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1. **CONTACTS:** To help you obtain information about claims or other needs:

- **VETERANS CRISIS LINE:** Veterans and loved ones can call (800) 273-8255 24/7 and then press 1 with total anonymity to speak to a professional counselor. A Houston Vet Center counselor, **James Bailey**, is available in Don Montoya's office on Thursdays for veterans and their families. Call Don's office at (979) 532-1311 for an appointment to see James Bailey. See forms on my desk for information.
- **Dwight Winkler**, 2254 CR 291, East Bernard, TX 77435; (979) 335-4464;
lerwinkdd@aol.com
- **Don Montoya**, Wharton County Veterans Service Officer, 1017 N. Alabama Road, Wharton, TX 77488; (979) 532-1311, don.montoya@co.wharton.tx.us ; **NEW OFFICE HOURS:** M, TUES, THUR (Wharton), 8:00a.m.-12:00 noon & 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.; FRI (Wharton), 8:00a.m.-12:00 noon by appointment only & 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m. (Administrative time); On WED (El Campo library), 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. **Don out 10/10-10/13/2017**
- **Vanessa Hicks-Callaway**, (Congressman **Blake Farenthold's** Veteran Advocate), (361) 894-6446, Vanessa.Hicks-Callaway@mail.house.gov . **NOTE: Vanessa Hicks-Callaway will work with you if you have problems with FEMA or any other government agency as you deal with Hurricane Harvey issues.**
- **Matt Minor**, (Texas State Representative **Phil Stephenson's** Veteran Advocate), (281) 232-7900, Matt.Minor@house.state.tx.us
- **VA COMPLAINT HOTLINE:** New VA complaint hotline number is (855) 948-2311. Be courteous and be able to answer WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY about "wrong doing at the VA."
- **NEW VA PHONE NUMBER TO CALL 1-844-698-2311;** This new national toll-free number is a goto source for Veterans and their families who do not know what number to call at the VA. It is identified at the VA as **myVA311**. [Goto myVA311 Webpage](#)

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2. **VA BENEFIT PAYMENT SCHEDULE:** Oct 2017-Nov 1, 2017; Nov 2017-Dec 1, 2017; and Dec 2017-Dec 29, 2017. (Source: Veteransbenefits@public.govdelivery.com)

3. **MILITARY RECORDS:** If you have not sent off for your military records, I recommend you send off for the records (using a 3-pg SF-180 form) before a fee is charged for obtaining them. See Don Montoya for information on how to obtain your records as well as replacement medals, awards and decorations. I presented this information to the Chapter in the following handout links: [1/8/2014](#), [1/14/2015](#), [9/9/2015](#), and [9/14/2016](#). (Source: VSO Training). **Use the link below to view & print the SF-180 form, and to read the details on filling out the 3-page form and the mailing address to mail the form to.** **Note that the last page of the 3-pg form will include instructions, showing where you will need to mail the form.** <https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/standard-form-180.html>

[Or view/print the SF-180 form that's on our chapter's website.](#)

4. **VA UPDATES RATING CRITERIA FOR DENTAL DISABILITIES:** After more than 70 years, the VA is doing a comprehensive review and update of the 15 body systems. The first of these updates, for Dental and Oral Conditions, went into effect September 10, 2017. This update includes updated medical terms, new diagnostic codes for conditions previously rated under other conditions, and added disability levels. *"NO EXISTING DENTAL OR ORAL CONDITIONS WERE REMOVED. IF YOU ARE ALREADY SERVICE-CONNECTED FOR A DENTAL OR ORAL CONDITION AND SUBMIT A CLAIM FOR INCREASE, YOUR DISABILITY RATING MAY INCREASE (OR DECREASE) BASED ON THE NEW RATING CRITERIA."* In the coming months, more body systems will be updated until all 15 systems are **modernized**, ensuring VA provides the most accurate ratings for disability compensation claims based on modern medicine. Bob Supak, our Chapter web master, posted this on our Chapter web site on 9/19/2017. [Go to our website and visit Dwight's Veterans Benefits page](#) for detailed information associated with the 15 VA defined body systems. (Src: <http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/41029/va-updates-rating-criteria-disabilities/>)

5. **FREE FLU SHOTS:** Walgreens pharmacies and the VA have teamed up again for free flu shots through March 31, 2018. Call 800 925-4733 or go to <https://www.walgreens.com> to locate a store near you. Call to obtain the necessary documentation to verify your eligibility. The Group ID is: **VAFLU** (Source: eBenefits@public.govdelivery.com)

6. **REPLACING VITAL DOCUMENTS, PAGE 3:** The next page is titled "Replacing Vital Documents - Texas" and is intended to serve as a source to replace documents that have been lost due to flooding or other reasons. (Source: It was received from Wharton County Veteran Service Officer Don Montoya on 9/27/2017 and its main website is <https://www.usa.gov/replace-vital-documents>)

7. **CAMP LEJEUNE PRESUMPTIVE DISEASES, PAGE 4:** Eligibility, diseases and application process are explained on this page. See 3/18/17 VVA Info (Source: WCVSO, 9/27/2017). [Also see our chapter's webpage for more information.](#)