

BENEFITS & BEYOND

Veterans & Social Security Disability

MAY/JUNE 2020



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What Veterans Should Know About Their Benefits and the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) temporarily closed its 56 regional offices to the public, March 19th, in response to COVID-19.

“The decision to close our offices to the general public is part of the VA’s effort to limit exposure to vulnerable populations like our older Veterans and those with underlying medical conditions, as identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “VA is expanding existing technologies to remain accessible to Veterans, service members and their families.”

Many in-person services are already available via the phone or online through virtual options like VA Video Connect. VBA has and continues to adjust to ensure the safety and well-being of its clients and staff. The changes include:

- *Uninterrupted GI Bill payments so students continue to receive their benefits unaffected by any change from in-person to online learning*
- *Supporting students for educational counseling through online and telephone services*
- *Connecting Veterans to Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment*

“**VA is expanding existing technologies to remain accessible to Veterans, service members and their families.**”

Services through teleconferencing; providing case management and general counseling virtually through VA Video Connect

- *Informal conference hearings by telephone or video conferencing when needed*
- *Collecting information to process fiduciary claims by telephone. When necessary, other accommodations will be arranged*
- *Collecting information remotely via phone or teleconference when possible, to process grant requests for special adaptive housing*
- *Conducting examinations for disability benefits using tele-compensation and pension or “tele-C&P” exams. If an in-person examination is required, Veterans will be notified for scheduling*

Effective this past March 30th, the VA discontinued VA benefit briefings and services on military installations for transitioning service members and their families through the interagency Transition Assistance Program (TAP) until further notice. However, the VA is providing virtual briefings and individualized counseling for transitioning service members where possible.

At Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law, our heart goes out to our Veterans and the community as a whole. Our disability clients rely on their benefits. Working Veterans and their family members are being furloughed. Know that the Jan Dils team is taking precautions during the coronavirus to keep our clients and staff well. Stay Home. Stay Safe. Meet Us By Phone. Please know that we are always here for you.





Letter From Jan

Given the recent events surrounding COVID-19, not only has the world been forced to adapt to a new “norm,” but so has the team here at Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law. With no loss in stride, we were cautious to follow the CDC’s Social Distancing guidelines.

While working remotely, we have been fortunate enough to remain fully operational with the same dedication to our clients. Regardless of the circumstances, we’ve taken this opportunity to embrace the situation and continue to learn new ways we can adapt and grow to better help the individuals we care about most.

Of course, Veterans and Social Security Disability benefits are very important to many of our clients, making all the difference in the world. There is a lot of uncertainty – we are here to clarify what you are entitled to and continue to fight for your rights. Please take a moment to read more about your benefits and the

COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, if you have questions, don’t hesitate to contact us at Fight4Vets.com or JanDils.com.

Another topic is what’s in the news regarding Social Security Disability (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). After 40 years, Social Security is changing with the times and removing the Inability to Communicate in English as an Education Category.

Meanwhile, we hope to see our world-health progress. If you have questions or concerns about your benefits, don’t hesitate to give us a call at 1.877.JANDILS.

Sincerely,

JAN DILS brings her expertise to issues that affect you and millions of other Americans every day. While her knowledge spans the critical areas pertaining to Personal Injury, Veterans benefits, Social Security disability benefits and related appeals and claims, her practice remains focused on people, making sure you get the right answers and, above all, results.



OFFICE INBOX

The big story for the last few months is “all hands-on deck” to implement Social Distancing. Our firm moved very quickly to ensure we could remain safe while not compromising the needs of our clients. We have had some celebratory moments, too. We are proud to recognize Social Security Operations Manager **Missy Parsons** and Compliance & Quality Assurance Manager **Tiffany Rummer** on their 10-year work anniversaries on March 18th. We also welcomed VA Attorney **Robert (Bobby) Fredeking** to the firm. Our family grew, too. **Kasey Myers**, VA Hearing Clerk, gave birth to a baby girl!

COMMUNITY CORNER

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, schools and businesses all across the world have closed or cut back. However, hundreds of teachers across the Mid-Ohio Valley are still interacting with their students, and March’s Jan Dils **Golden Apple Award** winner is no exception. **Audrey Reynolds** is a special education teacher at Putnam Elementary in Marietta, Ohio, and parents say she has a special way of working with each one. We were unable to acknowledge Ms. Reynolds as usual. However, we hope to officially present her with her award and jewelry from Baker & Baker Jewelers soon.



Employee Spotlight

ROBERT (BOBBY) FREDEKING

Joining Jan Dils, Attorneys at Law, in March of 2020, VA attorney Bobby Fredeking brings added valuable client advocate experience to the firm. His professional experience started as a Lobbyist and Legislative Analyst for then-Florida Governor Rick Scott (now United States Senator). Following his time with the Governor, Bobby joined Fredeking, Fredeking & Biser Law Offices as an Associate, where he worked in all aspects of litigation.



“I knew from the outset this firm was going to be a great fit,” says Bobby. “The Jan Dils team is truly dedicated to providing competent representation to clients in dire need of assistance.”

Bobby is passionate about getting to know his clients on a personal level and making a positive difference in their lives. That’s the Jan Dils culture. We are so pleased to have him on the team.

Social Security Modernizing its Disability Program

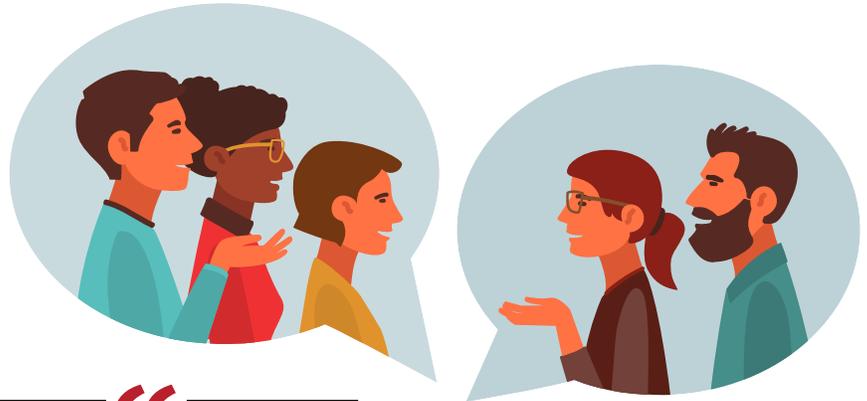
A DECADES-OLD RULE has been updated to reflect today's workforce. Social Security Commissioner Andrew Saul announced a new final rule February 24, 2020, modernizing an agency disability rule that was introduced in 1978 and has remained unchanged.

The new regulation, "Removing the Inability to Communicate in English as an Education Category," updates a disability rule that was more than 40 years old and did not reflect work in the modern economy. This final rule has been in the works for a number of years and updates an antiquated policy that makes the inability to communicate in English a factor in awarding disability benefits.

"It is important that we have an up-to-date disability program," Commissioner Saul said. "The workforce and work opportunities have changed, and outdated regulations need to be revised to reflect today's world."

A successful disability system must evolve and support the right decision as early in the process as possible. Social Security's disability rules must continue to reflect current medicine and the evolution of work.

Social Security is required to consider



“**The workforce and work opportunities have changed, and outdated regulations need to be revised to reflect today's world**”

education to determine if someone's medical condition prevents work, but research shows the inability to communicate in English is no longer a good measure of educational attainment or the ability to engage in work. This rule is another important step in the agency's efforts

to modernize its disability programs.

In 2015, Social Security's Inspector General recommended that the agency evaluate the appropriateness of this policy. Social Security owes it to the American public to ensure that its disability programs continue to reflect the realities of the modern workplace. This rule also supports the Administration's long-standing focus of recognizing that individuals with disabilities can remain in the workforce. The rule will be effective on April 27, 2020.

Source: www.ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2020/#2-2020-1

What's Cooking?

Memorial Day Macaroni Salad



From the kitchen of Social Security Case Manager **Kerry Lucas**, this Macaroni Salad is perfect for a Memorial Day picnic or every day.

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 16-ounce package of elbow macaroni | 1/4 cup sweet relish |
| 6 hard cooked eggs, sliced | 1/2 cup honey mustard |
| 1 small red/purple onion, diced | 1 teaspoon tsp salt |
| 1/2 cup celery, chopped fine | 1/2 tsp black pepper |
| 1 cup mayo | 1 tsp celery salt |

DIRECTIONS: Cook the macaroni according to the package. Slice the hardboiled eggs. Dice the purple onion. Chop the celery, fine. Mix the mayo, honey mustard, salt, pepper and celery salt. Add the mayo mixture to the macaroni, eggs, onion and celery. Cover and refrigerate.

IT'S GAME TIME

COMMONYMS

What's a commonym you ask?

A commonym is a group of words that have a common trait in the three words/items listed. For example: the words; A car - A tree - An elephant... they all have trunks. These will make you think!

1. The Navy - A Deli - An Absent Teacher
2. A Person - A Watch - A Mountain
3. A Bowling Alley - A Roof - A Street
4. High - Uneven - Parallel
5. Goose - Theresa - Hubbard
6. Mare - Mustang - Bronco
7. Killer Whales - Referees - Old T.V's
8. Music - Mail - Safe Deposit
9. Rail - Chain - Picket
10. Palm - Easter - Hot Fudge

Answers: 1 They all have subs 2 They have faces
3 They have gutters 4 Bars in gymnastics 5 Mothers
6 Horses 7 They're black & white 8 Boxes 9 Fences
10 All Sundays/Sundaes



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PERSONAL INJURY / VETERANS DISABILITY / SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY

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What Social Security Recipients Should Know About the CARES Act Stimulus Payments

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was signed on March 27, 2020. But for Americans on Social Security, there has been a lot of new and changing information.

At a glance:

- The U.S. government passed a stimulus bill giving eligible individuals a one-time payment of up to \$1,200, up to \$2,400 for joint filers, plus \$500 for each qualifying child.
- This includes people who collect Social Security benefits for retirement, disability or Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- The government will use information from your Form SSA-1099 Social Security Benefit Statement, Form RRB-1099 Social Security Equivalent Benefit Statement, or a tax return to determine how much you qualify for.

- You do not need to take additional steps to receive a stimulus payment. If you don't have a tax filing requirement because your income is too low, you do not need to file a tax return just to get a stimulus check.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Will I receive a check, even if I'm on Social Security disability?

As long as you qualify, you will receive benefits. That includes income from disability, SSI and retirement.

The following people are not eligible for stimulus payments:

- Individuals with an adjusted gross income over \$99,000
- Nonresident aliens
- Dependents*

I need to file a tax return. How long are the economic impact payments available?

For those concerned about visiting a tax professional or local community organization in person to get help with a tax return, these economic impact payments will be available throughout the rest of 2020.

When should I have received my stimulus money?

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said that he expected for most people to see payments mid-April. If you qualify and have not received your check, visit [IRS.gov/coronavirus](https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus) to learn more about specific dates and/or delays from the U.S. Treasury.

Do I have to pay it back?

That is unlikely. The stimulus payments are treated like an advance tax credit. And since it's a tax credit, you won't have to pay tax on the amount you receive, either.

Where can I get more information?

The IRS has a reduced staff in many of its offices but remains committed to helping eligible individuals receive their payments expeditiously. Check for updated information on [IRS.gov/coronavirus](https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus) rather than calling IRS associates who are helping process 2019 returns.

*Individuals with dependents under age 17 can receive up to \$500 for each qualifying child. That amount will be added to their stimulus check. Anyone who is claimed as a dependent on another person's tax return will not be able to claim a stimulus payment for themselves.