

LAVAN & NEIDENBERG NEWSLETTER

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VA Claim Support from Veterans Rights Advocates

Members of NOVA offer better veteran support

Did you know that The Law Offices of LaVan and Neidenberg is connected with a national network of thousands of veterans advocacy professionals? Attorney Kenneth LaVan has been a member of NOVA, the National Organization of Veterans Advocates, for 4 years running and it has allowed him to provide exemplary assistance to his clients above and beyond a normal veterans' disability compensation lawyer.

Membership in NOVA is more than just an application and a fee. A NOVA attorney or advocate must be approved by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (referred to as the "VA") as an accredited veterans' advocate. **This involves 3 main areas of approval:**

- **they must have represented at least 1 veteran in the past;**
- **they must have a history of prompt filings and response to all filings;** and
- **they must have attended at least 1 continuing legal education course and continue to do so every 18 months.**

This means that only the most dedicated veterans' disability compensation attorneys will have earned the prestigious membership in this helpful organization.

NOVA membership isn't just about the title either. It's about offering the best service to deserving veterans as they work to claim their rightful disability benefits. They assist in all aspects of the claims process, including pension and disability. A NOVA-approved attorney can also assist the families of veterans in obtaining any type of benefits for their loved ones.

Also in this issue...

Page 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SSA Prepares for Online• Health News• Quick Fix Meal
Page 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• September Calendar of Events• Book of the Month• Remembering September 11th



How a NOVA Attorney Benefits Your Claim

One of the main benefits of being a NOVA member is that attorneys like Kenneth LaVan have access to a national network of other veterans' advocates. There are many aspects of veterans benefit law that make it difficult for any single attorney to know everything there is to understand.

By utilizing their connections, NOVA attorneys can collaborate with other NOVA members to find answers to unfamiliar questions about veterans' disability law. As they say, "2 heads are better than one" – and a network of thousands of veterans' benefits attorneys is better, too!

Working for You: Kenneth LaVan and NOVA

At The Law Offices of LaVan & Neidenberg, P.A. we take pride in our founding partner, Kenneth LaVan's work with NOVA. Mr. LaVan has not only upheld his membership requirements in every way, but he has gone above and beyond for the organization.

Aside from the required continuing education, Mr. LaVan has also been asked to present informational sessions on veterans' disability benefits and veterans' benefit claims. As a leader in his field, he applies this same passion and commitment to his disability law firm and the cases it handles.

Our experienced attorneys are here to answer your questions and protect your right to your veterans' disability benefits. To schedule a no cost case evaluation, [contact us today](#) to get your claim reviewed and discover how a veterans' disability attorney can help you get the benefits you are entitled to – **1-888-234-5758**.

SSA Prepares for Online Future

SSA working on long-term online features

A recent review by the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Inspector General resulted in a new analysis and plan for the department's future online needs.

With more and more of the SSA services going to the World Wide Web, the agency is focused on online benefit management and assistance. Some of these changes are already apparent, such as the March 2012 deadline for the end of paper benefit checks and the transition to direct deposit.

The SSA already allows applicants to file for retirement and disability benefits through their website. The SSA's website is full of information for first-time applicants and current benefit recipients, as well as their families. There are online guides to applying, news announcements for the latest in benefit information, and much more.

The Inspector General also made the following recommendations to help enhance the current online programs and prepare for new ones:

- **determine what services can be transitioned to online;**
- **set goals for these transitions;**
- **determine customer expectations;**
- **build timelines for meeting goals, as well as addressing customer expectations;**
- **provide adequate staffing to develop, implement, and monitor these new online projects; and**
- **establish performance metrics to provide the best online support possible.**

In 2010 the SSA saw 27% of all new disability benefit claims filed through their online application services. They expect to increase this percentage to 38% by the end of this year, and continue an increasing trend.

The SSA has developed a Future Systems Technology Advisory Panel (FSTAP) to assess and evaluate the online programs. According to the panel, the SSA should be prepared to move to a completely electronic self-service online model. The hope is that it will allow for at least 90% of all disability benefit business to be conducted online rather than in person or by postal mail.

Even if you apply for your disability benefits online you may still need assistance from a Social Security disability attorney when your claim is denied and you must appeal the decision. The online application process can still be confusing and difficult – get an attorney's help to avoid making mistakes that could delay your benefit approval!

HEALTH NEWS

Location Can Influence Cost of Health Care Premium

As the fight over the Obama administration's health care plan continues, studies by the Kaiser Family Foundation have shown that where you live can already effect what you pay in health care premiums.

The study shows that in some states such as Massachusetts and Vermont, health care premiums were two times the national average of \$215. While these states are said to be in insurance market reforms, changes may not be seen until 2014 when insurers are prevented from charging higher premiums for pre-existing conditions.

Some of the reasons for differing premium costs between states include the local:

- **health care costs;**
- **cost of living;**
- **demographics; and**
- **regulatory requirements.**

QUICK FIX RECIPE

Almond Green Beans



As the fall harvest rolls in many areas are finding themselves overwhelmed with bushels of delicious string beans!

You can use any variety of beans in this recipe: traditional green beans, wax beans, long beans, even the purple varieties!

All you need is:

- **1lb beans, cut in small chunks if desired**
- **½ cup slivered, toasted almonds**
- **2 tbs butter or low-fat butter spread**

Lightly steam the beans until they're tender but not limp, about 15 minutes. Place in a bowl and toss with the butter and almonds. For a little extra flavor, sprinkle on some seasoned pepper or garlic powder!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September is a month of transition with students back in school, the weather changing in many areas from summer to fall, and the spring crops coming to harvest.

VJ DAY – FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2ND, 2011

“Victory over/in Japan Day” is the day that the official ceremony took place with the formal signing of surrender aboard the USS Missouri. President Harry S. Truman declared this date as VJ Day as it was the formal surrender by the Japanese, although the actual surrender occurred back on August 14, 1945.

LABOR DAY – MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 5TH, 2011

The first Monday of every month is a federal holiday known as Labor Day, dedicated to honor the hard-working Americans that keep our society running. The first Labor Day was celebrated officially in 1882 thanks to the Central Labor Union in New York City.

Schools, government offices, and many businesses are closed on this day. Make sure you call first to confirm a business is open before running any errands this day!

FRIENDSHIP DAY – SUNDAY, AUGUST 7, 2011

The first Sunday in August is known as Friendship Day – an official excuse to celebrate all the friends that make life worth living! The Internet has helped us keep in touch with our current buddies, and find long lost old friends. Why not take this day to catch up with an old pal?

GRANDPARENT’S DAY – SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2011

This is the day to honor our grandparents and all they do for us. Many senior centers and elder care facilities host family days to provide a fun event day for grandparents and their loved ones.

POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY – FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2011

This day of remembrance is dedicated to Prisoners of War (POW) and soldiers Missing in Action (MIA). These brave men and women of our U.S. armed forces have been through extreme conditions to help maintain our freedom, and many are still unaccounted for.

If you are a former POW or have a loved one who was MIA, take today to thank them for their dedication.

SIGN OUR PETITION FOR FREE MEDICAL RECORDS!

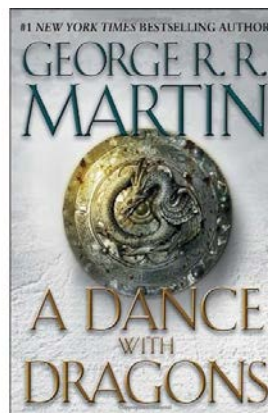
LaVan & Neidenberg is sponsoring a petition to change medical records fees in the State of Florida. Currently, patients are required to pay up to \$1 per page to obtain a copy of their own medical records. The Firm’s legislative initiative proposes to **make medical records FREE for all individuals applying for disability benefits.**

Please join us in our fight and [sign our petition](#) today! Thank you for your support!

Book of the Month

A Dance With Dragons

by *George R.R. Martin*



In the aftermath of a colossal battle, the future of the Seven Kingdoms hangs in the balance once again--beset by newly emerging threats from every direction. In the east, Daenerys Targaryen, the last scion of House Targaryen, rules with her three dragons as queen of a city built on dust and death. But Daenerys has three times three thousand enemies, and many have set out to find her. Yet, as they gather, one young man embarks upon his own quest for the queen, with an entirely different goal in mind.

To the north lies the mammoth Wall of ice and stone--a structure only as strong as those guarding it. There, Jon Snow, 998th Lord Commander of the Night’s Watch, will face his greatest challenge yet. For he has powerful foes not only within the Watch, but also beyond, in the land of the creatures of ice.

And from all corners, bitter conflicts soon reignite, intimate betrayals are perpetrated, and a grand cast of outlaws and priests, soldiers and skinchangers, nobles and slaves, will face seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Some will fail; others will grow in the strength of darkness.

Remembering September 11th

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the September 11th, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. To commemorate this historic time in our nation’s history, the City of New York will hold several moments of silence at each time a plane hit and a tower fell, beginning at 8:46 a.m. The memorial at Shanksville, PA where one of the planes fell will be dedicated on the 10th and a service held on the 11th at 9:30 a.m.

Local tributes are expected to take place across the nation and your local city hall or community center should have information on where you can pay your respects to those lost in these tragic attacks.