



THE AMERICAN LEGION FAMILY

STEVENS-CHUTE POST #4 and AUXILIARY

BEND, OREGON



IT'S ZOOM TIME AGAIN!
TUESDAY, FEB. 1, 6:00 pm

UPDATE

Remember Four Chaplains Day
February 3
*Honoring those who gave their lives
to save others.*

OUR IN-PERSON MEETING PROCEDURE: Potluck Dinners will resume once it is safe to do so. Before the meeting, social time starts at 6 pm, and Post and Auxiliary meetings follow about 6:30 pm. We enjoy the company of veterans and hope you'll join us. It doesn't matter where you served in the military, only that you served honorably. Families are always welcome. **BYOB** if you want something stronger than water or soda. A small donation is encouraged to help defray costs of refreshments and supplies. Thanks!



(l. to r.) Post 86 Vice Cdr. Ed Owens, Post 4 member Dick Tobiason, District 5 Cdr. Lance Trowbridge, Department Cdr. Don Weber, Department 2nd Vice Cdr. Cory Brockman, Department Judge Advocate/Alternate NEC Gene Hellickson, Post 4 Vice Cdr. Denny Shannon, and Post 4 Adjutant Vivian Shannon.

DISTRICT 5 LEGIONNAIRES MEET AT REDMOND'S POST 44

Despite winter driving conditions and COVID concerns, several Legionnaires met to discuss their mission. Tanner Stenkamp, junior at Redmond High School in Redmond, presented her 9-minute prepared speech on a facet of the US Constitution, as well as a 3 to 5-minute extemporaneous talk on a subject drawn from a hat by the judges.

A second competitor, Wes McGovern, a sophomore at Summit High School in Bend, sponsored by Post 4, was ill and could not attend. He will compete virtually. Post 4 will present him a \$500 scholarship for his presentation in the Post competition held a few weeks ago.

As Districts are allowed two contestants, both will compete at Department at the March 2022 contest.

Dick Tobiason of Post 4 presented a resolution generated by Post 4 to present to National to ask Congress to declare US Hwy 20 the National Medal of Honor Hwy. Only two states in the entire length

of Hwy 20 across the nation remain to ratify the inclusion of their states.

As there was not a quorum present, no vote was taken, but the resolution will be forwarded to Department for consideration at Department Convention in June, 2022.

District 5 Auxiliary meeting was cancelled due to the recent death of President Ginny Williams' husband, Willie Williams.

COMMANDER'S CORNER

I encourage all Post 4 members to join us on our February 1 Zoom membership meeting. You will receive an invitation to the meeting by way of a separate email.

We will be voting on our resolution to encourage National to ask Congress to designate US Hwy 20 as the National Medal of Honor Hwy. (Draft Resolution follows).

Take a moment to make a Buddy Call to your friends, neighbors and fellow veterans to see how they are doing and that you are there to assist them as needed. Do they have enough fuel for heat, enough food to eat, need a ride to doctor? Remember, they might hesitate to ask for help unless you offer.

Commander Denny Drury



Happy Valentines Day!
**Remember your veterans
and your sweetie!**

**DRAFT RESOLUTION NO:
THE AMERICAN LEGION STEVENS-CHUTE POST 4
BEND, OREGON**

TITLE: National Medal of Honor Highway

WHEREAS, The Medal of Honor award was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln in 1861 and 1862, and

WHEREAS, 3,511 members of the Armed Forces of the United States have been awarded the Medal of Honor, our nation's highest award for valor for *acting with conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty at the risk of one's life* during wars against enemies of the United States, and

WHEREAS, During 2017-2018, the nonprofit Bend Heroes Foundation managed creation of the 451-mile border to border Oregon Medal of Honor Highway across Oregon on US Highway 20 honoring all of Oregon's 29 Medal of Honor recipients of all wars and was the first state in our nation to do such, and

WHEREAS, During the 5-year period 2018-2022, Bend Heroes Foundation managed creation of the Medal of Honor Highway Across America through 12-states located along the 3,565-mile coast to coast U.S. Highway 20, the longest highway in our nation, and

WHEREAS, Numerous American Legion Posts and Departments across our nation have supported or led designations of the 12-state Medal of Honor Highways which complement one of the purposes stated in The American Legion's Preamble: "*To preserve the memories and incidents of our associations in all wars*", and

WHEREAS, Each of the 12-state Medal of Honor Highways honors the state's Medal of Honor recipients and recipients from any state who travel on it, and

WHEREAS, The 12-state Medal of Honor Highways along U.S. Highway 20 collectively honor about two-thirds of our nation's 3,511 Medal of Honor recipients with the remaining thirty-eight states accounting for about one-third of all awardees, and

WHEREAS, The United States Congress designated the coast-to-coast Lincoln and Eisenhower Highways honoring two former Commanders-in-Chief who either created or presented Medal of Honor awards during war, and

WHEREAS, Not a single highway across the United States has been designated by the United States Congress to honor all of our nation's Medal of Honor recipients since the Medal of Honor award was created 161 years ago; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By Stevens-Chute Post 4, The American Legion, Department of Oregon assembled in Bend, Oregon, February 1, 2022, respectfully requests The American Legion Department of Oregon to support this resolution and request The American Legion national organization to support and encourage the United States Congress to designate

the coast to coast U.S. Highway 20 as the "National Medal of Honor Highway" and require appropriate highway signage including display of the three versions of the Medal of Honor medal on all signs, and be it further

RESOLVED, A National Medal of Honor Highway will raise public awareness of the Medal of Honor award and the bravery of our nation's war heroes – an objective of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society chartered by Congress, and be it finally

RESOLVED, Designating the Newport, Oregon to Boston, Massachusetts coast-to-coast U.S. Highway 20 as the National Medal of Honor Highway by the United States Congress would honor all of our nation's current and future Medal of Honor recipients and promote education of the traveling public on the "bravest of the brave" American war veterans.

Denny Drury, Commander (date)

Vivian Shannon, Adjutant (date)

References: Congressional Medal of Honor Society: <https://www.cmohs.org/> Medal of Honor Highway Across America fact sheet, American Legion Preamble

Drafted by Dick Tobiason, Chairman, Bend Heroes Foundation, Member Post 4
1-24-2022



***A Community of Volunteers
Serving Veterans, Military,
and their Families***

NOTES FROM THE PREZ

Greetings from sunny Eloy, Arizona, where husband Denny and I are spending our fourth winter out of the cold and snowy Northwest. It looks however as if your temps in Central Oregon are as balmy as possible at this point!

Even tho we are far away, our hearts and minds are with our Legion Family at home, and we enjoy our monthly chats with Post 4 and Auxiliary friends, and sometimes occasional guests from District or Department.

I am in contact via phone, text and email and am here to serve our veterans' needs as if I were right next door. Take care and stay safe and warm!

Auxiliary President Yvonne Drury

VETERANS' BENEFITS CLAIMS SURGE AS VA LOOKS TO SPEED UP PROCESS

By Nikki Wentling/Stars and Stripes
JAN 19, 2022

The Department of Veterans Affairs initiated a pilot project in December to automate part of the process for reviewing benefits claims – a change that the agency says has the potential to shorten the time that veterans wait for decisions from 100 days to one or two days.

VA Secretary Denis McDonough announced the project Tuesday, and he described it as an “exciting new effort” that he hopes will “significantly reduce the time it takes to process veterans claims.” The VA created a new team to handle the project called the Office of Automated Benefit Delivery.

The announcement comes as the agency is experiencing a surge in backlogged claims. The VA considers claims as “backlogged” once they’ve been in the system for more than 125 days without being processed. As of Tuesday, there were about 260,000 backlogged claims, up from about 200,000 in October.

So far, the automation has been applied only to veterans’ applications for increased disability ratings for service-connected cases of hypertension. The VA benefits office in Boise, Idaho, is the only office handling the claims so far.

“It’s truly an exciting opportunity,” said Rob Reynolds, the VA’s acting deputy undersecretary for the new Office of Automated Benefit Delivery. “We’ve only started, but we’ve showed that the concept of proof is there.”

Under the program, a computer algorithm pulls data from the Veterans Health Administration about veterans, including their military service, claims history and medical treatment. If there’s enough medical evidence already in the system, the automated process will draft a proposed rating decision.

If there’s not enough information to make a decision, the automation will request the veteran undergo a compensation and pension exam. C&P exams are part of the traditional process for deciding benefits claims.

All the information is compiled and sent to a VA employee whose job is to rate benefits claims. Those employees make the final decisions, Reynolds said.

On average, the traditional claims process takes about 100 days. Since the pilot project started Dec. 15, the average time to make a decision on those claims is two days or less, Reynolds said. The process takes about 18 days if it’s necessary for a vet-

eran to get a C&P exam, he said.

“It’s truly demonstrating how we can systematically validate information and provide that information to our employees, while they still maintain the full adjudicative discretion,” Reynolds said.

The VA will work to expand the automated process to more types of claims, he said. The next step is to apply the process to claims for conditions that are on the agency’s presumptive list. Those conditions require less evidence to be approved.

Reynolds said his office is considering next applying the automated process to claims for conditions related to veterans’ toxic exposure, which account for many of the new claims being submitted to the VA.

Last year, the VA saw 60,000 claims from “Blue Water” Navy veterans – those who served offshore during the Vietnam War and claimed they were exposed to the chemical herbicide known as Agent Orange. Congress and the VA recently granted them a path to attaining benefits to seek treatment for their illnesses.

Veterans have submitted about 89,000 claims related to a decision made by Congress at the start of 2021 to place bladder cancer, hyperthyroidism and Parkinson’s-like symptoms on the presumptive list for VA benefits. Many veterans claimed they suffered from those conditions as a result of their exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

About 25,000 veterans have submitted claims for asthma, rhinitis or sinusitis because of their exposure to toxic burn pits. The VA decided in August to award benefits to Gulf War and post-9/11 veterans suffering from those conditions.

McDonough on Tuesday encouraged veterans to continue submitting claims, despite the backlog.

“Please, please submit your claims,” he said. “I promise you that we will stop at nothing to work through this backlog to get you timely access to benefits.”

McDonough insisted the new automation process would be “the wave that will really break through this backlog.” However, the department is also taking other steps to address the surge.

The VA is hiring a total of 2,094 claims processors, McDonough said. As of Tuesday, 1,078 have been hired, with the rest to be hired by spring. The department is paying its processors overtime with funds from the American Rescue Plan.

The department is also working with the National Archives to scan veterans’ records. Employees of the National Personnel Records Center, which is part of the National Archives, were not permitted to work on site at the start of the coronavirus pandemic. The records aren’t digitized, so workers couldn’t access them remotely. A backlog grew to about

500,000 records requests from veterans who need their military personnel information to apply for VA health care and benefits.

“They’re making real progress on scanning veteran records to make sure that there are no further delays due to COVID-driven closures of those facilities,” McDonough said.

FIND A SERVICE OFFICER

The American Legion Department of Oregon has an office in Portland with two service officers available to serve the needs of the veteran.

Location: 100 SW Main Street, Portland, OR
Office: 503-412-4706
Fax: 503-412-4772



ED VAN DYKE
Dept. Service Officer



JODY MARSH
Asst. Service Officer

FROM THE ADJUTANT

I am happy to report that our membership is at 80% of our goal for 2021-2022. If you have not yet renewed, please do so online or send a \$49 check to American Legion Post 4, PO Box 784, Bend, OR 97709.

District 5 has donated \$100 to Post 4 to assist with renewals for three members.

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact me at vshannon920@gmail.com.

Department is holding a fundraising raffle for the “Legacy & Vision” The American Legion 100th Anniversary lithograph print, wood-framed and matted with the American Legion Centennial Silver Dollar. Tickets are \$10. Contact Department Headquarters or members of the TOALF committee.

Adjutant Vivian Shannon



POST EVERLASTING

It is with sadness we have learned of the death of our Oregon Legion Family friend, Willie Williams. Willie was a member of the Prineville Sons of the American Legion, and a National board member.

At every event, Willie was there greeting old friends and making new ones, always with a big smile and handshake. He leaves behind his wife, Ginny, the current District 5 Auxiliary President, and grown children. He will be missed.

Join us Tuesday, February 1 Zoom chat! Invitation in email to follow.

Please contact us when we can be of assistance.

2021-2022 Post Officers:

Cdr: 541-480-7600

Adj: 425-220-3089

Chap: 425-220-3089

Commander Denny Drury

Vice Commander Denny Shannon

Chaplain Vivian Shannon

Adjutant Vivian Shannon

Finance Officer Denny Drury

Mailing address: American Legion Post #4, PO Box 784, Bend, OR 97709

2021-2022 Unit Officers:

Pres: 541-390-4231

Chap: 541-419-3990

President Yvonne Drury

Vice President Katie Terry

Secretary Karen Banks

Treasurer Carole Jura

Chaplain Bonnie Wilkins

Sgt-at-Arms Kellie Terry Pelham

Mailing address: American Legion Auxiliary Unit #4, PO Box 7911, Bend, OR 97708

To be removed from this email list, please email ydrury47@gmail.com with “unsubscribe” in the subject line.

If you have information of interest to Veterans, please submit to Yvonne at ydrury47@gmail.com