



# Veteran's Advocate

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## It's Official.....No Social Security or VA COLA for 2010

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With consumer prices down over the past year, monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits for more than 57 million Americans will not automatically increase in 2010. This will be the first year without an automatic Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) since they went into effect in 1975.

"Social Security is doing its job helping Americans maintain their standard of living," Michael J. Astrue, Commissioner of Social Security said. "Last year when consumer prices spiked, largely as a result of higher gas prices, beneficiaries received a 5.8 percent COLA, the largest increase since 1982. This year, in light of the human need, we need to support President Obama's call for us to make another \$250 recovery payment for 57 million Americans."

The Social Security Act provides that Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits increase automatically each year if there is an increase in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers* (CPI-W) from the third quarter of the last year to the third quarter of the current year. This year there was no increase in the CPI-W from the third quarter of 2008 to the third quarter of 2009. In addition, because there was no increase in the CPI-W this year, under the law the starting point for determinations regarding a possible 2011 COLA will remain the third quarter of 2008.

Some other changes that would normally take effect in January 2010 based on the increase in average

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## Honor Flights Scheduled for April, May and October 2010

Help send our World War II veterans to visit their memorial in Washington D.C. by attending the following fundraisers:

### Saturday, January 2<sup>nd</sup> 5:30pm to 8pm

Kasson American Legion

Steak dinner \$8.50, Shrimp dinner \$9.50, Combo \$10.50

All include baked potato, coleslaw, and French bread.



### Saturday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 4-7 PM

Rochester Elks Lodge, Hillcrest Shopping Center

Pork Sandwich or Hamburger Dinner

Served with coleslaw and baked beans

Adults \$6, Seniors and Children \$5

Contact: 507-282-6702 or 507-288-9451

### Saturday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 5-8 PM

VFW Post - Lake City

Top the Baked Potato Bake

Suggested donation - \$8.00

Enjoy a baked potato with a wide assortment of toppings: beef stroganoff, taco fixings, broccoli, cheese, and many other options. Meal includes coleslaw, dinner rolls, assorted bars, coffee & milk.

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wages also will not take effect, even though average wages did increase. Since there is no COLA, the statute prohibits an increase in the maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax as well as the retirement earnings test exempt amounts. These amounts will remain unchanged in 2010.

Information about Medicare changes for 2010, when available, will be found at [www.Medicare.gov](http://www.Medicare.gov). The Department of Health and Human Services has not yet announced if there will be any Medicare premium changes for 2010. Should there be an increase in the Medicare Part B premium, the law contains a "hold harmless" provision that protects about 93 percent of Social Security beneficiaries from paying a higher Part B premium, in order to avoid reducing their net Social Security benefit. Those not protected include higher income beneficiaries subject to an income-adjusted Part B premium and beneficiaries newly entitled to Part B in 2010. On September 24th, the House passed legislation by 406-18 that would, on a fully paid-for basis, prevent abnormally large premium increases. The President is calling on the Senate to enact this legislation before it becomes too late for the Social Security Administration to update its computer systems to implement this needed change.

**Note:** Annual cost-of-living adjustments for veteran's receiving service-connected disability compensation or non-service connected pension and dependents or survivors receiving benefits are subject to the same requirements as Social Security. Therefore, those benefits will also not increase in 2010.



## Holiday Closures

The Veterans Service Office will be closed for the New Year's Day Holiday on Friday, December 31st and for the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday on Monday, January 18th. There will be no van service to the Minneapolis VA Hospital on those days.

# Living on too little?

## Project Community Connect

Please come to  
**Christ United Methodist Church**  
400 5th Ave. SW, Rochester  
(507) 328-6333

Thursday, January 28, 2010  
11:00 am—3:00 pm  
\*Free Lunch\*

Services Offered Include:

- Legal services
- Medical services
- Housing resources
- Employment assistance
- Free haircuts
- Veterans' services
- Photo ID's
- Interpreters
- Mortgage foreclosure resources
- Tax appointment information