



Vietnam Veterans of America

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A Not-For-Profit Veterans Service Organization Chartered by the United States Congress

MEMO

TO: VVA
FROM: John Rowan, National President
DATE: April 6, 2020
RE: Impact of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) National Emergency

The last couple of weeks within VVA and the country at large have been difficult for all. Regardless of where we live, all of us have been affected in some way by the virus that is infecting our world's population. As you are aware by now, VVA's membership, because of our age and our underlying health issues, are considered to be in the most critical group, should we contract COVID-19.

No matter whether your state is under a stay-at-home order from your Governor, please, I urge you, stay home.

These are extraordinary times. Many businesses--including VVA--have been forced to close in order to protect employees and the general population. On March 25, VVA National Treasurer Jack McManus informed everyone that our largest funding source, the Household Goods Donation Program (HGDP), has ceased its operations throughout the U.S. All HGDP thrift stores, deemed non-essential entities, are now temporarily closed. Our HGDP buyers have since laid off over 4,000 employees. The shutdown is expected to last 20 weeks. Given this unexpected loss of a major source of our revenue, VVA's national officers have acted quickly in order to preserve whatever we could.

Life as we have known it in VVA is changed. Working in concert with department directors and staff, the officers have directed that all aspects of VVA's expenditures be and continue to be analyzed for possible savings.

In order to move forward, VVA's budget--prepared by our Directors and reviewed by the VVA Finance Committee--was submitted to the BOD for approval by an E-Vote procedure. However, the budget that was recently approved included income that was expected BEFORE we knew that our revenue had taken a hit.

This budget, as passed by the board, will serve as a baseline for further changes to the organization. To be blunt, there may be many more cuts down the road. At this point, I need to acknowledge and thank the members of the Finance Committee for doing a job that no one would frankly envy or want. Proposed cuts will need to be made to most all segments of our operations. No one or no department will be exempt from this. This situation will impact everyone. An amended budget, with subsequent adjustments based on our new reality, will be proposed to the BOD shortly.

Normally, upon passage of the budget, we would have allowed you to commence incurring bills and spending your budgets. However, Treasurer McManus has announced a spending freeze for all respective cost centers. He stated “Do not incur any expenses without express written email approval from your executive officer (meaning the officers of the corporation that each department head reports to) or the VVA National Treasurer. Understand that if you incur ANY expenses without authority, our organization at this time WILL NOT be able to reimburse you for expenses that you have incurred. Period.”

As you know, I have cancelled our upcoming National Board Meeting. Instead, we are making plans for a virtual board meeting, to be held on April 16, 2020. Details will be coming out about the procedures that we will use to hold this meeting. This is a new experiment, so bear with us.

The Board will be addressing the challenge of the National Leadership Conference. With all that is going on, it is likely that this will be cancelled or, at the very least, postponed. You will be advised ASAP. Most of the staff are now working remotely from home. This has been deemed necessary for their safety. The Officers are maintaining constant contact with the them.

You should also know that VVA has filed an application under the Paycheck Protection Plan or “PPP” program that was recently passed by Congress. Our Finance Department worked hours to prepare the proper documents to apply for this loan, which we hope will eventually be forgiven by the government. We were actively preparing for this program, even before it was formally approved by Congress. Our application was submitted to our bank the day before funds were released for this program. We are on top of this.

We ask everyone within VVA to pull together during this unprecedented time of disruption to our lives. We thank our members for their understanding, as well as for their kind words of encouragement and their recommendations to us as we move forward. We are not sure what the future holds for us, however, I can assure you that your officers, Tom, Jack, Bill, and myself, as well as staff, have been working almost around the clock, or so it seems, to deal with this situation. Measures are in place to keep the staff safe, the workflow constant, and everyone informed about what is taking place as we attempt to secure our immediate future and ensure that our work on behalf of our veterans and their families will continue.

Meanwhile, we urge everyone to stay safe and protect yourselves until this pandemic is over.

As we proceed, we will keep you informed as much as possible.

Thanks for your continued support.