



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, March 17, 2019

Volume 10, Issue 11



This-N-That

This week we're running again all the action items in the hopes people will continue to send off the pre-written E-Mails to your Reps in DC. And also in the hopes you will share them with family and friends and ask that they too send off these E-Mails.

The more noise we make, the better the chances are of getting all these bills passed, sent to the Senate, and once there we will let you know so we can keep on them as well.

There are two bills that keep coming up every election

for the past ten plus years, both relate to Concurrent Receipt, we desperately need these to pass in both the House and Senate and signed into law.

Also, please keep calling your Reps in DC and asking them to please pass HR 299.

We're still receiving numerous E-Mails from Veterans on the issue of travel pay reimbursement. Please do keep them coming good or bad. It helps us to determine which VA Medical Centers are good and which are bad at reimbursements.

Down in various locations in this newsletter there are several calls to TAKE ACTION on several pieces of legislation and we sincerely encourage everyone, please send out these prewritten letters to your Reps in DC.

It only takes a couple of minutes of your time, and again even civilians can do this as well to help all our Veterans.

It's tax time again. So if you've not already done your taxes, not even prepared, or don't know what all you need in order to get your taxes done and help to provide the best outcome, go to this link [Tax Deduction Finder and Problem Minimizer](#) and click on the GREEN download button.

This will provide you a rather detailed list of items to take with you to your tax preparer.

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

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org



CONGRESS TO INTRODUCE BI-PARTISAN LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS HERBICIDE EXPOSURE ON CENTRAL PACIFIC ISLANDS

A recent GAO report confirmed the herbicide use on the islands of Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands which have negatively impacted veterans stationed at military bases in the 1960's and 1970's.

Congressmen Michael San Nicholas of Guam and Gus Bilirakis of Florida are addressing this matter by introducing the Lonnie Kilpatrick Central Pacific Herbicide Relief Act, on March 13, 2019, which would grant presumptive herbicide exposure status to US service members who served on the islands of Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands and

Johnston Atoll.

Mr. Kilpatrick was a Navy veteran of Guam who died, after a VA mis-diagnosis, of diseases related to herbicide exposure. After a fight lasting several years, he was granted service connected compensation shortly before his death. His last words "Make it count," have become the rallying cry of the Guam veteran community.

Government documents have confirmed the use of herbicides through 1980. A Public Health assessment of the fire training school at Andersen Air Force Base found a dioxin concentration of 19,000 parts per million. Additionally, the dioxin laced Agent Orange was stored on Johnston Atoll between 1972 and 1977. The herbicide was disposed at sea during the summer of 1977. However, during the storage period, corrosion caused significant leakage which seeped into the grounds. Military personnel stationed on the island were exposed to the leakage during the storage and disposal phases.

Military-Veterans Advocacy Executive Director Commander John B Wells, USN (ret) and Agent Orange Survivors of Guam leader Brian Moyer expressed their thanks to Congressmen San Nicholas and Bilirakis. We appreciate the support for this bi-partisan effort, Wells said. This bi-partisan effort is

necessary to correct a tragedy that has been lingering for decades.

Words cannot express our thanks, Moyer said. This bill will not only provide compensation and medical care for these veterans but will recognize their sacrifice in support of national policy. Moyer also serves as Military-Veterans Advocacy's Deputy Chief of Staff for Central Pacific Islands.

The bill should provide benefits for approximately 52,000 veterans.

The bill should be introduced the afternoon of March 13. Mrs. Sheila Kilpatrick, Lonnie's widow and his daughter are expected to attend.

Source: Cmdr. John Wells



TWENTY TWO SOLDIERS

By Brian Crandall

Twenty two soldiers died today
Their mind overwhelmed with fear
Flagged casket lowered into the ground
While loved ones shed a tear

www.LoveOurVets.org

Twenty two soldiers died today
Their thoughts filled with despair
I wish they'd found another way
I wish they knew how much we care

Twenty two soldiers died today
Keep fighting, yes they tried
Too many souls are lost this way
Each one a victim – of Suicide

Please help spread awareness that there is help and hope.
Love Our Vets - PTSD Family Support



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 **2,269** hits per day, and downloads average **2,014** per day with a total **4,793,986** 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 **16,925** documents on-

line (Updated: 02/11/19)

- 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: 8,289)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **4,702**, Added 2 New Links
(Updated: 03/13/19)

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



New VA Budget Request a Good Start

The president's federal spending plan for fiscal year 2020 increases VA's overall budget by 9.6 percent to \$220.2 billion, which would enable the VA to start implementation of the MISSION Act, strengthen mental health access and treatment programs, increase women's health services, boost electronic health record interoperability with DOD, and support a host of [VFW legislative initiatives](#). VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence called the president's budget submission a good start. "What the VFW now expects from Congress is thoughtful consideration of what the proposed budget does for veterans, service members and their families, and what the VFW demands from Congress is a fair hearing," he said. As good as the budget request seems, the VFW national commander remains very concerned with the reintroduction of a controversial round-down of annual cost-of-living allowance increases, the proposed 45 percent decrease to VA's construction budget, and the near yearlong delay to expand caregiver benefits. "However, since the FY 2020 budget process just began, the VFW will now work with the administration and Congress to improve where needed in order to secure a quality budget for our men and women who answer the call to serve," he said. Learn more about the VA FY 2020 budget request [here](#).





~Veterans-For-Change Made Social Media Change from Face Book to MEWE~

We had been on Face Book for many years and have moved to MEWE.com for a number of reasons.

**IMAGINE A SOCIAL NETWORK WITH ALL THE
FEATURES YOU LOVE AND NONE OF THE BS.**

Where you are the customer to serve and not data to sell.

Where you share your real life and celebrate, not censor, diversity.

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



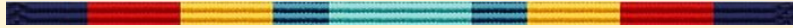
H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act

On January 8, 2019, Representative Gus Bilirakis (FL) introduced H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act. This bill would extend concurrent receipt authority to longevity retirees with service-connected disabilities rated less than 50 percent disabling. Under current law disabled veterans with longevity retirement from active military service who are also in receipt of a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability determination of 50 percent or higher may retain both military retirement pay and their compensation.

DAV strongly supports H.R. 303 as it would end the unfair policy of forcing many military longevity retirees to forfeit some of their retired pay in order to receive equal amounts of disability compensation from the VA. This legislation is in accord with DAV Resolution No. 104 and would eliminate concurrent receipt for all longevity retirees.

Please use the prepared electronic letter or draft your own to urge your Representative to support and cosponsor H.R. 303. As always, we appreciate your support for DAV and your grassroots activism in participating in DAV CAN. Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.

Take Action



FY 2020 Defense Budget Request is a 4.9 Percent Increase

The president's \$750 billion budget request for total defense spending includes a 4.9 percent increase for the Defense Department, or \$718 billion, which will enable the department to continue its three-pronged strategy to compete, deter and win across all spectrums of warfare. Specifically, the Pentagon proposal includes:

- A 3.1 percent military pay raise, the largest in a decade.
- A 3.2 percent basic allowance for housing increase and a 2.4 percent basic allowance for subsistence increase.
- Growth of the active and reserve force by almost 40,000 over the next five years.
- A 10 percent increase for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, from the current year \$130.6 million to \$144.88 million.
- The largest research and development request in 70 years.
- Also, DOD plans to allocate \$8 billion to support military families with childcare, youth programs, school education, and commissary operations.

[More details here.](#)





March's Featured Song

JACK

By

LT Bobby Ross

LT Bobby Ross - Voice Of America

Previous Featured Songs



GI Bill Anniversary

This year the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the GI Bill, is turning 75. There have been many different modifications to the GI Bill throughout the years, enabling millions of veterans to prosper after leaving military service. To celebrate this historic milestone VA wants to hear from veterans who have used the GI Bill in any of its different versions. If you have used any version of the GI Bill, [please share your story](#).



The Semper Fi Fund is excited to announce the:
**LCpl Parsons Welcome Home Fund
for Vietnam Veterans**

The Semper Fi Fund expanded our mission to care for veterans from all US military service branches who are catastrophically wounded, ill, or injured from combat operations in Vietnam.

***Eligibility criteria**

- Blind/legally blind
- ALS (Lou Gehrig's Disease)
- Amputation (loss of any limb or extremities)
- PTSD (combat related) – 70% or greater VA rating
- Paralyzed (paraplegia, quadriplegia, hemiplegia)
- Severe Traumatic Brain Injury (cannot function independently)
- Severe illness linked to Agent Orange exposure (recognized by the VA)

Documents required

- Copy of DD214
- Photo ID (front/back)
- LCpl Parsons Welcome Home Fund Application
- VA rating decision letter and/or signed note from medical provider stating diagnosis

Assistance may be provided in the following areas

- Housing grant (adaptive housing, home modification/repair, rent, mortgage, utilities)
- Transportation grant (adaptive transportation, vehicle modification/repair)
- Medical Care grant (not covered by insurance, Medicare, or the VA)
- Funeral/Cremation Expense

*Must have one or more of the conditions




For more information, please call
760-725-3680 or contact us at
Vwestcoastcw@semperfifund.org



Montana SSG to Receive Posthumous Medal of Honor

An Army 10th Mountain Division staff sergeant will be posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor later this month. Staff Sgt. Travis Atkins, of Bozeman, Mont., was killed in action on June 1, 2007, while conducting a route clearance mission southwest of Baghdad. Atkins, 31, heard a radio report of suspected insurgents crossing an intersection in the Iraqi town of Abu Samak. Atkins ordered his vehicle to intercept them. As Atkins attempted to search one of the suspects, the insurgent reached for an explosive vest under his clothing. Atkins grabbed the suicide bomber from behind and slammed him to the ground, away from the other soldiers standing only a few feet from the fight. As he pinned the insurgent to the ground, the bomb detonated. Atkins was killed by the blast. The Medal of Honor will be an upgrade to the Distinguished Service Cross he received for saving the three other soldiers from the suicide bomber. [Read the Stars and Stripes article here.](#)





H.R 445, Help Hire Our Heroes Act

On January 10, 2019, Representative Julia Brownley introduced H.R. 445, the Help Hire Our Heroes Act. This bill would amend the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 to make permanent the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP).

The VRAP was started in 2012 to provide training assistance to unemployed veterans between the ages of 35 and 60 who are no longer eligible for the GI Bill. It provided up to 12 months of training benefits at community colleges and technical schools in

occupations that the Department of Labor has identified as "high demand." Since funding for this program expired in March 2014, the VA has not been able to enroll new veterans in VRAP. This program gap means that thousands of older, qualified veterans have been unable to access the resources which could help them find work.

This bill would strike the end dates of the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program and would replace it with year to year authorizations. This bill is in accord with DAV Resolution No. 190 which seeks adequate funding and permanency for veterans' employment and training programs.

Please use the prepared letter to write to your Representative to cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 445, the Help Hire Our Heroes Act. Thank you for your efforts and support of the Commander's Action Network.

Take Action



**DPAA Makes 200th Identification
form USS Oklahoma Unknown
Remains**

Last week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced that on Feb. 26, 2019, Navy Fireman 1st Class Billy James Johnson was identified, marking him as the 200th crewmen to be identified from the 388 individual sets of unknown remains recovered from the USS Oklahoma between 1941 and 1944. The VFW thanks the DPAA for its tireless dedication to this most sacred mission. [Learn more here.](#)



Senate Committee Approves Nominee for Veterans' Employment Agency

On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs unanimously approved to advance the nomination of John Lowry III to be assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service. If confirmed, the Marine Corps veteran would oversee the federal government's efforts to ensure veterans obtain meaningful careers after leaving military service. Lowry testified before the committee on [June 13, 2018](#). His nomination advanced to the full Senate in 2018, but was not confirmed by the 115th Congress. Lowry now awaits confirmation by full Senate. [Learn more.](#)



**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



**10 tips for choosing healthy
meals as you age**

Making healthy food choices is a smart thing to do—no matter how old you are! Use these tips to choose foods for better health at any stage of life.

1. **Drink plenty of liquids.** With age, you may lose some of your sense of thirst. Drink water often and limit beverages that have lots of added sugars or salt.
2. **Make eating a social event.** Meals are more enjoyable when you eat with others. Invite a friend to join you or look for shared meals at senior centers or

places of worship.

3. **Plan healthy meals.** Check our resources on what to eat, how much to eat, and which foods to choose.

4. **Know how much to eat.** Learn to recognize how much to eat so you can control portion sizes. When eating out, pack part of your meal to eat later.

5. **Vary your vegetables.** Brighten your plate with different colored vegetables for a variety of nutrients and good sources of fiber.

6. **Eat for your teeth and gums.** Dental problems may make it hard to chew fruits, vegetables, or meats. Eating softer foods can help. Try cooked or canned foods like unsweetened fruit, low-sodium soups, or canned tuna.

7. **Use herbs and spices.** Your sense of smell, sense of taste, or both can change as you age. Medicines may also change how foods taste. Add flavor to your meals with herbs and spices.

8. **Keep food safe.** Throw out food that might not be safe and be sure not to eat raw or undercooked foods like eggs, fish, shellfish, meat, or poultry.

9. **Read the Nutrition Facts label.** Pay attention to what's on the Nutrition Facts label on your food. This will tell you about things like calories, fats, sodium, and more.

10. **Ask your doctor about vitamins or supplements.** Your doctor will know best if you need any dietary supplements. It's important to tell your

doctor about all the dietary supplements you take, because they could interfere with your medicines or affect your medical conditions.

Learn more about [choosing healthy meals](#) as you age on our website.





EUGENE A. OBREGON CMH MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

PRESENTS

6TH ANNUAL NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR DAY

"FIRST RESPONDERS HONORING AMERICA'S DEFENDERS"

MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2019 AT 5:00 PM

AT THE

LOS ANGELES PLAZA PARK - 125 PASEO DE LA PLAZA, LOS ANGELES 90012



The **Medal of Honor** is the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force which can be bestowed upon an individual serving in the Armed Services of the United States. Generally presented to its recipient by the President of the United States of America in the name of Congress.

**HONORING THOSE WHO HAVE GONE
ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY.**



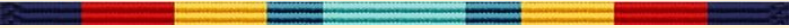
**Tester, Moran Introduce VFW-
Supported Veterans Mental Health
Bill**

On Wednesday, Senators Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) introduced the VFW-supported Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019, which will improve veterans' access to high-quality mental health care and help reduce the rate of veteran suicide. The bill would bolster VA's mental health workforce to serve more veterans, improve rural veterans' access to mental health care, strengthen support and assistance for transitioning service members, study and expand innovative and alternative treatment options, and hold VA accountable for its mental health care and suicide prevention efforts. [Learn more](#) or [watch the press conference](#).



AMERICAN SOLDIERS

**WILLING TO DIE FOR THE COUNTRY
THAT ISN'T WILLING TO PAY THEM!**



Pentagon May Tap Military Pay, Pensions for Border Wall

The Pentagon is planning to tap \$1 billion in leftover funds from military pay and pension accounts to help President Donald Trump pay for his long-sought border wall, a top Senate Democrat said March 7. Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Illinois, said the funds are available because Army recruitment is down and a voluntary early military retirement program is being underutilized. The Pentagon is planning to transfer money from various accounts into a fund dedicated to drug interdiction, with the money then slated to be redirected for border barriers and other purposes. The [Army](#) missed its recruiting goal last year, falling short by about 6,500 soldiers, despite pouring an extra \$200 million into bonuses and approving some additional waivers for bad conduct or health issues. Read more about the plan on [here](#).



Lawmakers: End Afghanistan War, Give Every GWOT Vet a \$2,500 Bonus

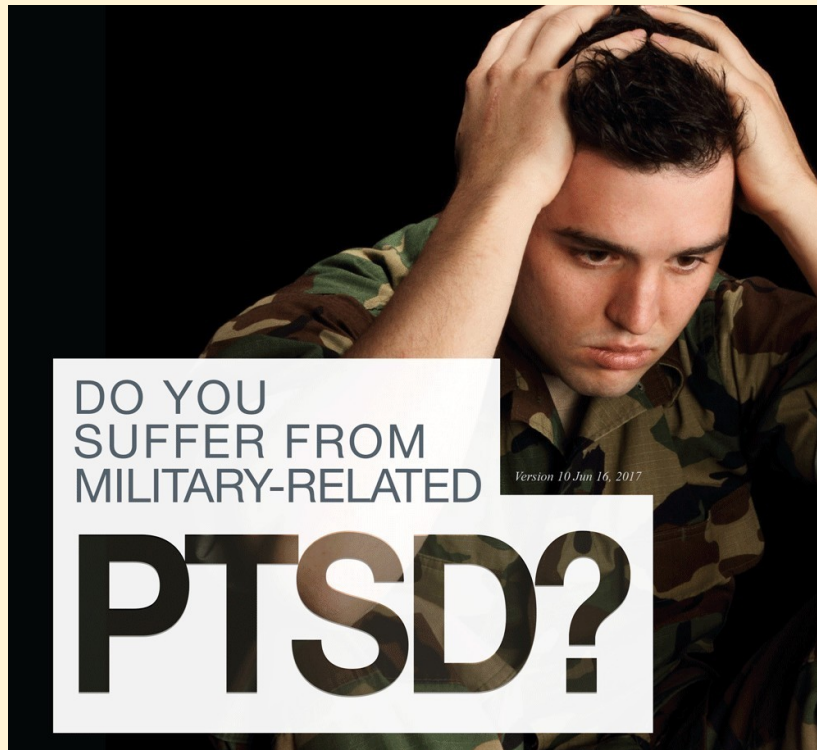
Two U.S. lawmakers on March 5 introduced legislation to pay veterans bonuses for serving in America's longest war. Sens. Rand Paul, R-Kentucky, and Tom Udall, D-New Mexico, introduced the bipartisan American Forces Going Home After Noble (AFGHAN) Service Act to "honor the volunteers who bravely serve our nation by providing bonuses to those who have deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism, and redirect the savings from ending nation-building in Afghanistan to America's needs at home," according to an announcement. If passed, the AFGHAN Service Act would also permanently end America's involvement in Afghanistan and overturn the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force. It would also order the government to pay any and all members of the military who have served in the Global War on Terrorism a \$2,500 bonus within one year of the legislation passing. Read more about the proposal [here](#).



Veterans Receive Golden 'Tickets' Canceling Their Medical Debt

It sounds crazy and looks like a scam: a golden envelope containing a letter that says part or all of your health care debt has been erased. But for thousands of veterans and family members, the mailings, which have been going out since 2016, have been the winning ticket for getting out from under a mountain of medical bills. The organization, RIP Medical Debt, helps raise the funds needed to purchase medical debt from the companies that hold it. RIP buys the debt for a penny — or less — on the dollar. Working with the debt holders, it finds patients in dire straits and gleans the list specifically to find veterans. Some of those get the yellow envelope. In the past three years, RIP Medical Debt has quietly erased roughly \$65 million worth of medical debt for veterans, family members, National Guard and reserve members, notifying them by mail of the action, according to organization officials. Read more about the effort [here](#).





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



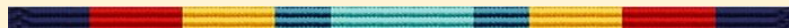
**Will the VA Pay for Your Funeral?
The Answer May Surprise You**

If you want to have a big funeral and a fancy tombstone in a nice cemetery, it will cost a lot. That's OK. You're a veteran; the Department of Veterans Affairs will pay. Right? Not so fast. The VA will pay some, but not all, of your burial costs, and probably very little of your funeral costs. The VA will pay a burial allowance to an eligible veteran's family to help defray burial and funeral costs. All veterans with other-than-dishonorable discharges are eligible for free burial in a national VA cemetery. Learn more about veteran funeral, burial and related benefits [here](#).



VGLI Too Much? Get \$300k Coverage from Only \$21 a Month

Could your family survive without you? Because tomorrow is never guaranteed, protect your family's future now. [Get \\$300k life insurance coverage from just \\$21 a month.](#)





**Our values
match yours.**



www.veterans-for-change.org

Employer Spotlight: ManTech is Looking for 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. [See jobs for veterans at Mantech.](#)

Reduce Your Out of Pocket Costs with a Tricare Supplement

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



H.R. 444, Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act of 2019

On January 10, 2019, Representative Julia Brown (CA) introduced H.R. 444, the Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act of 2019.

Currently, veterans with service-connected disabilities or other employment handicaps are able to receive career development services through VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program up to 12 years

after they separate from military service. H.R. 444 would remove the limiting 12-year-period for eligibility.

In agreement with DAV Resolution No. 310, we support this legislation to eliminate the 12-year-period of eligibility. By removing the limited eligibility period, H.R. 444 will provide veterans the flexibility to receive the support they have earned and deserve throughout their lifetime and thus help reduce unemployment for service-connected veterans.

Please use the prepared electronic letter or draft your own to urge your Member of Congress to support and cosponsor H.R. 444.

Standing up for veterans is vital and we thank you for your advocacy. Your actions help make DAV a highly influential and effective organization in Washington. Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.

Take Action





Retirees, Civilians Can Live in Base Housing

Many bases lease housing to military retirees, Defense Department civilians or even U.S. citizens who are not affiliated with the military. Each base has different rules about who can rent on base. Rental prices on some bases also cover the cost of yard maintenance and utilities. To qualify, you must pay for a credit and background check for each adult living in the home and show proof of employment and income. You also have to pay a security deposit. Check with your local base for more information on whether it participates. Read more about base housing rentals [here](#).



Tricare Emergency Procedures in Place in California, Alabama

Tricare's emergency prescription refill program is in place for Lee County, Alabama, and 21 counties in California, including Los Angeles, Marin, San Diego and Monterey. In Alabama, the emergency procedures were prompted by a recent tornado. In California, the procedures were prompted by flooding. When that system is in place, Tricare users who fill their prescriptions at retail chains can fill it at another store in that chain or get emergency refills at any retail network pharmacy. For a full list of impacted California counties, see this [Tricare notice](#).



Your 2019 \$0 Down VA Loan Benefit Is Ready to Use Now

VA Loan limits have increased to \$484k for 2019. Take advantage of this great benefit and lock in a low rate for as little as \$0 down. [Use your VA loan benefit today.](#)





H.R. 553, Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act

On January 15, 2019, Congressman Joe Wilson introduced H.R. 553, the Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act. This bill would eliminate an unfair offset placed on many surviving spouses of service members who pass away during active duty or spouses of retirees who die of a service-connected disability.

Currently, purchased Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) annuities are offset by the amount of any benefit payable under the VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) program. SBP is not a government gratuity benefit; rather, it is a type of insurance purchased out-of-pocket by military retirees for their survivors while DIC is a VA benefit intended to provide spouses of veterans who died from a service-connected condition some semblance of financial security. Thousands of survivors of military retirees are adversely affected by this unfair offset between SBP and DIC benefits.

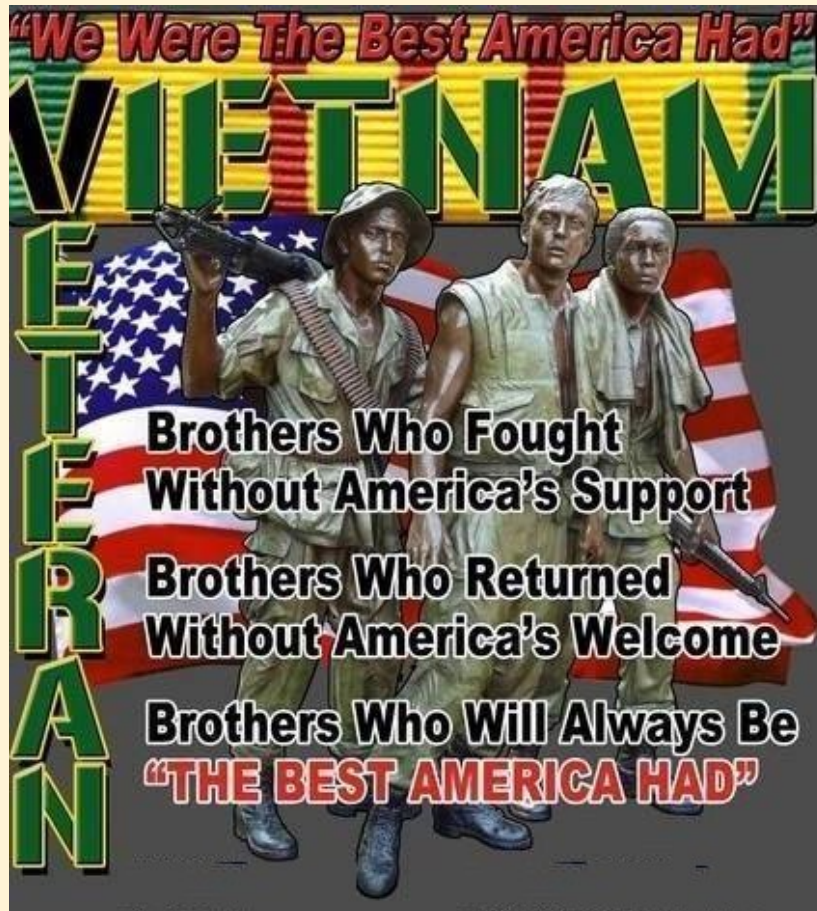
Upon the retiree's death, the SBP annuity is paid monthly to eligible beneficiaries; however, if a surviving spouse is also entitled to DIC, the SBP benefit is reduced by the amount of the DIC benefit (currently \$1,283.11 per month). In general, when DIC benefits are payable but the monthly rate is equal to, or greater than, the monthly SBP payment amount, beneficiaries lose the entire SBP payment.

This bill would eliminate the offset and allow surviving spouses to receive both the purchased SBP annuities and their earned DIC benefits. This bill is in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 014, which calls for Congress to repeal the offset between SBP annuity payments and DIC payments.

Please use the prepared letter to write your Representative to cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 553, the Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act. Thank you for your efforts and support of the Commander's Action Network.

Take Action





Links to Other Stories

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.

1. [2019 National Vietnam War Veterans Day](#)
2. [DoD recognizes Brain Injury Awareness month,](#)

promotes warfighter brain health

3. How VA Medical Centers Can Help You

4. Lower attendance at Veterans Stand Down cause for optimism

5. New legislation aims to provide relief to NM communities impacted by groundwater contamination from military bases

6. New valve for Veterans with aortic valve disorders

7. President Trump signs executive order to empower Veterans and end Veterans suicide

8. Purple Heart Recipients to Get Claims Priority Starting April 1

9. Secretary Wilkie statement on signing of the Executive Order, "Supporting the Transition of Active Duty Service Members and Military Veterans into the Merchant Marine"

10. Stitt's Veterans secretary pick accused of underpaying Veterans

11. Trump ramps up effort to prevent Veteran suicides with executive order creating task force

12. Trump signs executive order aimed at lowering Veterans' suicide rate

13. VA Ends Funding for Homeless Vet Residence in Montana

14. VA Needs to Do Better Credential Checks on Its Doctors, Report Finds

15. VA's Center for Women Veterans kicks off Women's History Month with 'Trailblazers' campaign

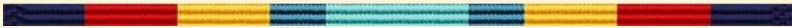
16. Veteran volunteers provide support to Veteran patients
17. Veterans Encouraged To Take Advantage Of Newly-Opened Grand Prairie VA Clinic
18. When the VA misrepresents performance, Veterans suffer

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



Scholarship Gives Military Spouses Free Financial Counselor Accreditation

Now through April 19, [military spouses](#) can apply for the opportunity to earn a free financial counselor accreditation to help them find employment at any military installation or in the civilian sector. The Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) Foundation Military Spouse Fellowship Program offers this career-enhancing credential to military spouses so they may in turn provide financial counseling and education to fellow members of the military community. Those interested in applying for the 2019 fellowship [must submit applications](#) no later than April 19. Read more about the scholarship [here](#).



Veteran Organization Priorities Include Health Care, Suicide, Education

Implementation of the Mission Act, suicide prevention and mental health care — along with education, women veterans and environmental exposures — top the lists of concerns veterans advocates have as they look toward the legislative year ahead. While the groups are varied — from the largest, including the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, to the more obscure, the American Ex-Prisoners of War — they presented a unified front to Congress, urging lawmakers to support those who have served the nation. Read more about the veteran organizations' priorities [here](#).



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Trump Signs Executive Order Creating Task Force to Stop Vet Suicide

President Donald Trump signed an executive order March 5 aiming to stem the number of suicides among veterans by creating a high-level task force to develop research strategies and plans to tackle the problem and provide grants for communities to help former troops who are struggling. The task force will develop a "public health road map" that will include a national research strategy for studying suicide risk factors and intervention efforts, as well as proposals for equipping states and communities with the resources needed to undertake suicide prevention and quality-of-life initiatives for former service members. The order, known as the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide, or PREVENTS, also seeks to network national and local programs to actively engage veterans "rather than a passive system wherein the onus for engagement is placed on veterans." Read more about the executive order [here](#).





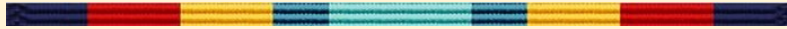
Your actions
could save a life.

Showing you care can make a big difference to someone in crisis.

VeteransCrisisLine.net



**Veterans
Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1



After Military, Uncle Sam Wants You to Join the Merchant Marine

Seafaring service members may soon be able to transition to the U.S. Merchant Marine with less hassle and at less cost than currently required under an executive order signed March 4 by President Donald Trump. The order is designed to bolster the ranks of the Merchant Marine and increase job opportunities for transitioning troops. Under the order, the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security will, over the next year, identify all military training and experience that may meet merchant mariner credentialing qualifications and requirements. Members of the Merchant Marines can be called up for service by the Navy. They serve on civilian and federally owned merchant ships, supporting trade and military sealift operations. U.S. water transportation workers earn on average \$65,700 a year, with many merchant mariners taking home more than that, according to officials. Read more about the order [here](#).



Pentagon Debuts Draft Tenant Bill of Rights for Troops

The military services on March 6 released a draft copy of a military base housing tenant bill of rights designed to give service members more power over their leases. The document is intended to give troops and families safe homes and hold privatized housing companies accountable, according to a statement. Under the draft, residents would gain the right to have landlord-tenant disputes resolved by a "neutral decision-maker." It would also give them the right to have their rent payments withheld during a dispute and be entitled to a refund, depending on the arbiter's decision; guarantee responsive communications between tenant and the landlord and maintenance staff; provide a housing advocate, as designated by the installation command, to provide advice and support to tenants; and give tenants the right to reside in homes that are in safe working order and meet health and environmental standards. The changes will be enforced "in the coming weeks," according to the Defense Department. Read more about the proposed list of rights [here](#).



Office of Inspector General

- Progress Made but Continued Attention Needed to Address Management Weaknesses at Federal Agencies Serving Indian Tribes
- USDA's Efforts to Prepare for a Potential Outbreak Could Be Strengthened



'Not in My Squad' Sexual Assault Initiative Expands

The Army is expanding its Not in My Squad bystander initiative to further combat sexual assault in the ranks. The program, introduced in 2015, is designed to empower junior leaders at the squad level to reduce sexual assault and violence through mutual trust, according to a recent release. Sergeant Major of the Army Dan Dailey testified to Congress on Feb. 27 that the program has now spread to 27 campuses, and the Army has conducted 17 workshops on the topic. Dailey also said that certified resiliency trainers embedded at the company level are working to train soldiers on improving performance and sustaining readiness. Read more at Army.mil.



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



1. Claire's Stores, Inc., Announces Voluntary Recall of Three Make-Up Products
2. Fullei Fresh Recalls Organic Bean Sprouts Because of Possible Health Risk
3. Hometown Food Company Recalls Two Production LOT Codes of Pillsbury® Unbleached All-Purpose 5lb Flour Due to Possible Health Risk
4. New blood pressure meds recall for cancer risk; now 5 in two weeks



SURVIVAL IS FUN



**A Workshop for Military and
Veteran Families! Babies on the
Homefront: Caregiving While
Caring for Your Young Child
Thursday April 4, 2019 at 7:00pm
ET**

Are you a parent or guardian caring for a baby or toddler? The VA Caregiver Support Line and ZERO TO THREE have collaborated to present a workshop in support of Military and Veteran Families who are also caring for the needs of young children.

This workshop by ZERO TO THREE will provide tools and resources to support you as a parent, help you understand your child's development, and appreciate what your child is trying to tell you in those oh-so challenging moments. Join us in this partnership as we support you in balancing the needs of your family while also caring for the blossoming developments of your "Babies on the Home front!"

To Register:

Click [HERE](#)



Tax & Credit Information



1. [Be on the lookout for promises of inflated tax refunds 2019 IRS 'Dirty Dozen' list continues](#)
2. [Business taxpayers should take another look at their](#)

estimated tax payments

3. Filing season tips for employers and employees

4. Free File is growing: More people are filing their return for free

5. IRS cautions taxpayers on scams involving disasters, charitable causes 2019 'Dirty Dozen' list continues

6. IRS' 2019 'Dirty Dozen' tax scams list highlights inflating deductions, credits

7. Refunds of \$1.4 billion waiting to be claimed by individuals who have not filed federal income tax returns for 2015

8. Schemes involving falsifying income, creating bogus documents make IRS' 'Dirty Dozen' list for 2019

9. Tax Preparers can protect their clients by hiring a cybersecurity pro

10. Tax reform changes to fringe benefit deductions affect business's bottom line

11. Tax Time Guide: IRS publication helps small businesses, self-employed understand what's new for taxes

12. Tax Time Guide: IRS urges taxpayers to check their tax withholding early in 2019; Paycheck Checkup can avoid problems next year

13. The IRS Tax Exempt & Government Entities Division (TE/GE) still has a wide range of job opportunities available. Apply today to become part of our team and help us oversee a vital part of the

nation's tax system.



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MIA Update

This week the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of five U.S. personnel, previously unaccounted for from our nation's past wars and conflicts. Returning home with full military honors are:

U.S. Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Howard T. Lurcott, was a member of the 38th Bombardment Squadron, 30th Bombardment Group, stationed at Hawkins Field, Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands. On Jan. 21, 1944, the B-24J bomber aircraft he was piloting

crashed into Tarawa lagoon shortly after takeoff. Lurcott and the nine other service members aboard the aircraft were killed. Interment services are pending. [Read about Lurcott.](#)

U.S. Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Carl M. Shaffer, was a member of the 38th Bombardment Squadron, 30th Bombardment Group, stationed at Hawkins Field, Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands. On Jan. 21, 1944, the B-24J bomber aircraft he was aboard crashed into Tarawa lagoon shortly after takeoff. Shaffer and the nine other service member aboard the aircraft were killed. Interment services are pending. [Read about Shaffer.](#)

Army Pfc. William F. Delaney was assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division. On Nov. 22, 1944, when his battalion launched a massive firing demonstration against a large pocket of German defenders near the town of Grosshau, in the Hürtgen Forest in Germany. During the battle, an enemy artillery shell struck Delaney's foxhole, and he died before he could be medically evacuated. Due to ongoing combat operations, his remains were not recovered at that time. Interment services are pending. [Read about Delaney.](#)

Navy Fireman 3rd Class Willard I. Lawson 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 Lawson. Interment services are pending. [Read about Lawson.](#)

Navy Seaman 1st Class Joseph K. Maule 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 Maule. Interment services are pending. [Read about Maule.](#)



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Family!**



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