

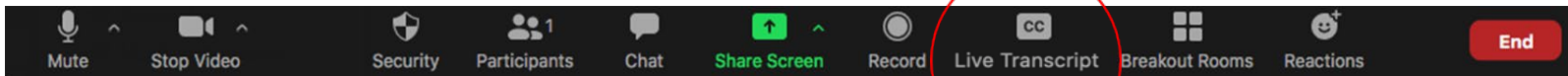
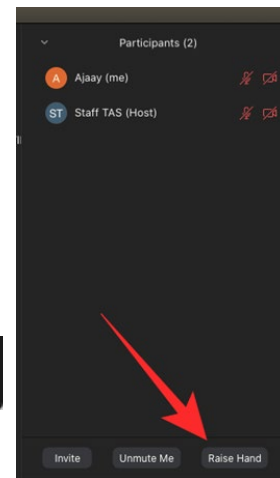


**Welcome to the  
Veterans Across America Virtual Chapter Meeting  
May 18, 2021**

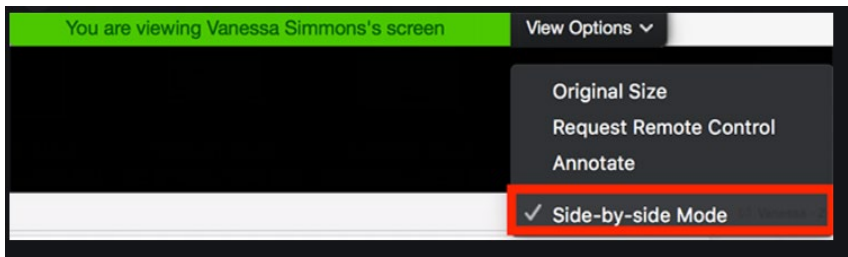
- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Minutes of Last Meeting**
- 3. Committee Reports**
- 4. Please send all email communication directly to me and/or other officers:**
  - Don Doherty, President – [dondoherty46@gmail.com](mailto:dondoherty46@gmail.com)**
  - David Schible, Vice-President - [david.schible@gmail.com](mailto:david.schible@gmail.com)**
  - Martin Collinsworth, Secretary - [deserthawiian@cox.net](mailto:deserthawiian@cox.net)**
- 5. New Outreach Activity**
- 6. New Business**
- 7. Next Meeting – June 22, 2021**
- 8. Tonight's Meeting:**
  - Hearing Loss and Benefit Administration Claims**
  - Speaker: Michelle Anderson, Veterans Benefit Specialist, Bayfield County Veterans Service Office, Michigan**

# Tech Tips

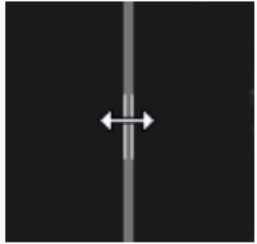
- Click on CC icon on your Zoom meeting bar and click on Show Subtitles.
- Open Chat and move that box on your screen to avoid overlap of captions and chat messages. Please only use chat for comment exchange or technical issues only.
- Click on Raise Hand option to ask a question. Go to Participants icon and click on bottom right corner, Raise Hand. We will be using this feature to facilitate questions after the presentation.



# Tech Tips



- Your screen should be in Side-by-side mode if you have joined by computer.
- There should be a shared screen with presentation on the left and the speakers will appear on the right in gallery view.
- You can adjust the size of your Side-by-side view by hovering your pointer between the shared screen and panelist videos and click on the grey line and slide to adjust to your desired view.
- If you have joined by mobile device or phone. You will have a different view. You may have to scroll between views to get desired one.



# What is the Department of Veterans Affairs?

- Veterans Health Administration (VHA)
- Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)
- National Cemetery Administration

# 3 necessary pieces to file a claim with the VBA:

## 1- Current Medical Diagnosis

\*Veteran's testimony regarding their hearing loss and/or tinnitus is sufficient to serve as evidence that the disability exists as these symptoms are capable of lay observation

## 2- Evidence of in-service hazardous noise exposure

\*Prove noise exposure

-Can concede noise exposure if MOS is "Highly Probable" or "Moderate" level

-Evidence of shift in hearing ability from entrance and separation exams

- "At least as likely as not" medical opinion that your hearing loss is due to military service

-Be thorough on 21-4138 and describe in detail what noise you were exposed to; get buddy statements if possible

## 3-Nexus – or link - tying the two together

\*Get "as likely as not" statement (must include what the Dr. reviewed in giving this opinion and a rationale for the opinion)

\*Buddy or lay statements

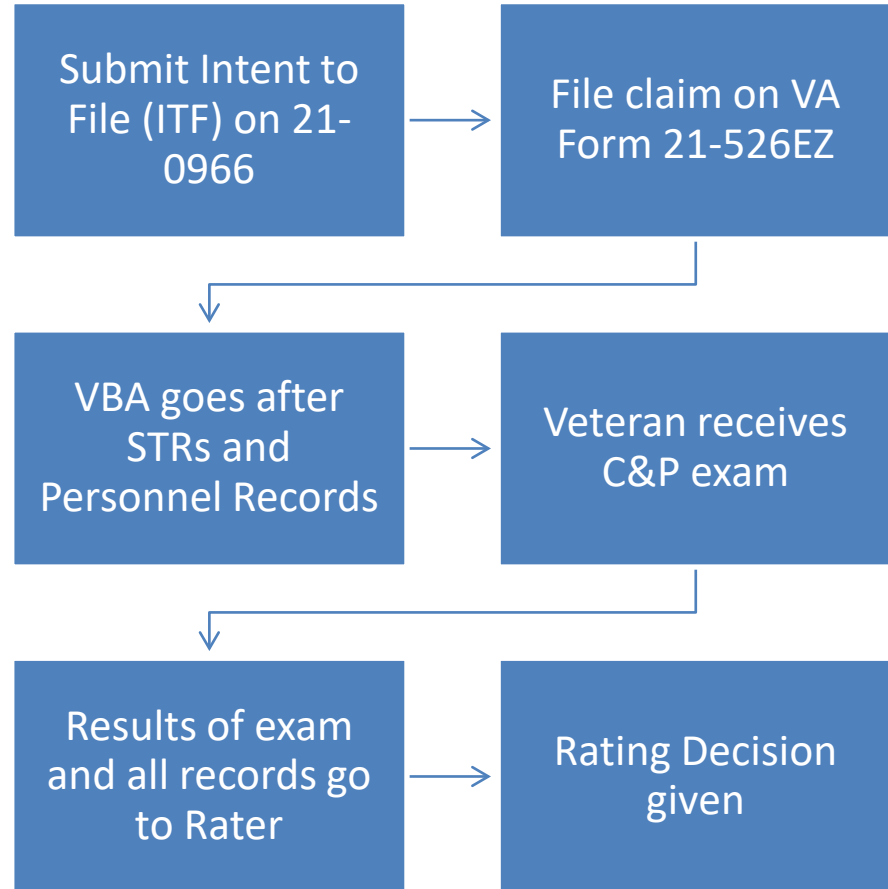
\*DBQ or other conducted exam from a physician



# WHO CAN FILE A CLAIM

- Veterans
  - “A person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged under conditions other than dishonorable”

# Filing a claim



# SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY COMPENSATION

Money paid to veterans who are disabled by an injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated during active military service.

Such injury or illness causes a functional loss in earning capacity.



# Hearing Loss and Military Service

- Causes:

Prolonged noise exposure from: flight lines; aircraft, bombs, tanks, gunfire, combat deployments, training incidents

## Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)

- Reference your MOS and the noise exposure listing – if possible. Otherwise reference your MOS alone.
- Buddy statement should also be considered if the noise exposure is moderate or low level.
- Explain your military service: “In addition to the normal duties expected of (your MOS), I had multiple combat deployments to Iraq where I became qualified on the M4 and M16. I was also exposed to loud Helo noises, noisy flight lines, and indirect fire attacks.”

# Establishing Hearing Loss

## 2 types of tests

- Maryland CNC speech discrimination test
  - Word list used to test ability to hear spoken words
- Pure tone audiometry test
  - Different tones being detected at varying frequencies

**TESTS SHOULD BE PERFORMED BY A STATE LICENSED AUDIOLOGIST!**

**DO NOT WEAR YOUR HEARING AIDS DURING TESTING**



# Rating Hearing Loss

See Section 4.85 of the Code of Federal Regulations for formula used in rating your hearing loss or you can use the below hearing loss calculator:

<https://www.hillandponton.com/va-hearing-disability-calculator/>



VHA says you qualify for hearing aides, but that doesn't mean you will be given a rating for service-connection.

## Hearing Loss For VA Purposes

# Batteries for hearing aids

## 1. Through the mail

- ~ Use VA Form 2346 (blue paper) received with your initial or latest battery order
- ~ Complete form and mail it to the address on the form:  
VA Denver Acquisition and Logistics Center  
PO Box 25166  
Denver, CO 80225-0166

## 2. Phone

- ~ Call Denver Acquisition Center at 303-273-6200  
Press 1 for Automated Battery Reorder System  
You will be asked for your SSN and Zip Code, then select which authorized batteries you want to re-order

# TINNITUS

- What is it  
Ringing, buzzing, roaring, clicking, hissing and other auditory noises in the ears.

It is NOT hearing loss; rather it is a result of damages in the eardrum

Caused by constant stress on the eardrums from gunfire, loud machinery, and other explosive blasts

- \* How often do you notice it?
- \* Is it constant or nearly constant?
- \* When did it start?

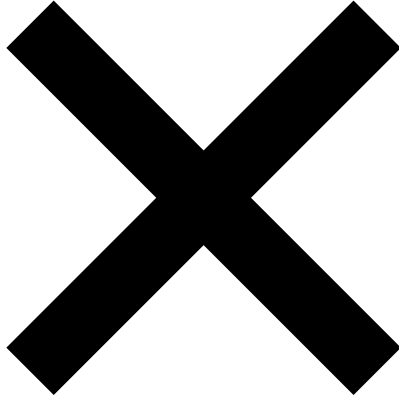
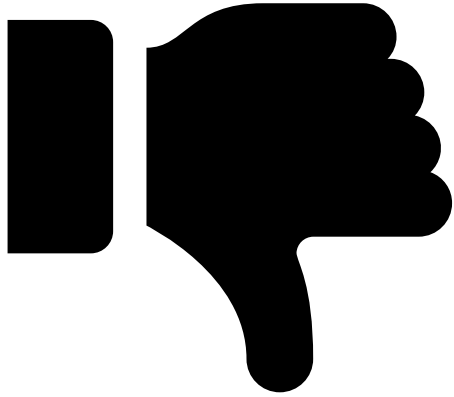
Chronicity: We automatically begin to accept a situation as normal, after some time. Decide if this might have been the case for you many years ago. Did you hear the noise and dismiss it as it just became your new normal?

- Include a statement in support of claim (VA Form 21-4138) that describes how the Tinnitus affects you on a daily/weekly basis: i.e. makes it difficult to be in a room where more than one conversation is happening; unable to hear distinct noises due to the constant thrumming

The maximum rating for Tinnitus is 10%; nothing more and nothing less.







Denied Hearing Loss and/or Tinnitus?

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## Supplemental Claim

## Higher Level Review (HLR)

*For the same benefit which was previously denied*

- Use VA Form 20-0995
- MUST have new and relevant evidence to submit
- Submit within 1 year of denial

- Use VA Form 20-0996
- Claim reviewed by senior VBA employee – CAN NOT submit any new evidence
- Informal teleconference if wanted
- Submit within 1 year of denial

A large, irregular orange watercolor splash graphic on the left side of the slide, with a dark orange center fading to a lighter orange and white at the edges. The text 'Board of Appeal' is written in white, sans-serif font over the dark orange part of the splash.

# Board of Appeal

- Hearing allowed with Law Judge
  - May submit new evidence up to 90 days after hearing
  - Virtual, videoconference or in-person hearings allowed
  - Law Judge has more leniency than VBA

# Timeframes for Completion

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SUPPLEMENTAL  
CLAIM: 4-5 MONTHS



HIGHER LEVEL  
REVIEW: 4-5 MONTHS



BOARD APPEALS:  
OVER 1 YEAR

# Questions and Answers



**Please use Raise Hand option to ask a question! Thank you!**



**Thank you for joining us!**

Please join us again **June 22, 2021** for the next meeting  
of the  
**Veterans Across America Virtual Chapter.**