

Veterans Corner

Veterans Choice Program Extended

On April 5, 2017, following the U.S. Senate's passage by unanimous consent, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation that extends the Veterans Choice Program (VCP) until the funding dedicated to the program is exhausted. President Trump signed it into law on April 19, 2017. The VCP is a critical program that increases access to care for millions of Veterans, by allowing them to receive health care within their community, rather than from the VA health-care system. Using this program does NOT impact the veteran's existing VA health-care or any other VA benefit. Without this legislation, the ability to use VCP funding would have ended abruptly on Aug. 7 of this year. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. David J. Shulkin released the following statement of support:

"Congress has once again demonstrated that the country stands firmly united when it comes to supporting our nation's Veterans," Secretary Shulkin said. "The Department of Veterans Affairs truly appreciates the quick bipartisan resolution Congress provided with the extension of the Veterans Choice Program.

"I want to thank Chairman Johnny Isakson, Ranking Member Jon Tester, Chairman Phil Roe, Ranking Member Tim Walz and all the members of our committees for their leadership as we continue to make improvements to increase Veterans' access to care," Secretary Shulkin continued. "I also want to thank Senator John McCain, who has championed choice for Veterans and whose work on this issue allowed for swift and successful resolution.

"VA looks forward to continued bipartisan support as we partner with Congress to not only develop a long-term solution for community care, but also work toward other critical legislation, such as accountability and appeals modernization to ensure Veterans receive the highest quality of care, benefits and support they have earned."

For more information regarding eligibility for the VCP or any of the other numerous veterans benefits for which you may be eligible, please contact our office, using the information below.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office can complete the DMV Veteran Status Verification Form for the new California Veteran Designation on your driver's license and also issues Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Scott Holwell if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To determine if you are eligible for any of these benefits, call or visit our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com/vets.

Scott Holwell, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call (559)852-2669; or e-mail scott.holwell@co.kings.ca.us.