



## LEGAL NEWS UPDATE: MAY 2012

1. VA has amended its rating schedule to provide a **100%** disability rating for any veteran with service-connected amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). This rule became effective on January 19, 2012, and applies to an application for benefits that was received by VA or appealed to the Board or was remanded to the Board by the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims on or after January 19, 2012. 76 Fed. Reg. 78823 (Dec. 20, 2011).
2. VA issued a final rule stating that the rules regarding hearings conducted at the regional offices also apply to hearings conducted at the Board of Veterans' Appeals. 77 Fed. Reg. 23128 (Apr. 18, 2012).
3. Starting May 15, 2012, the Department of Veterans Affairs began accepting applications for the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), for training that begins on or after July 1, 2012. This program is open to unemployed veterans, ages 35 to 60, who pursue a VA-approved program offered by a community college or technical school that leads to a "high-demand occupation." The link to the VRAP's list of High Demand Occupations is [http://www.gibill.va.gov/documents/VRAP\\_High\\_Demand.pdf](http://www.gibill.va.gov/documents/VRAP_High_Demand.pdf).

In order to be eligible for this program, you must (1) have received an other than dishonorable discharge, (2) not be eligible for any other VA education program, (3) not be receiving VA compensation based on employability, and (4) not be enrolled in a federal or state job training program. The program is limited to 99,000 veterans – with 45,000 veterans allowed to participate prior to October 1, 2012.

This is a joint effort between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Labor. The Department of Labor will provide every veteran participant with employment assistance after they have completed the program. More information can be found at this link: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/VOW/education.htm>.

4. The House Veterans Affairs Committee held a hearing that examined the role of the VSO claims representative in the VA disability claims process. You can access information from the hearing at this link: <http://veterans.house.gov/hearing/from-the-inside-out-a-look-at-claims-reps-role-in-the-disability-claims-process>
5. The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee held a hearing on VA Mental Health Care: Evaluating and Assessing Care. You can view the hearing from this link: [http://veterans.senate.gov/hearings.cfm?action=release.display&release\\_id=b030f350-2b9f-4e85-9903-0731e03be8e1](http://veterans.senate.gov/hearings.cfm?action=release.display&release_id=b030f350-2b9f-4e85-9903-0731e03be8e1)