



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, December 23, 2018

Volume 9, Issue 50



This-N-That

Quite often I hear from Veterans telling me that the VA Healthcare System should be turned over to civilian doctors and hospitals.

I understand why, and truly do understand many of the reasons provided, but I also see why in so many areas why this would be a hugely bad idea.

One, which is a relatively minor area is the VA will say they will pay the bills, but yet never provide written authorization. Authorization is provided by

an individual who for the most part will only identify themselves by their first name only. Reason for this is so that no one can blame them for an incorrect decision.

Then later only find out that the VA will not pay the bills and end up being billed thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the civilian hospitals and doctors will go after you like a wolf. Sending you countless letters, call after call, then eventually turning you over to a collections agency, and then finally drag you into court.

In addition I've tried to go out of my way to view many documentaries of medical care being provided by both the VA Healthcare System and private hospitals. Sadly all the documentaries done on the VA Healthcare system never made it to any venue for public viewing.

But I did find one which had nothing to do with a Veteran, but did provide a PERFECT example of what could happen to anyone of you at any time and very easily occur both in VA facilities as well as private Hospitals called "**Bleed Out**".

If you have cable or dish, and know how to search for the documentary title, I really would recommend

you viewing it to see what you're truly up against, and how badly the odds are stacked against you.

Blue Water Navy Veterans are constantly on my mind, and although they have a huge mountain to climb, the end result of passing HR 299 is not impossible yet.

Providing benefits and healthcare to BWN Veterans is only one of hundreds of issues that need to be fixed, and I'm quite confident that if we all chip in and do our part to help them, once it's passed and signed into law that the BWN Veterans would gladly chip in and help us in other fights all to make the VA better for all.

We need for everyone to please call **Senator Mitch McConnell**, even if you're not his 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!

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

PS: My apologies for the delayed sending of this newsletter. We were up to our necks in last minute placement of some homeless Veterans.



**Utah Senator Stops Blue Water
Navy Bill**

An objection by **Sen. Mike Lee** (R-Utah) to passing H.R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2018, by unanimous consent on the Senate floor Wednesday has effectively doomed any chance of the bill being passed in the 115th Congress. Lee now joins **Sen. Mike Enzi** (R-Wyo.), who objected last week due to the bill's overall cost. Lee's objection was because he wants to wait and see more sufficient evidence. "We don't need more sick veterans to prove sufficient evidence," said VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence. "Agent Orange made Vietnam Veterans sick, and science agrees that there isn't any reason to treat so-called Blue Water Navy Veterans any different than their peers who served ashore or on the inland waterways of Vietnam," he said. "What both senators have done is fail thousands of Veterans — many of whom reside in their home states. Their obstruction to this bill's passage forsakes our nation's promise to take care of those who were injured or made ill due to their military service. Their objections put cost above faithful and honorable service." [Read more](#). The VFW is again calling on all members and advocates to demand that the Senate pass H.R. 299 before the end of the year.

[Make your voices heard.](#)



<http://capwiz.com/vfw/issues/alert/?alertid=80552661>





Tricare Deductibles, Caps Reset Jan. 1

Tricare's catastrophic cap and deductibles reset every Jan. 1. Depending on your plan, that means you might need to pay out of pocket for some services until your 2019 deductible is met. And all Tricare users except those on Tricare for Life will also be set back to the beginning on meeting their annual out-of-pocket fee cap. To better understand the costs associated with your Tricare plan, [visit Tricare's cost comparison tool](#).



Before New Year's, Update DEERS

Is your information current in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS)? Before the year ends, be sure you and your family's information is up to date and correct. Incorrect information in DEERS can cause problems with TRICARE claims and other health care benefits. To remain eligible for TRICARE coverage, you must keep your information up to date in DEERS.

Read the full article [here](#).



Vietnam Blue Water Navy Bill Stuck in the Senate

We have been reporting the last few weeks on the Blue Water Navy Bill that would give presumption of

exposure to Agent Orange to Navy veterans who were off shore but never set foot on land in Vietnam and who nonetheless have come down with diseases presumed by the VA to have been caused by Agent Orange. Presumption of exposure has already been given to those who were on Vietnamese soil.

Tragically, the bill is stalled in the Senate because of just a few Senators.

Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) is saying lawmakers need to "have a better idea of the costs" of Blue Water navy legislation. Enzi, who heads the Senate Budget Committee, says the bill will cost at least \$1.3 billion more than the original estimate and that VA analysis suggests it could be nearly five times what Congress assumed when the House passed it. "The bill's sponsors have paid for their cost estimates by increasing home loan fees for veterans, but even that doesn't offset the true cost of the bill," according to Enzi.

Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Johnny Isakson (R-Ga.) however is pledging to get the bill, which would expand benefits for veterans who say they were exposed to Agent Orange, across the finish line despite opposition. Sen.

Kirstin Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) said at a press conference last week to expect more unanimous consent requests to pass the bill on the Senate floor.

Source: TREA



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 **2,500** hits per day, and downloads average **2,100** per day with a total **4,604,846** 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: **8,077**)
- 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





Blue Water Navy Bill Press Conference

The VFW showed up in force to a Blue Water Navy Bill press conference in the Cannon House Office Building yesterday. House VA Committee Chairman Dr. Phil Roe (R-Tenn.) and incoming Chairman Mark Takano (D-Calif.) hosted the bipartisan event to urge the Senate to pass H.R. 299, The Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act 2018, which the House passed unanimously 382-0 back in June, has been held up twice in the Senate over the past two weeks by Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) and Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), who either objected to the bill's cost or wanted to wait for more sufficient evidence. VFW Legislative Director Carlos Fuentes said, "If America can't afford to take care of her veterans, then America should quit creating us." [**Watch the press conference.**](#)



December's Featured Song

Prayer For A Soldier

By

LT Bobby Ross

LT Bobby Ross - Voice Of America

Previous Featured Songs



**Here Are the 2019 CONUS COLA
Rates**

Fewer troops will receive a cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) payment stateside in 2019, as 45 areas drop from the COLA list, the Defense Department announced Dec. 20. For 2019, the number of service members receiving COLA within the U.S., known as CONUS, will decrease from about 28,000 to about 15,000, officials said in a release. Of those who received a CONUS COLA payment in 2018, 2,000 service members will see no change, 7,900 will see a payment increase, 2,600 will see a decrease and 15,000 will no longer receive any payment in 2019. But another 2,500 have been newly added to the list. Read more about the [CONUS COLA rates in this story](#).



Blue Water Navy CALL TO ACTION

Call to Action to get the Blue Water Navy Bill passed into law. [Contact your senators here.](#)

Please click on the link above and let your Senators know we need this bill passed! Five decades is more than long enough to fix a problem and keep their promise to all those who served!



End of 115th Congress Legislative Roundup

While the Senate failed to pass the VFW-supported Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, Congress was able to send several VFW-supported bills to the president before it concluded the 115th Congress. This includes [S. 2248](#), a miniature omnibus package, which improves programs for homelessness veterans, transition assistance, veteran-owned small businesses, student veterans, and also includes the SIT-REP Act, which would protect student veterans from penalties due to delayed GI Bill payments. Congress also passed the VFW-supported [S. 3777, Forever GI Bill Housing Payment Fulfillment Act of 2018](#), which will require VA to set up a team to plan and schedule dates for when student veterans who were impacted by GI Bill payment problems will receive their corrected housing payments. The VFW is also glad Congress passed [S. 3661](#), which requires DOD to conduct a program to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of WWII and support programs sponsored by veterans organizations and local governments, and [S. 2679, Veterans Small Business Enhancement Act](#), which enables veteran-owned small businesses to participate in the Federal Surplus Property Donation Program.

All bills that were not passed this year must be re-introduced in the 116th Congress. The VFW applauds efforts of the 115th Congress to improve the quality of life of veterans, service members, and their families and survivors. More than two dozen VFW-supported bills have been enacted into law over the past two years, or are awaiting the president's signature. Among them are: the [Forever GI Bill](#), which removes the 15-year use-or-lose window for veterans discharged after January 2013, grants full eligibility to all Purple Heart recipients, adds additional months of eligibility for veterans pursuing STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) degrees, and restores benefits to veterans whose schools abruptly closed. The VA MISSION Act expands caregiver benefits to pre-9/11 veterans, consolidates access to private sector doctors into one simplified and improved program. The [VA MISSION Act](#) also improves the VA's ability to hire and retain high quality health care professionals, and established a process to evaluate and improve VA facilities across the country. The [Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act](#) improves accountability at the VA and protects the rights of whistleblowers. The [Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act](#) ensures

veterans receive faster decisions on their claims appeals, easier to understand rating decisions, new claims resolution options at VA Regional Offices, and hiring more staff to oversee claims appeals. The VFW will work to make certain its [2019 Legislative Priority Goals](#) are reflected in bills that are reintroduced and passed in the 116th Congress





Coping With Holiday PTSD

The holidays can be especially stressful for those with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Both those with and without PTSD can cope with holiday stress by following few tips. Talk with your family about how you feel; be honest about your stress level and let your friends and family know your plans ahead of time; set limits; do not join activities for longer than you can handle; take breaks; get plenty of rest; and keep up with exercise routines. For more on how to handle holiday stress, read the [VA Vantage Point Blog](#). If you are in crisis, or know someone who is, contact the Veterans Crisis Line by calling 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, [chat with a counselor online](#), or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support.



**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



**Secretary of VA Testifies on State
of VA**

On Wednesday, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie testified before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs. The VFW thanks Secretary Wilkie for reaffirming that VA will make whole all veterans who were impacted by issues with the implementation of the Forever GI Bill. He also discussed how VA health care has improved in recent years and responded to recent stories regarding Veterans Choice Program spending, mishandling of the caregiver program, and suicide prevention. The hearing focused on implementation of the landmark and VFW-supported VA MISSION Act of 2018. Members of the committees and the VFW's written statement expressed concerns with VA's lack of transparency, which can impede its ability to ensure veterans have timely access to the high-quality care they have earned. [Watch the hearing.](#) [Read the VFW's testimony.](#)



To Shut Down - or Not to Shut Down

From now until the end of the week the biggest question in Washington is likely to be whether the President and the Congress will be able to reach an agreement on keeping the government open after midnight this coming Friday. This morning it appeared that there would be no effort to come to an agreement but even as this is being written a report has come out that the White House has signaled the President won't shut the government down after all, even if he doesn't get the \$5 billion he wanted for his border wall. So we shall see.

In the meantime, Congress has other legislation to deal with. The question there is whether they will be totally consumed with keeping the government open and therefore fail to pass other important legislation they have in front of them.

Here's what we support and urge Congress to pass before they adjourn for the final time this year.

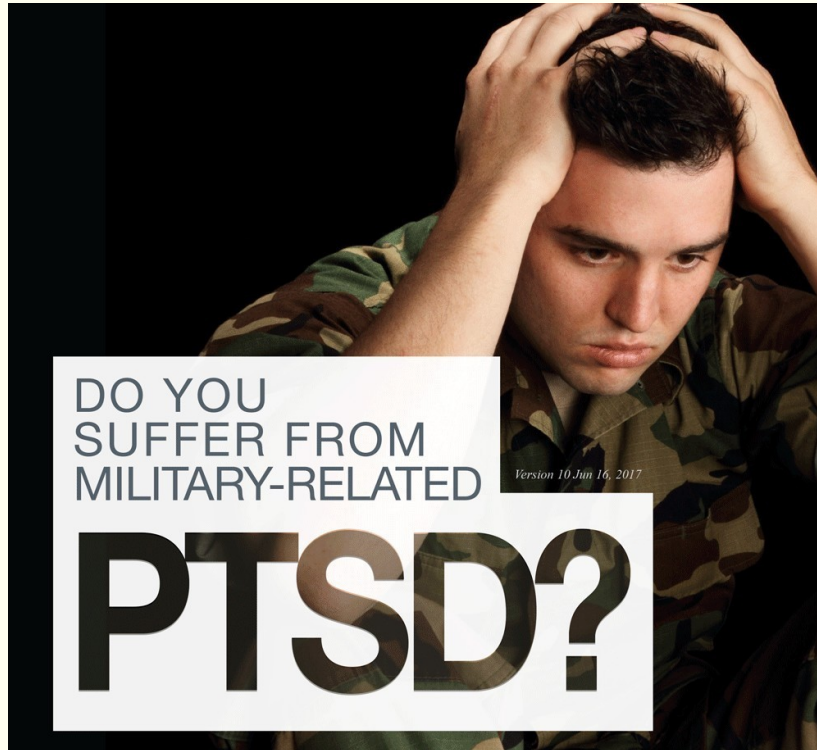
Source: TREA



Vet Group Demands Officials Reject Benefits Cuts for Some Vets

A cost-saving proposal that sparked backlash from veterans in 2017 has resurfaced in a new Congressional Budget Office report as an option to help reduce the federal budget deficit. One veterans group, AMVETS, is urging the White House and the VA to publicly disavow the proposal before it creates a groundswell of anger within the veteran community. Read this [article](#).





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**



**Don't Waste Money on Out of
Pocket Costs TRICARE Doesn't
Cover**

Get a TRICARE supplement that pays your cost shares and can pay 100% of covered excess charges. [Get valuable coverage now.](#)



Temporary Moratorium on Discharges Issued for the Caregiver Program

In response to the high number of veterans being wrongfully discharged from the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers, known as the Caregiver Program, VA has announced it will temporarily halt discharges and decreases in level for current enrollees. Veterans are still able to apply and those wishing to leave the program may continue to do so. Learn more about the [VA Caregiver Program](#).



Veterans' Bill Edging Close to the Goal Line but Still Not There

A bill with provisions for veterans, active-duty members and military dependents is still waiting for Senate action. If it does not pass before the Senate adjourns for the year it will be dead which means starting all over next year

Among the provisions in the bill is a measure that would block schools from penalizing student veterans for Department of Veterans Affairs delays in GI Bill educational benefits. Other items include burial and memorial benefits, expansions of the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) and changes to VA's debt collection practices.

Here are the details:

Education Benefits

After the public relations fiasco caused by VA's late GI Bill payments this fall, Congress set out to ensure that it protects veterans from repercussions against them due to VA's negligence. The new legislation would:

Make schools ineligible for GI Bill tuition payments if they placed penalties or burdens on students as a result of the VA failing to pay GI Bill payments on time.

Block schools from kicking veterans out of classes if their GI Bill payments are late.

Require the VA to tell veterans exactly how much their monthly housing allowance rather than require more guessing.

Burial and Memorial Benefits

Under the legislation:

Spouses and children would be eligible for government provided headstones if they are buried in a VA cemetery.

Spouses and children of veterans buried in tribal cemeteries would get all the same benefits as the veteran.

Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act (SCRA)

The bill would make changes in SCRA rules to legal and debt collection rights held by veterans and their spouses. Included in the bill is:

The ability for a surviving spouse to terminate a lease under the SCRA if their partner dies on active duty.

The right of a military member who is mobilized or gets PCS orders to terminate their video programming and internet bills without any late charges. Previously only telephone bills were covered.

Give a military spouse the right to claim the same state of legal residence as their partner for state taxes. Previously, the spouse could only claim the

state they were living in or go through the hassle of setting up residence in the military member's state of legal residence.

The ability for the spouse to maintain their state of legal residence for voting even if they live out of state while accompanying the military member. Some states require you to actually live in the state for a certain amount of time in an election year to be able to vote.

VA Debt Collection

Under the bill, VA would have to re-format all debt-related letters into "plain language" with a clear explanation, according to the proposed legislation. It also would allow VA to communicate with veterans via both mail and electronic means.

Homeless Veteran Reintegration

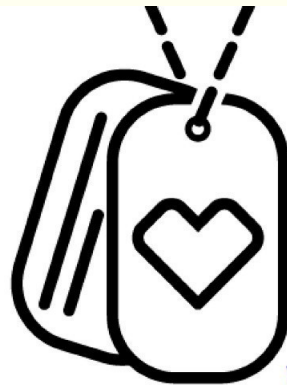
Homeless veterans programs would expand to veterans transitioning from incarceration to civilian life, and to those getting assistance under the Native American Housing Assistance Program.

Expansion of VA Dental Program

The bill also would give VA one year to report to

Congress on the costs, enrollment estimates and feasibility of expanding the dental program.

Source: TREA



**Our values
match yours.**



www.veterans-for-change.org



**Employer Spotlight: ManTech is
Hiring Veterans**

If you're returning to civilian life and looking to start your new career, we have opportunities that fit exceptionally well with the skills and experience you've acquired in the military. And if you're a veteran who has gained civilian work experience or earned university degrees since your time on active duty, [we would like to talk to you.](#)





Survey Shows Increased Trust from Veterans in VA Hospitals

Between fall 2017 and September 2018, VA surveyed more than 1.6 million veterans regarding their trust of VA health care. Eighty-six percent of veterans indicated they trust VA, which is a 2.4 percent increase. Veterans expressed a concerns with access to specialty care, lack of parking and long wait times to receive medications. Learn more about the [VA customer experience feedback survey](#).





The 2019 VA Loan Limit is Now up to \$484k – Use Your Benefit Now

VA Loan limits have increased to \$484k. Take advantage of this great benefit and lock in a low rate for as little as \$0 down. [Use your VA Loan benefit today.](#)



North Dakota Considers Tax Exemption for Military Pay and Pensions

The governor of North Dakota is proposing to exempt military pay and pensions from North Dakota income taxes, with the idea that doing so would help keep retiring veterans in North Dakota and thereby help the state fill thousands of open jobs.

As in so many states where similar proposals have been considered the argument used in opposition is the loss of tax revenue to a state.

The argument in favor of the proposal is that the economic benefits of keeping veterans in the state would more than make up for lost revenue.

North Dakota currently has more than 13,000 unfilled advertised jobs and the state is one of only eight that fully taxes military retirement pay.

A separate bill by a state representative would go even further by prohibiting the state from collecting income tax from military members on active duty, in the Guard or in the reserves. The bill would include exemptions for surviving spouses but would not cover civilian employees of the military.

TREA Past National President Arthur Cooper has been working on this issue in his state of Maryland for a long time. He and his colleagues have been able to get a partial exemption of military retired pay from the state income tax but not the entire amount. However, they continue to work on it.

This is a project that TREA members and chapters might want to consider in their own states if they are still subject to state income tax.

Source: TREA





Never forget our fallen!



VA Secretary Urged to Heed Vet Groups over Community Care Access

At a Dec. 20 joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie reported on his department's progress implementing the VA Mission Act. The facts he shared left many lawmakers concerned that deadlines set only six months ago, particularly for caregiver benefit expansion, might not be met because of the VA's aging computer systems. Read more about the hearing the VA Mission Act in this [story](#).



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



Tricare Expands Ambulance Service Coverage

Tricare now covers both treat and release and joint response ambulance services. Treat and release is when an ambulance treats you but does not 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. Ambulances can be network or non-network providers. Active duty troops will not pay for treat and release or joint response services, while some active duty and retiree families are subject to deductibles or copays. For more information, visit [Tricare's Ambulance Services page](#).



Links to Other Stories

1. [‘Lend me your ears’: Navy Veteran receives new prosthetic](#)
2. [Air Force Psychologist Found Guilty Of Sexually Assaulting Military Patients Seeking PTSD Treatment](#)
3. [Florida Veteran dies after genitals become gangrenous; family blames nursing home: report](#)
4. [Forever GI Bill Housing Payment Fulfillment Act](#)
5. [Langley Air Force Base Secretary Faked Payroll For 17 Years, Giving Herself An Extra \\$1.46 Million](#)
6. [Medic recalls landing on Omaha Beach and the profound impact on his life](#)
7. [Mississippi man gets 3 years for stealing Veteran’s ID](#)
8. [Price of Service: Health care program available for Vets who served at Camp Lejeune](#)
9. [Report: Nearly half of Veterans had dermatology appointments delayed at Pensacola VA clinic](#)

10. The VA's war against Vietnam Navy Veterans
11. VA care played key role in Heat-Moon's career
12. VA hospitals often the best option for medical care, study finds
13. VA Medical Center Nurse Pleads Guilty for Stealing Narcotics
14. VA mismanaged police force, costing millions of dollars and leaving security gaps, investigators say
15. VA Nurse Admits to Fraudulently Obtaining and Tampering with Opioid Prescriptions
16. VA Secretary Misled Senators During Confirmation

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



VA Hospitals Outperform Private Hospitals: Study

A recent study from Dartmouth College found that the Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals outperform private hospitals in most health care markets throughout the country. The study showed VA hospitals were either the best or above average for treating heart attacks, heart failure and pneumonia. Read an abstract of the study in the [Annals of Internal Medicine](#).





[CLICK HERE TO FOLLOW US ON TWITTER!](#)



Sailors, Marines Get Free Calling Cards

More than 30,000 deployed and forward-deployed sailors and Marines will get free calls this holiday season thanks to a program from the Navy Exchange. The sailors and Marines will receive either a free \$10 prepaid card or virtual calling minutes using a virtual personal identification number (VPIN). Both the card and VPIN can be used aboard U.S. Navy ships or via shore-based telephone systems in the US and overseas. A list of U.S. Navy ships that will receive the free prepaid phone cards or VPINs can be found [here](#).



*** RED ALERT ***

**Everyone Call The Senate Committee
On Veterans Affairs Members Ask
Them To Support and Vote to pass
HR 299 Blue Water Navy
Vietnam Veterans Act Of 2018 to the
Full Senate for a Vote!**

**Jon Tester (D - MT)202-224-2644-Tony
Murray, Patty (WA)202-224-2621-Ryan
Sanders, Bernie (VT)202-224-5141-Matt
Brown, Sherrod (OH)202-224-2315-Anna
Blumenthal, Richard (CT)202-224-2823-Ethan
Hirono, Mazie (HI)202-224-6361-Adam
Manchin, Joe (WV)202-224-3954-Emily**

**Please Ask everyone to Make The
Calls and Share this with
Everyone!**

**Thank You Michael F Kvintus
Sr. BWNVVA
National Vice Commander**



DPAA Year in Review

This past week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) released its annual report which provides an overview of the past year's accomplishments and missions. In FY18, the agency accounted for 203 formerly missing service members, which is the highest yearly total reached to date, and made substantial progress in identifying remains who were previously accounted for as a part of group burials. Broken down by conflict, 10 were accounted for from the Vietnam War, 37 from the Korean War, and 156 from World War II. [Read the report.](#)





Tax Exemption for Military Pay and Pensions Proposed in North Dakota

North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum wants to exempt military pay and pensions from North Dakota income taxes, arguing in part that retaining veterans could help the state fill thousands of open jobs. North Dakota is one of only eight states that fully taxes military retirement. For more about the proposal, see this [article](#).



Office of Inspector General

1. Actions Needed to Improve Exception and Waiver Reporting and Selected Agency Guidance
2. Agencies Need to Improve Implementation of Federal Approach to Securing Systems and Protecting against Intrusions
3. Budget Requests Included Construction Projects Located in Over 30 States Selected Using a Multi-level Process
4. Improved Data Would Enhance Oversight
5. Improvements Needed in Suicide Prevention Media Outreach Campaign Oversight and Evaluation
6. Significant Progress Made, but CDC Needs to Take Further Action to Resolve Control Deficiencies and Improve Its Program



Survey: Veterans Increase Trust in VA Hospitals

Veterans increased their trust in VA hospitals about 2.4 percent during fiscal 2018, according to a survey conducted by the agency. Other results showed veterans are concerned with issues such as accessibility of speciality providers and services. Veterans surveyed recommended the VA provide better parking and speed access to medications. The survey queried over 1.6 million veterans. Read more about the survey and the results on the [VA website](#).



**“We Proudly Support our
Military Personnel & Families”**



VA Receives 20th Running Clean Audit

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was given a clean audit opinion on its consolidated Fiscal Year 2018 financial statements, its 20th consecutive such finding. The financial statements and financial report provide information to Congress, the president and public to assess VA stewardship over financial resources and its performance as an organization. An independent public accounting firm selected by the VA Office of Inspector General reviewed VA's financial statements. Read more about the audit on the [VA's website](#).





VA Expands Veteran Hiring Internship Program

The Department of Veterans Affairs VA Acquisition Academy (VAAA) is expanding its Warriors to Workforce (W2W) Program to help fill future VA job openings. The program is accepting resumes through June for the September 2019 class. Located in Frederick, Maryland, W2W is an internship program that prepares returning service connected disabled veterans for federal contracting careers. After graduation, participants transition into the two-year [Acquisition Intern Program \(AIP\)](#). For more information, read this [VA Vantage Point Blog post](#).



 **U.S. FOOD & DRUG**
ADMINISTRATION

1. [Adam Bros. Farming, Inc. Recalls Red and Green Leaf Lettuce and Cauliflower Because of Possible Health Risk](#)
2. [Apio, Inc. Voluntarily Recalls Five Skus of Eat Smart Single-Serve Salad Shake Ups](#)
3. [Atherstone Foods Inc Issues Allergy Alert on](#)

Undeclared Soy in "Greens and Grains Hummus and Quinoa

4. Enovachem Pharmaceuticals Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Dyural-40 and Dyural-80 Convenience Kits Containing Recalled Sodium Chloride Injection, USP, 0.9% Due to Latex Hazard

5. Enovachem Pharmaceuticals Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Dyural-40 and Dyural-80 Convenience

6. FDA warns about increased risk of ruptures or tears in the aorta blood vessel with fluoroquinolone antibiotics in certain patients

7. Inspired Organics Issues Voluntary Recall of Organic Almond Butter Due to Potential Health Risk

8. Medtronic Announces Worldwide Voluntary Field Corrective Action; Company Issues Software Update for Puritan Bennett™ 980 (Pb980) Ventilator Series

9. Medtronic is notifying customers worldwide of a voluntary field corrective action for its Puritan Bennett™ 980 (PB980) ventilator series

10. Roche Diagnostics Recalls CoaguChek XS PT Test Strips Due to Inaccurate INR Test Results

11. Spokane Produce Voluntarily Recalls Northwest Cuisine Creations and Fresh&Local Sandwiches and Green Leaf Lettuce Filets

12. Terrific Care, LLC. / Medex Supply Dist, Inc.

issues Nationwide Recall of CoaguChek Test Strips

13. Torrent Pharmaceuticals Limited Issues

Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Losartan Potassium
Tablets, USP

14. Wegmans Issues Voluntary Recall of Fresh
Cauliflower Rice, Veggie/Cauliflower Rice Blend
and Stir-Fry Mix with Cauliflower



SURVIVAL IS FUN



Calendar Year Costs for TRICARE Resets Jan. 1

In 2018, TRICARE implemented a number of changes. These changes include improving access to care and simplifying costs. Most TRICARE costs limits also moved from a fiscal year cycle to a calendar year cycle. What does this mean for you? Your annual catastrophic cap and deductibles reset every Jan. 1.

Read the full article [here](#).





**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.”



Secretary of Defense Resigns

Secretary of Defense James Mattis announced yesterday that he will be stepping down from his position at the end of February. His resignation comes in the wake of an announcement by the administration to completely withdraw U.S. forces from Syria, and to reduce troop numbers in Afghanistan by approximately half. “Secretary Mattis, who received the VFW’s Dwight D. Eisenhower Award in 2015, has ensured America’s military remains the best, that our intelligence resources remain clear-eyed, and that our elected officials hear the unvarnished truth,” said VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence. “In his short, two-year hitch at the Pentagon, he's restored military readiness, built a more lethal force, changed the department’s business practices to get more bang for the buck, strengthened overseas alliances, and took care of our troops and their families. This great American made things happen, and on behalf of the entire VFW family, I salute him for his near five decades of dedicated service to our nation.” [Read the resignation letter.](#)



Tax & Credit Information



1. Businesses can visit [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) to find out how tax reform affects their bottom line
2. Fidelity & Vanguard Distribution Calendars
3. First plug-in electric vehicle manufacturer crosses 200,000 sold threshold; Tax credit for eligible consumers begins phase down on Jan. 1
4. Income Planning for Your Retirement
5. IRS issues standard mileage rates for 2019





* * **MIA Update** * *

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced 36 new identifications, including 20 from the USS Oklahoma. Returning home with full military honors are:

Air Force Col. Richard A. Kibbey, was a member of Detachment 5, 38th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron. On Feb. 6, 1967, he, along with three others, were aboard a HH-3E helicopter on a rescue and recovery mission over North Vietnam. After rescuing the pilot of a downed aircraft, Kibbey's helicopter was hit by enemy

ground fire resulting in an internal explosion and crash. Kibbey was subsequently reported missing in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about Kibbey.](#)

Army Sgt. 1st Class James L. Boyce was a member of Company K, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, engaged in combat operations against the North Korean People's Army south of Chonui, South Korea. Boyce could not be accounted for and was declared missing in action on July 11, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Boyce.](#)

Army Cpl. Frederick E. Coons was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. On July 29, 1950, Coons was declared missing action in the vicinity of Geochang, South Gyeongsang Province, South Korea, when he couldn't be accounted for after a unit withdrawal action to set up a roadblock against North Korean Forces. Interment services are pending. [Read about Coons.](#)

Army Pfc. William H. Jones was a member of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, engaged in attacks against the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces near

Pakchon, North Korea. On Nov. 26, 1950, after his unit made a fighting withdrawal, he could not be accounted for and was reported missing in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about Jones.](#)

Army Pfc. George L. Spangenberg was a member of Company E, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 2, 1950, following a battle in Unsan, North Korea. Spangenberg's name was never included on lists of American soldiers being held as prisoners of war by the Korean People's Army or the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces and no returned American prisoners of war had any information on his status. Based on a lack of information regarding his status, he was declared deceased on Dec. 21, 1953. Interment services are pending. [Read about Spangenberg.](#)

Army Pfc. James P. Shaw was a member of Company G, 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, when enemy forces invaded the regiment's positions and forced them to withdraw in North Korea. During the withdrawal, U.S. forces were under constant heavy enemy pressure and were hampered by icy roads and heavy equipment. Shaw was reported missing following an engagement which lasted through the

night on Dec. 3, 1950. On June 23, 1951, he was declared deceased. Interment services are pending. [Read about Shaw.](#)

Army Air Forces Sgt. Vernon L. Hamilton a member of the 642nd Bombardment Squadron, 409th Bombardment Group, 9th Bombardment Division, 9th Air Force. On March 23, 1945, he was aboard an A-26B, when the aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire and went missing during a combat mission from Couvron, France to Dülmen, Germany. Hamilton, his pilot, 2nd Lt. Lynn W. Hadfield, and the other crewman, Sgt. John Kalausich, had been participating in the interdiction campaign to obstruct German troop movements in preparation for the Allied crossing of the Rhine River. Interment services are pending. [Read about Hamilton.](#)

Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Lynn W. Hadfield a member of the 642nd Bombardment Squadron, 409th Bombardment Group, 9th Bombardment Division, 9th Air Force. On March 23, 1945, he was aboard an A-26B, when the aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire and went missing during a combat mission from Couvron, France to Dülmen, Germany. Hadfield, and his two crewmen, Sgt.

Vernon Hamilton and Sgt. John Kalausich, had been participating in the interdiction campaign to obstruct German troop movements in preparation for the Allied crossing of the Rhine River. Interment services are pending. [Read about Hadfield.](#)

Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Hulen A. Leinweber was a member of 40th Fighter Squadron, 35th Fighter Group. On June 10, 1945, the P-51 aircraft he was piloting was reportedly struck by anti-aircraft fire, causing the right wing to break off. Leinweber's aircraft crashed just south of Ilap village, in Infugao Province, Republic of the Philippines. The American Graves Registration Service searched the area south of Ilap village, locating wreckage but recovering no remains. In October 1947, Leinweber's remains were declared non-recoverable. Interment services are pending. [Read about Leinweber.](#)

Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. James R. Lord a member of the 66th Fighter Squadron, 57th Fighter Group, 12th Tactical Air Command, 12th Air Force. On Aug. 10, 1944, the P-47D aircraft he was piloting crashed due to a navigational error a mile off the coast of Anghione, Corsica. No witnesses reported seeing any parachute sightings. Interment services are pending. [Read about Lord.](#)

Army Pvt. William A. Boegli was a member of Company L, 332nd Infantry Regiment, 81st Infantry Division, invading Angaur Island in the Palau Island chain. After Boegli's regiment successfully captured Red Beach on the northeastern shore, they pushed westward across the island. On Sept. 30, 1944, Boegli was killed while attempting to lead a group of litter bearers to evacuate wounded servicemen. His remains were not recovered following the war. Interment services are pending. [Read about Boegli.](#)

Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Nicholas J. Gojmerac was a member of Company Q, 4th Raider Battalion, 1st Marine Raider Regiment, when his unit assaulted a Japanese stronghold at Bairoko Harbor, New Georgia Island, Solomon Islands. He was reported missing in action on July 20, 1943, after he was last seen crawling through heavy fire to provide medical care to an injured Marine while he was mortally wounded himself. Interment services are pending. [Read about Gojmerac.](#)

Navy Reserve Pharmacist's Mate 3rd Class William H. Blancheri was a member of Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against

stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded. Blancheri died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Blancheri.](#)

Marine Corps Pfc. Michael L. Salerno was a member of Company K, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded. Salerno died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Salerno.](#)

Marine Corps Reserve Pvt. Fred E. Freet was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense

fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded. Freet died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Interment services are pending.

[Read about Freet.](#)

USS Oklahoma: The following personnel were 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:

Navy Seaman 2nd Class Wilbur C. Barrett.

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

Navy Storekeeper 2nd Class Gerald L. Clayton.

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

Navy Storekeeper 1st Class John W. Craig.

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

Navy Fireman 3rd Class Warren H. Crim.

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

Navy Musician 2nd Class Francis E. Dick.

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

Navy Seaman 2nd Class George T. George.

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

[George.](#)

Navy Seaman 2nd Class Charles C. Gomez.

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

Navy Fireman 1st Class Claude O. Gowey.

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

Navy Seaman 1st Class Daniel L. Guisinger.

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

Navy Seaman 1st Class Robert W. Headington.

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

Navy Seaman 2nd Class Challis R. James.

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

Navy Seaman 1st Class Wesley V. Jordan

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

Navy Radioman 3rd Class Howard V. Keffer.

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

Navy Seaman 2nd Class Joe M. Kelley. Interment services are pending. [Read about Kelly.](#)

Navy Fireman 1st Class Elmer D. Nail. Interment services are pending. [Read about Nail.](#)

Navy Fireman 1st Class Frank E. Nicoles.

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

Nicoles.

Navy Storekeeper 3rd Class Eli Olsen. Interment services are pending. [Read about Olsen.](#)

Navy Fireman 1st Class Millard C. Pace.

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

Navy Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Merle A.

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

Navy Reserve Fireman 1st Class Lewis F.

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



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