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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VA issues new ID cards

WASHINGTON (Feb. 21, 2014) -- The Department of Veterans Affairs is issuing new Veteran Health Identification Cards (VHICs) to about 4 million veterans and family members enrolled in VA's health-care system.

The new cards provide a more secure means of identification for veterans due to Social Security numbers and dates of birth no longer contained in the card's magnetic strips or bar codes. Instead, the cards now display an Electronic Data Interchange Personnel Identifier number as the "member ID" on the front of the card and embedded in the magnetic strip. These numbers will be unique to each cardholder.

While The American Legion understands the need to convert to a more secure ID card system, it is urging the department to ensure that no VA enrollee is denied timely access to health care during the card transfer.

According to VA, mailing of the cards "will begin soon. Because we will be reissuing 4 million cards, we ask for your patience during this time." A new VHIC will be automatically mailed to veterans who have the old Veteran Identification Card (VIC).

Last September, VA suspended the issuing of VICs to allow time for changing its systems to read the new card. However, VA has continued taking veterans' requests for cards – the requests have been put on hold but will be produced and issued as soon as the final system changes are ready.

Enrolled veterans who do not have the old VIC may contact their local VA medical center's enrollment coordinator to arrange to have their pictures taken for the new cards, or they may request a VHIC at their next VA health-care appointment. Veterans must provide proper identification in order to receive the new cards.

To receive VHICs in a timely manner, veterans enrolled in VA should make sure their mailing addresses are correct. To update or confirm an address with VA, call (877) 222-VETS (8387). If the post office is unable to deliver a VHIC, the card will be returned to VA.

While VA regrets the delay in providing veterans their new cards, the cards are not required to receive VA health care. The VHIC is for identification and check-in at VA appointments. It cannot be used as a credit card or an insurance card, and it does not authorize or pay for care at non-VA facilities.

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