

# KIRKUS REVIEWS

## TITLE INFORMATION

### **OUT OF THE UNIFORM, BACK INTO CIVILIAN LIFE**

*No Nonsense Veterans Benefits Guide*

Jason Pike

\$9.99 paperback

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## BOOK REVIEW

A basic navigational manual for dealing with benefits for veterans of the U.S. armed forces.

Pike, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel and a decorated combat veteran, opens his slim handbook by guessing that all of his readers found it by reading his memoir, *A Soldier Against All Odds*(2022). But this is an entirely independent work that seeks to demystify the intricacies of applying for and securing government benefits as a military veteran. After a few lines of autobiography and a brief overview of the history of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, he gets right down to business, starting by clarifying who qualifies for benefits and who doesn't; for instance, he interestingly notes that those who have received "other than honorable" discharges can still get certain VA benefits. He covers three main pillars of the benefits system—pensions, health care, and education—and at every step, he clarifies the dictates of what he calls "the massive bureaucratic edifice" that governs these programs and apportions the VA's \$240 billion budget. Each of his book's short sections includes a "Pro Tip" inset that adds extra advice, such as "Keep all your medical records and any paperwork related to health and medical issues for the entire time you are on active duty." He likewise uses bullet points to clearly spell out the often-lengthy lists of qualifications for any given benefit. These are all features of Pike's refreshingly straightforward approach, and readers facing the daunting complexities of VA rules and regulations will appreciate the author's cheerful bluntness and repeated assurances that things aren't as intimidating as they might at first seem. He covers an incredible amount of very specific material at a fast pace, but the work never feels rushed, and he always takes the straightforward tone of a veteran who's dealt with all this himself. Fellow veterans are sure to find the book invaluable.

An intensely useful guide to a vast program's complexities.

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