

Vital Information For Veterans

SAN FRANCISCO-- Vietnam-era veterans make such good employees that the Veterans Administration hired 3,800 more of them in 1979 than it had in 1978. Agency chief Max Cleland said that as 1980 began the VA counted 40,473 Vietnam-era veterans among its 230,538 employees. They outnumber veterans of any other war on the VA payroll.

"It's not only appropriate-- because VA has taken the lead in urging private enterprise to hire Vietnam-era veterans-- but it's just plain good business," Cleland said.

And he cited another plus: "Having them at VA assures more empathy within the Agency for the needs and problems of Vietnam-era veterans who need our assistance.

The VA chief, a severely disabled veteran of the Vietnam conflict, gives major credit for the high level of employment of this group of veterans to effective use of the Veterans Readjustment Authority (VRA).

This is a program that permits federal agencies to hire certain Vietnam-era veterans without going through the regular civil service competitive employment process.

In Fiscal Year 1979, for example, VRA accounted for nearly half of the new Vietnam-era veterans hired by the Agency.

Since the enactment of the VRA in 1970, VA has used it to employ 53,662 veterans, more than a third of the total for all federal agencies.

The VRA program is open to veterans whose military service was between Aug. 5, 1964, and May 7, 1975, the official dates marking the beginning and end of the Vietnam era.

In total, VA has 85,831 veterans of all wars on its rolls.

SAN FRANCISCO - The first decrease in the G.I. home loan interest rate ceiling since 1976 was announced today by Veterans Administration chief Max Cleland.

The new maximum rate - 13% - took effect Monday, April 28. It is a full point below the record 14% ceiling which has been in effect since April 3.

For a veteran buying a home with a 30-year, \$50,000 G.I. loan, the one percent will lower the monthly payment by about \$50.

The rate change does not affect existing loans, Cleland pointed out. Once a loan is made the interest rate remains the same over the life of the loan.

The new 13% rate was agreed upon jointly by VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and is in line with interest rate reductions in the private sector.

The VA guarantees

loans made by private lenders to eligible veterans, unmarried surviving spouses and active duty military personnel. The guaranty covers 60% of the loan amount or a maximum of \$25,000, whichever is lower.

The VA has guaranteed loans worth \$8.6 billion so far in fiscal year 1980. Since the G.I. loan guaranty program began in 1944, approximately 10.5 million loans worth \$178.6 billion have been guaranteed by VA, Cleland said.

SAN FRANCISCO-- Former prisoners of war (POWs) who were held in captivity for six months or more are now eligible for any dental care deemed necessary by the Veterans Administration.

Also eligible are certain veterans whose service connected disabilities are permanently rated at 100%.

Veterans who believe they may qualify for the expanded dental benefits should contact the VA health care facility nearest their place of residence for applications

and assistance. Dental treatment for former POWs was previously limited to dental problems rated as service connected. The new legislation-- Public Law 96-22--distinguishes between former POWs held captive for less than six months and those who were prisoners for six months or more.

Short term prisoners are presumed not to have suffered irreparable dental damage while those held prisoner for six months or more are considered to have suffered such damage.

For this reason they are now eligible for any dental care, as determined necessary by VA, on an unlimited treatment

basis. Under certain conditions, veterans living in localities remote from VA health care facilities may be authorized treatment for VA dental care:

- veterans with compensable service connected dental conditions;
- veterans who apply within one year of [See Veterans, page 6]

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