

Veteran Resource Center

March 2018

With the days getting longer and Springtime just around the corner we leap into March with a renewed sense of excitement! We have several reminders for you this month. First, Veterans are offered priority registration at MSJC. Registration dates and times for Summer 2018 will be released on April 2nd. Therefore, if you submitted your DD Form 214, your registration status should be marked as priority. Please make sure you know your registration status before registration begins in April!



As you may know, the Summer terms at MSJC run for either eight (8) weeks or six (6) weeks. To qualify for the Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA) of the Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33), you must be registered MORE THAN half time. Therefore, during our 8-week term you must register for more than 4 credits and during our 6-week term, you must register for more than 3 credits.

Spring Break runs from March 19th to March 26th 2018 at MSJC. Although classes will not be in session, our VRCs will be open Monday-Thursday from 0800-5:30. Finally, did you know Spring officially begins with the Spring Equinox on Tuesday, March 20, 2018? The Spring Equinox is a day when the sun sits directly over the equator, so day and night all over the world are of equal length. Here, in the Northern Hemisphere, it is the first day of Spring. In the Southern Hemisphere, it is known as the Autumnal Equinox and signals the beginning of Fall. The Spring Equinox falls anywhere from March 19th through March 21st. This year the Spring Equinox is Tuesday, March 20th, 2018.

Spring

1

In the News

2

Resources

3

Taxes

4

SCO Corner

Reminders:

- Apply or Reapply for 18/19 FAFSA by March 2nd
- Apply or Reapply for the 18/19 Cal Vet Waiver (after taxes are filed)
- Report all adds/drops with Blue forms
- Check Eagle Advisor for missing financial aid paperwork, you may be missing out on federal or state grants simply because you have not submitted missing documents.

Did You Know? The VA Offers Instant Access to Real Time Data!

The VA implemented an access portal for students with entitlements to access their Statement of Benefits. Current Post-9/11 GI Bill beneficiaries are able to download a “*Post-9/11 GI Bill Statement of Benefits*” through Vets.gov. The information is real-time data pulled from the same system used by VA education benefit processors. The Post-9/11 GI Bill Statement of Benefits is a document generated through the Vets.gov portal that provides details on remaining entitlement, eligibility percentage, and benefit end date for beneficiaries who have already applied for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Visit vet.gov for more information.

Vietnam Wall In Memory Program Accepting Applications

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund created the *In Memory* Program in 1999 to honor Vietnam veterans whose lives were cut short as a result of their service such as illnesses associated with Agent Orange exposure, PTSD, and other causes. A plaque dedicated near The Wall in 2004 reads: In Memory of the men and women who served in the Vietnam War and later died as a result of their service. We honor and remember their sacrifice. Applications for an In Memory Day ceremony this June are now being accepted. The application deadline is March 9. Learn more here <http://www.vvmf.org/InMemoryProgram>

Important Dates

Spring 2018 Important Dates

Check Out MSJC Important Dates <https://www.msjc.edu/StudentServices/EnrollmentServices/Pages/Spring-2018.aspx>

March 12	Schedule of Summer Classes Released On Line
March 15	American Legion's Birthday
March 19	National Medal of Honor Day
March 19-26	Spring Break
March 30	Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day
April	Month of the Military Child
April 2	Registration Appointments on Eagle Advisor
April 5	Gold Star Wives Day
April 14	Air Force Reserves Birthday

VA Launches Welcome Kit

The Veterans Administration just made things a little easier for Veterans by launching their "Welcome Kit." The VA Welcome Kit can help guide you to the benefits and services you've earned. Based on where you are in life, your VA benefits and services can support you in different ways. Keep your Welcome Kit handy so you can turn to it throughout your life—like when it's time to go to get a job, buy a house, obtain health care, retire, or make plans for your care as you age.

Download your VA Welcome Kit here
www.vets.gov/welcome-to-va/



VA Home Loan Refinance Protections

The Senate recently introduced S. 2304, a bipartisan bill designed to stem the number of bad refinance opportunities to which Veterans can fall victim. The VA home loan program is an excellent benefit that has been used by millions of veterans. While most of the refinance opportunities are offered in good faith, there are some bad actors who look to prey upon VA home loan users and offer beneficiaries loans which have front-end benefits, but increase the long-term costs. The bill would limit home loans from being refinanced unless they meet the net tangible benefit test in which offers must benefit the VA user, not the institution. The bill would also make permanent a requirement for VA home loan beneficiaries to wait six months before being eligible to refinance their loans. The six months seasoning period was established by VA and Ginnie Mae to control the rapid increase in interest rates for homeowners which is caused by frequent refinancing of VA home loans. Read the text of the bill here <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2304/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22s+2304%22%5D%7D&r=1>

VA Resumes Applications for New Veterans ID Card

After temporarily suspending applications for the recently created Veterans Identification (ID) cards due to high demand, VA is once again accepting applications. The new Veterans ID card was created by the Veterans Identification Card Act of 2015 so veterans who do not have a Veterans Health Identification Card are able to prove their veteran status without having to carry their DD-214. The cards are valid only for proving military service and cannot be used for VA or military benefits. Apply for a new Veterans ID card here <https://www.vets.gov/?next=%2Fveteran-id-card%2F>



The VA introduced a fairly new program for Veterans who are planning to file a VA

disability compensation claim. It's the Decision Ready Claim Program (DRC)-- the fastest way to get a VA disability claim processed. Eligible Veterans can get a decision on their claim within 30 days after it is submitted when they work with an accredited representative, such as a Veterans Service Organization. The DRC Program is administered by the Veterans Benefits Administration and additional information can be found here

<https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/drc.asp>

Frequently Asked Questions may be found here:

<https://www.benefits.va.gov/COMPENSATION/docs/drc-faqs.pdf>

Thanks to Vet Tix Veterans Get Free Tickets

Veterans Tickets Foundation (Vet Tix) is a national nonprofit that supports the Veteran and Military community with free community-based tickets ranging from concerts to professional sports games. Their Tickets for Troops program has distributed 2.5 million tickets to the military community since 2008.

Interested in learning more? Visit their website and search through all the events they offer <https://www.vettix.org/>

Exclusive Savings for California Community College Students

CollegeBuys, powered by the Foundation for California Community Colleges, offers discounts of up to 85 percent on a wide range of educational products—from industry-leading software and technology to high quality office and classroom furniture. As a student, you are eligible for discounts on products that will help you complete your education. Examples include: - Adobe Creative Cloud, Microsoft Office, Mobile Citizen and more...

For more information visit

<http://store.collegebuys.org/>

Free Tax Return Preparation for Veterans, Military Members and their Families

The IRS and the VA entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2015 to provide free tax preparation services to Veterans and their families. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program offers free tax help to low- to moderate-income (generally, \$54,000 and below) filer who cannot prepare their own tax returns. Certified volunteers sponsored by various organizations receive training to help prepare basic tax returns in communities across the country. Additional information may be found here <https://www.irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-you-by-volunteers>

Additionally, the IRS offers "IRS Free File." Whether you draw a paycheck, are self-employed or own a small business, you can use all available tax forms you need for free with IRS Free File. If you made \$66,000 or less during 2017, you qualify. If you made more than \$66,000, you can use Free File Fillable Forms, electronic versions of IRS paper forms. You may access the filing information here <https://www.irs.gov/filing/free-file-do-your-federal-taxes-for-free>



Combat-Injured Veterans Tax Fairness Act of 2016

The "Combat-Injured Veterans Tax Fairness Act of 2016" hopes to restore amounts improperly withheld for tax purposes from severance payments to individuals who retired or separated from service in the Armed Forces for combat-related injuries, and for other purposes. The new law went into effect in 2017. Under federal law, Veterans who suffer combat-related injuries and who are separated from the military are not to be taxed on the one-time lump sum disability severance payment they receive from the Department of Defense. More than \$78 million is owed to an estimated 14,000 Veterans. This law instructs DoD to identify Veterans who were taxed in order for them to file an amended return to receive their refund. Additional information may be found here - <http://www.moaa.org/Content/Publications-and-Media/MOAA-Blog/Combat-Injured-Veterans-Tax-Fairness-Act.aspx>



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