of the 16+ vets who commit suicide each day, 11 are NOT using any form of VA health care.

The Board of Veterans Appeals has produced a YouTube video on what to expect at a Board hearing. There are now 102 law judges on that Board.

There are now 1,062 clinics and 70% of all US doctors receive some of their training at a Veterans Health Administration hospital.

Over 200 veterans are diagnosed with some type of cancer daily! This last year saw over 60 million hospital visits by our veterans.

That's it from Washington. On the local level our Chicago office has hired a new full-time Service Officer who is fluent in Spanish. Johnny Gonzalez is a service-connected disabled veteran and has a distinguished military career. After discharge he earned an MBA and is now working on a law degree. He is nearing completion of his training and should be an asset to our staff.

**While the Corona Virus has limited our walk-in hours at the Chicago office, we are still helping veterans and their dependents with claims. We can be reached 24/7 at the above listed e-mail and telephone numbers.**

**“In times of stress and danger such as come about as the result of an epidemic, many tragic and cruel phases of human nature are brought out, as well as many brave and unselfish ones.”**

**— William Crawford Gorgas, Sanitation in Panama during the Yellow Fever epidemic.**