

## VA Healthcare Update

For veterans struggling financially due to a job loss or decreased income, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers an assortment of programs that can relieve the costs of health care or provide care at no cost. It is important that eligible veterans learn of the many ways VA has to help them afford the health care they have earned.

Veterans whose previous income was ruled too high for VA health care may be able to enter the VA system based upon a hardship if their current year's income is projected to fall below federal income thresholds due to a job loss, separation from service or some other financial setback. Veterans determined eligible due to hardship can avoid copays applied to higher-income veterans. Qualifying veterans may be eligible for enrollment and receive health care at no cost.

Also eligible for no-cost VA care are most veterans who recently returned from a combat zone. They are entitled to five years of free VA care. The five-year "clock" begins with their discharge from the military, not their departure from the combat zone.

The VA Medical Center in Fresno has an enrollment coordinator available to provide veterans information about these programs. Veterans may also contact VA's Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222 VETS (8387) or visit our office with health eligibility questions.

There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can also get information on the web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office website at [www.countyofkings.com](http://www.countyofkings.com).

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 West Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230, the phone number is 582-3211 ex. 2662 or email [joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us](mailto:joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us).