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Presenter: Dwight Winkler

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.
- **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.; On WED (El Campo library), 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
- **Vanessa Hicks-Callaway,** (Congressman Blake Farenthold's Veteran Advocate), 361 894-6446, Vanessa.Hicks-Callaway@mail.house.gov
- **Matt Minor,** (Texas State Representative Phil Stephenson's Veteran Advocate), 281 232-7900, Matt.Minor@house.state.tx.us
- **VA INQUIRY ROUTING & INFORMATION SYSTEM (IRIS),** <https://iris.custhelp.com>

2. **AT&T SALUTES YOUR SERVICE:** Veterans can receive a 15% discount on their monthly wireless service by contacting a participating AT&T dealer. Proof of eligibility includes your DD-214. In Rosenberg, the Brazos Town Center at (281) 342-6850; El Campo (979) 543-9499; Columbus, (979) 732-9683; Wharton, (979) 532-0011.

3. **NATIONAL AUDIOLOGY AWARENESS MONTH AND TINNITUS CLAIMS:** The Department of Veterans Affairs is recognizing October as Audiology Awareness Month. If your military occupational specialty (MOS) was infantry, artillery, armor, or any other MOS in which you were exposed to loud sounds (air craft mechanic, boiler room or engine room duty on a ship, flight deck duty, etc.), you should see Don Montoya about filing a claim for TINNITUS or "ringing, buzzing, or other type of noise that originates in the head".

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4. **FLU SHOTS AND WALGREENS PHARMACIES:** The VA has once again teamed up with Walgreens pharmacies to allow veterans who are currently enrolled in the VA healthcare system to receive a flu vaccination at no cost at any Walgreens store. Call (800) 925-4733 for a participating store through March 31, 2017.
5. **TAX STATEMENTS AND EXEMPTIONS:** All counties will be sending out their 2016 TAX STATEMENTS in the next few weeks. You need to check your statement to be sure you have all the exemptions to which you are entitled. For example, if you own your home, you should have a HOMESTEAD (HS) exemption on your statement. If you are over 65 or turning 65 this year, you should have filed for OVER 65 (O65) exemption. If you are receiving disability compensation, you should file for a VETERAN (VET1) exemption. Call your county Central Appraisal District (CAD) for your status. In Wharton County, the CAD can be reached at (979) 532-8931, Colorado County is (979) 732-8222 and Jackson County is (361) 782-7115.
6. **IN-HOME HEALTH SERVICES:** If you are in need of some type of in-home health services, here are three options: (1) If you are a veteran in the VA health care system, go to your VETERANS HEALTH BENEFITS HANDBOOK, Chapter 3, and "Your Health Benefits At A Glance", will be listed. After you have reviewed that information, you can call **MICHELLE JABBIE**, Richmond VA Outpatient Clinic Social Worker @ (832) 595-7700 for any programs or services that are available for your situation; (2) If you are a veteran but not in the VA healthcare system, you can still call **MICHELLE JABBIE** and see if there are any programs and services available for your situation; (3) If you are on Medicare, you should have received MEDICARE & YOU 2016 (M&Y-2016) last year at about this time and MEDICARE & YOU 2017 (M&Y-2017) recently. In the 2017 book, pages 37-61 describe the services that are covered by Medicare, Parts A (hospital insurance) and B (medical insurance). For example: M&Y-2017, page 50, states in reference to **HOME HEALTH SERVICES** that "you can use your home health benefits under Part A and/or Part B. Medicare covers MEDICALLY NECESSARY part-time or intermittent skilled nursing care, and/or physical therapy, speech-language pathology services, and/or services if you have a continuing need for occupational therapy. A doctor or certain health care professionals who work with a doctor, must see you face-to-face before a doctor can certify that you need HOME HEALTH SERVICES. A doctor must order your care, and a Medicare-certified home health agency must provide it." The bottom part of page 61 and all of page 62 lists the items and services that Medicare does not cover.

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6. **IN-HOME HEALTH SERVICES (cont.):** For example under services not covered: **CUSTODIAL CARE** and/or **LONG TERM CARE** are/is defined as non-skilled personal care, like help with activities of daily living like bathing, dressing, eating, getting in and out of a bed or chair, moving around, and using the bathroom. It may also include the kind of health-related care that most people do themselves, like using eye drops. **IN MOST CASES**, Medicare does not pay for custodial care and/or long term care. In the M&Y-2017 book, page 62, the topic "Paying for long-term care" is discussed and there are five phone numbers that can be accessed to find out more information. If a veteran is 70% SERVICE CONNECTED or 60% SERVICE CONNECTED with an UNEMPLOYABILITY rating or if a veteran is on HOSPICE care, the VA will pay for a nursing home that has a VA contract. Medicaid will pay for a nursing home care at select facilities if the veteran is below a certain level of income. The veteran can contact the Department of Aging at (713) 692-1635 to see if he/she qualifies for Medicaid. Again, the veteran can contact Michelle Jabbie at (832) 595-7700 for more information. While in a nursing home, the veteran can apply for **AID AND ATTENDANCE (A&A)**. I discussed A&A in my 3/11/2015 presentation. Briefly, for A&A, the evidence must show that due to the veteran's service-connected disabilities, the veteran requires the aid of another person in order to perform personal functions required in everyday living, such as bathing, etc.

7. **INCREASED SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (SSA) BENEFITS FOR VETERANS:** At the April 9, 2014, VVA meeting, Carolyn and Louis Milder gave us some information about extra Social Security benefits for those with active duty between January 1957 to December 31, 2001. Briefly, you as a veteran during the time period stated would receive \$300.00 a yearly/quarter for active duty added to your Social Security earnings which in turn would provide more income for the veteran when he/she retired and went on Social Security. In June, another Veteran refreshed my memory about the topic so I decided to e-mail the SSA to be sure my earnings were added to my SSA earnings when I retired four years ago and went on social security. The SSA never returned my e-mail so I sent the SSA a return receipt requested letter on 8/20/2016. I received a 3 page FORM reply on 9/29/2016 with four pages of more forms to fill out and a request for \$136.00 if I wanted an "Itemized Statement of Earnings" that included the names and addresses of my employers from the past. Therefore, if you have not yet gone on Social Security, I recommend you contact the SSA before you go on Social Security to be sure your \$300.00 per active duty quarter was added to your earnings.