

**TDVS Benefits Bulletin**  
**24-8**

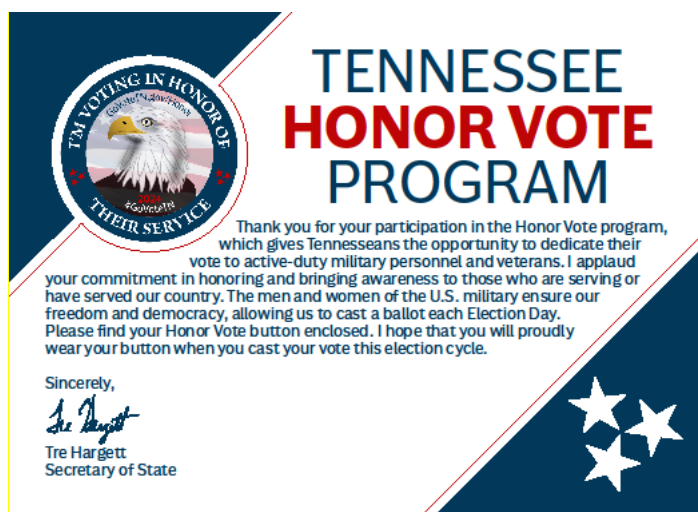
[TDVS Updates](#)  
[VA and Veteran Benefit Updates](#)  
[Practice Like a Pro](#)  
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*This month's bulletin is 2,112 words and will take just over 8 minutes of your time.*

**1 big thing: Honor Vote Program**

**The Honor Vote program** lets Tennesseans dedicate their vote to those who are serving or have served our country.

**How to submit:** Submit your Honor Vote to the Tennessee Secretary of State's office using the [online form](#). A commemorative button will be sent to you by mail to wear on Election Day.



🌐 Visit the [Honor Vote website](#) to learn more.

**TDVS Updates**

💰 [Economic Impact of Veterans in Tennessee](#)

**Now available on TDVS's website.** This innovative tool provides a detailed visual representation of the economic contributions of Veterans across our state. You can access

the interactive map directly via [Economic Contributions of Tennessee Veterans - Total Impact and Expenditures Analysis \(tn.gov\)](https://tn.gov/economic-contributions).

**Why it matters:** This map is not just a repository of information; it is a strategic tool that you can use to significantly enhance outreach efforts and interactions with a variety of stakeholders.

🔔 Share the link as this is public facing information designed to benefit our state and the Veteran community.

### Claims Management System – Request for Proposals

**On May 28<sup>th</sup>, TDVS released a Request for Proposals (RFP)** to solicit a potential replacement for VetraSpec, the current claims management system.

**Why it matters:** The decision to replace VetraSpec follows a review process started in April 2022, led by a working group of State and County Veteran Service Officers. Their recommendations have shaped the criteria for the RFP.

**What's new:** Several amendments have been posted to [the Department of General Services Request for Proposals Opportunities website](https://tn.gov/general-services) to allow additional time to respond to vendor questions and comments. The vendor response deadline was August 2, 2024.

### **I need more:**

- [Benefits Bulletin 23-7](#) contained an update of the group's work.
- [Commissioner Baker's Letter](#) to County Mayors and Executives
- [Stakeholder Engagement Portal](#)
  - FAQs
  - Got a Question – [Ask It Here](#)

👉 **Don't forget:** TDVS is covering VetraSpec licensing fees for County users in the upcoming billing cycle. Please submit invoices to [TDVS.AP@tn.gov](mailto:TDVS.AP@tn.gov) with a courtesy copy to your Regional Director, [travis.murphy@tn.gov](mailto:travis.murphy@tn.gov) and [Jonathan.soto@tn.gov](mailto:Jonathan.soto@tn.gov).

### Annual Conference 2024

#### "Leading the Nation – Tennessee Veteran Advocacy"

**[Registration is open for TDVS's Annual Conference 2024.](#)** It will be held September 30<sup>th</sup> – October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 at the Chattanooga Convention Center & Chattanooga Marriott Downtown, 1 Carter Street, Chattanooga, TN.


**What's new:** Keep an eye on your inbox for Commissioner Baker's invitation to the Annual Awards Banquet, which will be held Tuesday, October 1, 2024, from 6 – 8 p.m. EST.

👉 **Don't forget:** Tickets are now available for the [Coolidge National Medal of Honor Heritage Center](#). The Center will be providing a unique opportunity for conference attendees to visit on Monday, September 30, 2024, from 5 – 8 p.m. EST.

Get your [tickets](#) now. *This is an optional opportunity and not a required portion of the TDVS training conference.*

**Here's your [one-stop shop](#)** for all things Annual Conference. Check out --

- Information on Parking & Venue
- Things To Do in Chattanooga
- And More

 **Save the Date** – [TDVS Lunch & Learn](#) September 11th, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. CST – 2024 Annual Training Conference Update

#### [TDVS' Knowledge Library](#)

- Added [2024 Tax Relief Brochure](#) - VSO Tools – Tools
- Added [Benefits Bulletin 24-7](#) – VSO Tools – TDVS Benefits Bulletin – 2024
- Added [TDVS Accreditation Course Smartbook July 2024](#) – VSO Tools – Publications
- Added [Benefits Claims – How to Use 08.10.2024](#) – VetraSpec Version 24.1 Release Update Toolbox – VetraSpec 24.1 Release Notes/Guides

#### [Training Updates](#)

**What's next:** Here's the training schedule for the remainder of the calendar year:

- August – [Lunch & Learn](#), Wednesday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. CST – VA Special Claims & Benefits
- September – [Lunch & Learn](#), Wednesday, September 11th, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. CST – 2024 Annual Training Conference Update
- Annual Conference / Awards Banquet / Advocacy Summit – Monday, September 30 - Wednesday, October 2
- October Initial Accreditation Training, Monday, October 21, 2024 – Friday, October 25, 2024
- Annual Examination – Friday, November 15<sup>th</sup> **OR** Monday, November 18<sup>th</sup> - Virtual

- [2024 Training Schedule](#)

## **VA and Veteran Benefit Updates**

### VA Enhances Claims Status Tool

**VA recently updated the [VA Claim Status Tool](#)** that allows Veterans to view the status of their VA claim, decision review or appeal online through VA.gov.

#### **What's new:**

- User-friendly interface: Easier to navigate and find what you need.
- Real-time notifications: Get up-to-date information about your claim status instantly.
- Mobile optimization: Manage your claim on your phone or tablet, from anywhere.
- Clearer information: See your claim details presented more clearly, making it easier to understand the status and next steps.

#### **I need more:**

- [VA News](#) – VA enhances claim status tool for improved Veteran experience.
- [VA Claim Status Tool](#)
- [2023 Spring Quarterly Training](#) - How to Create an ID.me Account for VA.gov

### VA Begins Transition to Simpler Online Sign-In Experience

**In 2025, VA will be transitioning from four sign-in account** options (Login.gov, ID.me, My HealtheVet, and DS Logon) to two sign-in account options: Login.gov and ID.me accounts.

**Background:** VA knows this transition will be difficult for some Veterans and is dedicated to ensuring that all Veterans, including those using assistive devices (like screen readers), have the support they need to successfully make this transition. As part of this, VA is committed to partnering with VSOs to provide consistent outreach and support.

**What's next:** Representatives from VA's Office of Information Technology (OIT) will be reaching out to VSOs to schedule briefings to provide further information and answer questions.

#### **I need more:**

- [VA Press Release](#)


- [VA Landing Page](#) – Continuously updated with the latest information, support materials, and answers to common Veteran questions as the transition progresses.
- [2023 Spring Quarterly Training](#) - How to Create an ID.me Account for VA.gov

### Presidential Pardon for LGBTQ+ Veterans

**On June 26, 2024, President Biden issued a proclamation that gave a full and unconditional pardon to individuals with court-martial convictions** for violations of former Article 125 of the UCMJ based on conduct that involved consensual, private conduct with persons aged 18 and older.

**Background:** Individuals convicted of attempts, conspiracies, and solicitation to commit qualifying former Article 125 offenses under Articles 80, 81, and 82 of the UCMJ are also pardoned. The proclamation applies to qualifying court-martial convictions occurring between May 31, 1951, and December 26, 2013. To qualify for a pardon certificate, a person must not have engaged in conduct contained in the exceptions listed in the proclamation.

Individuals who meet the criteria and receive a pardon certificate may be eligible for additional VA benefits earned during periods of military service. The pardon does not change an individual's character of service.

 **Don't forget:** VA encourages any person discharged from the military under dishonorable conditions who receives a pardon certificate to apply to their Board of Correction of Military or Naval Records. TDVS is partnering with NVLSP's Lawyers Serving Warriors® program to help in some discharge upgrades and has referred over a dozen Veterans since announcing this advocacy partnership.

Just follow the three simple steps in this [TDVS Fact Sheet - Complex Claims Assistance Program – Discharge Upgrades](#) to take advantage of this opportunity for your clients.

**I need more:**

[Presidential Proclamation on Certain Violations of Article 125 under the Uniform Code of Military Justice \(va.gov\)](#)

### Final Rule – Adaptive Equipment

**VA has published a [final rule](#)** to amend its regulations governing the provision of a monetary allowance to certain Veterans and eligible members of the Armed Forces who require adaptive equipment to operate an automobile or other conveyance.

**Background:** VA proposed establishing in Regulation a VA Adaptive Equipment Schedule for Automobiles and Other Conveyances to calculate the amount of the monetary allowance for adaptive equipment based on industry standards and their experience administering the program.

**Why it matters:** This rulemaking does not change the eligibility requirements to receive adaptive equipment. It addresses reimbursement to eligible persons who have paid for adaptive equipment and payments made by VA directory to registered adaptive equipment providers.

**I need more:**

- [Federal Register](#)
- [Final Rule](#)

VBA VSO Quarterly Updates

**Last month's Bulletin** provided updates on MST claims processing including pending changes to VA Forms.

**Dig deeper:** the Bulletin noted VA would implement these changes, in part, through updated forms (VA Forms 21-0781 and 20-0995) and that VetraSpec was aware of the form updates and working to incorporate into Tennessee's forms library.

- The new version of VA Form 21-0781, dated March 2024, released on June 28, 2024, has been updated in VetraSpec.
- VetraSpec is still working to incorporate the new version of VA Form 20-0995, dated May 2024, released on June 28, 2024, into Tennessee's forms library.

**I need more:**

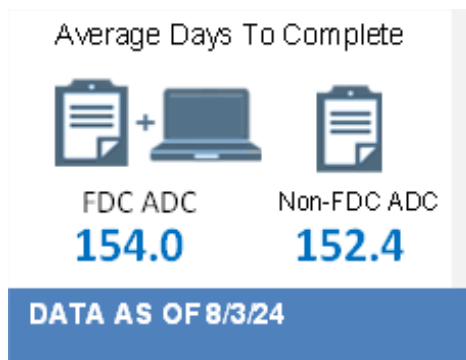
- [VBA VSO Quarterly Slide Deck](#)
- [VA Form 20-0995](#)
- [VA Form 21-0781](#)
- [TDVS Benefits Bulletin 24-7](#)

**Practice Like a Pro**

 When Will I Get a Decision on My Claim or Appeal? – Quarterly Update

**When will I get a decision on my claim or appeal?** This is one of the most common questions asked of advocates. There's no one right answer because each claim or appeal is unique, but here are several publicly available data points to help counsel your clients:

- Fully Developed Claim – [Average Days to Complete](#)



- Higher Level Review – Average Days Pending - VA's [Monday Morning Workload Report](#) – Download Most Recent Report & Navigate to Traditional Aggregate (TA) Tab

DROC Decision Review Workload (AMA)		
	Claims Pending	Average Days Pending
EP 030 - Higher-Level Reviews (HLR)	60,856	52.4
HLR - Compensation	60,300	52.4
HLR - Pension	556	54.1
EP 040 - Higher-Level Review Returns (HLRR)	74,616	156.1
HLRR - Compensation	73,930	155.9

HLRR - Pension	686	179.1
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- BVA Appeals – Average Days to Complete - BVA [Quarterly Reports](#)

Quarter	Direct	Evidence	Hearing
1st	388	1,002	1,001
2nd	727	1,052	1,026
3rd			
4th			

TDVS is currently holding hearings for 10182's filed in August/September 2020. Here's more to help clients understand [why BVA appeals take so long and what the Board is doing about it](#).

#### VetraSpec Update 24-1 - New Functionality

 **Tennessee VetraSpec Users received the VetraSpec 24.1 update** Saturday, May 11<sup>th</sup>.

#### **What do I need to do:**

**1** – If you haven't already, clear your browser cache. *This is a very important step; many of the post-update issues that users experience result from failure to clear the cache.*

- [Instructions for Firefox users](#) (Check "Cached Web Content")
- [Instructions for Chrome users](#) (Choose "All Time" and check "Cached images and files")

**2** – If you haven't already, please use the control panel to set up multi-factor authentication for your account.

- Select "Control Panel" from the left-hand side of the VetraSpec Home screen.
- Select "Multi Factor Authentication" from the top VetraSpec menu.
- Set up multi-factor authentication using either email or authenticator app.

**3** – If you haven't already, establish a VA authentication method to prepare to take advantage of the new Benefits Claims functionality.

- Instructions for [ID.me](#)
- Instructions for [Login.gov](#) (Validates with PIV)



**4** – If you have filing capability, start using the VBMS tab to view information from VBMS (POA, ITF) for your Veterans.

**5 – What’s new:** Here are the details on using the Benefits Claims filing capability that you have been waiting for. Thank you to State and County users for supporting validation testing!

**NEW** If you have filing capability, start using Benefits claims to file POA and ITF.

[Benefits Claims – How to Use 08.10.2024](#) – *VetraSpec Version 24.1 Release Update Toolbox – VetraSpec 24.1 Release Notes/Guides*

Appeals & Accreditation Division staff will make themselves available following the August – Lunch & Learn, Wednesday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. CST – VA Special Claims & Benefits – to answer any questions or provide additional instruction on using Benefits Claims.

Contact your Regional Director or the Appeals & Accreditation Division [Training Team](#) for Small Group Training.

**I need more:** Here’s your [one-stop shop](#) for all things VetraSpec Release 24-1. Check out --

- Release Notes Detailing Changes and New Features
- VA's Official communication Regarding the Move from D2D to Benefits Claims
- User Guide for Benefits Claims - Available to Users Who Currently Have D2D Access
- Instructions for Clearing Browser Cache

### **Advocate Spotlight**

Please join us in welcoming Tennessee’s newest accredited representatives:

James Barraza, Crockett County  
George Bowles, Grainger County  
Arthur Conover III, Montgomery County

Karah Cox, Bedford County  
Shad Devillier, Hardin County  
Johnathan Kealen, Rhea County  
Homer Keirse, Bradley County  
Jared Mathews, Van Buren County  
Timothy Morgan, Stewart County  
Kelli Rogers, Memphis Field Office  
Brian Smith, Montgomery County  
Shelia Terrell, Shelby County  
Gregory Tester II, Washington County  
Katie Unruh, Cumberland County



Congratulations on your recent completion of TDVS's Accreditation Course and TDVS accreditation!

*Do you have an advocacy success story or something you'd like to see included in an upcoming bulletin? If so, [share](#) for a future bulletin.*

*TDVS Benefits Bulletins Can Be Found on the [VSO Tools](#) Portion of TDVS's Website*

*Follow TDVS on social media:*

