



# VETERANS VOICE

Winnebago County Department of Veterans Services Newsletter

June 2024

## Intent To File and Retroactive Benefits

Last year, more Veterans submitted their “[intent to file](#)” (ITF) for benefits claims than [ever before](#). These ITFs are disability compensation claims that Veterans started, but didn’t finish, and they’re an important tool because they help Veterans preserve their earliest possible effective date for their benefits claim, which makes them potentially eligible for backdated benefits.

If you submitted an ITF last year, you must act fast. You only have 365 days from when you submitted your ITF to complete it. Here’s everything you need to know about ITFs and submitting your full claim.

### How long do I have to finish my intent to file?

You must finish your intent to file - and submit you complete claim - within 365 days of submitting to preserve the earliest possible effective date for your benefits.

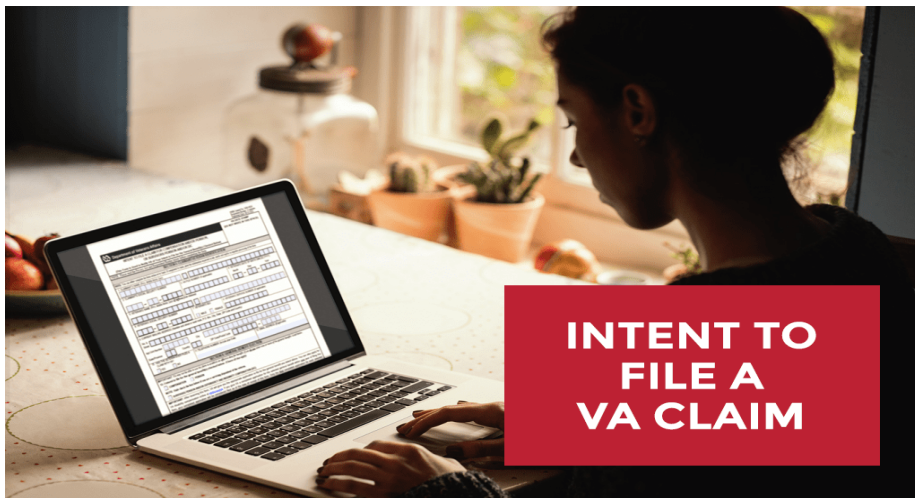
### What does this mean under the PACT Act?

If we grant you benefits under the PACT Act and you submitted your intent to file on or before Aug. 14, 2023, you may be eligible for retroactive benefits dating back to Aug. 10, 2022 - the date PACT Act was signed into law.

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“Being brave isn’t the absence of fear. Being brave is having that fear but finding a way through it.”

- Bear Grylls



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### What does this mean for non-PACT claims?

If we grant your benefits, we'll provide benefits that likely will date back to at least the date when you began your intent to file. We call this retroactive benefits (or backdated benefits). And this could be thousands of dollars.

### How do I check the status of my ITF?

The quickest and easiest way to check the status of your PACT Act claim is to sign into your va.gov account with your existing [Login.gov](#), [ID.me](#), [DS Logon](#) or [MyHealthVet account](#). If you don't have any of these accounts, you can create a free Login.gov or ID.me account. Once you are signed into your account, simply follow these three steps to check the status of your PACT Act claim.

- Go to your "My VA" dashboard. You will find the link for this dashboard in the top right corner of the page once you're signed in.
- Scroll down to the "Track Claims" section. There, you will see a summary of the latest status information for any open claims or appeals you may have, to include open ITFs.
- Click on the "View Status" button for a specific claim. You'll go to a page with more details about that claim's status and supporting evidence. Evidence may include documents like doctor's reports or medical test results.

### Is it too late to file a claim if I haven't already?

It's never too late to file a claim or ITF for the benefits you deserve. You can contact the [Winnebago County Veterans Service Office](#) to get help filing a claim for disability compensation.

### Will I be charged for submitting a claim or intent to file?

No. Remember, VA will never charge you for assistance filing for benefits. They are your benefits, and you earned them. To protect yourself from predatory claims agents, you have the right to [verify anyone's credentials](#) before filing a claim or providing personal information.

### If I miss the one-year deadline, what happens?

You can still finish your claim anytime, and we encourage you to do so. The only thing that may change is the effective date of your benefits.

For more information about ITFs, visit <https://www.va.gov/resources/your-intent-to-file-a-va-claim/>.



## National Great Outdoors Month

### Great Outdoors Month

Great Outdoors Month in June beckons us to go out and explore all that nature has to offer. Nature provides something for everyone, whether you prefer trudging through thick green forests, hiking on mountain trails, swimming in cool waters, or simply gazing at the stars or clouds in the sky.

Since 2008, many states in the U.S. have shown interest in celebrating this event, and by the end of 2019, more than 30 US. States had become a part of this yearly celebration. So get outdoors and immerse yourself in the natural beauty around you.

#### 5 Facts about Mother Nature:

- 1) The amount of water on Earth remains constant because of the cyclical nature whereby water evaporates, condenses, and filters throughout the year.
- 2) A single tree releases more than 260 pounds of oxygen every year.
- 3) Trees and forests provide shelter to 80% of wild animals.
- 4) Fall leaves comprise 75% of the solid waste in America's fall season.
- 5) The first Earth Day in 1970 was celebrated by 20 million Americans everywhere.

You can celebrate Great Outdoors Month by going on a nature trip or exploring new territories. By spending more time outdoors you get a breather and can learn new things.

# VA Survivors Benefits

VA honors the sacrifices of service members' and Veterans' dependents and survivors through many benefit programs, which may be available to a surviving spouse, dependent children and/or parents. Surviving family members may be eligible for certain VA [benefits](#) and programs, such as financial assistance, home loans, [education assistance](#), [VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation \(DIC\)](#), or survivors [pension](#).

## Summary of Survivors Benefits

### Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)

Monthly payment for the eligible surviving spouse, dependent children or parent(s) of the Veteran or service member IF the Veteran or service member died in the line of duty or due to a service-related injury or illness.

### Accrued Benefits

A one-time payment to a surviving spouse, dependent children or dependent parents of a deceased Veteran based on relationship when the record shows additional benefits (such as compensation or pension) may have been due to the Veteran prior to passing.

### Burials and Burial Allowance

Burial benefits available include a gravesite in any VA National cemetery with available space, opening and closing of the grave, perpetual care; a government headstone, marker, or medallion; a burial flag, and a Presidential Memorial Certificate, at no cost. Some survivors may also be eligible for a plot allowance, transportation allowance, and burial allowances based on the service-connected disability status of the deceased Veteran.

### Final Monthly Payment

If a Veteran who is receiving VA compensation or pension benefits passes away, their last month of benefits can be paid to their surviving spouse.

### Education and Training

Chapter 35 benefits and the Fry Scholarship are the two main G.I. Bill programs offering educational assistance to survivors and dependents of Veterans who died in the line of duty or as a result of service-related disabilities.

### Home Loan Guaranty

Home loan benefits are available for surviving spouses receiving DIC. Spouses of deceased Veterans who were on the VA-guaranteed loan can refinance their VA loan to obtain a lower interest rate through VA's Interest Rate Reduction Refinancing Loan (IRRRL). If a surviving spouse is having trouble making their mortgage payments, VA can provide counseling to help avoid foreclosure - even if the loan isn't a VA-guaranteed loan. Surviving spouses can contact a VA loan technician at 877-827-3702.

### Survivors Pension

A VA Survivors Pension offers monthly payments to qualified surviving spouses and unmarried dependent children of wartime Veterans who meet certain income and net worth limits set by Congress.

### VA Caregiver Support Program

Advance care planning allows the caregiver and the Veteran to make important health care wishes known in advance, including assigning a trustworthy individual to make medical decisions for the Veteran if they are not able to. An advance directive is crucial for ensuring that the wishes and preferences of both caregivers and the individuals they care for are respected.

# Upcoming Event

*Sunday, June 30, 2024* ★ *9:30 am - 5 pm*

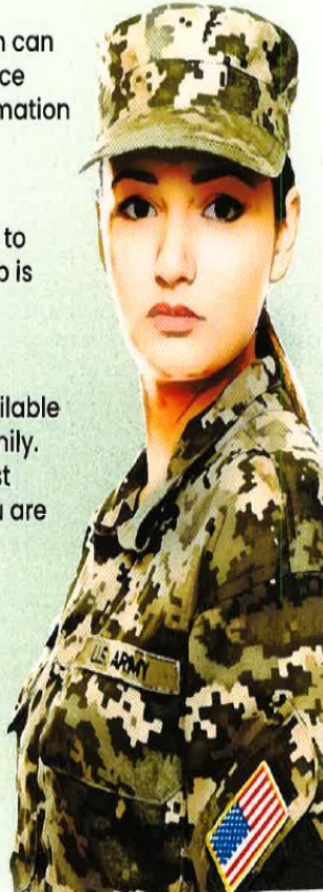
## MILITARY & VETERANS FAMILY DAY

*Milwaukee County Zoo*

**Enjoy free Zoo admission and parking**

*Tickets available May 28 - June 28*

- ★ Active military and veterans residing in Wisconsin can pick up tickets at their local County Veteran Service Office (CVSO). Contact your local CVSO for information on obtaining tickets.
- ★ Don't miss the Veterans Benefit Expo from **9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.** where veterans can learn how to get the benefits they deserve. This one-stop-shop is presented by the Milwaukee County Veteran Service Office.
- ★ **Important:** Tickets are required for entry and available for immediate family only. Limit 10 tickets per family. Tickets are limited and will be distributed on a first come first service basis. Only obtain tickets if you are sure you will be visiting the Zoo on June 30.



Milwaukee County Zoo  
10001 W. Bluemound Rd.  
Milwaukee, WI 53226

### CONTACT US

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Send a request to:

[CVSO@winnebagocountywi.gov](mailto:CVSO@winnebagocountywi.gov)

Visit us on the web at:

[www.winnebagocountywi.gov/veterans](http://www.winnebagocountywi.gov/veterans)



[www.facebook.com/WinnebagoCVSO](http://www.facebook.com/WinnebagoCVSO)

For a list of more events, check out our [calendar](#) !