

AMERICA'S HISTORY

VA Keeps Lincoln's Civil War Promise To Widows

(NAPSA)—President Abraham Lincoln had Civil War veterans in mind in his 1865 second inaugural address when he promised “to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan.” Little did he know that his pledge to serve Civil War widows would extend into the 21st Century.

Today’s U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) embraces Lincoln’s pledge as its mission statement on a plaque at the entrance to its Washington, D.C. headquarters. Its care for widows—and widowers—takes form in a variety of services, including payments to more than a half-million survivors of wartime veterans.

Some of the survivor benefits administered by VA today are rooted in battles of more than a century ago. Widows on VA benefits rolls today include the survivors of veterans who served in the Civil War (one Civil War widow remains), the Spanish-American War and the Mexican civil war. Most recipients of such benefits are the surviving spouses of veterans of the world wars, conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf, or who served in peacetime eras. World War II widows and widowers comprise the largest category.

The enduring nature of VA survivor benefits often is overlooked by widows who remarry after losing their veteran husband. If the veteran’s death arose in service or from a service-connected medical condition, the widow may have been receiving benefits from VA up until the time of remarriage.

What many widows don’t realize is that if their subsequent



marriage ends due to the husband’s death or by divorce, they may be eligible to return to the VA rolls for survivor benefits under a 1998 law.

VA is working with funeral directors and veterans service organizations and developing publications to let spouses of deceased veterans know that if they lost VA survivor benefits when they remarried, they may be eligible for restored benefits if no longer married.

The current basic monthly rate for this survivor benefit, known as dependency and indemnity compensation, is \$911. It is adjusted upwards when there are dependent children or if the widow or widower has severe limitations on his or her own ability to live independently.

More information about benefits for veterans’ survivors, including a program for low-income survivors of wartime veterans is available at <http://www.va.gov> or call VA toll-free at 1-800-827-1000.