

TRUMP, MUSK, DOGE AND VETERANS

There are unusual things happening in the federal government. As you may know, the Trump administration, particularly the newly created “Department of Governmental Efficiency”, is taking an axe to the federal budget, especially the work force. To date there have already been two rounds of layoffs at the Department of Veterans Affairs and Mr. Collins, the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs, just announced another 85,000 jobs being cut, with more to come. He said “We’ll be making major changes—get used to it.” How will this impact you? The answer is that no one knows specifically yet. That is in part because it will affect people at different stages differently and in part because Mr. Collins’ efforts are ongoing and the total effect cannot yet be known.

There are two points that are important, however. First, the VA was already struggling to perform its two primary jobs of delivering health care and providing benefits to veterans. For veterans who have had to appeal unfavorable rating decisions and are waiting for the Board to act on their cases, the timeline has already crept up almost another year since the PACT Act went into effect which brought a large volume of new claims into the VA system. Any cuts can only hurt, causing further delays in benefits determinations and slowing access to health care.

The second point is potentially much worse. The announced goal of the Trump (Musk) budget cuts is to reduce the 6.8 trillion dollar government budget by 2 trillion dollars, to 4.8 trillion, by eliminating “fraud and waste.” The problem is that there is very little fraud to find. Until Trump fired them, each department, including VA, had an Inspector General whose staff worked to prevent fraud and waste.

The other part of the problem is that waste is in the eye of the beholder. If you are Elon Musk, spending government dollars at the VA to research better treatment for veterans with PTSD might seem wasteful. For veterans with PTSD, it is not only not wasteful, it is important.

Regardless of what is considered wasteful spending, everyone needs to be worried about this Trump (Musk) goal of cutting the federal budget by two trillion dollars. The thing that some people do not realize is that most of the federal budget goes to three things—Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid and veterans’ benefits (just the benefits, not the employees needed to deliver those benefits to citizens). Those things together make up about 65 percent of the entire federal budget. The defense department (the largest department in the government) which pays for the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force and Space Force, is roughly another 15 percent of the total budget. Together, those account for roughly 80 percent of the total annual budget or about 5.5 trillion dollars. (If you fired every single federal civilian employee including everyone in ICE, the department of agriculture, the border patrol, the courts, the FBI, the defense department, social security and all the VA staff, it would not even come close to a trillion dollars since federal employment is only about 2.3 percent of the budget). Worse for veterans, over 25 percent of the entire federal work force are veterans, many of whose jobs are being cut.

The critical thing, however, is that cutting the budget by 2 trillion dollars as Trump and Musk say they will do means **substantially** cutting some combination of Social Security, Medicare/Medicaid, veterans’ benefits and the Defense Department.

We encourage every veteran to be proactive and contact five people—each of the senators from your state and your congressman, Senator Jerry Moran from Kansas who is the chair of the veterans affairs committee in the Senate and Representative Mike Bost who is the chair of veterans affairs committee in the House of Representatives. Tell them that Trump was not elected to fire veterans and make cuts at the VA which was already struggling to do its job with the staff and budget that it had.

This link on the internet will take you to a list of addresses for the Senators from your state:
<https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>

This link will help you to find your representative based on your zip code:
<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>

Address and phone number for Senator Jerry Moran:
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510
(202) 224-6521

Address and phone number for Representative Mike Bost:
352 Cannon House Office Building
Washington DC 20515
(202) 225-5661

We encourage you to please write, call or email. (Most politicians seem to pay the most attention to those who actually take the time to sit down and write a letter or at least a thoughtful email). You may wish to write one letter or email and copy it to all five people. Tell them how important veterans’ benefits are to you if you are receiving benefits and how long you have already been waiting if you have claims pending.

Which Conditions Can We Help You Claim Benefits For?

- ▶ PTSD
- ▶ Sleep apnea
- ▶ Migraines
- ▶ Sclerosis
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Neck and back injuries
- ▶ Knee and shoulder injuries
- ▶ Agent Orange-related conditions
- ▶ Gulf War-related conditions
- ▶ Chronic fatigue syndrome
- ▶ Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- ▶ Epilepsy
- ▶ Crohn’s disease
- ▶ Fibromyalgia
- ▶ Asthma

The Essex was produced by the Hudson motor car company in the late 1920's and early 1930's as an enclosed touring car with a powerful 6-cylinder engine. The Essex brand was third in the U.S. behind Ford and Chevrolet at that time. The photo below shows Alexandra Jackson at the wheel of an Essex Super Six.



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Spring Showers Bring...

FLASH FLOODS

April showers bring May flowers, but springtime also brings the risk of flash flooding. Flash flooding is the leading cause of weather-related death in the United States, accounting for roughly 200 deaths per year. Half of these deaths are related to vehicles.

When a roadway floods, it can often be tough for a driver to see before it's too late - especially at night. If a car gets stuck in a flooded roadway, the consequences can be disastrous. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, six inches of water is enough to reach the bottom of most passenger vehicles, causing loss of control and the possibility of stalling. A foot of water can float most vehicles. Two feet of rushing water is enough to carry away even SUVs and large pickup trucks. When driving in rainy conditions, awareness is the key to

safety. If you come across a flooded roadway, do not try to drive through the water!

Before hitting the road during a storm, you can take advantage of the National Weather Service's flood watch and warning system. There are four levels of alerts with different meanings. A Flood Advisory is issued when a forecasted weather event has the potential to cause a problem. A Flood Watch is issued when conditions are favorable for a specific event to occur. A Flood Warning indicates that flooding is already occurring or is imminent. A Flash Flood Warning indicates that a flash flood is already occurring or is imminent. When you see an Advisory for your area, you should be aware of the risk. A Watch should tell you to be prepared to deal with problems arising. A Warning means you should act by immediately moving to higher ground if you are in a flood prone area.

