

VVA CHAPTER 1069 BENEFITS PRESENTATION 2/10/2016

1. **Dwight Winkler**, 2254 CR 291, East Bernard, TX 77435, (979) 335-4464, lerwinkdd@aol.com. Don Montoya, Wharton County Veterans Service Officer (VSO), 1017 N Alabama Road, Wharton, TX 77488, (979) 532-1311, don.montoya@co.wharton.tx.us.
2. **VA DEFINITION OF VETERAN:** According to the VA, a "VETERAN" is a person who served in the ACTIVE military, naval, or air service, and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. See M21-1MR, Part III, Subpart ii, Chapter 6. Every person that came to my office in Wharton or El Campo, and claimed to be a Veteran, had to produce his or her DD-214 or other discharge document so that I could then proceed with their eligibility based upon their ACTIVE duty status and CHARACTER of service.
3. **TAX SERVICES:** Liberty Tax Service, 301 N. Mechanic St., El Campo, TX, 77488 is offering free tax services to Veterans for the first year their service is used. Call (979) 578-8297 for more information such as what to bring, and other pertinent information. I have a few pamphlets on my desk that explain a little about Liberty Tax Service. One other service that I found is on the internet at www.myfreetaxes.com. Generally, you must make less than \$62,000 to be eligible for their free tax service. I do not endorse either Liberty Tax Service or the Internet service, so proceed at your own risk.
4. **BEWARE OF IRS IMPERSONATORS:** As tax season begins, Veterans should be aware of people contacting them who claim to be from the IRS and the Treasury Department. These tax impersonators have been using phone calls and emails to take millions of dollars from taxpayers in every state. The callers tell intended victims they owe taxes and must pay using a pre-paid debit card, money order or a wire transfer. If you owe taxes, or think you owe taxes, hang up and call the IRS at 800-829-1040. The IRS will help you with your payment questions.
5. **REFORMING THE VETERAN'S APPEALS PROCESS:** In late January 2016, VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald presented to the Senate Veteran's Affairs' Committee a way to improve the care and services to all Veterans. The process is called MyVA. He is asking Congress' help in legislating a fair, streamlined, and comprehensive process for new appeals as well as providing much needed resources to address the current pending inventory of appeals. Disability claims reached an all time high of 611,000 in March 2013 and the VA now claims that is down to fewer than 82,000. In 2015 the VA decided 1.4 million disability compensation and pension claims for Veterans and survivors, the highest in VA history for a single year. HOWEVER, the current pending inventory of appeals stands at more than 440,000 and is estimated to grow rapidly. Right now, the VA is processing appeals from December of 2013!