



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, December 16, 2018

Volume 9, Issue 49



This-N-That

After several years of fighting, Blue Water Navy Veterans are still on the fight to get benefits and medical care.

Looks like Senator Enzi and Senator Lee are still fighting due to "costs" and neither seem to fully understand that if you can send people off to war, you better damn sure be able to fulfill your promises to care for them when they come home.

There is still hope, but we need your help and we

need it now!

We need for everyone to please call Senator Mitch McConnell, even if you're not is constituent and ask that he please bring HR 299 to the floor for a vote. His Washington DC office number is 202-224-2541.

Then we need for you to call Senator Mike Enzi in his DC office at 202-224-3424 and ask that he kindly change his position on the bill and vote for the bill to pass.

Then call Senator Mike Lee in his DC office at 202-224-5444 and ask that he kindly change his position on the bill and vote for the bill to pass.

Then if you would also please make time to call all of the following people and ask if they would please vote yes on HR 299 when it comes to the floor would help a great deal!

Senator Isakson 202-224-3643 & 770-661-0999

Senator Moran 202-224-6521

Senator Boozman 202-224-4843

Senator Rounds 202-224-5842

Senator Sullivan 202-224-3004

Senator Tillis 202-224-6342

Senator Cassidy 202-224-5824

Senator Heller 202-224-6244
Senator Tester 202-224-2644
Senator Brown 202-224-2315
Senator Sanders 202-224-5141
Senator Blumenthal 202-224-2823
Senator Murray 202-224-2621
Senator Hirono 202-224-2621
Senator Manchin 202-224-3954

Your calls are very important to thousands of Veterans, and we're asking you to make the calls immediately, then if you would, please call them every Friday, slow down their office, drive a point home that this bill must pass and quickly.

Just keep it simple, polite, and when you end your call, be sure to thank them for their time!

If you are experiencing difficulty with your GI Benefits, we'd seriously like to hear from you, tell us your story, and rest assured your contact information, name, anything that specifically identifies you will be redacted when we're contacting the White House, Congress and the VA Administration to help get this resolved and quickly.

On behalf of our Volunteers nationwide and myself, we wish you and your family good health and a

safe and Merry Christmas!

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org



Blue Water Navy Bill Update

VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence met yesterday afternoon with Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), who earlier this week blocked the passage of H.R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2018, because he believes it costs too much. “If we can afford to send our military to war, it’s unacceptable that we cannot afford to take care of them when they return home wounded, ill or injured,” said Lawrence, who called the meeting very productive. “I met with Senator Enzi to make it clear that VFW members expect the Blue Water Navy to pass before the end of the year. The senator assured me that he wants to provide Blue Water Navy veterans the benefits they have earned and is working with his colleagues, including Senate VA Committee Chairman Johnny Isakson, to get this bill passed. I told him the VFW will work with him to make it happen, but we will hold him accountable if it does not,” he said. “We also met with key staff for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) and Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah) to let them know that the VFW wants the Senate to pass H.R. 299 now!” The VFW is asking all members and advocates to join in our Call to Action to get the Blue Water Navy Bill passed into law. Contact your [Senators here](#).



VVA Condemns Obstruction of “Blue Water Navy” Bill by Sen. Enzi

(Washington, D.C.) -- “It is beyond disappointing that a single senator, Mike Enzi (R-WY), has obstructed H.R. 299, Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, a bill that was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 382-0 and

would assuredly pass in the Senate if the members of that body were given the opportunity to vote on it,” said John Rowan, VVA National President.

On Monday, December 10, Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) brought up the Blue Water Navy bill on the floor of the Senate. When she asked for unanimous consent, it was the senior senator from Wyoming, chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, who objected, citing cost concerns and saying that it would cause “budgetary and operational pressures that would happen at the VA.”

Earlier this year, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie voiced opposition to the legislation, reversing an earlier commitment by his predecessor, Dr. David Shulkin, to “do the right thing.”

“Congress is only too glad to throw money, and lots of it, at the Department of Defense for questionable programs, citing the need for a strong defense,” said Rowan. “The Senate is being prevented from ‘doing the right thing’ for a relative handful of veterans who served with honor in the waters off the coast of Vietnam and are now hurting from effects of exposure to Agent Orange.”

“Contrary to the VA’s assertions, we have the

science that shows the pathways of exposure to this insidious herbicide. So we endorse the sentiments of two legislators, a Republican senator and a Democratic congressman, who make the case for passing this long-needed legislation.”

“This is an issue of justice,” said Senator Steve Daines (R-MT). “This is an issue of bureaucracy, frankly, not doing the intent of what Congress was, when it was originally passed. And this would clarify that so that we can make sure these vets get the benefits they deserve.”

“All too often,” said Rep. Tim Ryan (D-OH), “members of this Congress are willing to pay lip service to the sacrifices our military and military veterans make, then fall into the trap of playing politics when there’s a chance to actually do something to help them.”



You'll Be Able To Get A Bigger VA Loan In 2019

VA loan limits will be increasing for 2019, giving veterans who plan to use the benefit cash that keeps pace with the cost of housing. For full details, see this [article](#).



[Veterans-For-Change Web Site](#)

The Veterans-For-Change website has been under construction since day one back in 2009 and every day since then. The looks pretty much stay the same, but in the background constant improvement and change is being done to make our website the most user friendly “**One-Stop-Shop**” website to find almost everything you might have tried to find searching the internet.

Almost a hundred people have been involved; collecting web links to documents now houses on

the VFC website, collecting thousands of web links for various issues, illnesses and benefits. Creating forums for all eras of service and two forums one just for men and one just for woman where you can go question, comment, share medical and personal concerns, what ever you'd like it to be.

We also have a forum with for Mental Health and are currently seeking a new Licensed Mental Health Worker, where you can seek help or just ask questions.

We average **2,560** hits per day, and downloads average **2,015** per day with a total **4,557,069** visitors as of Friday.

If you subscribe you will have full access to the entire website and best of all it's **FREE of charge!** You just need a valid E-mail address so the system can send you a confirmation E-Mail. Once received, click on the link to be authorized automatically.

www.veterans-for-change.org

- Documents Library with over **16,777** documents on-line (Updated: 12/05/18)
- FAQ's with more than **1,600** FAQ's and answers
- Multiple Forums

- o Afghanistan Veterans
- o FMP - Foreign Medial Program
- o Gulf War & Desert Storm Veterans
- o Iraq Veterans
- o Korean Veterans
- o Men Veterans Forum
- o Mental Health for Veterans (*Counselor Needed*)
- o Political Issues
- o Suggestion Box
- o The Mess Hall
- o VA Hospitals and Medical Centers
- o Veteran Affairs
- o Vietnam Veterans
- o Welcome Mat
- o Women Veterans Forum
- o WW II Veterans
- Job Postings
- Memorial Pages (Updated: 10/30/18) (37 Added)
- News (Articles On-Line: **8,061**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **4,580**, Added 173 New Links (Updated: 12/06/18)

If you have a submission for the memorial pages,
E-Mail: Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org



Veterans-For-Change Makes Social Media Change

Effective immediately, all social media pages that have been on Face Book for many years have all been moved to MEWE.com for a number of reasons.

We know most people don't like change, however, this new Social Media Site, MEWE.COM has no advertisers, truly respects privacy and protects your security far better than Face Book ever could. They also have a fantastic customer service group who actually does respond to your messages, suggestions, ideas and more!

We hope you will join us on this new site.

Veterans-For-Change

www.mewe.com/join/veterans-for-change

Homeless Heroes Program of Veterans-For-

Change

www.mewe.com/join/homelessheroesprogramofveterans-for-change

AMVETS Group

www.mewe.com/join/amvetsgroup

VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP

www.mewe.com/join/veteranssocialgroup

{USAVET} SUPPORTING GOD & ALL WHO SERVED OUR GREAT NATION

www.mewe.com/join/usavetsupportinggodallwhoserveandserve

AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY

www.mewe.com/join/americansforsovereignty



House Passes Veterans Minibus

This week, the House and Senate grouped together numerous Veterans' bills in a miniature omnibus package in order to pass as many noncontroversial proposals as possible before the end of the current Congress. Typically, at the end of each congressional term the House and Senate will try to wrap up and pass as many proposals as they can before the official end of the session. This year's bill would add improvements for homelessness programs, transition assistance, Veteran-owned small businesses, student Veterans, and many other beneficial proposals. Included in this package is the VFW-supported SIT-REP Act which would protect student Veterans from penalties due to delayed GI Bill payments. The VFW is glad to see Congress is still working to improve benefits for Veterans right up to the holidays, and we hope when they return from their break after the new year they are ready to continue right where they left off, working for Veterans.



Veterans Pension Rates Updated for 2019

If you are a vet with a limited income and no longer able to work, you may qualify for a veterans pension. For more details, and to see the latest pension updates for 2019, see this [article](#).



December's Featured Song

Prayer For A Soldier

By

LT Bobby Ross

LT Bobby Ross - Voice Of America

Previous Featured Songs



5 Ways to Build a Winning Financial Playbook

In honor of last week's Army-Navy game, we're creating our own playbook — your [strategy](#) for making the most of your money, depending on your needs and strengths.



Search Jobs at Chevron — Vets Wanted

Chevron is hiring Veterans. See why Chevron is a great place for Veterans and find your [next career](#).





VA Secretary Promises Full GI Bill Housing Benefits Payments

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert Wilkie issued the following statement on GI Bill Housing Benefit Payments: "To clear up any confusion, I want to make clear that each and every [post-9/11 GI Bill](#) beneficiary will be made 100 percent whole, retroactively if need be, for their housing benefits for this academic year based on Forever GI Bill rates and not on post-9/11 GI Bill rates. Although VA has encountered issues with implementing the Forever GI Bill on Congress' timeline, we will work with lawmakers to ensure that, once VA is in a position to process education claims in accordance with the new law, each and every beneficiary will receive retroactively the exact benefits to which they are entitled under that law."



2018 Tax Statement Release Schedule

2018 tax statements for military, retiree, annuitant and federal civilian employee customers serviced by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service will be distributed mid-December through January 2019.

The IRS tax forms will be available via myPay, the Department of Defense online pay account management system (<https://mypay.dfas.mil/>) for most of the 6.4 million DFAS customers. In many cases, the electronic online forms are available much earlier and more securely than those sent to customers electing delivery by mail.

DFAS continues to provide IRS Forms 1095-B or 1095-C for military, retiree and federal civilian employees who receive healthcare insurance coverage through the Tricare or Federal Employee Health Benefit programs.

You can see the distribution schedule [here](#).

Source: TREA



Tired of Wasting Money on TRICARE Out of Pocket Costs?

Tired of paying out of pocket costs with TRICARE?
Get a TRICARE Supplement that pays your cost
shares and can pay 100% of covered excess
charges. [Get valuable coverage now.](#)



Government Shutdown Next Week?

A shutdown of the federal government appeared unlikely last month but the events of yesterday now seem to indicate we are headed in that direction. As everyone likely saw on the news last night the impasse is between the President and the minority leaders in Congress because there aren't enough votes in the Senate to pass legislation to spend \$5 billion building a wall on the southern U.S. border.

We will not get into the politics of the border wall but the impasse may mean the government could shut down a week from this Friday. Will this affect military personnel or military retirees and veterans?

The fy2019 budgets for the departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs have been passed into law so it is not likely there will be any affect on them. However, the budget for the Department of Homeland Security has not been passed so members of the Coast Guard could very well be affected.

Let's hope they can work out their differences in Washington and we won't have to find out who will or will not be affected.

Source: TREA



**CONTACT YOUR
MEMBERS OF CONGRESS!**

To Call your Representative:
202-225-2305

To Call your Senators:
202-224-3841 or 202-224-3553

To call Different Members of Congress:
202-224-3121

TOLL FREE: 866-272-6622

PLEASE... STOP Making Excuses!

www.veterans-for-change.org



**AF Reactivates 308th Fighter
Squadron**

The Air Force 308th Fighter Squadron was reactivated in a ceremony at Luke Air Force Base, Nov. 30. The squadron will house the Royal Netherlands Air Force's and the Royal Danish Air Force's F-35A Lightning IIs as part of a training partnership. With Lt. Col. Robert Miller assuming command, the fighter squadron is scheduled to begin operations in December, 2018. Throughout the next two years, the Dutch and the Danish air forces will be sending their jets to populate the squadron and help Luke AFB's mission of training the world's greatest fighter pilots. The 308th FS's goal is to train as efficiently as the rest of Luke AFB's fighter squadrons.



**Missed TRICARE Open Season?
There's Still Time to Act!**

If you missed TRICARE Open Season, you still have time to enroll. For this year only, you can enroll in or change your TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select plan through Dec. 31, 2018 for coverage starting on Jan. 1, 2019. You may also change your type of enrollment, like switching from individual to family coverage.

Read the full article [here](#).



Exchange Offers 2018 Holiday Price Guarantee

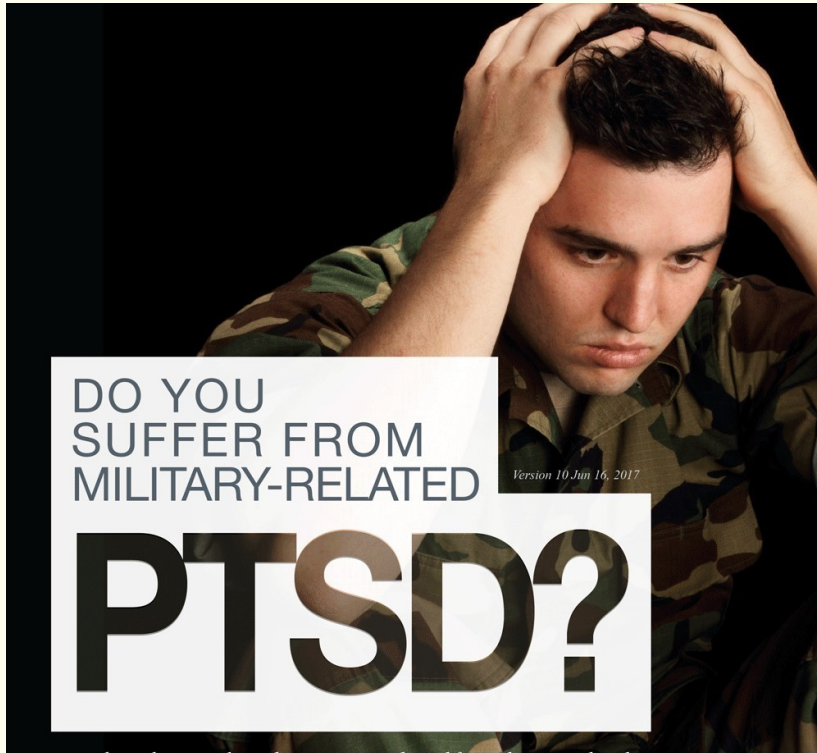
The Army & Air Force Exchange Service is offering an extended price guarantee this holiday season. From Dec. 1 through 24, authorized shoppers who make an in-store or online purchase at ShopMyExchange.com and find an identical item offered elsewhere for less will receive an Exchange gift card for the difference in price. To receive a gift card, shoppers should bring their original Exchange receipt or online order confirmation along with a competitor's current ad to their local Exchange customer service area. Alternately, they can also call the Exchange Customer Relations at 1-800-527-2345 or fill out the online [Customer Feedback](#) form.



Now is the Time to Get a Vote on Agent Orange Reform

The “Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act” (H.R. 299) has passed the House unanimously (382-0) and now is in the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee awaiting a vote. The proposal would clarify that service members serving off the coast of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam conflict and those serving near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in Korea have a presumption for filing disability claims with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for ailments associated with exposure to the Agent Orange herbicide. The legislation will also extend health care, vocational training & rehabilitation and monetary allowance to a child who was born with spina bifida if at least one of the child’s parents served in Thailand between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975 and had been exposed to a herbicide agent during that period. The bill also now includes changes and improvements to VA’s home loan program.

Please use the FRA **Action Center** to ask your Senators not to delay any more in the closing days of the 115th Congress and pass H.R. 299 and send it to the President to sign into law.”



DO YOU
SUFFER FROM
MILITARY-RELATED

Version 10 Jun 16, 2017

PTSD?

**Veterans Crisis Line:
1-800-273-8255 & Press 1
Ntl Call Center for Homeless Vets
1-877-424-3838**



House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Examines VA Appeals Reform

The VFW attended a hearing on Wednesday of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs to examine if VA is ready to implement the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017. Implementation of the new law is set for February 2019 and aims to modernize the claims and appeals process by providing veterans multiple review options and shorter time for claim resolution. Recent problems with the rollout of the Forever GI Bill this fall prompted lawmakers to press VA on its IT capabilities related to these changes. "We're updating two critical VA systems, and we have actually had boots on the ground working very hard long before this bill passed," said Lloyd Thrower, VA's deputy chief information officer. The VFW submitted a statement expressing further concerns regarding VA's IT platforms, as well as their poorly executed "Informal Conference" option for Higher Level Review (HLR) claims. The VFW will continue to monitor the implementation of this law. [Watch the hearing](#), learn more about [changes to claims appeals](#).



Treating Veterans with Ecstasy

MDMA, the active ingredient in the recreational drug ecstasy, has shown great promise in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder. In fact, it showed such promise during safety trials that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) designated MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD as a "breakthrough therapy," meaning the administration believes it may prove more beneficial than current treatments. For more details, see this [article](#).



Expanded TRICARE Coverage for Ambulance Services

TRICARE expanded ambulance services to cover both treat-and-release and joint response services this year. Treat-and-release is when an ambulance treats you, but doesn't take you to the hospital. Joint response is when an ambulance crew needs the help of a paramedic or intermediate EMT to give you advanced life support services.

Read the full article [here](#).



Navy Seeks Volunteers for Data Challenge

The Navy is launching its first Navy-wide Sustainment Data Challenge, and is seeking Navy workforce volunteers to form a challenge team that will develop solutions impacting the future of Navy readiness. The application period is open through Jan. 8, 2019. If interested in participating, organize and apply as a team by Jan. 8, 2019. Teams will attend a virtual kickoff event to gather context, rules, starting data sets and access to subject matter experts. Teams will submit checkpoint progress briefs as scheduled, and one of the checkpoints may be used to down-select amongst the teams. Finalist teams will present proposed solutions and demonstrate a data model at the May summit. For more information, e-mail NAVAIR_IBC.gm@navy.mil.



SENATE KILLS BILL TO RESTORE BENEFITS TO VIETNAM-ERA NAVY VETERANS

Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY) last night killed HR 299, the

Blue Water Navy Veterans Act, which would have restored Agent Orange benefits for Navy veterans who served in the harbors and coastal waters of Vietnam.

The bill passed the House of Representatives six months ago, and stalled in the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. Department of Veterans Affairs officials also reversed course several months ago and withdrew support for the bill, citing the long-term cost of the benefits.

"While veterans are suffering and dying from exposure to Agent Orange, the VA is playing games," said Cdr. John Wells (USN, Ret.), who heads Military Veterans Advocacy and who has been working to pass the bill for years. "By changing cost estimates submitted to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the very agency charged with protecting veterans' interests has caused a huge setback in justice for these veterans."

Despite considerable work to find offsets for the cost of restoring benefits that were taken from Vietnam veterans in 2002, and despite broad, bipartisan support in the Senate, the bill is effectively dead for the year.

"I urge the body to pass the Blue Water Navy bill by unanimous consent because this is about justice, this is about a bureaucracy making a decision and really not following the intent of this Congress. This is correcting something that was done wrong back in 2002," said Sen. Steve Daines (R-MT)

"There have been four different health studies by the C.D.C. about the detrimental effects of Agent Orange exposure, and the Blue Water Navy veterans have been shown to suffer those exact diseases (and) at the same rate of the other exposed veterans," said Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). "But some of my colleagues are wrongly insisting on a fifth study. We do not have another year to wait. Some of our veterans will not last that long. Many Blue Water veterans have already passed away from the disease associated with Agent Orange exposure. The 1991 bill to provide coverage for veterans exposed to Agent Orange didn't discriminate between those who served offshore and those who served on rivers or on the ground, yet due to a decision by a V.A. bureaucrat in 2002, the coverage for those who served offshore was wiped out. It doesn't make any sense, and we must help all our veterans."

"I am not giving up and Military Veterans Advocacy is not giving up," Wells said. "Not only will we seek passage of the bill again in the next Congress, but we are also taking this fight to court. As Sen. Gillibrand said last night, a bureaucrat's decision 16 years ago thwarted the intent of Congress. If Congress won't correct this egregious injustice, perhaps the federal courts will."

The Court of Appeals for the federal circuit appearing en banc heard arguments on the restoration of benefits last Friday, Dec. 7, in a case brought by Military Veterans Advocacy.



Coping with Trauma 'Anniversaries'

Do you remember the actual date of a personal trauma? Whether the event is something specific only to you or one that gets a lot of attention (like D-Day, 9/11, or Hurricane Katrina), you may feel sad and on edge. Those feelings are called an 'anniversary reaction,' and they may be hard to deal with. Here are several strategies to try and cope: (1) reach out to friends and family; (2) plan relaxing activities that you enjoy; and (3) mark the occasion by visiting a memorial or the grave of a loved one. For more information, visit this [PTSD article](#).



'Blue Button' Health Record System Getting Update

An update to the computer program behind the Department of Veteran Affairs "Blue Button" health record sharing system will make it more accessible to physicians outside the VA. Going forward, your non-VA doctor should be able to click one button and have all your health data download automatically into his or her computer system. To make that possible veterans must first sign a release of data authorization form on [eBenefits](#). For more details, see this [article](#).



2019 Survivor's Pension Rates

The VA Death Pension is a tax-free benefit for low-income orphans and widows of deceased wartime veterans. For the updated pension rates for 2019, see this [article](#).



Veteran Crisis Resources

Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1
Military Crisis Line 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
1-877-4AID-VET (424.3838)
VA Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274



**Mental Health Care Available
Downrange**

Deployed mental health providers help give medical care downrange. They give classes on sleep, work with units on basic stress management and provide one-on-one counseling or targeted interventions. One such intervention is the Combat Operational Stress Control program, which is only offered to deployed service members. This program delivers educational materials and gives first responders a chance to speak specifically about combat operational stress, over the course of four sessions. In a deployed setting, these types of interventions helps service members support the mission. For more details, see this [Air Force article](#).



Links to Other Stories

1. [Agent Orange takes another victim, 5 decades later](#)
2. [Different Types of VA 100 Percent Disability Ratings](#)

3. Family Faces \$3k in Fines Per Day for Christmas Light Display Raising Money for Vets
4. GAO finds VA contractors not meeting timeliness, accuracy standards on exams
5. Holiday Hints for Alzheimer's Caregivers
6. How to Manage Your Type 2 Diabetes with Diet
7. Hypertension Upgraded in Latest Biennial Review of Research on Health Problems in Veterans That May Be Linked to Agent Orange Exposure During Vietnam War
8. Indiana Veterans affairs head resigns after grants scrutiny
9. Message from Dr. Loren Erickson
10. MPTF Has Helped Industry's Military Veterans Collect \$500K In Unclaimed VA Benefits
11. My husband lost a limb in Afghanistan. Now, as his caregiver, I'm on the front lines
12. Permanent and Total Ratings
13. President Trump – and our Veterans – are winning against an entrenched VA bureaucracy
14. The VA actually spent money — and years — on a scientific study to tell us daily drinking is unhealthy
15. Tiny houses for homeless Vets make a lot of sense
16. Trump loyalist at VA forced out after collecting pay but doing little work

17. Uncertainty over late GI Bill payments leave lawmakers asking: Who is accountable?
18. Understanding Decisions from RAMP
19. VA secretary praised Confederate president as a "martyr to 'The Lost Cause'" in 1995 speech
20. Veterans Affairs rulers had sway over contracting and budgeting
21. Veterans are calling for more oversight as the Governor searches for new Veterans affairs director
22. Want to help a Veteran suffering from PTSD? Here's how
23. Why the VA may be getting too much money

You can help VFC by reading articles posted and *commenting* at the bottom and rate the articles. If you don't have an account, sign up today, it's **FREE**. Your comments and rankings tell us what type of information you want most.

Check us out today: www.veterans-for-change.org



TRICARE and FEDVIP Open Season Extended

The Defense Health Agency (DHA) announced this week that eligible beneficiaries who missed the deadline to enroll in FEDVIP or make changes to their existing TRICARE plan now have until Dec. 31 to do so. [Learn more](#) about how to take advantage of the TRICARE extension. [Learn more](#) about how to take advantage of the FEDVIP extension.



CLICK HERE TO FOLLOW US ON TWITTER!



Exchange Sponsors 2018 Holiday Contest

The Army & Air Force Exchange Service is inviting military shoppers to [share photos of their pets decked in their holiday finest](#) for a chance to win \$3,000 in gift cards. From Dec. 1 to 24, authorized Exchange shoppers 18 years or older can [submit a photograph of their pet dressed in holiday attire or with Santa](#) at ShopMyExchange.com. One grand prize winner will receive a \$1,000 Exchange gift card, while four runners-up will each receive a \$500 Exchange gift card. No purchase is necessary to enter. Entries must be sent as a .JPG, .PNG or .PDF and include the pet's name, the entrant's legal first name and last name, mailing address, email address, phone number and local Exchange location. Limit one entry per person.



VA to Develop New Patient Safety Innovations

VA announced 10 Patient Safety Centers of Inquiry (PSCI) will receive funding to further research for innovative ways to improve patient safety. The PSCI program was developed in 1999 and has resulted in many current patient safety standards such as protocols to decrease patients falling, reducing infections, suicide prevention, moderate sedation techniques for non-anesthesiologists, and a cancer care tracking system. Currently, the program is headquartered in Ann Arbor, Mich., where the facility will spend the next three years focusing on the appropriate use of catheters and peripherally inserted central catheter lines. The nine other facilities awarded funding for this initiative will focus on improving outcomes, with a specific focus on medication safety, for patients going back and forth between VA and non-VA care; preventing diagnostic errors by improving timely follow-ups for abnormal test results; creating

automated risk-adjusted metrics that are adaptable to the diverse care settings across VA's health system; transitions for elderly veterans and those with complex conditions with a focus on testing 30-day readmissions and patient satisfaction; identifying patients at high risk for adverse opioid events and monitoring opioid use to provide guidance on tapering opioid prescriptions and providing support networks for patients with opioid use disorders; prevention of adverse events related to mobility/immobility; practical solutions to reduce suicide among veterans not receiving VA care; and to test evidence-based programs to decrease suicide risk following psychiatric discharges. [Read more](#) about this initiative.



Know Your Options for Blended Retirement

The opt-in deadline for the Blended Retirement System (BRS) is December 31, 2018. The BRS gives service members a chance to save their money in a portable Thrift Savings Plan while also receiving matching government funds. Troops should make their decision knowing only they can determine which system is best for them, and understand that if they opt into BRS, it is irrevocable. Utilize the BRS comparison calculator on the [Military Compensation website](#) before making an appointment with your base financial counselor. For more information, visit this [article on BRS](#).



Office of Inspector General

1. Information on the Availability of Forensic Examiners
2. Long-Range Emerging Threats Facing the United States As Identified by Federal Agencies
3. Office of Complex Investigations Should Update Policies to Require Additional Documentation for Sexual Assault Cases
4. Payments for Certain Long-Term Care Hospitals that Specialize in Spinal Cord Treatment
5. Planning Gaps Could Impede Readiness for Successful Appeals Implementation
6. Rebuilding Ship, Submarine, and Aviation Readiness Will Require Time and Sustained Management Attention
7. Strengthened Pilot Design and a Dedicated Team Could Improve Real-Property Donation Pilot Program



**Another New Study Finds VA
Outperforms non-VA Care**

A newly published study researched by Dartmouth College found VA mostly outperforms non-VA health care systems and facilities in their same regions when comparing mortality rates and patient safety. Researchers conducting the study compared data from VA hospitals against non-VA proximate facilities in 121 regions. In 14 out of 15 measures, or over 93 percent, results show VA performed significantly better. The study was initiated after Dr. William Weeks, a former VA employee who now works as a professor at Dartmouth Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice, was skeptical of multiple previous studies with results concluding VA hospitals outperform other medical systems. Dr. Weeks told reporters he felt compelled to further study the issue to compare data at a regional level compared to previous studies which focused on national level data. He also said that he wanted to research the regional perspective for veterans who might have the option to use their local VA facility or a non-VA facility nearby. [Read more](#) about the study.



**~We Proudly Support our
Military Personnel & Families~**



Navy Exchange Offers Awards to Students

The Navy Exchange Service Command's (NEXCOM) A-OK Student Reward Program offers all qualified students a chance to participate in a quarterly drawing for monetary awards of \$2,500, \$1,500, \$1,000 or \$500 for a total of \$5,500 per quarter. The next drawing will be at the end of December, 2018. Any eligible full-time student that has a B-grade point average equivalent or better may enter the drawing. To enter the drawing, stop by any NEX with a current report card or progress report and have a NEX associate verify the eligibility. Then fill out an entry card and obtain an A-OK ID which entitles the student to discount coupons for NEX products and services.



Tricare Emergency in Alaska

Emergency procedures in place in all counties in Alaska due to the Nov. 30 earthquake. To get an emergency refill, take your prescription bottle to any Tricare retail network pharmacy. To find a network pharmacy, call Express Scripts at 1-877-363-1303, or search the [network pharmacy locator](#). If possible, visit the pharmacy where the prescription was filled. If you use a retail chain, you can fill your prescription at another store in that chain. If your provider is available, he or she may call in a new prescription to any network pharmacy. You can request assistance at another pharmacy, but it is at that pharmacy's discretion to help you.



1. [Accra Super Market Issues Allergy Alert On Undeclared Peanuts In 'Suya Barbecue Seasoning'](#)
2. [Class 1 Device Recall CARESCAPE R860](#)

Inspiratory Safety Guard

3. Del Monte Foods Announces Limited Recall of Canned Fiesta Corn Seasoned with Red & Green Peppers Due
4. FDA alerts health care professionals and patients not to use drug products intended to be sterile from Promise Pharmacy
5. FDA: Vaping, erectile dysfunction drugs a bad combination
6. Fine Land Corp Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Milk Allergens in “Meiqili Durian Candy”
7. Inspired Organics Issues Voluntary Recall of Organic Sunflower Butter Due to Potential Health Risk
8. Kimberly-Clark announces tampon recall throughout U.S. and Canada
9. Kotex Sleek tampons recalled after reports of unraveling, pieces left in body
10. Moonstruck Chocolate Co. Issues Allergy Alert On Undeclared Hazelnuts In 4 Oz. Sea Salt Caramels Tumbled In Milk Chocolate
11. Mylan Expands Its Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Valsartan Tablets, USP, Amlodipine and Valsartan Tablets, USP, and Valsartan and Hydrochlorothiazide Tablets, USP, to all Lots Within Expiry Due to The Detection of Trace Amounts of NDEA (N-Nitrosodiethylamine) Impurity Found in

the Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient

12. Recalls of Foods & Dietary Supplements

13. The J.M. Smucker Company Issues Voluntary Recall of Specific Lots of 9Lives® Protein Plus® Wet, Canned Cat Food Due to Low Levels of Thiamine (Vitamin B1)



WWI Commemorative Silver Dollar Available

The U.S. Mint's 2018 World War I Commemorative Silver Dollar is a collectible coin that is only available for another three weeks. The coin gives you the opportunity to directly participate in the creation of the [new National World War I Memorial in Washington DC](#). A \$10.00 surcharge from every coin sale will go to our Centennial Commission to help build the Memorial. For more information, visit the [WWI Centennial Commission website](#).



SURVIVAL IS FUN



WWI Documentary Screening for Two Days

The poignant WWI documentary 'They Shall Not Grow Old' will be shown in select cinemas on December 17 and 27. The acclaimed documentary is an extraordinary look at the soldiers and events of the Great War, using film footage captured at the time, now presented as the world has never seen. By utilizing state-of-the-art restoration, colorization and 3D technologies, and pulling from 600 hours of BBC archival interviews, the film puts forth an intensely gripping and authentic experience through the eyes and voices of the British soldiers who lived it. For tickets, visit FathomEvents.com.



Remembering the Fallen with Wreaths Across America

What began as a dream for [Department of Wisconsin American Legion Riders Ray and Evelyn McSherry](#) will become a reality Dec. 15. The pair had a goal of covering every grave at the Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Waupaca as part of the national Wreaths Across America program. Seven years after starting the program, the goal will be reached. On Dec. 15, all 7,300 graves will be marked with a wreath, thanks to the efforts of the Wisconsin American Legion Riders and other Wisconsin American Legion Family members. The Wreaths Across America nationwide program is in its 27th year. To learn more, visit the [Wreaths Across America website](#).



TeleMOVE! Matches Veterans with Home Health Services

TeleMOVE! is one of VA's [Home Telehealth Services](#) in which veterans are matched with a VA Care Coordinator and at-home health monitoring technologies that best fit their needs. It is a 90-day program that focuses on nutrition, physical activity and behavior change. In 2018 alone more than 136,000 Veterans were enrolled in VA Home Telehealth. For more information, read the [VA VAntage Point Blog](#).



VA Telecounseling Service for Vocational Rehab

Veterans nationwide have access to more than 1,000 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) via 'telecounseling,' or virtual communication, thanks to a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program (VR&E) upgrade. Telecounseling is accessible on any device with a webcam and microphone. Telecounseling allows Veterans to meet with VRCs virtually through [VA Video Connect](#). Veterans participating in most VR&E rehabilitation plans of service may use Telecounseling and are encouraged to speak with their VRCs about it. Participation is voluntary and not required. For more information about VR&E, visit the [VR&E webpage](#).



Tax & Credit Information



1. [For private corporations and their employees,](#)

IRS provides initial guidance on new tax benefit for stock options and restricted stock units

2. Here's how tax preparers can protect themselves and their clients

3. IRS issues guidance for determining nondeductible amount of parking fringe expenses and unrelated business taxable income; provides penalty relief to tax-exempt organizations

4. IRS issues proposed regulations on key new international provision, the base erosion and anti-abuse tax

5. IRS reminder: Deadline Dec. 31 for most retirees who must make required retirement plan distributions

6. IRS, Security Summit Partners warn tax professionals of high risk of data theft attacks

7. Tax reform brings changes to qualified moving expenses

8. Tax reform creates opportunity zone tax incentive

9. Tax reform law makes changes to employee achievement award rules

10. Taxpayers can now instantly get tax info on Instagram

11. Wrongful incarceration exclusion reminder: Dec. 17 is deadline for older refund claims



MIA Update

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced 13 new identifications. Returning home with full military honors are:

Navy Capt. James R. Bauder was an F-4B pilot assigned to Fighter Squadron Twenty One, USS Coral Sea, in South East Asia. On Sept. 21, 1966,

during a night reconnaissance mission over North Vietnam, contact with Bauder's aircraft was lost and his plane did not return to the ship. An extensive search was conducted with negative results. Based on this information, Bauder was declared missing in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about Bauder.](#)

Army Pfc. Karl L. Dye was a member of Battery B, 52nd Field Artillery Battalion, 24th Infantry Division, engaged in combat operations against North Korean forces, near Taejon, South Korea. In July 1950, he was seriously wounded by an enemy mortar shell and placed in an ambulance. The ambulance allegedly encountered an enemy roadblock. Dye was reported missing in action on July 16, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Dye.](#)

Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Allen R. Turner was a C-109 pilot assigned to the 1330 Army Air Force Base Unit, Air Transport Command. On July 17, 1945, during a routine flight from Jorhat, India, to Hsinching, China, over "The Hump," his aircraft crashed in a remote area. All four passengers were declared deceased after an extensive search effort failed to identify the crash site. Interment services are pending. [Read about Turner.](#)

Army Pfc. Marvin E. Dickson was a member of Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 110th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division. On Nov. 13, 1944, while attempting to reestablish broken telephone communications lines between headquarters and outposts in the Hürtgen Forest in Germany, he and three others were attacked. Surviving members could not confirm Dickson's death, nor provide the location to where he was killed. He was listed as missing in action and on Nov. 14 his status was amended to killed in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about Dickson.](#)

Navy Seaman 2nd Class John C. Auld was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Auld. Interment services are pending. [Read about Auld.](#)

Navy Water Tender 1st Class Edwin B. McCabe was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the

ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including McCabe. Interment services are pending. [Read about McCabe.](#)

Navy Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Roman W. Sadlowski was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Sadlowski. Interment services are pending. [Read about Sadlowski.](#)

Navy Fireman 3rd Class Kenneth L. Jayne was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Jayne. Interment services are pending. [Read about Jayne.](#)

Navy Signalman 3rd Class Charles E. Nix was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Nix. Interment services are pending.

[Read about Nix.](#)

Navy Seaman 1st Class Camillus M. O'Grady was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including O'Grady. Interment services are pending.

[Read about O'Grady.](#)

Navy Ensign William M. Finnegan was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including

Finnegan. Interment services are pending. [Read about Finnegan.](#)

Navy Seaman 1st Class Harold W. Roesch was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Roesch. Interment services are pending. [Read about Roesch.](#)

Navy Machinist's Mate 1st Class Fred M. Jones was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Jones. Interment services are pending. [Read about Jones.](#)



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