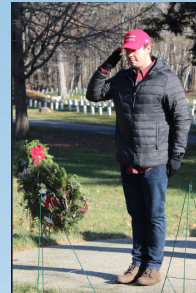


Stakeholder Monthly Newsletter



Wreaths Across America

Wreaths Across America took place on December 16, 2023, across the Nation. Volunteers placed wreaths on Veterans headstones as a way to remember the fallen, honor those who served, and teach the next generation the value of freedom.



We were able to honor these Veterans by helping volunteers throughout the community place over 5,500 wreaths on Veterans gravestones. Togus RO placed wreaths at both the Maine Veterans' Cemetery on Civic Center Drive in Augusta, and at the Togus National Cemeteries, here on the Togus Campus.

Two of our Togus RO employees were able to place the ceremonial wreaths: the Air Force wreath at the Maine Veterans' Cemetery on Civic Center Drive, and the Coast Guard wreath here at the Togus National Cemetery.



Do you know someone who is looking for a challenging, fulfilling career that focuses on serving Veterans and their family members?

If so, please direct them to www.usajobs.gov or you may share the below QR Code to see positions as they are announced.



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Special Point of Interest

- Maine Veterans may call 207-621-6938 to ask questions about benefits or to schedule an in-person or video call for assistance with claim related matters.

How can a Veteran prepare before starting their application?

- Be sure to fill out their claim completely.
- Gather any evidence (supporting documents) they'll submit themselves when they file their VA disability claim. We encourage them to send in all their supporting documents along with their claim. This will help us process their claim quickly. [Learn about fully developed claims](#)
- Find out if they'll need to turn in any additional forms with their claim. [Learn about additional forms Veterans may need to file](#)

What evidence does a Veteran need to support their claim?

They can support their VA disability claim by providing these documents:

- **VA medical records and hospital records.** These could relate to their claimed illnesses or injuries or they could show that their rated disability has gotten worse.
- **Private medical records and hospital reports.** These could relate to their claimed illnesses or injuries or they could show that their disability has gotten worse.
- **Supporting statements.** These could be from family members, friends, clergy members, law enforcement personnel, or people they served with. These statements could tell us more about their claimed condition and how and when it happened or how it got worse.

Depending on the type of claim a Veteran files, they may gather supporting documents themselves, or they can ask for our help to gather evidence. We'll also review their discharge papers (DD214 or other separation documents) and service treatment records.

[Learn more about the evidence we'll need for their claim](#)

Does a Veteran need to submit evidence with their claim?

No. A Veteran doesn't have to submit any evidence to support their claim. But we may need to schedule a claim exam so we can learn more about their condition.

[Learn more about VA claim exams \(C&P exams\)](#)

A Veteran should also know that they have up to a year from the date we receive their claim to turn in any evidence. If they start their application and need time to gather more supporting documents, they can save their application and come back later to finish it. We'll recognize the date they started their application as their date of claim as long as they complete it within 365 days.

Should a Veteran submit an intent to file form?

If they plan to file for disability compensation using a paper form, they may want to submit an intent to file form first. This can give them the time they need to gather their evidence while avoiding a later potential start date (also called an effective date). When they notify us of their intent to file, they may be able to get retroactive payments (compensation that starts at a point in the past).

Note: If they file for disability compensation online, then they don't need to notify us of their intent to file. This is because their effective date gets set automatically when they start filling out the form online—before they submit it.

[Find out how to submit an intent to file form](#)

How does a Veteran file a claim for compensation?

They can file for disability compensation in any of these 5 ways:

1. Online:

Veterans' can file a claim online now at www.va.gov

[File for disability compensation online](#)

2. By Mail:

File a Veteran's claim by mail using an Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits (VA Form 21-526EZ).

[Get VA Form 21-526EZ to download](#)

Print the form, fill it out, and send it to this address:

Department of Veterans Affairs
Claims Intake Center
PO Box 4444
Janesville, WI 53547-4444

3. In Person:

Bring the application to a VA regional Office near them.

[Find a VA regional office](#)

4. By Fax:

If they're in the U.S., fax their application to [844-531-7818](tel:844-531-7818)

If they're outside the U.S., fax their application to [248-524-4260](tel:248-524-4260)

5. With the Help of a Trained Professional:

A Veteran can work with a trained professional called an accredited representative to get help filing a claim for disability compensation.

There are five Veterans Service Organizations located on the Togus Campus: American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Maine Veterans' Services, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and Veterans of Foreign Wars

[Get help from an accredited representative](#)

What happens after a Veteran files their VA disability claim?

[Find out what happens after a Veteran files](#)

A Veteran doesn't need to do anything while they're waiting unless we send them a letter asking for more information. If we schedule exams for them, they should be sure not to miss them.

[Check a VA claim status](#)

If you or your organization is hosting an event and you want Togus to participate, please contact Christina Smith at VBATOGROEngage@va.gov.

Look for a Togus Representative at one of the following locations:

- ◆ **January 8, 2024**– Veteran Employment and Resource Event, 217 Waterville Rd., Skowhegan, ME, Time: 10:00am to 3:00pm, Open to the Public
- ◆ **January 16, 2024**– Veteran Employment and Resource Event, Clinton Town Office, 27 Baker St., Clinton, ME, Time: 10:00am to 3:00pm, Open to the Public
- ◆ **January 19, 2024**– Veteran Employment and Resource Event, University of Farmington, 246 Main St., Farmington, ME, Time: 10:00am to 3:00pm, Open to the Public

Claims Clinics

To schedule an appointment at one of the Claims Clinics near you, please call 207-621-6938.

- ◆ **January 2, 2024**– Lewiston VA Clinic, Lewiston, ME, Time: 9:30am to 2:30pm
- ◆ **January 4, 2024**– Rumford VA Clinic, Rumford, ME, Time: 10:00am to 2:00pm
- ◆ **January 9, 2024**– Portland VA Clinic, Portland, ME, Time: 10:00am to 2:00pm
- ◆ **January 12, 2024**– Caribou Vet Center, 456 York St., Caribou, ME, Time: 8:00am to 11:30am
- ◆ **January 16, 2024**– Bangor VA Clinic, Bangor, ME, Time: 10:00am to 2:30pm
- ◆ **January 18, 2024**– Bangor Vet Center, 615 Oldin Rd. Suite 3, Bangor, ME, Time: 10:00am to 2:00pm
- ◆ **January 23, 2024**– Portland VA Clinic, Portland, ME, Time: 10:00am to 2:00pm
- ◆ **January 25, 2024**– Sanford Vet Center, Springvale, ME, Time: 10:00am to 1:00pm
- ◆ **January 26, 2024**– Mid-Coast Veterans Council (MCVC), Brunswick, ME, Time: 9:30am to 2:30pm

Togus Regional Office

The Togus Regional Office (RO) is assigned to the Northeast District of the Veterans Benefits Administration. The RO is authorized 349 full time employees to support a Maine State Veteran population of more than 100,000 Veterans. The Regional Office administers a variety of services and benefits including Compensation and Veteran Readiness and Employment.

Va.gov and VA: Health and Benefits app

Please encourage Veterans to create a va.gov account or download the VA: Health and Benefits app. A Veteran is able to print their own letters from their va.gov account or from the VA: Health and Benefits app on a smart device. The following is a list of some of the letters available:

- Benefit summary and service verification letter
- Benefits verification letter
- Proof of creditable prescription drug coverage letter
- Proof of minimum essential coverage letter
- Proof of service card

Contact the Regional Office

Togus Regional Office

1 VA Center

Augusta, ME 04330

207-626-4788

DIR.VBATOG@VA.GOV

Jennifer A. Bover, Executive Director

Michael J. Brawn, Assistant Director

Timothy R. Hum, Veterans Service Center Manager (VSCM)

Thomas C. Whitney, Assistant Veterans Service Center Manager (AVSCM)

Philip S. Black, Assistant Veterans Service Center Manager (AVSCM)

Daniel Pelletier, Assistant Veterans Service Center Manager (AVSCM)

Christopher V. Smith, Staff Assistant

Allison D. Bubier, Veteran Readiness and Employment Officer

Tracy L. Sinclair, Support Services Division Chief

Christina M. Smith, Public Affairs Officer

Contact Your Congressional Liaison

David Poulin

Email: CIC.VBATOG@va.gov

Phone: 207-626-4788, Ext. 5775

Sara Graney

Email: CIC.VBATOG@va.gov

Phone: 207-626-4788, Ext. 5775

Helpful Websites

- ◆ Access the latest information on the PACT Act: www.va.gov/PACT
- ◆ View the impact of this legislation: [VA PACT Act Performance Dashboard](#)
- ◆ Access the Togus Regional Office website: www.benefits.va.gov/togus
- ◆ Refer Veterans to www.va.gov or the [VA: Health and Benefits App](#) for self-service options