



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, March 31, 2019

Volume 10, Issue 13



This-N-That

Finally, although the battle continues on, SecVA Wilkie has testified before Congress that they should not fight Blue Water Navy for their benefits and care!

Most if not all Blue Water Navy Veterans have been suffering the exact same illnesses as those who served with "boots on the ground" and should never have been denied in the first place, and the fifty year battle has cost the lives of thousands who served our country with pride, dignity and honor and deserved no less than those who served on land.

But even with this announcement we're still pushing for everyone to follow through with all the action items, to continue to call their Reps in DC and ask that they too support the bills, and lets help push this through so that this issue can be finally put to bed and Blue Water Navy Vets can get their long over due care and benefits.

Further down in this newsletter there is a link to a petition to demand full accountability on the part of the VA and I do urge everyone to please, take the time and sign it.

If we can get their attention by the numbers of people responding then we have a better chance of improving the VA, forcing them to be accountable for all the funds provided through the budget, hire more staff, purchase modern and innovative equipment which is needed in many facilities and help stop all the nonsense going in within their walls and do the jobs they were hired for, providing proper, efficient medical care.

It's still tax time! 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.

Some of you have subscribed to the VFC Website, and had some issues. Those accounts have been repaired, and a Welcome E-Mail has been sent out. In addition we had our webmaster remove that layer of added protection for now.

We are going to look for a new website hosting service and hope to locate one fairly soon that can offer the service, management, large storage base ability and pricing we've been paying for several years now.

If you or anyone you know runs a hosting service, please contact me.

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





Demand VA Accountability

TELL CONGRESS: Make sure VA Completes the MISSION!

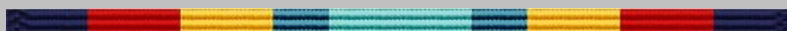
Take Action



VA Recommends Dropping Blue Water Navy Legal Battle

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said during congressional testimony Tuesday that he would recommend that the Justice Department not contest a recent federal court ruling that will pave the way for the return of earned disability benefits for some 90,000 so-called Blue Water Navy veterans. In [Procopio v. Wilkie](#), the VA secretary was sued by Navy veteran Alfred Procopio Jr., a Life member of VFW Post 6587 in Spring Lake Park, Minn., who was denied service connection for prostate cancer and diabetes mellitus — both illnesses are among the [14 presumptive diseases](#) associated with Agent Orange exposure — because he was

assigned aboard an aircraft carrier inside Vietnam's 12-mile territorial waters but never on dry land or within Vietnam's inland waterways. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit focused on the intent of the 1991 Agent Orange Act, which was to grant a presumption of service connection for certain diseases to veterans who "served in the Republic of Vietnam." At issue was whether service within territorial waters constituted service "in the Republic of Vietnam." By a 9-2 decision, the court ruled it did. "The VFW salutes Secretary Wilkie for his support to move forward and take care of this group of forgotten Vietnam veterans," said VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence. "We also support his recommendation that some type of historical research division be created within the Department of the Navy to ensure that all such ships are fully accounted-for in the [VA's list of exposed ships](#). After a half-century, we need to get this done to reinforce to tens of thousands of Vietnam veterans that our nation is willing to provide them the care and benefits they have earned and deserve, and we urge Congress to pass H.R. 299, the Blue Water Veterans Act of 2019, to ensure the VA can never again arbitrarily strip veterans of their earned benefits." [Contact your members of Congress here.](#)



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 **2,903** hits per day, and downloads average **2,848** per day with a total **4,837,435** 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: **8,356**)
 - Polls
 - Web Links, more than **4,705**, Added 3 New Links (Updated: 03/27/19)

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



H.R. 1527, the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act

Representative Clay Higgins introduced H.R. 1527, the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act. This bill would provide veterans who are no longer capable of living independently an alternative to nursing home care, in which the veteran would continue to receive the care that they need in an intimate home-like environment through VA's Home-Based Primary Care program, and

the Medical Foster Home (MFH) attendant program.

Started in 2000, VA Medical Foster Homes provide veterans who need nursing home level of care an alternative to being placed in a nursing home. VA Medical Foster Homes merge traditional adult foster care with comprehensive longitudinal care provided in the home by a VA interdisciplinary team that includes a physician, nurse, social worker, rehabilitation therapist, mental health provider, dietitian, and pharmacist. Since its inception, over 4,000 veterans have resided in Medical Foster Homes.

However, many service-connected veterans who wish to reside in a VA Medical Foster Home are unable to do so because of substantial out-of-pocket costs of approximately \$1,500 to \$3,000 per month. Because VA does not have the authority to cover these costs, veterans are placed in nursing homes which VA pays for but cost more than twice as much.

As the veteran population continues to age, the need for long-term care services will continue to grow. Home-based community programs like MFHs will enable VA to meet the needs of aging veterans in a manner closer to independent living than institutionalized care. With the passage of this bill, veterans would have the option of care that more closely aligns with their independence while

maintaining their quality of life.

This bill is in accordance with DAV Resolution No. 085, which calls for legislation to improve the comprehensive program of long-term services and supports for service-connected disabled veterans regardless of their disability ratings.

Please use the prepared letter to write your Representative to cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 1527, the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act. Thank you for your efforts and support of the Commander's Action Network.

Take Action



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

Follow us on [MEWE](#)! We've move to [MEWE](#) and after three months, membership has grown and the support staff at [MEWE](#) is responsive, open to suggestions and works very hard to protect your personal information.

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



VA to Offer New Ketamine-Based Nasal Spray for Depression

The newest FDA-approved medication to treat severe depression, a nasal spray based on the anesthetic (and misused hallucinogenic party drug) ketamine, will soon be available to veterans treated within the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#). In a move that may help thousands of former service members with depression that has not improved with other treatments, VA officials announced March 19 that the department's doctors are now authorized to prescribe Spravato, the brand name for esketamine, a molecular variation of ketamine. The treatment will be available to veterans based on a physician's assessment and will be administered only to patients who have tried at least two antidepressant medications and continue to have symptoms of major depressive disorder. Read more about the new offering [here](#).





March's Featured Song

JACK

By

LT Bobby Ross

LT Bobby Ross - Voice Of America

Previous Featured Songs



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.

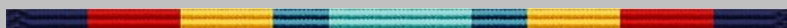
Take Action



Fiscal Year 2020 Budget for Veterans' Programs

On Tuesday, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie testified before a Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing regarding the president's Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 budget request for VA. Secretary Wilkie supported the president's 7.5 percent increase of VA's budget and discussed how it enables VA to improve customer service and implement the numerous recently enacted and VFW-supported laws such as the [VA MISSION Act](#), the [Forever GI Bill](#), and the [Appeals Modernization Act](#). Secretary Wilkie also announced that VA has recommended the president drop the [Blue Water Navy legal battle](#) and start providing long-overdue benefits to veterans exposed to

Agent Orange while serving off the coast of Vietnam. Committee members expressed concerns with VA's reduction in funds for construction despite having a \$60 billion construction backlog and VA's plans to rely more heavily on private sector doctors. VA also indicated it would make a decision within the next three months on benefits for bladder cancer, hypertension, Parkinson's-like symptoms, and hypothyroidism related to Agent Orange exposure. The VFW and its Independent Budget (IB) coauthors submitted testimony opposing VA's proposal to round-down cost-of-living adjustments for compensation benefits and encouraging Congress to properly fund veterans' care and benefits. [Watch the hearing](#), which starts at the 23-minute mark. [Read the IB testimony](#).





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.

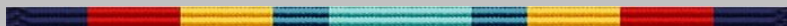
Please use the prepared letter to write to your Representative to cosponsor and support passage of H.R. 445, the Help Hire Our Heroes Act. Thank you for your efforts and support of the Commander's Action Network.

Take Action



VA Receives \$25 Million Donation to Provide Genetic Testing for Veterans

A billionaire philanthropist has donated \$25 million to the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide genetic tests for veterans to help tailor their medical treatments and medications. The VA and Denny Sanford, a South Dakota banker and Air Force Reserve veteran, announced the gift March 12. The money is expected to help up to 250,000 veterans through 2022, starting with those who have received a cancer diagnosis. According to Sanford Health, the hospital system named for Sanford after he donated \$400 million in 2007, the gift will fund the testing program, called Pharmacogenomics Action for Cancer Survivorship, or PHASeR. It aims to use a veteran's DNA to determine personalized treatment and reduce costly adverse drug reactions. Dr. Deepak Voora, with the Duke University School of Medicine's Center for Applied Genomics and Precision Medicine, will oversee the program; a pilot is expected to launch at the Durham, N.C., VA Health System later this year. Read more about the program [here](#).



**CONTACT YOUR
MEMBERS OF CONGRESS!**

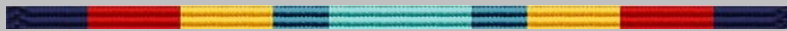
To Call your Representative:
202-225-2305

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

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

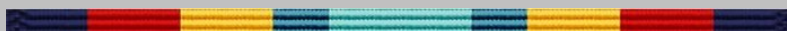
TOLL FREE: 866-272-6622

PLEASE... STOP Making Excuses!
www.veterans-for-change.org



**DOD Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense
Authorization Budget request**

On Tuesday, Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick M. Shanahan and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph F. Dunford testified before the House Committee on Armed Services. The hearing focused on the Department of Defense (DOD) Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Budget request for the FY2020 National Defense Authorization Act. The president's budget request for overall defense is \$750 billion for the FY2020, a \$34 billion increase from FY2019. The request focuses on military modernization, which the military has been unable to achieve for the past three decades. Acting Secretary Shanahan stated that both China and Russia are aggressively modernizing their militaries, especially in the space and cyber domains, to erode U.S. global hegemony, a "central problem" for DOD. In light of this, the budget will invest heavily in prioritizing innovation and modernization to strengthen competitiveness across all domains —air, sea, land, space, and cyber. \$57.7 billion will go to procurement and modernization for U.S. fighters, \$14.1 billion to space, \$9.6 billion to offensive and defensive cyberspace operations, \$2.6 billion to improving and expanding cyber operations training, \$14.6 billion to fund roughly 6,400 combat and tactical vehicles, and \$14 billion to nuclear capabilities. [Read the testimony](#) or [watch the hearing](#).



Vietnam Veterans Can Get Free Commemorative Pin at Base Exchanges

For the second year in a row, the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) will honor Vietnam veterans on National Vietnam War Veterans Day, March 29. In partnership with The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration, AAFES will give away a free [Vietnam Veteran Lapel Pin](#) to everyone who served on active duty during the period from Nov. 1, 1955, to May 15, 1975. Along with the pin giveaway, many exchanges will be conducting ceremonies with local organizations. For more information on the times of the ceremonies at local exchanges, visit the [exchange website](#). If you can't get to the exchange for a lapel pin March 29, you can [visit this site](#) to find an event or commemorative partner in your local area. Read more about the pins [here](#).





AMERICAN SOLDIERS

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



Bill Introduced to Stop Veterans from Being Punished for VA's Miscalculations

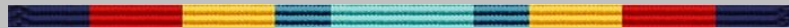
Last week, Senators Tester (D-Mont.), Boozman (R-Ark.), and Brown (D-Ohio), introduced the VFW-supported Veterans Debt Fairness Act, which would reduce VA overpayment errors and require VA to hold itself — not veterans — accountable for its mistakes.

[Learn more](#) or [read the bill](#).



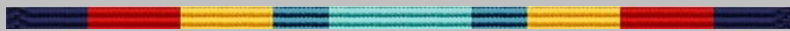
Bill Would Require DoD to Pay for Combat Troops to Freeze Sperm, Eggs

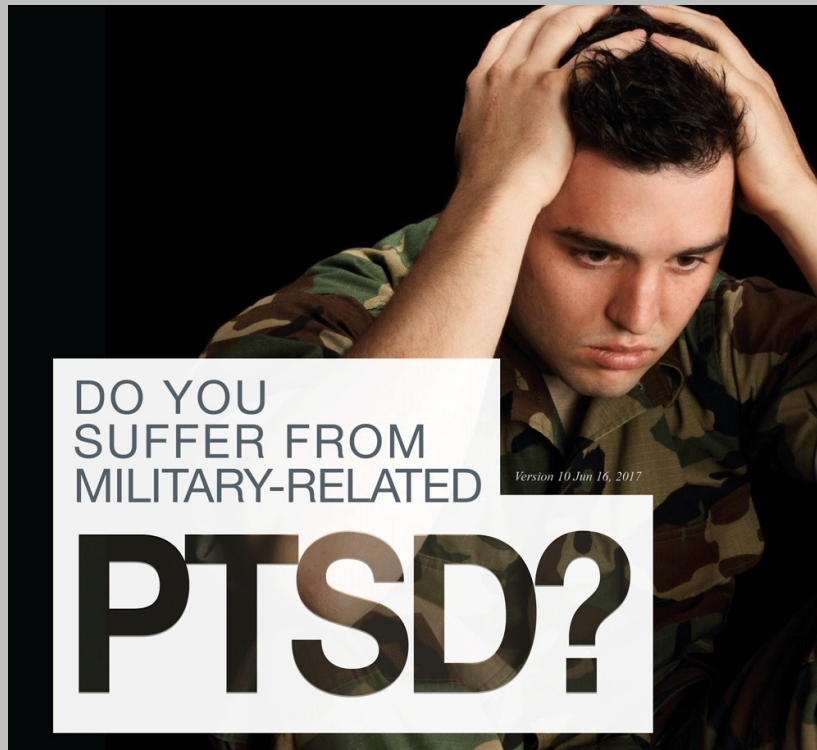
A new bill would give troops with infertility related to their military service greater access to advanced reproductive treatments, including up to three completed cycles of in vitro fertilization, or IVF, and cryopreservation of eggs and sperm for those heading to a combat zone. It would require the Defense Department to provide treatments, such as IVF and access to egg and sperm donation services, as well as use of surrogates to wounded, ill or injured service members whose infertility is related to military service. If approved, the legislation would revive an initiative announced in 2016 by former Defense Secretary Ash Carter, who included cryopreservation of gametes in a series of personnel initiatives known as the "Force of the Future." Read more about the proposal [here](#).



Armed Forces Retirement Home Accepting Applicants

The Armed Forces Retirement Home is accepting applications for residents at its two locations in Gulfport, Mississippi, and Washington, D.C. Applications are being accepted from veterans with at least half of their service as an enlisted member, warrant officer or limited-duty officer, and those who meet one of the following criteria: at least 60 years of age or older with an honorable discharge; retirees with 20 years of service or more; service-connected disability; served in a war zone or received hostile-fire pay and have injuries, disease or a disability. The 2019 rate for independent living is 46.7 percent of the resident's gross monthly income or \$1,990, whichever is less. Learn more [here](#).





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



**S. 179/H.R. 712, Legislation Calling for
Clinical Trials to Evaluate the
Effectiveness of Medical Cannabis for
Chronic Pain and PTSD**

These companion bills, S. 179 and H.R. 712, would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to carry out a clinical trial of the effects of cannabis on health outcomes of adults with chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

These measures would require the VA Secretary to conduct clinical trials that look into whether cannabis is able to reduce symptoms associated with chronic pain such as inflammation, sleep disorders, spasticity, and agitation and effects on the use or dosage of opioids, benzodiazepines or alcohol for veterans with PTSD.

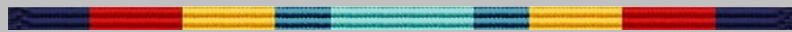
Research is necessary to determine the safety and efficacy of any drug. At this time there are few definitive answers about risks and benefits associated with the use of cannabis on various medical conditions and illnesses. Research is necessary to help clinicians better understand the safety and efficacy of cannabis use for certain conditions common in the veteran population such as chronic pain and posttraumatic stress.

These bills are in line with DAV Resolution No. 023 which calls for comprehensive and scientifically rigorous research by the VA into the therapeutic benefits and risks of cannabis, cannabis-derived products as a possible treatment for service-connected

disabled veterans.

Thank you for your support of our nation's ill and injured veterans. Please use the letters below to ask your elected officials to support S. 179/H.R. 712.

Take Action



National Vietnam War Veterans Day

Today is National Vietnam War Veterans Day, a day to salute more than 8.7 million servicemen and women who served during the Vietnam era, the 3.4 million who served in-theater, and to recognize and remember the 58,000 who paid the ultimate price and the 1,589 who remain missing and unaccounted-for. In a nation where less than one percent of the population wears the uniform and less than seven percent has ever worn the uniform, today, like every day, is a great opportunity to say “Welcome home” and “Thank you for your service.”





**Our values
match yours.**



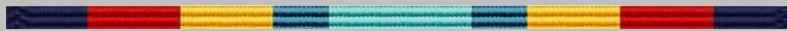
www.veterans-for-change.org

Tricare Adds Coverage for Human Breast Milk

For the first time ever, [Tricare](#) is covering the purchase of human breast milk from an accredited milk bank, according to a policy update released March 18. The new coverage, which is retroactive to Jan. 1, could save mothers of premature or sick infants thousands of dollars if their baby requires breast milk but they are unable to provide it. Since the maximum Tricare will pay a bank per ounce for milk is \$4.50, according to the policy, that means no beneficiary will pay more than about \$1.12 per ounce, while many will pay nothing, depending on their cost share. Read more about the new coverage [here](#).

Coast Guard Eyes Changes to Physical Standards, Tattoo Policy to Retain Troops

A week before releasing results of a study on retaining women in the [Coast Guard](#), the service's top leaders said they will institute a policy to better support families during parental leave and are considering changing weight standards they say disproportionately affect women. Officials also said the service plans to study minority retention in order to grow — and keep — diversity in the ranks. It also is examining its tattoo restrictions, policies that prevent single parents from enlisting and physical standards based on body mass index that limit recruitment and retention. Read more about the changes [here](#).



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



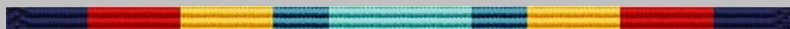
Rates Are Rising: Use Your \$0 Down VA Loan Benefit Now

Don't waste your earned benefit. Now is the time to lock in your low rate, plus you don't need a large down payment. [Find lenders now.](#)



Army SSG Receives Posthumous Medal of Honor

On Wednesday, President Trump presented the Medal of Honor posthumously to the son of Army Staff Sgt. Travis Atkins, of Bozeman, Mont., who was killed in action southwest of Baghdad after using his body to shield three other soldiers from a suicide bomber on June 1, 2007. Watch video of the White House ceremony [here](#).





We will always be our
Brothers Keeper!



McConville Picked to Lead Army

The president this week nominated Army Gen. James McConville to become the service's next chief of staff. Once confirmed by the Senate, he will replace Army Gen. Mark Milley, who President Trump announced was his choice to become the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff when Marine Gen. Joseph Dunford retires sometime this year. McConville has served as the Army vice chief of staff since June 2017. The 59-year-old from Quincy, Mass., is a 1981 graduate of West Point, who spent much of his career in Army aviation flying the AH-64 Apache, OH-58 Kiowa Warrior and the AH-1 Cobra. The general has commanded troops in both Iraq and Afghanistan, to include the 101st Airborne Division in Afghanistan, and earlier, the 4th Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, in Iraq. Prior to his current assignment he was the Army deputy chief of staff for personnel. Read more [here](#).



Soldiers Re-Enact Bataan Death March

Soldiers and civilians at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, marked the anniversary of World War II's 1942 Bataan Death March with a desert walk involving nearly 9,000 participants. To start the memorial trek, troops heard from three survivors of the historic march: Valdemar De Herrera, Paul Kerchum and Ben Skardon. Then, they sounded a symbolic roll call, according to a recent release. The marchers traveled from all 50 states and 12 countries. The event honored the 750,000 U.S. and Filipino troops who were marched brutally for days through Philippine jungles to prison camps after the U.S. surrendered the Bataan Peninsula to the Japanese during the war. Read more at [Army.mil](https://www.army.mil).



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.

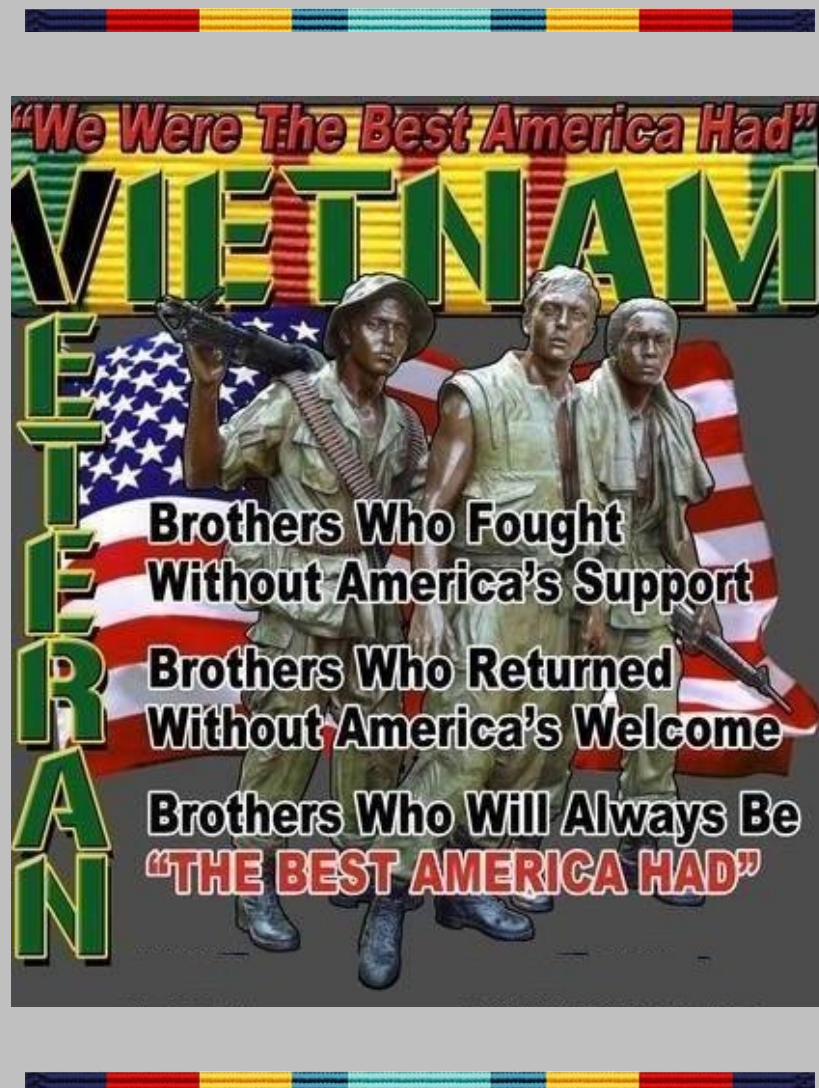
Upon the retiree's death, the SBP annuity is paid monthly to eligible beneficiaries; however, if a surviving spouse is also entitled to DIC, the SBP benefit is reduced by the amount of the DIC benefit (currently \$1,283.11 per month). In general, when DIC benefits are payable but the monthly rate is 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. [Air Force Chief of Staff: To Our Adversaries, It Sucks to Be You](#)
2. [Beloved 97-year-old Veteran working at grocery store says he's not retiring anytime soon](#)
3. [Birth defect numbers in children of Vietnam Veterans alarm experts](#)
4. [Call for volunteers to help renovate future apartments for homeless Veterans](#)
5. [Companies should honor military service beyond Veterans Day](#)
6. [Congressmen urge FBI to investigate bots targeting Veterans with fake news](#)
7. [Different paths can lead to moral injury following military trauma](#)
8. [Dr. Ileana Howard and her "very important mission"](#)
9. [Extending Benefits for Veterans](#)
10. [Final salute offered to military Veterans at Sacred Heart](#)

11. Five things to know about Bayer and Monsanto
12. House bill strengthens Burn Pit Registry
13. It's Very Real, and Very Deadly
14. Local Veteran aims to break burpee record to help fight PTSD
15. Long time coming: Vietnam Vets get their due, though some say too late
16. Military Space-A Available for Veterans
17. More soil testing to be done in the Riverside Park area of Wausau
18. More than 800 Veterans receive direct access at Montgomery Veterans Experience Action Center
19. New Agent Orange bill introduced
20. On eve of joint conference in August, DOD and VA issue call for strategies to prevent suicide
21. Pentagon Pushes for Weaker Standards on Chemicals Contaminating Drinking Water
22. Precision health initiative brings genetic testing to Veterans
23. Remains of Ohio Soldier Killed in Korean War Identified
24. Retiring judge calls VA appeals system a 'tragedy'
25. Secretary Wilkie announces groundbreaking partnership between VA and Sanford Health
26. Should Veterans have to pay for VA's benefits errors?
27. Statement by Secretary Robert Wilkie on President Trump's FY 2020 budget request

28. [The VA Is Privatizing Veterans' Health Care While Launching a Campaign to Deny It](#)
29. [This Generation's Agent Orange: Soldiers Exposed to Burn Pits Face Health Risks](#)
30. [Transgender Veteran clashes with Shreveport VA over medical records](#)
31. [Types of Dementia](#)
32. [VA continues to pioneer new approaches for treating Veteran mental health conditions](#)
33. [VA on path to cure 100,000 Veterans of hepatitis C](#)
34. [VA Receives \\$25 Million Donation to Provide Genetic Testing for Veterans](#)
35. [VA releases health care inspection reports and staffing data for more than 100 Community Living Centers](#)
36. [VA system lauded at town hall: Vietnam Veterans recognized in ceremony](#)
37. [VA to make new nasal spray drug available for treatment-resistant depression](#)
38. [VA's Private Care Program Headed for Tech Trouble, Review Finds](#)
39. [Veteran copes with PTSD through photography](#)
40. [Veterans court may be collateral damage in immigration fight](#)
41. [Veterans Demand Congress End the Forever Wars](#)
42. [Veterans groups appeal to Trump over benefits for Blue Water Navy Veterans](#)
43. ['What Does War Do To An Entire Person?' — VA](#)

Studies Veterans With Blast Injuries

44. Women Veterans coming together to share stories of their service

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



Berger Picked to Lead Marine Corps

The president this week also nominated Lt. Gen. David Berger to be the next commandant of the Marine Corps, as well as promotion to the rank of general. If confirmed, he will replace Gen. Robert Neller, who is set to retire after leading the Corps since 2015. Berger, 59, of Woodbine, Md., was commissioned in 1981 as an infantry officer after graduating from Tulane University in New Orleans. He was a battalion operations officer with 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion during Operation Desert Storm, commanded Regimental Combat Team 8 during Operation Iraqi Freedom, and was the commanding general of 1st Marine Division during Operation Enduring Freedom. Berger has been the commanding general of Marine Corps Combat Development Command and the Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration since August. Prior to his current assignment, Berger commanded I Marine Expeditionary Force and U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific. Read more [here](#).



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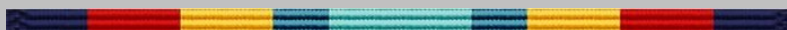


**Support SBP/DIC Offset Repeal (S.
622/H.R. 553)!**

Sen. Doug Jones (AL) has introduced legislation (S. 622) that repeals the SBP/DIC offset for survivors, sometimes referred to as the "military widows tax." Earlier, Rep. Joe Wilson (SC) introduced similar legislation in the House, the "Military Surviving Spouses Equity Act" (H.R. 553).

SBP and DIC payments are paid for different reasons. The Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) is purchased by the retiree and is intended to provide a portion of retired pay to the survivor. Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is a special indemnity compensation paid to the survivor when a member's service causes his or her premature death. In such cases, the VA DIC should be added to the SBP the retiree paid for, not substituted for it. It should be noted as a matter of equity that surviving spouses of federal civilian retirees who are disabled veterans and die of military-service-connected causes can receive DIC without losing any of their federal civilian SBP benefits.

TAKE ACTION





Eliminate 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.](#)



TRICARE Fee Increases in 2019?

The FRA is thankful that the Administration's proposed FY2020 budget recently submitted to Congress does not include any TRICARE fee increases.

Unfortunately, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) submitted a report to Congress in December recommending various TRICARE fee increases and other benefit cuts for military retirees and active duty military. Concern in Congress about the growing annual spending deficit for the current and upcoming fiscal years is increasing and legislators may consider these drastic cuts to reduce the deficit. Some of the

many recommendations in the report include:

- A new TRICARE-For-Life (TFL) annual enrollment fee of \$485 for individual coverage and \$970 for family coverage, and increased cost-shares
- Increasing TRICARE Prime and Select enrollment fees beyond the current annual CPI increase
- Reduce active duty BAH to 80 percent of actual cost
- Limit active duty annual pay increases
- Eliminate VA's Individual Unemployability payments to disabled veterans at the full retirement age for Social Security

Members can tell their legislators NOT to reduce the deficit on the backs of our active duty military, veterans, retirees and their families by going to the [FRA Action Center](#) and scroll down to Don't Enact CBO Proposed Budget Cuts! campaign listed on the Center.



Office of Inspector General

1. Better Monitoring of Block Grant Funds Is Needed
2. CMS Should Assess Documentation Necessary to Identify Improper Payments
3. Federal Insurance and Other Activities That Transfer Risk or Losses to the Government
4. Fiscal Year 2018 Obligations of Operation and Maintenance Funding for Overseas Contingency Operations
5. Most Households Approaching Retirement Have Low Savings, an Update
6. Range of Consumer Risks Highlights Limitations of Identity Theft Services
7. Strategic Human Capital Management is Needed to Address Serious Risks to IRS's Mission



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



TRICARE Beneficiary Bulletin #495

Listen to this week's podcast to hear about:

- April 4 TRICARE Webinar "Ask TRICARE"
- Brain Injury Awareness Month
- Provider Types

Visit the Multimedia Center for this podcast and previous podcasts at www.tricare.mil/podcasts.



1. [Ata Int. Inc. Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of BLUEFUSION Capsules, due to presence of Undeclared Sildenafil, Tadalafil, Desmethyl carbodenafil, Dithiodesmethyl carbodenafil, Scutellarin and Daidzein](#)
2. [Better Made Snack Foods Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Milk In 10 Ounce \\$3.99 Original Potato Chips](#)
3. [Blood pressure medication recalled after possible cancer causing impurity detected, says FDA](#)
4. [Cook Medical Inc. Recalls Transseptal Needle Due to Risk of Detached Plastic Fragments](#)
5. [Cybersecurity Vulnerabilities Affecting Medtronic Implantable Cardiac Devices, Programmable, and Home Monitors: FDA Safety Communication](#)

6. Drug Recalls
7. FDA Warning Issued for Investigational Venetoclax Use in Myeloma Trials
8. FDA Warns about the risks associated with the investigational use of Venclexta in Multiple Myeloma
9. Food Recall Alerts
10. Hill's Pet Nutrition Expands Voluntary Recall of Select Canned Dog Food for Elevated Vitamin D
11. Hospira, Inc. Issues a Voluntary Nationwide Recall of 8.4% Sodium Bicarbonate Injection, USP Due to the Presence of Particulate Matter
12. Kingston Pharma, LLC RECALLS " DG™/health NATURALS baby Cough Syrup + Mucus" Because of Possible Health Risk
13. Legacy Pharmaceutical Packaging, LLC Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Losartan Potassium Tablets, USP, 50mg Due to the Detection of Trace Amounts of N-Nitroso N-Methyl 4-amino butyric acid (NMBA) Impurity found in the Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API)
14. Mylan Institutional LLC Initiates Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Levoleucovorin Injection Due to the Presence of Particulate Matter
15. Ripple Effect: Repackaged Losartan Recalled Due to Impurity
16. Snak Club Honey Bliss Nut Mix recalled due to undeclared allergen
17. Stokes Healthcare Inc. Issues Voluntary

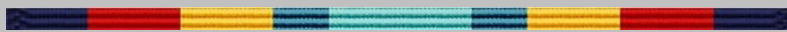
Nationwide Recall of Pilocarpine 0.1% Ophthalmic Solution Due to a High Level of Preservative

18. Surtidoras Bakery Inc. Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Milk in Marble Muffin, Banana Muffin, and Blueberry Muffin

19. UPDATE: Treatment of Peripheral Arterial Disease with Paclitaxel-Coated Balloons and Paclitaxel-Eluting Stents Potentially Associated with Increased Mortality - Letter to Health Care Providers



SURVIVAL IS FUN



Who You See for Care Matters: TRICARE Provider Types

When you need care, you can visit several types of providers. Depending on where your provider is located, you may seek care at a military hospital or clinic or from your TRICARE-authorized provider. When seeking care outside a military hospital or clinic, your ability to choose a provider may depend on your TRICARE plan, whether you need a referral, and the type of care you need. Seeing TRICARE-authorized providers saves you money and ensures quality treatment.

Read the full article [here](#).



H.R. 1200, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2019

On February 13, 2019, Representative Elaine Luria (VA), Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs and Ranking Member Michael Bost (IL),

introduced H.R. 1200, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2019.

This bill, if enacted, would authorize a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for veterans in receipt of compensation and pension, and for survivors of veterans who died from service-incurred disabilities and are in receipt of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC). It would provide a COLA increase by the same percentage as Social Security and would be effective December 1, 2019.

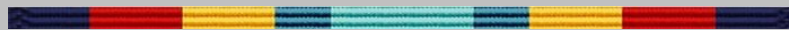
Receipt of annual COLA increments aids injured and ill veterans, their families, and their survivors to help maintain the value of their VA benefits against inflation. Without COLAs, these individuals, who sacrificed their own health and their family life for the good of our nation, may not be able to maintain a quality of life in their elder years. DAV strongly supports H.R. 1200 as it is in accord with DAV Resolution No. 031.

Take Action Today! Please use the prepared electronic letter or draft your own to urge your Representatives to support and co-sponsor H.R. 1200.

As always, we appreciate your support for DAV and your grassroots activism in participating in DAV CAN. Your advocacy helps 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



Tax & Credit Information



1. [Abusive tax shelters, trusts, conservation easements make IRS' 2019 'Dirty Dozen' list of tax scams to avoid](#)
2. [All taxpayers will file using 2018 Form 1040; Forms 1040A and 1040EZ no longer available](#)
3. [As the April tax deadline approaches, the IRS reminds members of the U. S. Armed Forces of special tax breaks, helpful resources](#)
4. [Boxed in the sandwich generation? I can help.](#)
5. [Here's a quick overview of tax reform changes and where taxpayers can find more info](#)
6. [IRS announces arrests and indictments after two-week campaign to fight refund fraud and identity theft](#)
7. [IRS concludes 'Dirty Dozen' list of tax scams for 2019](#)
8. [IRS expands penalty waiver for those whose tax withholding and estimated tax payments fell short in](#)

2018; key threshold lowered to 80 percent

9. IRS has resources to help military personnel and veterans understand taxes
10. IRS issues proposed regulations on new tax reform reporting requirements for life insurance contract transactions; New reporting forms available
11. IRS offers free March 28 webinar: Understanding how to do a 'Paycheck Checkup'
12. IRS revises EIN application process; seeks to enhance security
13. Plug-In Electric Vehicle Manufacturer Crosses 200,000 Sold Threshold; Tax Credit for Eligible Consumers Begins Phase Down on Apr. 1
14. Spread the word about a tax credit that helps millions of Americans
15. Supplemental application period now open for LITC grants
16. Tax reform brought significant changes to itemized deductions
17. Tax Time Guide: Contribute to an IRA by April 15 to claim it on 2018 tax returns
18. Tax Time Guide: Free tax return help available in-person and online
19. Tax Time Guide: Tax help is just a click away on IRS.gov



Bring Your TRICARE Benefit Questions to April 4 Webinar

Have questions about your TRICARE benefit? Here's your chance to get some answers. Join the "Ask TRICARE" webinar on April 4, from 1 to 2 p.m. ET. The Q&A webinar will include a panel of subject matter experts to answer your questions about TRICARE health care, pharmacy, and dental programs. Don't miss this unique opportunity to ask questions directly to TRICARE experts. Register today!

Read the full article [here](#).



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MIA Update

This week the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) 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:

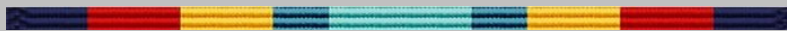
Navy Reserve Journalist 3rd Class Raul A. Guerra was a passenger on board an E-1B Tracer when radar contact with the aircraft was lost just outside of Da Nang. Several days later, wreckage was spotted in the area where contact was lost, but because of the location and very steep terrain, a ground recovery could not be conducted. Guerra and the four other service members on board were declared killed in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about Guerra.](#)

Army Pfc. Herschel M. Riggs was an infantryman with Headquarters Company, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. In July 1950, his unit was involved in combat actions against North Korean forces near Taejon, South Korea. Riggs was declared missing in action on July 16, 1950, when he could not be accounted for by his unit. Interment services are pending. [Read about Riggs.](#)

Army Cpl. Benjamin W. Scott was a member of

Company M, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. In July 1950, his unit was engaged in combat actions against the North Korean forces in the vicinity of Choch'iwon, South Korea, when he was declared missing in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about Scott.](#)

Seaman 2nd Class Calvin H. Palmer and **Seaman 2nd Class Wilferd D. Palmer** 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 crewmembers, including Calvin and Wilferd Palmer. Interment services are pending. [Read about the Palmer brothers.](#)



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Family!



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