

THE RESERVE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA

DEPARTMENT OF THE GOLDEN WEST “SENTINEL”



A NEWSLETTER
FOR THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE
GOLDEN WEST (CA & NV)
VOLUME 53 – MAR 2026 EDITION
NO LONGER available online!



The congressionally chartered object and purpose of the Reserve Organization of America: *“To support a military policy for the United States that will provide adequate national security and to promote the development and execution thereof.”*

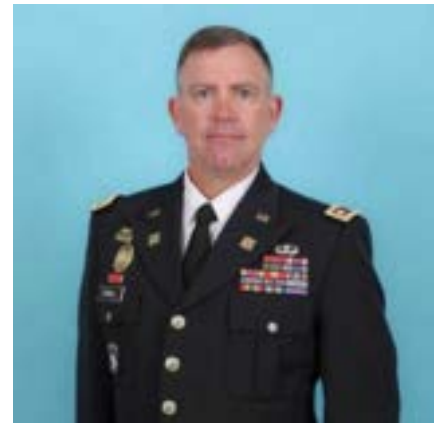


2025 -2027 DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT

LTC Peter Powell, USA

Email: peter.powell@outlook.com

I invite you to our Department of Golden West April 25 – 26 meeting in San Diego! This is a great opportunity for our members to gather to discuss current Reserve and National Guard issues. This is where we determine how our department and you will advocate to Congress, the Pentagon, and the Veterans Administration. Where we will formulate how to inform and network with the policymakers throughout California and Nevada.



This is an opportunity to work with your chapters and the department EXCOM so we can work together and provide National with any resolutions that affect the Department of Golden West. This is how we advocate for our members and the Service Members that serve in California and Nevada.

I highly recommend that you personally contact individual members in your chapter and service sections to ensure that we have a quorum and can make necessary changes for us to continue as a department. I have provided the April meeting and hotel information below, and I have also provided the national email list to all department members.



2026 -2026 DEPARTMENT PRESIDENT-ELECT* To be elected at April Conference.

NAVAL Vice President:

CAPT Deborah Nelson Holsworth, USN

E-mail = Debbynelsn@me.com

CELL: (831) 594-6966

March 3, 2026, is the 111th birthday of the Navy Reserve. AUSN salutes the Naval Reserve today and recounts some of the past milestones in our history.

Established on March 3, 1915, the Federal Naval Reserve followed in the footsteps of a proud U.S. naval tradition. Two years later, this military unit was reorganized and renamed the U.S. Naval Reserve Force. The final name change to the Navy Reserve came in 2005.

Entering World War I with approximately 8,000 service members, the U.S. Naval Reserve Force grew to a strength of nearly 250,000, representing 54 percent of the total U.S. naval force at that time. By the end of World War II, reservists accounted for nearly 85 per cent of the sailors serving, and included five future presidents and 15 Medal of Honor recipients.

Subsequently, the Naval Reserve mobilized for the Korean and Vietnam Wars, the first Gulf War, and the contingencies in Bosnia and Kosovo. Since 9/11, more than 70,000 Navy reservists supported the Global War on Terror and maritime patrol squadron rotations in the Western Pacific.



Reservists are trained in a boat drill at Naval Training Station Great Lakes, Illinois, in 1918.

Reservists amplify the Navy’s core capabilities, including forward presence, deterrence, sea control, power projection, maritime security, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response. On any particular day, 25 percent of the Navy Reserve delivers global operational support to the fleet and combat forces.

The haunting photo of Reservists manning 7 – 8 boats into the horizon along the Cape May, NJ, is courtesy of the USO.



Immediate Past President:

Col. David Thompson, USMC (Ret)

Email: dmtmar@aol.com



ARMY Vice President:

COL Jessaka Menzie, USA

Email: jessakamenzie@outlook.com

As your Vice President–Army, I aim to strengthen outreach to Army Reserve and National Guard members, encouraging participation in ROA events, professional development, and mentorship opportunities.



AIR FORCE Vice President:

Vacant

Article from: [Air Guard and Reserve troops question new Air Force policy](#)

Air Guard and Reserve troops say new Air Force rules add to confusion over benefits

A new Air Force policy meant to make health care easier for reservists and Air National Guardsmen may add to frustrations, troops say.

[DAVID ROZA](#) PUBLISHED FEB 27, 2026 2:08 PM EST

Air National Guard and Reserve airmen say new Pentagon rules on injuries during active duty do little to help long-term issues they face. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Connor Taggart.

The Air Force says a new policy will streamline access to health care for reservists and Air National Guardsmen who are hurt on duty. But airmen and veterans with firsthand experience say the new policy does little to address the actual roadblocks that many encounter trying to collect health care and longer-term benefits.

“It’s not fixing the problem,” said Cody Kirlin, a former F-15 fighter pilot who retired from the Louisiana Air National Guard earlier this month after a four-year benefits battle with the Air Force.

The new guidance was released on Feb. 1 and announced in [a press release](#) on Monday. It promises access to Tricare, the military’s health insurance network, to members of the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard who are hurt on active duty orders for 31 days or more and clear several paperwork hurdles.

It sounds like a good deal, considering that about 130,000 Guardsmen and Reservists do not have consistent health insurance, according to [2023 data](#).

But a trio of airmen, veterans, and advocates say the new guidance does not address the deeper issues that lead to hundreds of injured airmen a year being denied both immediate pay and health care, and longer-term disability benefits.

The basics

Guard and reserve troops who are injured while serving on active duty orders for 30 days or longer qualify for the same healthcare that active duty troops enjoy: cost-free Tricare. If an ARC

member gets hurt or sick during that active duty time, they are supposed to move to “medical continuation” or MEDCON orders with active duty pay and Tricare until they recover.

If they haven’t recovered after a year, a board evaluates whether they can still serve or if they should receive disability benefits. These benefits can add up to tens of thousands of dollars over a lifetime.

The key to the whole system is an “In Line of Duty” determination, or ILOD, an official judgment that their injury or illness came from their active duty service. Under Air Force rules, an In Line of Duty status — issued first by their local commander and ultimately decided by a high board — should be automatic unless “clear and unmistakable evidence” shows otherwise. But according to airmen, veterans, advocates, and [a 2024 Air Force inspector general report](#), the Air Force rarely provides evidence for the [hundreds](#) of ILODs it cancels [every year](#).

“This is undoubtedly a significant source of frustration for members that remain unanswered by policy or process,” the inspector general wrote.

A Louisiana Air National Guardsman of the 159th Fighter Wing Maintenance Group inspects the fuselage of an F-15 Eagle. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Daniel P. Farrell.

Kirlin was one of them. In 2019, he was diagnosed with two herniated discs from flying F-15s while deployed to Guam. His injuries were initially ruled In Line of Duty but reversed by National Guard officials in 2022.

Tricare helped cover Kirlin’s surgeries, but without extended orders, he had no income during the two months he was confined to bed. He had to use all of his civilian sick time and take short-term disability with financial support from his airline.

“It was very fortunate, but absurd that Southwest even lifted a finger for something that happened in the military,” he said.

One KC-135 tanker pilot without a civilian job [couldn’t pay her mortgage](#) after receiving a NILOD, also without explanation, while a technical sergeant with 20 years of service and stage four cancer is working part-time at an auto-parts store to make ends meet, [according](#) to ABC 15.

Doubts about long-term disability benefits

Advocates say one issue with the memo is that it adds paperwork and requirement hurdles to qualify for an In-Line-Of-Duty and access to health care that federal law and regulations say troops hurt on active-duty orders should already be getting—unless the Air Force has clear and unmistakable evidence saying they shouldn’t.

“Most of the people we help are getting medical care one way or another,” said Jeremy Sorenson, a retired Air National Guard fighter pilot who has helped dozens of ARC airmen wade through Line of Duty issues. “All of the issues that come up as a result of the LOD process this doesn’t address at all.”

Sorenson said the most alarming part of the guidance is that the ILOD determination it lays out applies only to access to Tricare, not to MEDCON orders or the disability evaluation system.

That should not be possible, Sorenson said. Once an injury or illness is determined to be In Line of Duty, the ARC member is eligible for MEDCON and the disability evaluation system.

“That totally goes against the regs,” he said. “An LOD is an LOD.”

When asked why the new guidance excludes MEDCON and DES, an Air Force reserve spokesperson said LOD, MEDCON, and DES “are all separate processes requiring separate determinations.”

That is “100 percent false,” Sorenson said. “An LOD is the determination. MEDCON is a military status provided based on an LOD determination. The disability evaluation system is a process based on

the LOD determination and whether or not you're back to duty generally within 365 days. All of those are based on one determination and one determination only."

Reversed decisions on Line of Duty

Lt. Col. Mitch Hall, a former Washington Air National Guard tanker pilot, does not think this memo would have helped in his situation, where the National Guard Bureau overturned his In Line of Duty determination without providing the required evidence.

"I don't think it would have done me any good," he said. "The root problem is that they should not have overturned my ILODs. I should not have been cut off from MEDCON."

Hall, Kirlin, and Sorenson worry that the new policy will further muddy the waters for airmen and medical personnel. The Air Force inspector general reported "a lack of fundamental understanding" at all levels of the process, which Kirlin experienced firsthand.

"I had no guidance," he said. "This whole process has just been one hoop after the next with people not knowing how to do their part of it and me trying to figure it out on my own."

The trio feared that the new guidance might lead airmen to walk away with health care, but nothing else. Airmen and advocates say they would rather see the Air Force follow the rules laid out by federal law and regulations regarding timelines, transparency, and the burden of proof for denying a Line Of Duty.

"LODs have been a systemic problem for many years," Sorenson said. "Instead of addressing it head-on and complying with federal law and DoD instructions, this memorandum is yet another attempt to obfuscate the issue and to further make it difficult for injured airmen to obtain their due benefits."

National Council Person:

Col Ronald D. Harris, USAF (Ret)

Email: colrdhmd@reagan.com

I am looking forward to seeing you at our Department meeting here in San Diego (America's Finest City) from April 23- 25, 2026. Bring your friends and family members.

The Hilton Doubletree SD Bayside at 4875 N Harbor Dr, San Diego, CA 92106 is just a few-minute shuttle ride from the SD International Airport. Reduced costs mean that your experience goes much further. Visit the nearby USS Midway aircraft carrier museum or the famous SD Zoo or Sea World, which are very close by.



Retirement Affairs Vice President:

COL(R) Rick Garza

Email: razraq06@yahoo.com



Review the article about your Military ID Card later in this publication. Make sure to keep up with any changes by updating your personal information in the DEERS system.

Surgeon: Col Ronald D. Harris, M.D., USAF (Ret)

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Phone: (858) 200-6845

TRICARE Adds Coverage for Test That Detects Dozens of Cancers: TRICARE has joined hundreds of leading health systems and employers by covering Galleri, a multi-cancer early detection test, for beneficiaries age 50 and over with an elevated risk of cancer. The Defense Health Agency authorized Galleri coverage using the Lab Developed Test (LDT) Demonstration Program, a MOAA advocacy win from more than a decade ago that continues to provide benefits for servicemembers, retirees, their families, and survivors. Galleri is a multi-cancer early detection test that screens for many aggressive cancers before symptoms appear. Using a blood sample, it looks for a unique “fingerprint” of cancer from DNA fragments shed from cancer cells into the bloodstream. Galleri can screen for more than 50 cancers, including many that have no recommended screening available. Galleri results also provide directions to your doctor on the cancer’s origin to help guide the next steps in diagnosis.

Only five cancer screening tests are recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force: breast, cervical, colorectal, lung (for those at risk), and prostate. Most other cancers do not have recommended screening tests and are often diagnosed at a later stage. Early detection is important because it can significantly improve cancer survival rates. If your provider agrees that the Galleri test is appropriate for you, they will submit an authorization – subject to approval by TRICARE – and give you an order for the test. You will have a blood draw done, and results will be available about two weeks after your blood sample is received at the lab. There are two possible results: No Cancer Signal Detected or Cancer Signal Detected. Nearly 99% of people who use the Galleri test will screen negative with No Cancer Signal Detected. Continue with routine cancer screening tests your healthcare provider recommends.

Around 1% of people ages 50-79 are expected to receive a Cancer Signal Detected test result. This result will include the predicted tissue type or organ associated with the signal, called a Cancer Signal Origin (CSO) – information that can help guide your healthcare provider with next steps. After diagnostic evaluation, around 40% of people with a Cancer Signal Detected result are expected to have a confirmed cancer diagnosis.

Galleri is a new technology, and some healthcare providers may not be familiar with it. If you are interested in discussing the Galleri test with your medical provider, you can download a [discussion guide](#) that includes instructions on ordering the screening test from the Galleri website.

The Galleri screening test is subject to TRICARE cost sharing. Medicare does not cover the Galleri test, so beneficiaries on TRICARE For Life who get the Galleri screening should expect to be billed for the TRICARE annual deductible (\$150 per individual for most retiree families) and the applicable [cost share](#). In mid-2025, TRICARE changed its coverage of Galleri to limit testing to once per lifetime versus an annual screening test – MOAA will follow up with the Defense Health Agency on testing limits to ensure coverage evolves to align with recommendations for Galleri testing. (Source: MOAA’s 2025-26 TRICARE Guide).



From our Department Treasurer:

CPT Gordon A. Fell, USAR (former)
Email: gaf@gafmail.com

Chapter presidents and treasurers *MUST* file a 990N postcard return to the IRS for your chapter, as well as a chapter financial statement to ROA. You have up to 5 months from the time of your year-end accounting period. If your chapter has a fund held by the Department of the Golden West, your treasurer, Gordon Fell, has a financial accounting of funds held by your chapter, which you will need for the Chapter Financial Report to ROA.

The chapters that have funds with the Department are 32, 43, 51, 53, 63, and 92. Chapter 57 had funds held by the Department for part of the year, so it will also need to have its report to make a Financial Report to ROA.

The financial report form is on the ROA website, but if you cannot find it to download it, I have a blank copy that I can send to you, which is a PDF file that you only have to fill out and send to DMarkham@roa.org, along with the receipt showing you have filed the 990N.

Not only is this required to maintain your IRS non-profit status, but it is also required so the Department and your chapter can receive the rebates from ROA.

***** A chapter that fails to provide these documents will be recommended for disestablishment as being inactive.**

******* Please send a copy of your filing with ROA to Gordon Fell, gaf@gafmail.com, and the Executive Secretary, Rafael Ortiz, ffpmORTIZ@gmail.com, for the Department records.



From the National Treasurer:

The biggest change for 2025 is notifying the IRS of our fiscal year change and filing the returns (990-EZ) on or before May 15.

Our IRS filing deadline will shift from August 15 to May 15 each year -- still 5 1/2 months after the end of the FY.

How does the Department or Chapters inform the IRS of the Fiscal Year change? The treasurers need to know that the only way to notify the IRS of a fiscal year change is via filing a Form 990-EZ (according to IRS instructions, the Form 990N -- that Departments and Chapters normally file -- cannot be used for this purpose). This will be

a one-time requirement, and next year (2025), Departments and Chapters can file the 990N once again.

What organization name should the Department and Chapter treasurers put on Form 990-EZ? Col Hueg restated the question as "Should treasurers use 'Reserve Officers Association [of the United States]' or 'Reserve Officers Association of the United States dba (doing business as) Reserve Organization of America' "? He said he hasn't seen any rule that we MUST show a name change, and he advises against changing it on the form at this point since we have not formally changed the Association's name through our Charter.

"I suppose if a Department or Chapter changed the organization name to "dba Reserve Organization of America" when they filed their 990N a few years ago, back when, during the National Convention where it was decided to add the "dba", then they would need to continue that practice on this year's form. But I doubt there are many (or any) out there."

"When ROA filed its Form 990 last August 15, the firm that has prepared ROA's tax returns for years typed on the first page of Form 990 (where the form asks the name of the organization) "Reserve Officers Association of the United States" without any further explanation or expansion. The name was typed on each Form 990 schedule attached to our return as well."

Col Hueg didn't have any information on ROA's name change other than it will require a change to ROA's Charter before we can drop the "dba" legality. "That decision was made back during the national convention in Memphis, but we are still waiting for that to occur."



ESGR - State Chair

Richard P. (Phil) Stage, COL, USA (Ret), ROA. CA

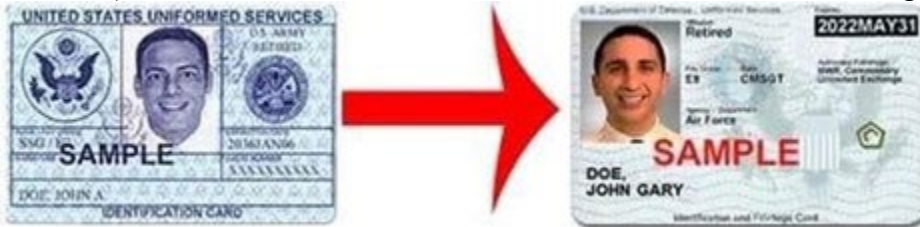
(C)(925)872-2639

E-mail: phil.stage@sbcglobal.net

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is a Department of War Office committed to supporting the over 56,000 Guard and Reserve Members in the State of California and their employers through training on the Department of Labor Law - Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act (USERRA), recognition of employers who go above and beyond through an awards program to include the Secretary of War Freedom Award and Patriot Awards for individual supervisors, and act as neutral ombudsman in USERRA issues between service members and their employers. There are over 100 ESGR volunteers in the State of California who brief units and employers, present Patriot Awards, and act as Ombudsmen. We are always looking for more volunteers to support our Guard and Reserve members. The California Committee will be having its Annual Planning and Awards Meeting in Los Alamitos on 30 May to recognize our volunteers for their work and to plan for the next FY.



Latest on ID Cards. You do NOT need to replace your USID card at this time. Your current USID card with the INDEF expiration date remains valid. DoD has not yet determined a deadline for replacing the old paper-based (Teslin) USID cards with the new plastic-based USID (formerly referred to as NextGen) cards. Once a decision has been made, the change will be widely publicized.



Military retirees are encouraged to update their older paper-based Uniformed Services Identification (USID) cards to the new plastic-based USID cards. The new cards are more secure and durable, incorporating features like plastic cardstock and enhanced security measures. USID cards are issued to retired military, Reserve members, dependent family members of uniformed Service members, and other eligible individuals in accordance with DoD policy.

It's important for USID cardholders to know these older paper-based forms of ID will eventually be terminated, and will need to be replaced by the new plastic-based USID card. This is true even if your old ID card has an INDEF expiration date on it. There are several ways to obtain a new ID card:

- (1) Visit the RAPIDS ID Card Office Locator website (<https://idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco/locator>) to find the closest office and call them to make an appointment, or
- (2) Schedule an appointment using the RAPIDS ID Card Office Locator website. Select the “Schedule an Appointment” option under the “More Site Info” header for any of the sites presented in the search results, or
- (3) Visit the ID Card Office Online website (<https://idco.dmdc.osd.mil/idco/>), select “Continue” under the “Family ID Cards” header, and follow the prompts for Online USID Renewal. Note: It may be necessary to create a myAuth account for logon. (Source: DFAS Newsletter June 2025).

Do you have a Uniformed Services (DD Form 2) ID card with an “indefinite” expiration date? Are you worried you may need to update or replace it? The article below is republished from MOAA.

Recent messages have led to confusion among some cardholders. Below are some answers to frequently asked questions; for more details on other types of ID cards, including eligibility and renewal guidelines, visit [MOAA's ID Card page](#).

Q. I have an older, paper-based, “INDEF” identification card. Do I need to renew/replace it?

A. No. Per official guidance, these cards “will all remain valid until DoD determines when those legacy paper-based cards will be terminated.”

Q. Should I renew/replace it anyway?

A. Cardholders may replace the legacy card with a plastic-based card “at their convenience,” per official guidance. Doing so in advance of any expiration announcement may be a smoother process, although officials say any termination of the older cards will be announced “well in advance of the actual termination date.”

Q. How do I renew/replace it?

A. Cardholders have two options:

- *Online:* Go to the [ID Card Office Online website](#) and click “Continue” under the “Family ID Cards” box. Follow the prompts to request a new card.

- *In Person:* Go to the [ID Card Office Online website](#) and click “Continue” under the “ID Card Office Locator & Appointments” box. Follow the prompts to set up an in-person appointment. You may renew/replace your card at any of the offices listed; consider widening the search area if those nearby have limited spaces available.

Q. I have questions about the renewal/replacement process.

A. Visit [CAC.mil](#) for more information, or call the Defense Manpower Data Center customer service line at (800) 538-9552.

Q. I was told/I read the deadline to get a plastic card is Dec. 31, 2025. Is this true?

A. No. As [one Army webpage explains](#), “The Department of Defense (DoD) has not set a termination date for legacy paper-based Uniformed Services ID (USID) cards with ‘INDEF’ (indefinite) expiration dates. Despite earlier reports, including a now-corrected DFAS newsletter citing a December 31, 2025 deadline, no such cutoff currently exists.”

Many of the reports were later cited in social media messaging and other platforms, leading to confusion among some cardholders.

Q. How can I be sure I don’t miss an update on the termination date?

A. MOAA will continue to provide updates as we receive them regarding any changes to ID card policy. Officials recommend visiting the [ID Card Office Online website](#) and clicking “Continue” under the “My Profile” box, then following the prompts to check (and update, if necessary) your contact information, so you will receive such updates as they are issued.

Q. Are military IDs with "INDEF" expirations accepted at airports?

A. Yes. All military IDs are accepted in this instance, but MOAA members have reported problems or delays at airports, up to and including rejected IDs. A spokesman for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) told MOAA that military ID holders who experience any such issues should ask for a Supervisory Transportation Security Officer (STSO). [Learn more about REAL ID rules.](#)



National Meetings

**March 13 - 14, 2026 National Council & Leaders Meeting
Minuteman Building, ROA Headquarters, Washington, DC.
Register online before March 5th.**

Register now: <https://roa.org/event/2026-national-council-leaders-conference/>

New scam: VA Benefits overpayment. Clever scammers are targeting Veterans, surviving spouses, and family members who receive VA benefits. They pretend to

be official VA representatives and use official communication channels to demand repayment for alleged benefits overpayments.

Common tactics used by scammers

- Fake VA letterheads, logos, and even spoofed phone numbers to make their communication appear authentic.
- Scammers claim you have been overpaid on your VA benefits and now owe money back to the VA.
- Scammers may pressure you into making immediate payments directly to them instead of through official VA payment channels. Requests for payment via wire transfers, bitcoin, prepaid debit cards, money transfers or gift cards are often signs of a scam.
- Scammers may ask for sensitive information, such as your VA login credentials, password, or financial information.

How to protect yourself

- If you receive a letter or communication about a VA benefits overpayment, log into your official VA.gov account immediately to verify if you truly owe money. If you find you do owe money, VA's Debt Management Center (DMC) offers many repayment options.
- If you find you do owe VA money, resolve the debt directly using VA.gov or by calling VA's Debt Management Center (DMV) at 1-800-827-0648.
- VA will never ask for your login credentials or password.
- Be wary of unsolicited emails or texts asking for personal details or directing you to external websites that are not part of VA.gov.
- If someone demands an upfront payment to help with your VA debt or claims, it's a scam. VA offers free help with managing debts and claims. You can find a VA-accredited representative to assist you at www.va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative/find-rep/.
- Be cautious if you receive an email or text asking for your personal information. Scammers often create fake links or attachments to trick you into downloading malware or malicious code to steal your data. Always review the sender's information carefully and avoid clicking on links or attachments from unknown sources.
- Secure personally identifying information (PII) and financial information. Never share sensitive information, such as social security numbers, bank account details, or credit card information, when responding to unsolicited requests.

Being aware of common scam tactics and following recommended precautions can significantly reduce your risk of falling victim to fraud. Always verify information through VA.gov and treat any suspicious communication with caution. Protecting your personal information and promptly reporting any suspicious activity can help ensure your benefits and personal data remain protected. VA offers a wide range of tools and resources to combat fraud and protect Veterans' benefits. To learn more, please visit the VBA fraud prevention page at VA.gov. Stay safe and vigilant! (Source: VA email 18Nov2025).



Currently, no person is assigned to coordinate with this group. **Council Website:** <https://www.calvet.ca.gov/>

CALVET offers many resources and opportunities within this organization and on the website.

For questions, please contact Executive Officer, Tina Lassiter, Tina.Lassiter@calvet.ca.gov or 916-653-2041.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

Contact: Deputy Secretary Kate Hoit

Phone: (916) 651-2147

CalVet 26-002

CalVet Celebrates Governor’s Signing of SB 694 to Protect California Veterans

What you need to know: Senate Bill 694 takes direct action to provide protection for the roughly 1.5 million veterans who call California home, especially those who may be vulnerable to scams while trying to access the benefits they’ve earned through their service.

SACRAMENTO — The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) celebrates the enactment of Senate Bill 694, legislation designed to protect California veterans from predatory “claims sharks” — unaccredited individuals who exploit veterans seeking help accessing the benefits they earned through service.

For California’s veteran community, access to reliable, accredited assistance remains essential when navigating the VA disability benefits process. SB 694 reinforces standards that support transparency, accountability, and confidence while helping ensure veterans can pursue the benefits they’ve earned without unnecessary risk.

“SB 694 is a critical step in protecting veterans and their families from bad actors who prey on trust,” said CalVet Secretary Lindsey Sin. “This bill stops false promises, illegal fees, coercive contracts, and demands for sensitive federal login information. We’re grateful to

the legislators who championed this effort and to Governor Newsom for standing with California's veterans."

CalVet Secretary Lindsey Sin

About Senate Bill 694

SB 694 directly targets abusive practices used by claims sharks by:

- Prohibiting unaccredited individuals from providing veterans' benefits claims assistance.
- Banning anyone from requesting or using a veteran's federal login credentials.
- Enforcing clear limits on fees, aligned with what VA-accredited professionals are legally allowed to charge.

These protections help close dangerous legal loopholes while reinforcing fair, transparent access to earned benefits.

SB 694 was authored by Senator Bob Archuleta, co-authored by Senator Sabrina Ceervantes and Assemblymember Pilar Schiavo, and co-sponsored by Attorney General Rob Bonta. The bill takes effect in January 2027.

The County Veterans Service Officers (CVSOs), who work directly with veterans across California, provided valuable frontline insight that informed broader efforts to strengthen protections.

Veterans Encouraged to Use Trusted, Free Claims Assistance

Across California, veterans can access free, accredited help when filing benefits claims:

- [County Veterans Service Officers](#) and nonprofit [Veterans Service Organizations](#) are accredited by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, professionally trained, and held to strict accountability standards.
- Organizations such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and others provide free assistance nationwide.
- CalVet strengthens this network through the California Veterans Service Representative Academy, which trains County Veterans Service Representatives to connect veterans with the benefits they've earned.
- The [Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022](#) (PACT Act) expanded eligibility for many veterans, resulting in millions of approved claims nationwide and hundreds of thousands of newly enrolled veterans in VA health care. Veterans who were previously ineligible for benefits may now qualify under the PACT Act.
- For veterans who believe they might have been scammed, [contact the California Attorney General's office](#).
- [Visit Calvet](#) to learn about the full range of state veteran benefits, including education, jobs, home loans, and more.

[Link to the press release.](#)

About CalVet

The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) serves and honors all California veterans by connecting them and their families with earned benefits through education, advocacy, and direct services. We work to ensure that California veterans are the most connected, protected, and respected in the nation. Contact CalVet at **800-952-5626** or visit calvet.ca.gov.

CALIFORNIA STATE COMMANDERS VETERANS COUNCIL REPORT

Col. Donald Dorfman, USAF (Ret)-
Legislative Chairman
Email: dorf_law@hotmail.com



Check out the Council Website:
<https://calcommanders.org/>

This council combines to provide a unified front on addressing California-specific issues related to all the military services and veterans. Bills before the California Legislature are tracked and supported by 17 individual organizations. **Any interested ROA member in California is welcome to come to the meetings.** Those not able to attend but interested can be sent emails regarding current issues, as well as keep current by checking out the website.

Call to Action

As always, your questions and continued advocacy are welcome. Let's ensure these critical programs and tax exemptions for veterans remain a top priority in the state budget. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Reeb Government Relations for further information or clarification.

Thank you for your service and for continuing to advocate for the veteran community.

Thank you,

Seth Reeb
Reeb Government Relations, LLC
1415 L Street, Suite 870
Sacramento, CA 95814
Please note my new email address: sethr@waterwarrior.com



<https://veterans.nv.gov/>

NDVS offers many resources and opportunities. Currently, no person is assigned to coordinate with this group. The NDVS website posts a calendar of events for veteran groups such as VFW, American Legion, and others. Adding an event is simple, so anyone hosting an ROA event should consider using this as a means for publishing in addition to our website. Our past president, Col Barbara Ortiz, USAF (Ret), has been appointed by the Nevada Governor to be the Chair of the Women's Advisory Committee.

Website: <https://veterans.nv.gov/about-the-united-veterans-legislative-council/>



Under the NDVS resides the United Veterans Legislative Council (UVLC). On the website, it lists resources on "How to Testify Before a Legislative Committee", "How to Prepare Your Testimony Template", and "Legislative Process Explained", which is key for Nevada since they only meet once every other year, and a link to the UVLC Constitution.

Chapter Presidents, Editors, and Webmasters:

The National website has been updated and no longer supports or provides the ability to post our department or chapter information. This change requires us to revitalize our own website. Your EXCOM is reviewing options to restart our old website and is looking for an individual who is knowledgeable in web design to assist us.

Check your Chapter Website. This also applies to any newsletters or materials you send out. Make sure there are no references to the Reserve Officers Association or use of Service Emblems, as they are copyrighted.

Dept Golden West Activities

Please share with us your activity photos, past and present.

****Our department has 5 sets of booth materials ready for your use.**** Northern CA (Turlock); Southern CA -1 (San Diego); Southern CA – 2 (Los Angeles); Northern NV (Reno Area); Southern NV (Las Vegas)

FROM OUR CHAPTERS

****Note: Numbers are from July 2025****

Chapter 00: 1,490 members

Chapter 00 consists of everyone not in a physical chapter.

Chapter 32: General Jimmy Doolittle (40 members)

Bryan J. Golden, USA (Ret) President

Email: bjgolden@attglobal.net

CELL: (831) 659-3473

We currently support and make presentations of the ROA JROTC Superior Performance Award to cadets at Soledad High School, Everett Alvarez High School, and Seaside High School, all in Monterey County. Anyone interested in assisting or getting together, please contact me at bjgolden@attglobal.net

Chapter 43: Bud & Betty Sparks (179 members)

Rafael A. Ortiz, USCGR (Ret) President.

Email: ffpmORTIZ@gmail.com

CELL: (661)810-2230.

A service-specific chapter for Coast Guard members. **Meetings HAVE CHANGED and are on ZOOM the second Tuesday of every month at 17:30 hours PACIFIC TIME.** All USCG members are invited and encouraged to participate. This meeting has expanded to include the ROA Coast Guard Affairs Committee as well. Meeting ID **975 713 1020**. Passcode **ROAch43**. ***I am looking for individuals to help with setting meeting locations and schedules.***

Chapter 51: MajGen James C. Wahleithner (Sacramento Area) (461 members)

Edward V. Chesser LTC (Ret.), Army of the United States

edchesser@yahoo.com

Mission Report: Strategic Outreach and Monthly Battle Rhythm – Beale AFB

1. MISSION OBJECTIVE To establish long-term ROA presence at Beale AFB through multi-level contact with the 940th Air Refueling Wing (ARW) and Installation Readiness leadership.

2. EXECUTION SUMMARY * Date/Time: 31 JAN 2026, 0800 hrs.

Contacts Made: Successfully engaged the 940th ARW Public Affairs Officer (PAO) and was subsequently referred to the Military Mobility Readiness Officer.

Literature Distribution: Three (3) ROA brochures were provided to these key administrative offices.

3. STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT Base personnel currently maintain a highly restrictive posture regarding training schedules (OPSEC/Internal policy). To navigate this, I am implementing a "Persistent Presence" strategy. By establishing a predictable schedule, we provide the ROA a foothold without requiring the units to divulge sensitive training calendars.

4. FUTURE BATTLE RHYTHM Starting February 2026, I will be on-site at Beale AFB every first Saturday of the month at the following high-traffic intervals:

0730–0900: Installation DFAC

1200–1230: Base Burger King

Chapter 53: Southern California Army (445 members)

COL Richard H. Keagy, USA (Ret) President.

Email: rhkeagydmv@verizon.net

CELL: (310) 903-8004 Home: (310) 474-3383

Chapter 53 is currently in its financial requirements but has no elected officers at this time. Members interested in the chapter please contact me.

Chapter 57: San Diego (326 members)

CAPT Steven R. Hales, USN (Ret) President.

Email: steve@hales.xyz

Chapter 57 is a geographic chapter that covers the Greater San Diego Area. All services are welcome to join. We have bi-monthly meetings and an annual Christmas Party in December. Contact President Hales for information.

For other information and meetings contact LTC Ken Robinson, email: robinson4ken@gmail.com

Chapter 63: Santa Clara (250 members)

CWO4 Ron Garcia, USMC (Ret)

Email: fef_ron@yahoo.com

Chapter 63 has been supporting Santa Clara University ROTC (LtCol Stanley Holt, USA (Ret) Scholarship - \$1,000) and San Jose State University ROTC awards programs; San Jose, CA Navy & Marine JROTC High School awards programs: Milpitas High School NJROTC, DelMar High School MJROTC, and MtPleasant MJROTC Awards ceremonies.

ROA chapter members attended military and community events: Hoover Institute Stanford University Marine Corps Birthday; Memorial Day Event at San Jose Oak Hill Cemetery placing flags at veterans' graves; and San Bruno Marine Corps Birthday Ball.

Our meetings are at Starbucks to discuss Chapter plans and future coordination tasks.

Chapter 92: Flaming Blade (210 members)

COL Richard Garza, USA (Ret) President.

Email: razrag06@yahoo.com

Chapter 92 has not been active. Centered on JFTB Los Alamitos, the chapter traditionally served Army Reserve members stationed there as well as interested active and retired members from all services. With the loss of key active USAR members from the 79th Theater Support Command, we have lost our ability to meet on base. We are looking for members to assist with finding a good time and place to meet and get together.



Here are the membership numbers from last year. Currently, with the update of the national website, we are no longer able to download or see what our membership numbers are or access their information.

- a. Members over:
 - i. 100 years old: 82
 - ii. 90 to 100: 430
 - iii. 80 to 90: 930
 - iv. 70 to 80: 987

- v. 60 to 70: 573
- vi. Under 60: 337
- vii. Unknown: 61
- b. Members who live outside of CA & NV: 700
*(Potential for us to lose transferring to where they live)
- c. 26 Associate "free" members.
- d. Members who live in CA & NV but registered with other departments:
452. *(Potential for us to have transfer to us)



For those interested: Years ago, the Dept of California decided to wear the "Road to California" Hawaiian shirt for informal gatherings. This shirt is still available through the High Seas Trading Co. www.highseastradingco.com at a 10.5% discount using code ROA1776.



Dept of Golden West ROTC & JROTC

MEDAL and CERTIFICATES PROGRAM

COL Richard H. Keagy, USA (Ret.)
 ROTC & Service Academies Committee Chair
 Email: rhkeagydvm@verizon.net

For many years, the Department of the Golden West has provided JROTC and ROTC (Bronze, Silver, and Gold) Medals and Ribbons with a certificate signed by ROA's Executive Director and Current President to Cadets. The criteria for awarding the ROA award are better than average grades, being selected as a member of next year's leadership corps, and demonstrating a high regard for the uniform and the program. The JROTC award can go to any eligible cadet who has at least one year remaining in the program. The ROTC Bronze award goes to a Freshman, the Silver to a Sophomore, and the Gold to a Junior. Seniors are not given these awards because, upon graduation, they cannot wear the medal or ribbon anymore, and the effect of having the ribbon and medal becomes ineffective in encouraging fellow cadets to strive for this award.

Please check with your local high school if they have JROTC, and if they do, contact the instructor and offer your help, and ask if they received the ROA ribbon, medal, and certificate. If not, direct them to COL Richard Keagy. If you have more than one JROTC unit in your area that you are or can work with, you can receive the awards and personally distribute them by ordering them from COL Keagy.

To receive the awards, a unit instructor or cadet leader needs to contact Colonel Richard Keagy, USA(R), by e-mail at rhkeagydvm@verizon.net with the following information:
 School's name, address, and phone number
 Senior instructor's name, e-mail, and phone number
 The cadet's name as they want it to appear on the certificate.

Date, time, and location of the unit's award ceremony

Upon receipt of the above information, the certificate will be printed with the cadet's name and school name, and the award will be mailed to the school. Mailing can be diverted to a requested alternative address.

If you are interested in attending a school's award ceremony in your area, please let COL Keagy know by e-mail. If there is a school that is to receive an award in your area, he will send you an email with the date, time, location, and POC so you can arrange to be the presenter of our ROA award. Your presence helps promote ROA and recognize the importance of the respective program you are supporting. Your Department of the Golden West has a perpetual fund that generates enough funds to provide the ROA award to all California and Nevada ROTC and JROTC units, so please make the effort to offer the award to units not yet receiving it.

Interested in the Army Reserve Forces ROTC scholarship? Get this award from any Army Reserve Ambassador (meeting minimum qualifications). They must join an Army Reserve unit and be enrolled in college ROTC to qualify. Scholarships can also be awarded for the National Guard, but Ambassadors only do it for the Army Reserve. POC is Jame C. Bernet, Army Reserve Ambassador, JamesCBernett@gmail.com, 858.775.4422. Great opportunity for a high school student or a lower-division college student!



2025 JROTC & ROTC Medal presentations



Col Robert Fritz, USA (Ret), presenting at Univ of Nevada, Wooster High School, Reno, NV.



CAPT Ortiz Presenting at Incline Village HS. Dressed in a Revolutionary Uniform as he presented for the Sons of the American Revolution at the same event.



Department Outreach Events



Col Chesser at Las Vegas Yellow Ribbon.



Yellow Ribbon events in San Diego and Newport Beach

2025 Dept Convention at Travis AFB



Swearing in of officers.



Presentations and discussions



Your assistance is required! ROA now has a NEW website!

We cannot communicate with 1,269 of our members in a timely fashion, as we do not know their email addresses. Email is the timeliest and most cost-effective way to communicate. Ensure your email and address information are correct in the ROA database. Because of the updated website, you need to log in and update your password! Please log onto the ROA website and ensure we have your correct mailing and email address on file today!

First, go to the ROA website www.roa.org and log in. Go to **manage your profile** and update your information. You can also change your preferences, chapter, and department.

Second, those assigned to chapter 00, please join another one. They need your assistance and support. We have seven that need you to be a member.

Thank you for your service and continued support of our goals and missions.



VA Expands Veterans Legacy Memorial

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has expanded its Veterans Legacy Memorial (VLM) platform, now allowing living veterans to document and share their life stories. Created to honor deceased veterans, the VLM has grown into the largest repository of veteran memories and service records. This new feature enables veterans to upload personal narratives, photos, and memorabilia, contributing to the historical record for future generations.

Veterans can access this new feature through the "Your Story, Your Legacy" page on the VLM website at www.vlm.cem.va.gov. Since its launch in 2019, the platform has collected over 165,000 submissions and now encourages veterans to share their own stories. Content will be moderated by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) to ensure compliance with VLM guidelines.

Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Ronald Walters emphasized the significance of this update, noting that it allows veterans to preserve their stories for posterity. The VLM now serves not only as a memorial for the deceased but as a living archive where veterans can document their service, achievements, and personal reflections.

For more information or assistance, veterans can visit the [Veterans Legacy Memorial](http://www.veteranslegacy.com) website or use the VA's chatbot at www.va.gov to navigate available benefits and

services. This expansion reflects the VA's commitment to honoring veterans in a personal and lasting way, ensuring their stories are preserved for future generations.



**THE ROA DEPARTMENT OF THE GOLDEN WEST
"SENTINEL" NEWSLETTER EDITOR
RAFAEL A. ORTIZ, USCGR (Ret.)
ffpmORTIZ@gmail.com**

It is the editorial policy of the "SENTINEL" to publish information of import to the membership of the Department of the Golden West of ROA, that will keep members informed of pertinent information, and to encourage participation in ROA affairs at Chapter, Department, and National levels.

Unless specifically stated otherwise, opinions contained herein are those of the Editor or Columnists and are not necessarily those of the Reserve Organization of America or its Department of the Golden West. Additionally, any advertisements contained herein do not imply endorsement by ROA or the ROA Department of the Golden West of any products or services so advertised. We appreciate any comments concerning our coverage.

The Department of the Golden West publishes the "Sentinel" Newsletter yearly.

[Do to the update on the ROA National website:](#)

The SENTINEL is NO LONGER able to be emailed to the membership!

Until the department creates its own website, there will be no way to access our newsletters online.

You now need to log into www.roa.org and re-register for a new login. Please review your status, address, and contact information to make sure it is current and correct.

Please ensure that both your email and mailing address is current.

Department of the Golden West Convention

Hilton Doubletree San Diego Bayside Hotel

FRIDAY 24 APR 2026

1200-1730 Potential Tour of local Base.
1800-2100 Dinner at a local establishment for those interested. Email ffpmORTIZ@gmail.com
1600-2200 Hospitality room open. **Hotel Point Loma 1 meeting room.**

SATURDAY 25 APR 2026

Point Loma 1 Meeting Room

0800-0900 In-person Registration \$ 30.00 (Pre-registration is \$ 20.00)
0800-0900 Breakfast **Seapoint Room** *included with registration.
0900-0915 Opening Remarks – LTC Peter Powell, USA DoGW President
0915-0945 Speaker: Col Alexander Heyman, USAF, SDSU AF ROTC
0945-1000 Reports
- National Council
- Retirement Affairs
- Medical Services
1000-1015 Break
1015-1100 Reports Continued
- State coordination (CSCVC & NV)
- Outreach events
- Chapters 32, 43, 51, 53, 57, 63, 92.
1100-1300 Lunch *included with registration. **Seapoint Room** w/ Speaker TBD
1300-1400 General Business Session
- Treasurer, Financial requirements for department and chapters
- Future meeting times and locations
- Recruiting plan/goals.
- Confirmation of display locations
- Department website & navigating the new National Website
1400-1415 Break
1415-1630 Chapter/Committee and Service Section Meetings
- Status of chapters
- Chapter organization and support.
- ROTC / JROTC
- Family Support
1630-1700 New business
1800-2100 Dinner: **Garden or Marina Room** *included with registration.

SUNDAY 26 APR 2026

0800-0900 Breakfast **Seapoint Room** *included with registration.
0900-1000 **Point Loma 1 Meeting Room** Unfinished Business / Closing Remarks

***** ZOOM Link available upon request. Email ffpmORTIZ@gmail.com for the link. *****

ROA 2026 Department of the Golden West Convention

Saturday 25th & Sunday 26th APR 2026

DoubleTree by Hilton Bayside San Diego, CA

Attendee Information:

Name: _____ Member #: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

ROA Registration: Qty: _____ x \$ 20 = _____

(Early registration ends April 15th. Registration after April 15th will be \$ 30.)

Friday Night Social: Open to all ROA members, serving guard and reservists, or veterans in the Area.

Meals: Included in registration, please make your selection below:

Lunch: _____ Chicken Ceasar Salad _____ Cobb Salad

Dinner: _____ Salmon w/ Cilantro Lime Butter _____ Macadamia Nut Chicken

Uniform: Civilian: Business casual (Collar shirt, Coat if cold weather) or Military: Uniform of the day if required by your command.

Print ONLY THIS registration page!

Include a check made out to: ROA Dept of the Golden West

Mail to:

CPT Gordon Fell, USA (Ret)

2120 S. Beverly Dr.

Los Angeles, CA 90034-1066

HOTEL Information on next page: Limited reservations will fill up rapidly. It is easy to cancel closer to the date. Make your reservation TODAY!



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DEPARTMENT OF THE GOLDEN WEST
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San Diego, CA 92137**

**The Golden West
SENTINEL
Peace Through Strength**

The Department of the Golden West publishes the "Sentinel" Newsletter at least yearly. It is emailed by default to the membership unless a Hard Copy is *specifically requested* from the Sentinel Editor.

2025-2027 OFFICERS

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ESTIMATED POSTAL (3400) AND ELECTRONIC DELIVERY (2454) DISTRIBUTION OF THIS ISSUE = 3400