



# DMAVA HIGHLIGHTS

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March 20, 2014



*U.S. Navy Coxswain Mario Marcucci, left, and Marine Cpl. Armit Harrison proudly wear the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal presented at the center court of the Deptford Mall March 18, 2014. The World War II veterans were among 16 veterans presented with state medals by Brig. Gen. James J. Grant, Director of the Joint Staff, New Jersey National Guard. The medal ceremony marked the start of a three-day visit of the veterans outreach kiosk at the Gloucester County mall, where veterans and their family members can learn more about benefits or entitlements that they could be eligible to receive. (NJDMAVA photo by Kryn P. Westhoven/Released)*



## U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

### VA MAKES SPECIALLY ADAPTIVE HOUSING GRANT ELIGIBILITY AUTOMATIC FOR VETERANS AND SERVICEMEMBERS LIVING WITH ALS

WASHINGTON - Veterans and active-duty military personnel with service-connected amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease, are now presumed medically eligible for grants up to almost \$68,000 to adapt their homes, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today.

"VA is committed to eliminating barriers that keep Veterans and Servicemembers from the benefits they have earned," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "This change will make it easier for some of our most severely impaired Veterans to receive speedy assistance adapting their homes to their unique needs."

The change affects recipients of VA's specially adapted housing grants, which helps pay for the costs for building, buying or adapting a home, up to a maximum of \$67,555.

Under the change, Veterans and Servicemembers with service-connected ALS will be determined medically eligible for the maximum grant. The program provides grants to eligible service-connected disabled Veterans and Servicemembers to construct or modify a home to meet their unique housing needs. Grants are also available to help eligible individuals purchase adapted homes or pay down mortgages on homes that are already adapted. VA estimates this change will save approximately 12 months in the overall process of a Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant.

"This change automates and shortens our SAH grant delivery process for Veterans and Servicemembers living with ALS," said Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. "SAH is an important benefit giving beneficiaries the ability to

adapt their homes and create a barrier free living environment-expanding their independence in their own homes."

In 2008, VA established a presumption of service connection for ALS for any Veteran who develops the disease at any time after separation from service, making them eligible for monthly VA disability compensation benefits. VA amended its disability rating scale in January 2012, to assign a 100-percent disability evaluation for any Veteran who has service-connected ALS.

ALS is a rapidly progressive, totally debilitating, and irreversible motor neuron disease that results in muscle weakness leading to a wide range of serious disabilities, including impaired mobility. VA adapted its rules so Veterans with service-connected ALS no longer have to file multiple claims with VA for increased benefits as their condition progresses. Prior to the new SAH regulatory change, many Veterans and Servicemembers who were rated by VA for service connected ALS, but who did not yet have symptoms debilitating enough to affect their mobility to the degree required for SAH grant eligibility, were unable to begin the process of modifying their homes to accommodate their often rapidly progressing conditions.

VA's SAH program provides grants to eligible service-connected disabled Veterans and Servicemembers for the purpose of constructing or modifying a home to meet their unique housing needs. The ultimate goal of the program is to provide a barrier-free living environment that affords a level of independent living that the veteran or service member may not otherwise enjoy.

For more information, visit: <http://benefits.va.gov/homeloans/adaptedhousing.asp>.



# HIGHLIGHTS

## EVERY DAY WE'RE SHUFFLING!



*Staff Sgt. Walfrin "Wally" Batista, A Troop, 102 Cavalry, right, talks about his experience as a New Jersey Army National Guard member and as a veteran for a documentary being produced for Rutgers University.*

### PHOTOS BY



*Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Lewis, center, 42nd Regional Support Group, addresses Soldiers of the 154th Quartermaster (water purification) Company at the units armory in New Egypt regarding changes coming to the military.*

### KRYN P. WESTHOVEN



*Sgt. Alaina Hornarth, Co. D, 250th Brigade Support Battalion, Westfield, N.J., loads magazines for 102nd Cavalry troops as they qualified with their individual weapons March 14, 2014 at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst.*



*Pfc. Saskya Pachas, left, and Staff Sgt. Maria Alvarez go through combative exercise at Doughboy Gym March 6, 2014. Soldiers of the 1-150 Aviation completed pre-mobilization training at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst last week.*



**2014 Passaic County Veterans Fair – Wayne, NJ  
Wayne Police Athletic League (PAL)  
1 PAL Drive, Wayne, NJ 07470  
March 22, 2014**

**VETERANS JOB FAIR: 10 A.M – 2P.M**

**Sponsored by: Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen**

**In Cooperation with:**

**Mayor Christopher Vergano**

**Township of Wayne Council**

**The Department of Veterans Affairs**

**Passaic County Veterans Services**

**NJ Fallen Soldiers Foundation**

**Workshops - Learn about the latest changes in veterans benefits**

**Presented by the VA at 11 AM and 1PM**

**Resource Providers on hand to assist veterans:**

**Benefits | Entitlements | Health Services**

**Employers | Bring your resume!**



**Catholic  
Charities**



**EMPLOYERS**

**Hiring Veterans initiative, local and  
commercial business welcomed!**

**JOB SEEKERS**

**Veterans, Active Duty Military,  
Members of Guard and Reserve  
Components, Military Spouses**

For more Information and resource provider registration please contact:

Jon Donado

Constituent Services Representative

Congressman Rodney P. Frelinghuysen

Phone: (973) 984-0711

For transportation to the event please call: 973-872-4707

**HIGHLIGHTS**

# **NEW JERSEY NATIONAL GUARD**

## **WOMEN**



# **SERVING OUR STATE & NATION**



**The National Guard Association of New Jersey** is holding its annual **membership drive** through **31 March**. All commissioned and warrant officers in the New Jersey Army and Air National Guard are eligible for membership in the association.

The goal of the NGANJ is to promote the interests of our membership, their families and all members of the NJ National Guard. Your membership in the association helps us achieve those goals. For further information on the association, visit our website at [www.nganj.org](http://www.nganj.org). Information on membership dues can be found at [www.nganj.org/membership](http://www.nganj.org/membership).

You can pay directly online via credit card or you can pay through your unit representative. If you need assistance finding your unit representative to the NGANJ, send an email to [secretary@nganj.org](mailto:secretary@nganj.org) for further information.



Join our social media groups

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**New Jersey Department of Military and Veterans Affairs**  
Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff – The Adjutant General  
Brig. Gen. James J. Grant – Director, Joint Staff  
Raymond Zawacki – Deputy Commissioner for Veterans Affairs  
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Patrick Daugherty – Public Affairs Officer  
Army Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley - Public Affairs Specialist  
Air Force Tech. Sgt. Armando Vasquez – Public Affairs Specialist