

Your Social Security

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News and Information for SSDI and SSI Recipients

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Veterans Groups Sue to Stop VA's New Informal Claims Process

Veterans' advocacy groups are crossing swords with the Department of Veterans Affairs over a recent change. New regulations now require veterans applying for disability benefits to file electronically or use specific, standardized forms. Previously, vets could informally start disability claims with the VA by writing a simple statement on a sheet of paper—it could be as simple as a handwritten note on a scrap of paper. But not anymore. This notification (which is known as "intent

to file a claim") is a critically important step because it establishes an effective date of benefits and protects the applicant for up to one year, meaning if you are seeking compensation or pension benefits, you will have a full year to gather and submit evidence necessary to support your claim.

The American Legion, AMVETS, Military Order of the Purple Heart, the National Veterans Legal Services Program and the Vietnam Veterans of America have filed a lawsuit seeking to overturn the new regulations, saying that "the elimination of informal claims was draconian and did not keep with VA's mandate to be veteran friendly" Ron Abrams, joint executive director of the National Veterans Legal Services Program, quoted in *Stars and Stripes* says "Our nation's promise to care for its injured and disabled veterans is being diluted by this new VA rule."

The VA disagrees and argues that vets will be better served under the new rules. "These new processes will leave no doubt as to the effective dates of claims," said National Service Director Jim Marszalek. "Of course, our 3,815 National, Department and Chapter Service Officers...are ready to help everyone get through and understand these new requirements." Until the lawsuit is settled, the new



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regulations are in effect. Individuals must use Form 21-0966, "Intent to File a Claim". The form is electronically available through www.ebenefits.va.gov and there are only three ways to initiate a disability claim:

- Submit the form on the ebenefits website,
- Mail the paper form to VA,
- Call a VA call center representative at 1-800-827-1000.

The VFW's website (vfw.org) has this cautionary note: "Veterans who notify

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(Veterans' Groups Sue...continued from page 1.)

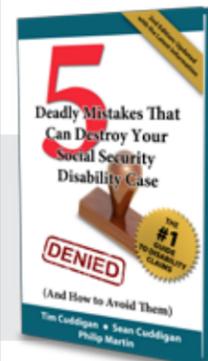
VA of their intent to file a claim without using the new "Intent to File a Claim" form will not be able to preserve their effective date, and may further delay the adjudication of their benefit claim. VA still has an obligation to furnish the requisite paperwork to veterans who are seeking to claim their benefits, but VA warns that the requisite paperwork will likely take months to arrive, meaning veterans will lose out on benefits."

If you or a family member needs help and advice regarding a VA disability claim, contact us at Cuddigan Law for a free evaluation of your situation.

Question of the Month

What should I wear to my disability hearing?

The hearing is informal. You should wear what you would normally wear on a typical day. You do not need to dress up or put on makeup or jewelry if you do not usually do so. However, you should not wear clothing that is revealing or that contains potentially offensive statements or language. Also, you should not do anything to risk making it appear that you are exaggerating your disability. For example, if you do not usually wear wrist braces or use a cane, you should not do so on the day of the hearing.



"5 Deadly Mistakes That Can Destroy Your Social Security Disability Case" is the #1 guide to improving the odds of winning a disability case.

For a FREE copy for you or someone you care about call Cuddigan Law at 402.933.5318 or email us at lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com



Comfort Food

From the kitchen of Janet Cuddigan

When your schedule is hectic and busy (like mine is), a crockpot is a great time saver. I know your family will enjoy this hearty meal and you will appreciate how easy it is.

Crockpot Beef

- 3 pounds round steak, trimmed and cubed
- 2 cans mushroom soup
- 1 cup of baby carrots
- 3 large potatoes, peeled and cut
- Salt, pepper and Lawry's seasoning to taste

Seven hours before dinner: Cut meat into bite size pieces and season to taste. Pour one can of mushroom soup into bottom of crockpot and add ¼ cup of water and stir. Add meat to soup and pour second can of mushroom soup over the meat. Cook on high for 3 hours then reduce heat to low. Four hours before serving stir in potatoes and carrots and continue to cook on low.

Family News

We are pleased to share with you an important milestone for Tim's grandson and Sean's nephew – Dillon Cuddigan. This month Dillon graduates from Omaha's Creighton Prep High School. His dad, Patrick Cuddigan, is, as expected, very proud of his son who was also standout high school athlete in football, track and rugby.

Dillon begins his college career this fall at Rockhurst College in Kansas City. Dillon will be majoring in business, but he's not sure yet what specific area of business interests him most. Dillon also says law school could be a part of his long term plans. And when asked if he might he join the family business, Cuddigan Law? "I like to keep my options open," Dillon slyly admits. Regardless of what the future may hold, we at Cuddigan Law, offer our congratulations to Dillon Cuddigan.



Connections

A spotlight on organizations that offer help and assistance in our community.

Organization: Brain Injury Association of Nebraska

Mission: The BIA-NE is creating a better future for all Nebraskans through brain injury prevention, education, support, and advocacy.



Help Offered:

- **Education** through extensive information about brain injury at conferences and training opportunities in Nebraska for persons with brain injuries, family caregivers, and the professionals who work with them.

- **Outreach and Family Support** by providing resources for educators, employers, and service providers. We also operate a toll-free help line, which provides outreach and referral services for newly injured Nebraskans and their loved ones. Our support groups offer emotional healing, encouragement, education, socialization and confidence building. Fourteen support groups are active in the state.

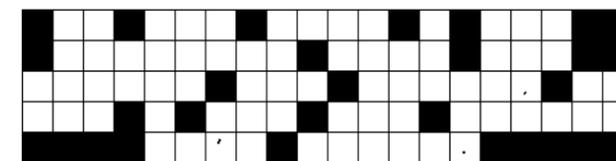
- **Public Awareness** through educating the public and increasing statewide awareness of brain injury as a serious disability with lifelong consequences is achieved through the development and distribution of prevention education and public awareness materials..

Go to <http://www.biane.org> or call (402) 423-2463 for more information.

(Source: biane.org)

Fallen Phrase

Find the amusing quote by filling the letters into the column they fall under.



A H
 A S L H S A M H O G H
 A T E I Z E T I R R A A M I N
 H R E H R E O N S W E I T H T I S K E
 F B Y A T E S W S W T O N G T H A N H S

For the puzzle solution go to cuddiganlaw.com/library/newsletters

We're in your corner.

We value the confidence and trust you have placed with us in the past.

If you or a family member or a friend could use our help now or in the future, please pass along our name.

Cuddigan Law.

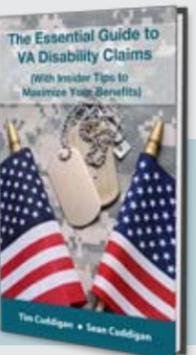
Disability law is all we do.



Tim & Sean Cuddigan

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Are you a disabled veteran?

Before you apply for VA disability benefits call Cuddigan Law at 402.933.5318 or email us at lawteam@cuddiganlaw.com for your FREE copy of our book "The Essential Guide to VA Disability Claims".