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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. A Houston Vet Center counselor, James Bailey, is available in Don Montoya's office on Thursdays for veterans and their families. Call Don's office at (979) 532-1311 for an appointment to see James Bailey. See forms on my desk for information.
- **Dwight Winkler**, 2254 CR 291, East Bernard, TX 77435; (979) 335-4464; lerwinkdd@aol.com, <http://www.vva1069.org/wcvso/wcvso.html>
- **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. (Administrative time); 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>
- **NEW VA PHONE NUMBER TO CALL 1-844-698-2311;** This new national toll-free number is a go to source for Veterans and their families who do not know what number to call at the VA. It is identified at the VA as **myVA311**.

2. PAYMENT OF BENEFITS: VA compensation, Pension, and Survivor's benefits are paid on a monthly basis one month in arrears. This means that benefits for a particular month are paid the first business day of the following month. When the first business day of the month falls on a non-business day or a holiday, VA benefits will be distributed on the last business day prior to the first of the month. Below is the payment schedule for upcoming VA payments:

- ❖ March 2017 will be paid on March 31, 2017
- ❖ April 2017 will be paid on May 1, 2017
- ❖ May 2017 will be paid on June 1, 2017

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- ❖ June 2017 will be paid June 30, 2017
- ❖ July 2017 will be paid August 1, 2017
- ❖ August 2017 will be paid September 1, 2017
- ❖ September 2017 will be paid September 29, 2017
- ❖ October 2017 will be paid November 1, 2017
- ❖ November 2017 will be paid December 1, 2017
- ❖ December 2017 will be paid December 29, 2017

3. SENATORS INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO OVER HAUL APPEALS PROCESS: Fourteen Senators have introduced legislation to overhaul the VA's broken appeals process. The process has not been updated since 1933, and more than 450,000 appeals are currently pending. On March 23, 2017, the Government Accountability Office released a report warning that, if no action is taken, veterans may have to wait an average of 8.5 years by fiscal year 2026 to have their appeals resolved. The VA has more than 450,000 veterans waiting to hear about an appeal and the average appeal takes up to 5 years to resolve. Read the full story on the "Committee on Veterans' Affairs" web page – link below:
<https://www.veterans.senate.gov/newsroom/minority-news/senators-introduce-legislation-to-overhaul-veterans-appeals-process>

4. FOUR NEW TESTS FOR ELEVATED PSA LEVELS: Four new tests have been developed that will predict whether a man with an elevated PSA level has cancer, or whether the higher level is due to aging, infection or an enlarged prostate.

- ❖ PCA3 is a urine analysis that looks for a specific prostate cancer gene. The test does not conclude whether a man has cancer but can give doctors more confidence than the PSA test in deciding whether to biopsy.
- ❖ Prostate Health Index (PHI) is a blood test where doctors look at three different components of PSA to determine whether the elevated level is due to infection, benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) or possibly cancer.
- ❖ OPKO 4Kscore is a blood test similar to PHI but looks at four components, two of which, when elevated, can predict a man's risk of developing aggressive prostate cancer.
- ❖ The mpMRI scan has been found to accurately diagnose tumors in 93 percent of those suspected of having prostate cancer.

I do not endorse or recommend any of these tests but am presenting this information to you to discuss these tests with your own doctor as I will with my urologist in the very near future. (Dwight Winkler)