



Suffolk County American Legion
608 Arlington Road
West Babylon NY 11704

Dear Educator:

We enclose the "Contest Rules" for the annual Suffolk County American Legion *Poster and Essay Contest* and ask that you kindly inform your students at your schools of this contest.

The Suffolk County Organization of the American Legion offers this contest to all eligible students as outlined in the rules. Prizes will be awarded to the 1st place winner of \$50 and a medal in each grade category after the contest. 2nd Place runner up will receive a medal. All students who participate will receive a special gift. Classes who participate will certificate from the Americanism Committee of the Suffolk County American Legion

ALL ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY MIDNIGHT FRIDAY APRIL 16th, 2023

Winning students, their teachers and schools will be notified. All winning students and their teachers will be invited to attend the Suffolk County American Legion Annual Convention on June 2023 at location TBA

We look forward to the participation of students from your school.

For God and Country,

Joseph Regina
Americanism Chairman

Check with your local American Legion Post with any questions



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2023-2024 County-Wide School Children's Americanism Contest

The American Legion is dedicated to service to "God and Country." One of the ways we perform this service is by taking an active interest in the preparation of our youth so they will become patriotic, freedom-loving, freedom-preserving and contributing citizens, who are proud to say that they are Americans.

Poster Contest Rules

- Subject: *The American Flag and What It Means to Me*
- Eligibility: Third through Fifth Grade students enrolled in an accredited school.
- Materials: Poster - Mixed media, maximum size 18" X "24"
- Format: On the back of each poster include the following information:
Contestant's Name and Age
School and Grade
Teacher's Name and Subject
Teacher's contact telephone number

Essay Contest Rules

- Subject: *The Bill of Rights (First Ten Amendments) of the Constitution and What It Means to All Americans*
- Eligibility: Sixth through Twelfth Grade students enrolled in an accredited school.
- Requirements: Sixth through Ninth Grade - 200 Words or more.
Tenth through Twelfth Grade 500 words or more
- Materials: 8 W' X 11" white paper typed or neatly handwritten, black, or blue ink - ONE side of paper only.
- Format: Cover Sheet must include:
Contestant's Name and Age
School and Grade
Teacher's Name and Subject
Teacher's contact telephone number

OVER

Awards

An award will be awarded to the winner in each category. Winners will be invited to attend the Suffolk County American Legion Annual Convention in June 2023.

Deadline

All entries must be received not later than MIDNIGHT FRIDAY APRIL 16th, 2023.

ALL ENTRIES BECOME THE PROPERTY OF THE SUFFOLK COUNTY AMERICAN LEGION AND WILL NOT BE RETURNED. OVERSIZE AND SHORT WORDED ENTRIES WILL BE REJECTED.

SUBMIT ALL ENTRIES TO:

Joseph Regina
608 Arlington Road
West Babylon NY 11704

Inquiries:

Joseph Regina (631) 422-5211
E-Mail GIJoe608@Hotmail.com

SVC / LEGIS

Veteran's Organizations Urge SecDef to Protect TRICARE Benefits in FY2024 Budget

Several veterans groups will submit a letter to Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin requesting that as the Department of Defense (DoD) undertakes the FY2024 budget request, it **protects the TRICARE benefit to ensure it provides the low out-of-pocket costs, comprehensive coverage, and access to quality care, service members and retirees have earned.** The FY2024 budget is expected to be released on March 9, 2023.

As noted in the Jan. 27, 2023, NewsBytes, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently issued a report recommending various fee increases for TRICARE-For-Life (TFL). The veterans groups will oppose any new TRICARE fee increases and members are urged to tell their legislators to oppose these CBO proposals now!

Veterans Homelessness Decreasing

The **U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness** released a report, "The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness" (Jan. 26, 2023) with encouraging data on veteran's homelessness. **The report indicates that the total number of veterans who are experiencing homelessness has decreased by 11 percent since January 2020.** The **VA claims this is the biggest drop in homelessness in five years.** In total, the estimated number of veterans experiencing homelessness in America has declined by 55.3 percent since 2010.

The report claims that this success is a result of VA efforts to reach out to every veteran experiencing homelessness, understand their unique needs, and address them. These efforts are grounded in the evidence-based "Housing First" approach, which prioritizes getting a veteran into housing, then provides the veteran with the wraparound support they need to stay housed — including health care, job training, legal and education assistance and more.

During 2022, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) permanently housed 40,401 homeless veterans, providing them with the safe, stable homes that they deserve. This exceeded the department's goal to house 38,000 veterans in 2022 by 6.3 percent.

Veterans groups have supported initiatives for the VA and other agencies to

enhance and invest in efforts to ensure that veteran's homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring.

Open Enrollment for VA Healthcare

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has expanded health care eligibility for certain veterans who were discharged after Sept. 11, 2001, and before Oct. 1, 2013. The open enrollment period ends on Oct. 1, 2023, for this group of veterans depending on their dates and locations of service, regardless of disability claim status. Once the open enrollment period has closed, veterans from this group will be eligible for VA health care as part of a phase-in process depending on discharge date. Go to: www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply/

Happy Birthday USCGR and Women Marine Reserves

Monday, February 13 was the 80th anniversary of women in the Marine Corps Reserves. The Marine Corps created the Marine Corps Women's Reserve in 1943, during America's involvement in World War II. More than 20,000 women Marines served in World War II, in over 225 different specialties.

This Sunday, February 19, marked the 82nd anniversary of the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve. The Coast Guard Reserve is a flexible, responsive operational force that exists to support the Coast Guard roles of maritime homeland security, national defense (domestic and expeditionary), and domestic disaster operations.

Support Major Richard Star Concurrent Receipt Legislation

Legislation that would provide concurrent receipt for servicemembers unable to complete 20 years of service due to combat-related injuries (H.R.1282, S.344) will soon be re-introduced. More than two-thirds of Congress co-sponsored the Major Richard Star Act during the previous session of Congress (2021-2022). Legislators are beginning to understand that reducing a retiree's retired pay because they are disabled is an injustice. **Please ask your legislators to co-sponsor this legislation today!**

PACT Act Creates Spike in VA Claims

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has reported a surge in disability claims (17 percent) since the enactment of the comprehensive veteran's toxic exposure act (PACT Act). The surge in claims was not unexpected and the FY2023 VA budget approved by Congress included both funding and

flexibility for increased staffing at VA medical centers to counter a possible increase in enrollment. The VA has a goal of about 52,000 new hires this fiscal year to replace departing staffers and add personnel to high-demand areas.

The enacted law would allow for the first time all veterans who were at risk of toxic exposure, including 3.5 million Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, to obtain immediate and lifelong access to health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) — one of the largest expansions of health care eligibility in the VA's history. The bill would establish a presumption of service connection for 23 respiratory illnesses and cancers related to the smoke from burn pits, used extensively in Afghanistan and Iraq to dispose of various types of waste, many of them toxic. Further, the bill also provides for new benefits for veterans who faced radiation exposure during deployments throughout the Cold War, adds hypertension and monoclonal gammopathy to the list of illnesses linked to Agent Orange exposure in the Vietnam War, expands the timeline for Gulf War medical claims and requires new medical exams for all veterans with toxic exposure claims.