

June 2007



**AFSC NEWS**  
**Updates**

**AFSC**

**Veterans News Updates**

**June 2007**

**June 15, 2007**

**VA Medical Centers Extending Hours**

**June 13, 2007**

**Nicholson Praises SBA's Patriot Express Loans**

**June 1, 2007**

**Great Lakes National Cemetery Officially Dedicated**

**May 29, 2007**

**VA Opening 38 New Clinics**

**May 25, 2007**

**Senate Confirms VA's Kussman and Harvey**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE June 15, 2007

**VA Medical Centers Extending Hours**  
***Change Benefits New Combat Veterans, Older Vets***

WASHINGTON -- In order to provide more health care for more veterans, especially mental health services, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson has directed the 153 medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to keep their doors open longer.

"Illness doesn't follow a 9-to-5 schedule," Nicholson said. "I'm directing our medical centers to provide extended hours to ensure we're there for the veterans who have earned our care."

Although the extra hours apply to many hospital-based programs and services, Nicholson said his latest decision was based upon a desire to ensure VA's more than 9,000 mental health professionals are available when veterans need them.

VA operates the largest integrated health care system in the country and the nation's largest mental health program. About 5.5 million veterans are expected to seek health care from VA's nationwide system this year, accounting for about 800,000 hospitalizations and 60 million outpatient visits.

In recent months, Nicholson has announced a number of initiatives to improve mental health care for returning combat veterans, including the hiring of suicide prevention coordinators for each medical center, 100 new adjustment counselors for VA's 207 Vet Centers, and 100 new medical center employees to serve as advocates for the severely wounded.

VA's mental health experts will gather in Washington in July for a four-day conference reassessing the Department's programs for veterans, especially veterans from the conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan.

# # #

[Back to Top](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE June 13, 2007

**Nicholson Praises SBA's Patriot Express Loans  
Vets a "Great Resource" for Business, Secretary Says**

WASHINGTON -- With nearly a quarter of newly discharged veterans considering starting their own businesses, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson praised a new Small Business Administration venture to make business ownership easier for all veterans.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has unveiled a program called "Patriot Express" that offers a wide variety of assistance to veterans interested in setting up or expanding their own small businesses.

"America's veterans are a great resource for the private sector," Nicholson said. "I commend Administrator Steve Preston of the Small Business Administration for his initiative in helping veterans transition back into the private sector."

Assistance under the new SBA program for veterans ranges from help writing a business plan and managing a business, to obtaining financing and learning how to export goods. Participants may also qualify for loans between 2.25 percent and 4.75 percent over the prime interest rate.

Patriot Express is open to veterans, reservists and National Guard members, current spouses of eligible personnel, the surviving spouses of service members who die on active duty, or spouses of veterans who die from a service-connected disability.

Expanding veterans' eligibility to SBA's Patriot Express program was a key recommendation of a presidential task force on the needs of returning veterans that Nicholson chaired. Nicholson delivered the panel's report to the White House on April 23.

More information about the SBA program is available at <http://www.sba.gov/patriotexpress>.

# # #

[Back to Top](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE June 1, 2007

## **Great Lakes National Cemetery Officially Dedicated**

### ***Michigan Veterans Attend Ceremony for New National Shrine***

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson will officiate at ceremonies June 3 dedicating the Great Lake National Cemetery in Holly, Mich.

“This will be a great day for Michigan’s veterans, as we dedicate this magnificent facility to honor their service to our nation,” Nicholson said. “Veterans have earned the right to be buried, if they choose, with their comrades in a national shrine.”

The Secretary will be joined at the dedication by William F. Tuerk, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and local officials.

Burials actually began at the 544-acre site in Oakland County on Oct. 17, 2005, and more than 2,500 interments have already taken place. Nearly 487,000 veterans and their families live within the service radius of the national cemetery, which is 45 miles northwest of Detroit.

Phase 1 construction of the cemetery, which is nearly complete, includes a public information center, an administration and maintenance complex, two committal shelters and an entrance area. The developed area has capacity for 6,500 full-casket gravesites, 1,450 in-ground cremation gravesites and 1,768 columbaria niches for cremation remains.

Veterans with a discharge other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible dependent children can be buried in a national cemetery. Other burial benefits available for all eligible veterans, regardless of whether they are buried in a national cemetery or a private cemetery, include a burial flag, a Presidential Memorial Certificate and a government headstone or marker.

In the midst of the largest cemetery expansion since the Civil War, VA operates 125 national cemeteries in 39 states and Puerto Rico, and 33 soldiers' lots and monument sites. More than three million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict, are buried in VA’s national cemeteries on more than 17,000 acres of land.

Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from the Internet at <http://www.cem.va.gov> or by calling VA toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.

Information about the Great Lakes National Cemetery can be obtained from the cemetery office at (248) 328-0386.

# # #

[Back to Top](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE May 29, 2007

**VA Opening 38 New Clinics**  
***World-Class Health Care Brought Closer to More Veterans***

WASHINGTON – To bring the world-class health care of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) closer to where veterans live, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson today announced plans to open 38 new community-based clinics in 22 states.

“VA is committed to providing world-class health care to the men and women who have served this nation,” Nicholson said. “These new clinics will bring VA’s top-notch care closer to the veterans who have earned it.”

With 153 hospitals and about 700 community-based clinics, VA operates the largest integrated health care system in the country. VA’s health care budget of more than \$34 billion this year will provide health care to about 5.5 million people during nearly 800,000 hospitalizations and 60 million outpatient visits.

“Community-based medicine is better medicine,” said Dr. Michael Kussman, VA’s Acting Under Secretary for Health. “It makes preventative care easier for patients, helps doctors have closer relationships with their patients and permits easier follow-ups for people with chronic problems.”

The new facilities, called community-based outpatient clinics, or CBOCs, will become operational by October 2008. Local VA officials will keep communities and their veterans informed of milestones in the creation of the new CBOCs.

A list of the new community clinics follows:

**VA’s Proposed Sites for New Outpatient Clinics**

**Alabama** -- Childersburg

**Arkansas** -- Pine Bluff

**Florida** -- Jackson and Putnam

**Georgia** -- Camden and Stockbridge

**Idaho** -- North Idaho

**Indiana** -- Elkhart County and Knox

**Iowa** -- Carroll, Cedar Rapids, Marshalltown and Shenandoah

**Kansas** -- Hutchison

**Kentucky** -- Berea, Daviess and Grayson County

**Maryland** -- Andrews Air Force Base and Ft. Detrick

**Michigan** -- Alpena County and Clare County

**Missouri** -- Branson and Jefferson City

**Montana** -- Cut Bank and Lewistown

**Nebraska** -- Bellevue

**South Carolina** -- Aiken and Spartanburg

**South Dakota** -- Wagner and Watertown

**Ohio** -- Hamilton and Parma

**Tennessee** -- Hawkins and Madison

**Utah** -- Western Salt Lake Valley

**Virginia** -- Charlottesville

**Washington** -- Northwest

**West Virginia** -- Monongalia

For more information: <http://www.va.gov/>

# # #

[Back to Top](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE May 25, 2007

**Senate Confirms VA's Kussman and Harvey**  
*Nicholson: Appointments "Good News" for Veterans*

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Senate confirmed appointments today of two experienced veterans' advocates to top jobs at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) where they will serve as VA's senior physician and chief of congressional affairs.

Dr. Michael J. Kussman was confirmed as Under Secretary for Health, and Thomas E. Harvey was confirmed as Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs.

"The continued service of these two dedicated public servants will significantly advance the interests of America's veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson. "Their confirmations are good news for veterans and their families."

Kussman, a native of Troy, N.Y., joined VA in 2000. Among his VA positions, he has served as Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health and since August 2006 as Acting Under Secretary for Health.

A graduate of Boston University Medical School, he is a retired Army brigadier general who spent more than 25 years on active duty. He commanded the Walter Reed Health Care System and the European Regional Medical Command.

Harvey, who holds a law degree from the University of Notre Dame, commanded an airborne infantry company during the Vietnam War. He holds the Silver Star and the Purple Heart.

He was deputy administrator of VA's predecessor organization, the Veterans Administration, from 1986 to 1989. A former chief counsel and staff director for the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, he has also been General Counsel for the U.S. Information Agency, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisitions and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Logistics.

# # #

[Back to Top](#)