

- **Did you know:**
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- **Al-Shabab terrorism threat casts wider shadow over Kenya.**
- **US sanctions North Korea in 1st official retaliation over Sony hacking.**
- **Overseas problems won't derail growing U.S. economy, analysts say.**
- **Chief of naval personnel: Navy should expand sabbatical program.**
- **For a former Navy SEAL, newly unveiled statue is symbol of his mission in life.**
- **Legal weed states have lessons to share.**
- **Army veteran poised for Ultimate Fighting Championship debut.**
- **New Year's baby born seconds after midnight to Army parents.**
- **'Vetrepreneurs:' More veterans start their own businesses.**
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- **Vet Center opens its doors to raise awareness.**
- **VA pursues Veteran's widow for mistaken pension.**
- **After year of trouble, VA building for future.**
- **91-year-old optician inspires others in Port Orange area.**
- **Flue seasons means taking precautions.**
- **Man blames VA after sleeping meds left him with erection for weeks.**

**Did you know:**

VA has launched a national Hypoglycemic Safety Initiative (HSI) to encourage diabetic Veterans receiving VA care to seek support in lowering their risk of

hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). The new initiative helps enable Veterans living with diabetes to work more closely with their VA clinicians to personalize health care goals and improve disease self-management. Diabetes is one of the most prevalent diseases among older Americans, with one in four Veterans suffering from the disease. The HSI emphasizes shared decision-making and universal health literacy to ensure Veterans understand the health information provided by their VA health care team. This includes the “teach back method” where Veterans and their caregivers are asked questions to be certain they understand and can act on key elements of self-management, including diet, exercise, glucose monitoring, managing medications, and insulin injections. The focus of the HSI is to help raise awareness among patients who may be at risk. “The Hypoglycemic Safety Initiative is designed to enable Veterans and their families, partners and caregivers to create a personal plan for blood sugar management based upon the Veteran’s unique health goals,” said Dr. Carolyn Clancy, Interim Under Secretary for Health.

**US advisers in Iraq stay out of combat but see fighting edging closer.** Not only have they been deployed in Baghdad and the northern city of Irbil, but in recent weeks they also have been sent to Anbar and to training sites flanking the capital.

**Al-Shabab terrorism threat casts wider shadow over Kenya.** The terror group al-Shabab has suffered setbacks in Somalia, with the killings of its secretive commander, Ahmed Abdi Godane, its intelligence chief, Tahlil Abdishakur, and other top figures in recent U.S. airstrikes. But in Kenya, the security crisis has only deepened as local terrorist cells take root and harsh government reactions cause a backlash.

**US sanctions North Korea in 1st official retaliation over Sony hacking.** The U.S. says its new round of sanctions against North Korea is just the opening salvo in its response to an unprecedented cyberattack on Sony and portrayed the move as swift and decisive.

**Overseas problems won't derail growing U.S. economy, analysts say.** Call it the Great Divide: The new year figures to be one of robust economic growth in the U.S., with slowdowns, stagnation and setbacks everywhere else in the world.

**Chief of naval personnel: Navy should expand sabbatical program.** With the unemployment rate dropping and more servicemembers leaving for the private sector, Vice Adm. Bill Moran says he wants to do everything he can to keep the best sailors longer — even if that means letting them go for a while.

**For a former Navy SEAL, newly unveiled statue is symbol of his mission in life.** It was seeing the statue of David in person for the first time that caused Stephen Otten, a former Navy SEAL, to break down in tears after years of post-traumatic stress.

**Legal weed states have lessons to share.** Don't worry about a federal lawsuit. But do worry tax rates. Those are among the many lessons Colorado and Washington have to share from the front lines of America's marijuana experiment.

**Army veteran poised for Ultimate Fighting Championship debut.** Jared Cannonier was overweight and out of shape when he moved to Alaska in 2009. A one-two punch had turned him into a heavyweight: His wife was pregnant, and he had just gotten out of the Army. Cannonier is still a heavyweight — a meaner, leaner one — and on Saturday, he'll make his debut in the Ultimate Fighting Championship.

**New Year's baby born seconds after midnight to Army parents.** The first words newborn Don Browne Jr. heard weren't "Happy Birthday." Instead, the baby born less than a minute into 2015 at Madigan Army Medical Center was welcomed into the world with cheers of "Happy New Year!" from medical staff at the hospital located on Joint Base Lewis-McChord.

**'Vetpreneurs:' More veterans start their own businesses.** Capt. Tim O'Neil was finishing up a stint at a Marine recruitment office when he saw an article about a new program at a school intensifying its recruiting of military veterans. O'Neil decided it was time to stop selling the military and start selling himself.

**The Washington Post: Obama to highlight economic policies in aggressive push toward State of the Union.** President Obama plans to make an aggressive push to tout his economic policies ahead of his State of the Union address... In the GOP's weekly address Saturday, Rep. Rodney Davis...said, the House GOP is promoting a bill called the "Hire More Heroes Act" that would exempt veterans already enrolled in health-care plans through the [DoD or VA] "from being counted toward the employee limit under the health-care law."

**Bloomberg News: A New Congress Readies for Old Fights With a Twist.** Representative Rodney Davis, an Illinois Republican, said in his party's weekly radio and video address posted Saturday that the House of Representatives "will start off with jobs bills that have bipartisan support but were never considered by a Democratic-run Senate." That includes legislation sponsored by Davis called the Hire More Heroes Act.

**NewsMax (Video): Rep. Rodney Davis: Hire More Heroes Act Will Help Businesses, Veterans.** The House session on Tuesday will start off with several jobs bills...said [Rep. Rodney] Davis in Saturday's GOP address, including the Hire More Heroes Act... The bill "makes a commonsense change" to Obamacare to encourage small businesses to hire more veterans by exempting veterans who are already enrolled in healthcare plans through the [DoD and VA] from being counted toward small businesses' employee limits.

**CBS News (Video): GOP to target Obamacare when new Congress begins.** When Republicans assume control of the full Congress next week, they will act swiftly to

approve the Keystone XL oil pipeline and pass a pair of measures adjusting portions of Obamacare, Rep. Rodney Davis, R-Illinois, said Saturday in the weekly GOP address... [Another] measure, called the "Hire More Heroes Act," would exempt any post-9/11 veterans from being counted toward the law's 50-employee threshold.

**SFGate.com (AP): New GOP faces at the helm of 9 House**

**Committees.** Republicans remain in charge of the House, but it won't be the same Republicans leading many committees... Jeff Miller, 55, of Florida will continue as chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee. Miller's oversight of the [VA] focused on long waits for initial medical appointments experienced by many veterans and falsified records covering them up.

**Baltimore Sun: Budget victory for Veterans.** The omnibus appropriations bill approved by Congress and signed last month by the president finally closed the book on federal budgeting for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30... Lost in most of the media coverage of this massive legislation is a very significant victory for millions of veterans that will prevent this very type of political gridlock from threatening veterans' benefits during any future budget battles or government shutdowns.

**The Garden City Telegram: Vet help: Congress must improve mental health**

**resources.** Having our nation at war for more than a decade brought a staggering toll in lost lives. Nearly 7,000 members of the United States military died in Iraq and Afghanistan. Then there were the other casualties of war in serious injuries and psychological wounds... [Sen. Tom Coburn] wrongly claimed the [Clay Hunt Act] duplicated an existing Veterans Affairs program.

**KWQC-TV (NBC-6) (Video): New IL Law Helps Disabled Veterans Afford Homes.**

"I ended up running over two IEDs in Afghanistan," said veteran and former Sterling resident Nick Mapson... With Mapson's disabilities his home was no longer accessible, he needed special adaptations to help him now and down the road... [T]hanks to senate bill 2905—passed earlier this week—Mapson is getting some much needed relief.

**Military Times: Army touts 'brain thermometer' as front-line tool.**

Army medics will soon use what's been dubbed a "brain thermometer": a mobile phone application that can, within minutes, provide health professionals data to help diagnose and measure a soldier's injuries... There are also ongoing studies of the tool regarding its capacity to help assess concussions with the athletic department at the University of Wisconsin and PTSD at the [VA].

**Veterans Today: VA Trust Building.**

Secretary McDonald says his first priority is trust building. How does he intend on building veterans trust? He opens a "Whistle Blower Hotline," and it backfires alienating both employees and veterans... Demonstrate positive changes. Trust veterans first. Why would we lie? Admit all claims going back as far as any veteran, spouse or family member can claim.

**Hill County Community Journal: Qualified VA patients to get 'Choice Cards'.** TriWest Healthcare Alliance announced recently the company is joining forces with the [VA] to implement a new program that will allow eligible veterans to receive health care from alternative providers in their communities, rather than waiting more than 30 days for a VA appointment or traveling more than 40 miles to a VA medical facility.

**Times Union: Fighting to survive the home front: A program for Veterans helps formerly homeless soldier.** At the age of 27, veteran Thomas Kudlack says he has been wounded three times, watched his partner die and was himself declared dead. For the Army specialist, originally from Greene County, active duty was nothing compared to life after the military... [H]e'll soon have his own home through the HUD-[VASH] program and Habitat for Humanity.

**Ellwood City Ledger: Veterans Crisis Line Available for those in need.** Pete Albert, suicide prevention coordinator at the Butler VA facilities, receives an average of five to 10 phone calls a week on the Veterans Crisis Line. The calls are from veterans or from family members or friends who care about a veteran.

**Daily News Journal (AP): Use of Veterans Courts in US Continues to Increase.** Efforts are under to develop a veterans court in Rutherford County this year, and similar efforts also are underway in Ohio, Kansas and Missouri, according to the Associated Press.

**Billings Gazette: Vet Center opens its doors to raise awareness.** When George Blackard found out about the Billings Vet Center, it was by accident. "We just needed an office for a little event we were doing," the commander of the Andrew Pearson American Legion Post 117 said. His search led him to the center, but what he found was much more than just an office.

**KIAH-TV (CW-39) (Video): VA pursues Veteran's widow for mistaken pension.** Lucille Koester's husband, Andy, was a veteran of five battles in WWII, including the Battle of the Bulge. Despite suffering physical ailments and PTSD for the rest of his life, Andy never wanted to collect disability benefits from the government. But after his death, representatives with the Veterans Affairs department pressed Lucille, telling her she was entitled to the money.

**Fayetteville Observer: After year of trouble, VA building for future.** Elizabeth Goolsby was the punching bag for a troubled VA in the latter half of last year. At seven town hall meetings held since September, Goolsby - the director of the Fayetteville [VAMC] - calmly stood before crowds of sometimes angry veterans... But the most recent meetings...last month, took on a different tone.

**SFGate.com (AP): 91-year-old optician inspires others in Port Orange area.** A 91-year-old retired optician and World War II combat veteran is inspiring many people through his volunteer work at a local Veterans Affairs clinic. The Daytona Beach News-

Journal (<http://bit.ly/1BtL9Pg>) reports that Orville Swett has helped to repair and adjust eyeglasses at the clinic for more than 30 years.

**The Daily Sentinel: Flue seasons means taking precautions.** [W]hen a few cases of Ebola surfaced in America, many U.S. public health officials tried to inject some rational thought into a debate that was bordering on hysteria... Americans have a far higher risk of dying from the flu than from Ebola, they warned... It's thought that a single visitor infected 11 patients in the Veterans Affairs Medical Center's community living center.

**WFXG-TV (Fox - Video): Man blames VA after sleeping meds left him with erection for weeks.** A man said the VA Hospital is to blame for his recent hospitalization. Edward Stalling said doctors prescribed Trazodone for his inability to sleep. Instead, he's had a painful erection ever since... "It's not functional as a sex organ and he has trouble urinating. We're going to bring a case against the VA."