



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, January 19, 2020

Volume 11, Issue 03



## **This-N-That**

We have been posting quite a number of legislative action items for a long time now, and we'd been hearing rumors for some time now that DAV was dropping their current system but we never received notice until a Veteran reader told us, so we removed all the old action items and have posted only new items and some are from the DAV's new system, and I've personally checked to make sure they work properly.

For at least two decades now Veterans have been fighting to force the WLA Medical center to honor the gifted deed requirements of the land to make a Veterans Home.

I know I've mentioned it many times, but it's been some time now since I discussed it.

The initial group of Veterans picketed every single Sunday rain or shine without fail, VA police tried to stop them but since it was on public land they couldn't do much, then we had not only the Mayor of Los Angeles, but members of Congress stand right on the property on news promising to take care of homeless Veterans. This was nearly 10 years ago and since, NOTHING happened.

There was a lawsuit brought against the VA for renting out space, land, etc to elitist Brentwood businesses and to the best of my knowledge none of that "rent" money has ever been accounted for, and some if not all of those businesses that by court order were to leave are still there.

In addition there was money budgeted to take care of the Homeless Veterans and yet again

nothing happened!

Now there is a new group, and a "new" plan and again we're looking at another decade before anything is done, if it's done. But there are also rumors that they will be tearing down these buildings which are all historic land marks, and all that really needs to be done to the twelve (12) two story buildings that have been vacant for years is to go in clean out all the asbestos, renovate and make available to Veterans, but will we see this happen? I seriously doubt it.

The VA loves to tout numbers of homeless at 40,000 +/- and that number would just about be all in California.

We used to have volunteers who stayed in touch with various VA Centers that had specific departments to handle/deal with Homeless Veterans, State Health and Human Services as well as various other organizations who were keeping track of homeless, and those numbers combined never wavered very far from the 1.5 million mark nationwide.

We still work with the Homeless Heroes Program we started in Orange County, and they have been doing awesome work and in the past five years they've been able to secure benefits, housing, job training, clothing, and to date 74% that are in the program have already secure jobs, and the remainder are still in job training and/or mental health programs moving forward to being self sufficient members of society.

Then we have Veteran and Military Suicides, which we're hearing the original numbers are increasing at a very alarming rate and now the VA is starting a new program where they're supposed to contact each new Veteran no less than three times in the first year of civilian life.

Makes me wonder how they intend on accomplishing this feat when they're always short staffed, have doctors who are not truly qualified to even touch a human being let alone provide treatment, being terminated and "paid off" I guess to avoid costly law suits for breach of contract, who knows.

We're still asking for help from those who have

experienced MST by telling us your story for two reasons, one is to continue communications with various members in Congress to force legislation to be drafted, presented, voted on and passed to not only help the victim, but to enforce heavy charges against the violator regardless of rank and the second is to assist in writing an article to not only post on the VFC web site, but to also send to various publications to help get the word out to civilians, give them a better understanding, and to educate them.

We're also looking for those who suffer from PTSD to tell us their story as well with the same reasons as noted above.

Confidentiality is a very high priority for us, so no names or contact information would ever be shared with anyone.

We look forward to anyone willing to share, or if you have questions, please do contact me and I will do my level best to answer all question direct and to the point and as quickly as I can.

We're still adding more and more information on

benefits for Veterans at the state level, so if your state hasn't been populated as of yet in either the web links or library please be patient they're coming soon.

And I noted in last weeks newsletter there are still very serious concerns that may have been addressed by Congress or the VA, but addressing issues means absolutely nothing without far reaching and serious action.

- Equality of Benefits being Paid for Identical Claims Coast to Coast
- Equality of Care and Services Provided from VAMC to VAMC
- Homeless Veterans
- Medical Malpractice
- Short staffing of Licensed Nurses, Doctors and Clinicians
- Speed of Appeals Processing
- Speed of Claims Processing
- Un-Caring and Non-Compassionate Support Staff
- Un-qualified Doctors, Nurses and Clinicians
- Veteran Suicide

If you can assist with any of the above noted,  
please do 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](mailto:Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org)



## **Blue Water Navy and the VA**

When: February 1, 2020

Where: Marriott Tampa Westshore Hotel

1001 N. Westshore Blvd.

Tampa Florida 33607

Hotel: Military-Veterans Advocacy has

arranged for guest rooms at

\$135 per night at the Marriott

Tamp Westshore. Price does

not include hospitality or other

taxes. First come first served.

Cost: Attorneys - \$150.00

MVA: Members - \$35.00

Others: - \$75.00

MVA has requested 3.0 hours of Continuing Legal Education credit from the State of Louisiana. For more information please contact John Wells, Director of Litigation at 985-641-1855 or [John.Wells@madvocacy.org](mailto:John.Wells@madvocacy.org). To register click **HERE**.





# Institutional Failures Found at VA Facility After Veteran's Parking Lot Suicide

The Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Health Care System facility where a veteran committed suicide nearly two years ago failed to alert mental health clinicians to the patient's condition, a VA Inspector General report found. Released this month, the IG report was done at the request of then-Rep. Timothy Walz to investigate the care coordination history of the patient who died by suicide. As lawmakers try to solve a crisis where an estimated 20 veterans kill themselves every day, the report reveals key points during the eight days leading up to the unnamed veteran killing himself while a patient in the VA facility. Read more [HERE](#).



Links to Other Stories

1. [Military burial flag found in Stanislaus County; Veterans search for family](#)
2. [Operation Babylift Veterans receive retroactive](#)

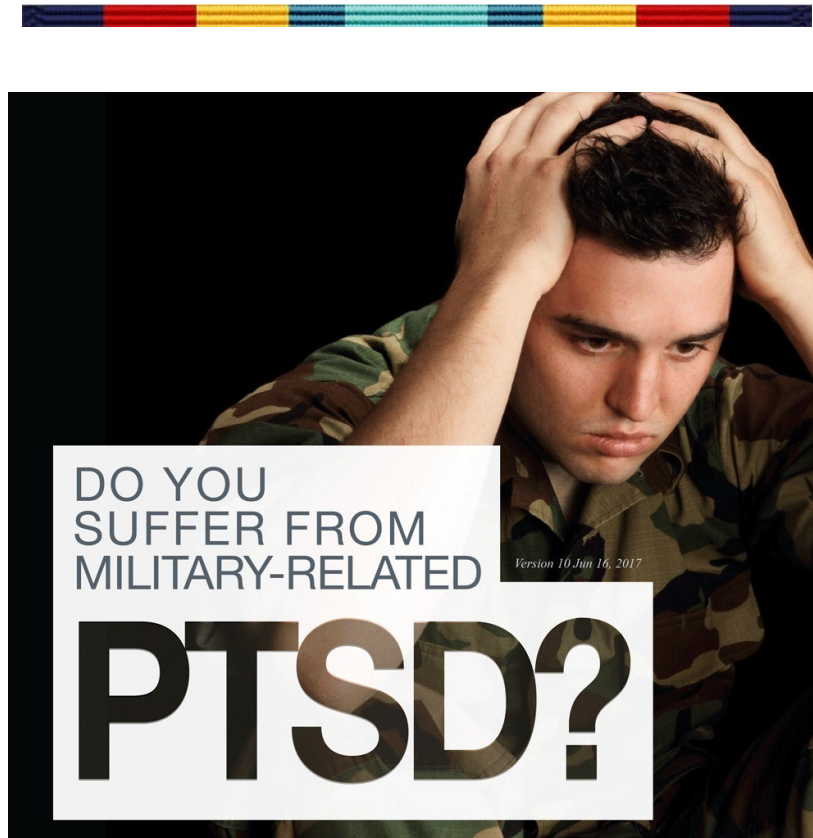
benefits through VA help

3. Senate Passes Bill to Ban VA From Signing Settlements With Doctors Fired for Medical Mistakes
4. California Veteran shoots robbery suspect who pistol-whipped him at market
5. Veterans: An annual physical could save your life
6. US Veteran finds note in mailbox saying his beloved dog was shot dead because she didn't have a leash on
7. Kansas' Moran takes over Veterans' Affairs Committee with focus on suicide prevention
8. Mapping A Hopeful Future For 5.5 Million Us Veteran and Military Caregivers
9. Disabled Veterans eligible for free National Park Service Lifetime Access Pass
10. Patrick Air Force Base gets Space Force designation, which could lead to name change
11. New VA Suicide Prevention Strategy: Talk to Vets 3 Times in First Year Out of Uniform
12. New for 2020: Commissary, exchanges opening up to 4 million more people
13. Painting salutes women Veterans
14. Making it in San Diego: VA loans to have no limits in 2020

15. Veteran lets go of past, possessions, to reclaim life
16. Moran to lead Senate
17. Letter to VA: Veteran gives thanks for life-changing experiences
18. Forget sharing GI Bill benefits — this state could give you and everyone in your family their own GI Bill
19. A Texas man is making canes for veterans using hundreds of donated Christmas trees
20. 7 Important Benefits Veterans' Survivors Should Know
21. Tricare to cover laser treatments for troops with severe shaving bumps
22. DoD answers top 10 questions on expanded commissary, exchange, MWR access
23. The VA — a decade in review
24. Mobile pharmacy agrees to \$1.9 Million settlement in TRICARE fraud case
25. Letter: Will this San Jose measure finally end Veteran homelessness?
26. Foster Homes offer Vets homelike atmosphere
27. How Can Veterans Earn 100% VA Disability Rating?
28. VA 'failed' to pay claims for years, leaving

Veterans without care and facing collections

Check us out today: [www.Veterans-for-change.org](http://www.Veterans-for-change.org)



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

**The FRA Launched Its 2020 Survey  
on Military, Veterans Benefits**

YOU are an important component of FRA's Legislative Team! As part of our mission to fight for the concerns of enlisted personnel on Capitol Hill, the FRA is conducting an online survey to determine which military and veterans' benefits are most important to active duty and reserve personnel, retirees, veterans and their families. The brief [survey is available online](#).

The survey asks current and former members of the uniformed services and their spouses to rate the importance of various benefits and quality-of-life programs associated with their service to our nation.

The FRA shares the results with elected officials on Capitol Hill, key committee staff and with leaders within the Departments of Defense, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs-ensuring these crucial decision-makers understand the enlisted sea service perspective.

Visit the FRA webpage and click "[take the survey](#)" to let us know which military and veteran benefits are most important to you!



## Veterans-For-Change Web Site

The Veterans-For-Change website has been around since 2009. 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 **3,862** hits per day, and downloads average **6,728** per day with a total **5,747,774** 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](http://www.Veterans-for-change.org)

- Documents Library with over **18,424** documents in **171+** Libraries, added 94 documents on-line (Updated: 01/06/20)
- FAQ's on-line with **1,790** FAQ's on **101** topics! (Updated 08/29/19 - 128 NEW)
- 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: **9,361**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **6,616**, Added 294 New Links (Updated: 01/04/20)

If you have a submission for the memorial pages,  
E-Mail: [Jim.Davis@Veterans-for-change.org](mailto:Jim.Davis@Veterans-for-change.org)



## **VFW, SVA Announce 2020 Student Veteran Fellowship Class**

Ten Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) members and Student Veterans of America (SVA) leaders have been selected to participate in the 2020



VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship. The Fellowship is a semester-long academic experience where students submit a policy proposal to address an issue related to student veteran success on campus and beyond, improving veteran's health care and benefits, transitioning from military to civilian life, and challenges for service members and their families. The fellows participate in the VFW's Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., where they have the opportunity to be paired with their VFW state delegation and accompany them on in-person meetings with their members of Congress to advocate for their policy proposal. The 10 student veterans of the 2020 class are:

- Tom Baker, Navy veteran, Arizona State University
- Katherine Cassell, Army retiree, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Carl Chen, Air Force active-duty service member, Trident University International
- Clifton Clevenger, Army veteran, Wayland Baptist University
- Ashley Dent, Air Force veteran, New York Institute of Technology

- Sasha Georgiades, Navy veteran, Hawaii Pacific University
- Blake Hite, Navy veteran, Georgetown University
- Matthew Jenkins, Marine Corps veteran, University of South Florida
- Randy Purham, Army active-duty service member, American Public University
- Jack Ratliff, Army veteran, University of South Florida

“The VFW prides itself on working with our student veterans nationwide to help build tomorrow’s leaders,” said VFW National Commander William “Doc” Schmitz. The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship Program continues the legacy of collaboration between the organizations.

[Learn more.](#)



Below are links to all currently active pre-written E-Mails to many pieces of legislation. We ask that you go to each one, and send the pre-written E-Mails, and to also call your Reps or Senators and ask for their support on a weekly basis!

You don't need to be Active Duty or a Veteran, in fact we ask all Veteran friends to also help!

1. [Allow Active Duty to Sue Military for Medical Malpractice \(H.R. 2422\)](#)
2. [Urge Congress to Pass the Retired Pay Restoration Act](#)
3. [Protect Bankrupt Disabled Veterans from Losing Benefits](#)
4. [S. 2966, the Rural Veterans Travel Enhancement Act of 2019](#)
5. [S. 1003, VET OPP Act to Reform VA Employment Programs](#)
6. [H.R. 4574 - Pass the Veterans' Right to Breathe Act Now!](#)



**Senator Moran Named SVAC  
Chairman**

On Tuesday, Senate Republicans officially named Kansas Senator Jerry Moran as the new chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, putting him in line to be a pivotal figure in veteran policy in the months ahead. The move was anticipated for months, since former chairman Sen. Johnny Isakson, (R-Ga.), announced his retirement in late summer. Moran was considered the likely replacement, but no formal action was taken until after Isakson stepped down from his Senate seat at the end of December. "The VFW looks forward to working alongside Sen. Moran as we continue to fight for legislation that matters most to our veterans and their families," said VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz.

[Read more.](#)



## **Veterans Group Sues Military Leaders, Claiming Benefits Decision Delays**

The military has failed to meet deadlines set by Congress for rulings on veterans' requests to correct records blocking them from receiving benefits, according to a federal class-action lawsuit filed last month. The suit brought by the National Veterans Legal Services Program (NVLSP) charges that delays in processing the requests by the Boards for Correction of Military Records of the service branches amount to a denial of the due process rights of thousands of veterans. Read more [here](#).



## Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Veteran Internship Program Recruitment

# HIRING INFORMATION SESSION

- ✦ The Veterans' Internship Program provides paid internships for qualified Veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States. The internships afford Veterans with on-the-job training and work experience that will enable them to effectively compete for permanent County positions.
- ✦ Depending on the job, Veterans can be hired for a 12 to 24 month on-the-job training program in the specialties below.
- ✦ Senior Community Health Worker (HS Diploma) | Medical Case Worker (Bach. Degree) | Psychiatric Social Worker (MSW or MFT) | Intermediate Typist Clerk (Entry Level)

#### WHAT TO BRING

- ✦ Copies Of Resume
- ✦ Copies Of ID Or Driver's License
- ✦ DD 214

#### WHAT TO WEAR

- ✦ Business Casual Attire

February 11, 2020

10am - 12pm

11301 Wilshire Blvd. Bldg. 257,

Room 227 Los Angeles, CA 90073



VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System  
Veterans Community Employee Development  
(VCED)

\* Parking Lot 49 available for attendees



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



~~ Follow us on MEWE ~~

Follow us on [MEWE](#)! The support staff at [MEWE](#) is responsive, open to suggestions and works very hard to protect your personal information.

We hope you will join us on this new site.

**VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE**

**HOMELESS HEROES PROGRAM OF  
VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE**

**AMVETS GROUP**

**VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP**

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

**AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY**





## **Listen to New TRICARE Beneficiary Bulletin Podcast #536**

Listen to this latest podcast to hear about:

- Key Features of TRICARE
- Disaster Preparedness and Alerts
- Preventive Health Care Services

Visit the [Multimedia Center](#) for this podcast and previous podcasts.



## **The FRA Weighs in on ANC Burial Restrictions**



The FRA recently surveyed its members regarding proposed changes to eligibility criteria for burial at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) that will include military retirees for above-ground inurnment. The survey was done in response to numerous calls from members who are upset about the changes. The FRA will share these survey results with the ANC, and key legislators. The results are as follows:

**Should FRA oppose a regulation that prohibits in ground burial for retirees with no combat experience?**

**YES: 54% NO: 28% Undecided/Unsure/Don't care: 18%**

Many retirees believe that twenty or more years of arduous military service has earned them the option to be provided an in-ground burial at ANC. Members can use the [FRA Action Center](#) to weigh in on this issue.





## **‘You’ve been selected for the military draft’ Text Messages Are Fake**

Don't fall for any text messages saying you've been selected for a military draft, U.S. Army Recruiting Command warned in an urgent news release Tuesday. Fraudulent texts were sent throughout the country this week informing individuals that they have been selected for a military draft, the command said. The phony messages come amid heightened tensions with Iran and after the emergency deployment of 3,500 paratroopers to Kuwait. "If you receive a text message informing you of your selection for the draft, please ignore it," said VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz. [Read more.](#)



# Firefighting Foam in Water Near Bases Gets Congressional Attention

Most of us who have been in the military have either heard of or used firefighting foam. It is commonly known as either Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) or perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). While you may remember the odor of AFFF and know that it will put out burning jet fuel, you may not know how hazardous it is in its own right. In fact, it's so bad that more than 180 countries have banned its production and use except in emergencies. Read more [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](http://www.veterans-for-change.org)



## **Jobs At T-Mobile -- A Top Military Employer**

The values you applied in service to your country - respect, integrity and loyalty -- are values T-Mobile embraces. T-Mobile is dedicating efforts to hire veterans the right way. [Search jobs now.](#)



## **Army Secretary Calls for Slowdown of Military Health Care Merger**

Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy raised concerns Jan. 15 over the speed with which the services' clinics and hospitals are transitioning to the Defense Health Agency's management. The timeline to consolidate the services' medical treatment facilities under the Tricare managing agency was shortened last year from four years to three. McCarthy told reporters in a Defense Writers Group that this change, meant to let the services focus on delivering care and maintaining military readiness, might be happening too quickly. Read more [HERE](#).



## **VFW Shares Women Veterans' Concerns with House**

On Wednesday, VFW NVS Veterans Casework Consultant for Health, Meggan Thomas, participated in the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (HVAC) Women Veterans Task Force Roundtable. The roundtable was comprised of veteran organizations to include the VFW, and members of Congress. It was led by HVAC Subcommittee Chair Rep. Julia Brownley (D-Calif.), who also chairs the Task Force. The Task Force raises visibility on issues affecting women veterans and solicits input and solutions from VSOs. This meeting focused on health care, particularly the availability of and access to reproductive health services through VA. The VFW shared the need for parity in contraceptive benefits with other commercial and government-sponsored health care programs and plans, as well as the need for a more inclusive benefit for in-vitro fertilization (IVF). Currently, VA will cover limited IVF services for men and women, but only if donors have their own sperm and eggs. With the prevalence of urino-genital injuries from the

Global War on Terror, this option is not always available and the VFW believes that VA should consider all the factors that affect a veteran's need for IVF. The VFW also advocates that VA must cover the partners involved in IVF, not just services for the veterans eligible for VA care. The VFW also highlighted the need for coordination of services and ways to provide the best care possible to the growing number of women veterans eligible for VA care.



Meet veteran-friendly companies  
looking to hire qualified veterans  
like you at our...

**Thursday**  
**January 30th**

10:00AM-2:00PM



**Military Veterans**  
RESOURCE CENTER

**Hope Hotel & Richard C. Holbrooke  
Conference Center**

10823 Chidlaw Road  
Wright-Patterson AFB, OH 45433

**Located at: Wright Patterson Air Force Base,  
Bldg 823, Area A - Gate 12A**

**Spouses Welcome!**

- ★ Dress for Success
- ★ Bring copies of your resume
- ★ Be prepared to talk to employers


**For more information, contact:**

Kelley Koons  
937-329-9559  
kelley.koons@milvetsrc.org

**Start the new year with a new career!  
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to transparency, accountability and financial integrity.*



## **House Passes Joint Resolution to Start Pilot Program for Veteran Dental Care**

The House suspended the rules and passed H.J. Res.80, sponsored by House Veterans Affairs Committee Ranking Member Rep. Phil Roe (Tenn.), to approve a request from the Department of Veterans Affairs to pursue a pilot

program that increases veteran access to dental care. Currently, only eight percent of veterans have dental coverage from the VA for service-connected dental problems. The measure now goes to the Senate for further consideration. H.J. Res. 80 would approve the request.

Section 152 of the FRA-supported MISSION Act created a VA Center for Innovation for Care and Payment to test new payment and service delivery models that could increase the quality of care for the veterans while reducing taxpayer spending. The law requires the VA to submit a report to Congress requesting the waiver of any such authorities necessary for carrying out an innovative pilot program and requires that Congress pass a Joint Resolution approving the VA's request. The program will be limited to five years and must obtain appropriations funding.

On Dec. 6, 2019, the VA submitted a request to Congress asking to pursue the pilot program to increase access to dental care for veterans. They entered into arrangements with community dentists who agreed to provide free or discounted services to veterans who are enrolled in the VA



healthcare system but are not eligible for VA-provided dental care. The request would allow administrative staff in VA medical facilities to educate veterans about their options in the community and to coordinate the dental care, as needed. Oral health is an important component of overall health. Connecting veterans, who cannot get dental care in VA facilities, with free or low-cost dental care would allow veterans to live better, healthier lives.





## VeTERANS' TRANSITIONAL SERVICES WORKSHOP

**NOTE:** This workshop is also open to Spouses and Dependents of those who have served in the military.

**Workshop is held the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last  
Friday of each Month (2020)**

**0900 hrs – 1230 hrs**

- > *Employment*
- > *Veteran Services*
- > *Education*

*AJCC / Employment Connection*  
 4025 W. Noble Ave., Suite B  
 Visalia, CA 93277  
 (559) 713-5150 or (559) 713-5000



### **DATES**

1/24/2020  
 2/21/2020  
 3/20/2020  
 4/17/2020  
 5/22/2020  
 6/19/2020



### **DATES**

7/24/2020  
 8/21/2020  
 9/18/2020  
 10/23/2020  
 11/20/2020  
 12/18/2020

*\*Dates may be subject to change*

Veteran's representatives are available to work exclusively with Veterans and provide information in areas such as employment and career development, goal setting, skills analysis, transferrable skills, resume formats and preparation, interview skills and techniques, and a variety of other local Veteran related resources.

In addition to assisting Veterans in preparing for their job search, we can assist you in exploring the local labor market, contact employers on your behalf, and a variety of employment and career development services designed specifically to meet your needs.

**Be on time, bring pen/pencil, bring resumes, and dress appropriately for possible job referral(s) as we will have employment and schooling presenters attending.**

Twitter: @VeTSVisalia

Website: [www.caljobs.ca.gov](http://www.caljobs.ca.gov)  
 Additional site: <http://bit.ly/1uZNErf>

America's **JobCenter**  
of California™

Form VeTSWS 3.30 (Rev.1)



# Potentially Dangerous Amounts of Opioids Issued at Some Military Hospitals

Some U.S. military hospitals overprescribed opioids to patients with chronic pain from 2015 to 2017, a dangerous practice that put them at risk for addiction and overdose, according to the Department of Defense Inspector General's Office. "In light of this DOD IG report and the opioid epidemic this country is suffering from, the VFW is extremely upset to find that our very own military treatment facilities were complicit in the opioid crisis," said VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz. "This is intolerable and accountability must be at the forefront. We demand answers on this matter." [Read more.](#)



**VA Now Processing Blue Water Navy  
Claims**

On Jan. 1, VA began processing claims under the VFW-championed Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019. The act restores VA benefits to thousands of Blue Water Navy Vietnam veterans who had their disability benefits taken away in 2002 after arbitrary regulatory changes. It benefits veterans exposed to Agent Orange while serving along the Korean DMZ with an earlier start date to encompass the timeframe when various defoliants were tested — to Sept. 1, 1967, instead of April 1, 1968 — and expands benefits to children born with spina bifida due to a parent's exposure in Thailand, coverage that already exists for the children of Vietnam and Korean DMZ veterans. [Learn more.](#)



## **House Passes Bill to Expand Veteran Homeless Programs**

This week, the House overwhelmingly passed the VFW-supported Veteran HOUSE Act of 2020. This bill would expand eligibility for the Department of Housing and Urban Development-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program to veterans discharged under other-than-honorable (OTH) conditions. Veterans with OTH discharges make up only 3% of the veteran population, but they compose 15% of the homeless veteran population. The bill was introduced by Rep. Scott Peters (D-Calif.) who is working to get more veterans off the streets, “Expanding housing assistance and services to these men and women would allow homeless veterans who have slipped through the cracks access the support they have earned through their service to our country,” said Peters. The HUD-VASH program is an incredibly valuable tool for veterans who are in need of stable housing. [Learn more.](#)





**New Commissary Shoppers Unable  
to Access Online Features,  
American Forces Travel**

Veterans and caregivers newly eligible to shop at commissaries have been unable to use the MyCommissary portal to register for benefits since Jan. 1, a Defense Commissary Agency spokesman said via email Jan. 16. American Forces Travel (AFT), the official Morale, Welfare and Recreation travel site, is experiencing similar issues with online accounts for the new patrons, it announced via Facebook earlier this month. Read more [HERE](#).



## **Military Housing Crisis**

On Tuesday, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Criminal Investigation Division raided the Tinker Air Force Base offices of Balfour Beatty Communities in connection with suspected EPA violations. The raid was the result of a subpoena on behalf of the EPA in connection with the removal of asbestos flooring in September of 2019. Last fall, Balfour Beatty received a stern warning in a letter from the Air Force indicating if "prompt and substantial improvement" is not noted, formal action against the company will

begin. [Read more](#). In a related matter, Navy Admiral Charles A. Williams (Ret.), who has 40 years of real estate experience and who has been nominated to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations, and Environment told lawmakers during his confirmation hearing that he is “livid” about the housing conditions of some sailors and their families. Williams said, if confirmed, his first priority will be to tackle problems with Navy privatized housing. He stated during his [confirmation hearing](#) that, although he “needs to study the issue more ... I’ll lay out a plan in fairly short order.”







## House Holds Hearing on Veteran Hunger

On Thursday, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a hearing on the issue of veterans facing food insecurity. Far too many veterans are food insecure and cannot utilize some of the assistance programs offered through different government agencies. At the hearing Chairman Mike Levin (D-Calif.) stated, "We set the highest expectations of our military to serve our country and we need to set equally high expectations of ourselves to serve them. We shouldn't be allowing a single veteran in need to go hungry, ever." The VFW is glad to see Congress is highlighting this important issue and hopes their attention will help bring an end to this veteran issue. If you, or veterans you know are facing this issue and need help combating food insecurity there are programs available to help. Learn more about the [VFW's Unmet Needs Program](#) and [USDA's Food Assistance Programs](#).





## House Approves VA Dental Pilot Program

On Monday, the House approved [H. J. Res. 80](#), which would provide congressional approval of the VA Innovation Center's programs to expand access to dental care through pro bono services at community dental clinics. This legislation is now being considered in the Senate. [Learn more.](#)



## IRS Free File Offers Free Tax Prep Options for Military Personnel

The Internal Revenue Service wants active duty military personnel to know that IRS Free File offers them multiple options for free federal tax preparation.

Free File is for individuals or families whose

adjusted gross income was \$69,000 or less in 2019. Free File is a private-public partnership between the IRS and the Free File Inc.

"The IRS takes special steps to help military members and their families with their taxes, and the Free File program is part of that effort," said IRS Commissioner Chuck Rettig. "Almost 10% of the IRS workforce are veterans. We greatly appreciate the service to the nation of every veteran and their supportive families, and we will do all we can to assist them."

For active duty military and their spouses, Free File has a special offer. Individuals and their families who meet the income limitation may choose from nine companies, without regard to additional eligibility requirements.

The nine special offers are from P: 1040Now, Inc.; FileYourTaxes.com; Free tax Returns.com; H&R Block; On-Line Taxes, Inc.; Tax ACT; TaxHawk, Inc.; TaxSlayer (English and Spanish) and TurboTax.

Active duty military who are stationed in combat

zones, have more time to file their tax returns. However, those with spouses and families may opt to file as soon as they can to claim various tax benefits for which they may be eligible. If only one spouse is present to file a joint return, they must have proper authorization to file a joint tax return on behalf of their spouse.

The IRS will begin processing tax returns on January 27. With Free File, you can use any digital device, personal computer, tablet or smart phone. Free File products are mobile enabled so you can do your taxes on your smart phone or tablet and e-file with your mobile device.

Here is how Free File works:

1. Go [online](#) to see all Free File options.
2. Military personnel who meet the income requirement can select from any of the nine providers that have "Free for Active Military for Adjusted Gross Income of \$69,000 or less" in their offer. Nine of the 10 partners are making the offer. One product is in Spanish.
3. Select a provider and follow the links to their web page to begin your tax return.

4. Complete and e-file your tax return only if you have all the income and deduction records you need. The fastest way to get a refund is by filing electronically and selecting direct deposit. If you owe, use direct pay or electronic options.

Generally, each Free File partner sets additional eligibility requirements that civilian taxpayers must meet. Non-military personnel should use the "look up" tool [online](#) to find the best match. Military members can get more information on their special tax benefits [online](#). Free File is available now through October to accommodate taxpayers who file for an extension filers.



## **Painkiller Overprescription at 3 Military Hospitals Prompts Scathing Watchdog Report**

Patients were routinely overprescribed opioids at three military hospitals under a system that failed to follow medical guidelines, according to a scathing report from the Defense Department's Inspector General. The IG's audit found that the three hospitals "overprescribed opioids between 2015 and 2017 because policies and processes were not in place to properly monitor and identify" patients receiving more than the federally recommended dose of 90 milligrams of morphine equivalent (MME) daily. Read more [HERE](#).



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**Petition Would Create Military Medal  
to Honor Those Fighting in the 'War  
on Drugs'**

A new online petition posted last week asks President Donald Trump to sign an executive order creating a War on Drugs Service Medal. The petition would create a "total force" award to recognize active-duty, Reserve, Guard, auxiliary and state service members who fought in the "War on Drugs" any time from June 18, 1971, to the present. As of the afternoon of Jan. 16, only two people had signed the "We the People" petition. Read more [HERE](#).



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## VA Moving Forward on Implementing Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention Law

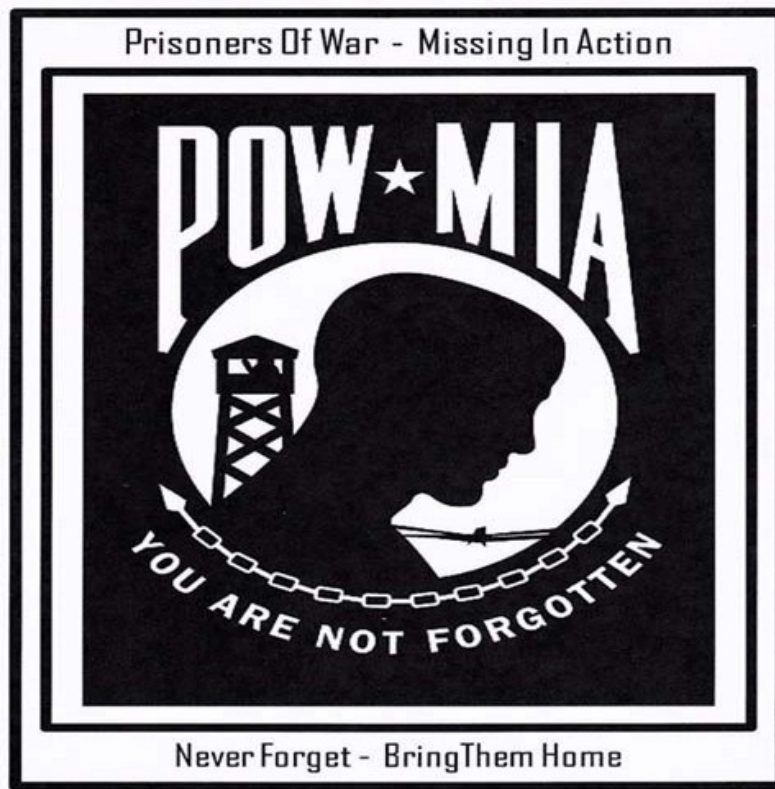


Firms in the Hampton, Virginia, area interested in helping veterans are being invited to submit information to the Department of Veterans Affairs about the services they could provide service members transitioning out of the military. The VA recently published a request for information intended to be used as "market research" as the VA searches for a contractor to fulfill services laid out in the Clay Hunt Act. The VA is looking for firms within a 50-mile radius of the Hampton Veterans Affairs Medical Center to retain at least five full-time Peer Recovery Specialists who have received 72 hours of training with the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services. Read more [HERE](#).



## **Painkiller Overprescription at 3 Military Hospitals Prompts Scathing Watchdog Report**

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## 2020 Military Payday Schedule

Looking for the schedule of 2020 military pay dates for the active and reserve components? This information may help avoid any confusion as to when you should expect to see the payment deposited to your account. Read more [HERE](#).



## VA Launches Stand Up to Stop Harassment Now! Campaign

The Department of Veterans Affairs Stand Up to Stop Harassment Now! campaign is designed to focus on VA's commitment to a safe and welcoming health care environment for veterans, employees, volunteers and visitors. Harassment of any kind is unacceptable on VA campuses. This behavior does not honor or value the traditions of military service and will not be tolerated at VA. The Veterans of Foreign Wars is among the Veterans Service Organizations who have partnered with VA to stop harassment. [Learn more](#) about stopping harassment.



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## **Group to Fight Space Force's Use of Bible for Swearing-In Ceremonies**

The U.S. Space Force has designated its own King James Bible for swearing-in ceremonies. On Jan. 12, religious leaders at the Washington National Cathedral blessed the Bible for the Space Force, which was established as the sixth branch of the U.S. military in December. Some users and veterans took to Twitter to voice their displeasure with the move, saying that religious texts aren't typically used when officers take an oath of office, though leaders can opt to do so. Others maintained that, by using the Bible, the Space Force will ostracize commanders and officials who practice a different faith. Read more [HERE](#).



## Tax & Credit Information



1. [All taxpayers should know their rights](#)
2. [Direct deposit fastest way to receive federal tax refund](#)
3. [Here are reasons for people to file a 2019 tax return](#)

4. Improved Tax Withholding Estimator helps workers target the refund they want; shows how to fill out new 2020 W-4
5. IRS and Treasury finalize Opportunity Zone guidance
6. IRS and Treasury issue guidance for students with discharged student loans and their creditors
7. IRS Free File helps seniors and retirees do their taxes for free
8. IRS Free File offers free tax prep options for military personnel
9. IRS Free File opens today; do taxes online for free
10. IRS Free File: Ideal for young and first-time filers
11. IRS helps workers, businesses with new Gig Economy Tax Center
12. IRS issues 2019 annual report; highlights program areas across the agency
13. IRS issues standard mileage rates for 2020
14. IRS opens 2019 tax filing season for individual filers on Jan. 27
15. IRS to restore sequestered funds (AMT only) this fiscal year to businesses affected by OMB determination
16. IRS: Most taxpayers eligible for free federal

and free state tax return preparation

17. National Taxpayer Advocate delivers Annual Report to Congress: focuses on Taxpayer First Act implementation, taxpayer service, and IRS funding

18. Questions for tax preparers to ask themselves about data security

19. Taxpayers should remember these tips when searching for a tax preparer



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**Coast Guard Wrapping Up Study on Why Minority Members Leave the Service**

The Coast Guard will wrap up a study examining why minority service members are leaving its ranks and publish its initial findings by June to try to thwart retention gaps, the service's vice commandant said Wednesday. During the Surface Navy Association's annual symposium outside Washington, D.C., Coast Guard Adm. Charles Ray said the service's goal over the past year has been to explore which policies can be adjusted to prevent people quitting the coastal defense mission. Read more [HERE](#).







The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one new identification, and twelve burial updates for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from WWII and the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

**Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Arthur B.**

**Summers**, 27, was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands, in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, while the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Summers was killed on the fourth day of the battle, Nov. 23, 1943. His

remains were reportedly buried in Cemetery 33. Interment services are pending. [Read about Summers.](#)

**Navy Seaman 2nd Class Lloyd R. Timm**, 19, of Kellogg, Minnesota, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Timm. From December 1941 to June 1944, Navy personnel recovered the remains of the deceased crew, which were subsequently interred in the Halawa and Nu'uaniu Cemeteries. Timm will be buried May 25, 2020, in Wabasha, Minnesota. [Read about Timm.](#)

**Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. William J. McGowan**, 23, of Benson, Minnesota, was a pilot, serving with the 391st Fighter Squadron, 366th Fighter Group, 9th U.S. Air Force. On June 6, 1944, he was killed when his P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft crashed while on a mission near the city of Saint-Lô, France. McGowan will be buried June 26,

2020, at the Normandy American Cemetery in France. [Read about McGowan.](#)

**Marine Corps Reserve 1st Lt. Justin G. Mills,** 25, of Galveston, Texas, was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed, including Mills on the first day of battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Mills will be buried April 29, 2020, at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. [Read about Mills.](#)

**Army Pfc. John A. Shelemba,** 19, of Hamtramck, Michigan, was a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. Shelemba was reported missing in action while defending Taejon, South Korea on July 20, 1950. Shelemba will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Shelemba.](#)

**Army 1st Lt. Robert C. Styslinger**, 28, of Pittsburgh, served with Battery B, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported to have been killed in action Nov. 29, 1950, while fighting enemy forces near Hagaru-ri, Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. His remains could not be recovered. Styslinger will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Styslinger.](#)

**Army Sgt. Maximiano T. Lacsamana**, 37, of the Philippines, a veteran of the Philippine Scouts during World War II, was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 31st Regimental Combat Team, 7th Infantry Division. During the Korean War, his unit was engaged in intense fighting with the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces near Hagaru-ri, North Korea. He was reported missing in action Dec. 3, 1950. Following the war, his remains could not be recovered. Lacsamana will be buried in the spring of 2020 in the Philippines. The exact date and location have yet to be determined. [Read about Lacsamana.](#)

**Army Cpl. William J. McCollum**, 19, of

Anderson, South Carolina, was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, 31st Regimental Combat Team. He was reported missing in action Dec. 2, 1950, in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces. Following the war, his remains could not be recovered until June 2018, when North Korea turned over 55 boxes, purported to contain the remains of American service members killed during the Korean War, which included McCollum's remains. McCollum will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about McCollum.](#)

**Army Pfc. Junior C. Evans**, 20, of Hall County, Texas, was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 12, 1950, in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. However, accurate accountability of troops was often difficult due to the chaotic environment and Evans likely went missing during a battle between Nov. 27 and Dec. 6, 1950. Following the battle, his remains could

not be recovered. Evans will be buried in Gilmer, Texas. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Evans.](#)

**Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Lowell S. Twedt**, 27, of Le Grand, Iowa, was a pilot assigned to the 71st Fighter Squadron, 1st Fighter Group. On Oct. 20, 1944, he piloted a P-38J “Lightning” aircraft as part of an escort for a B-17 “Flying Fortress” bombing mission targeting oil storage tanks in Regensburg, Germany. The mission encountered enemy anti-aircraft fire around Bolzano, Italy. Three P-38Js, including Twedt’s, went down as a result. An eyewitness account saw Twedt’s aircraft falling to the ground in flames, and did not see him eject. Twedt’s remains were never recovered. Twedt will be buried in Fernly, Nevada. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Twedt.](#)

**Marine Corps Pfc. Louis Wiesehan Jr.**, of Richmond, Indiana, was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over

several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed, including Wiesehan on the second day of battle, Nov. 21, 1943. Wiesehan will be buried April 18, 2020, in his hometown. [Read about Wiesehan.](#)

**Air Force Maj. Neal C. Ward**, 23, of College Station, Texas, was a member of the 602nd Special Operations Squadron, as the pilot of an A-1H aircraft, leading a flight of two on an armed reconnaissance mission in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. Following four bombing runs, Ward's aircraft was seen being stuck by automatic weapons fire, followed by a large fire and explosion. Ward's wingman was unable to establish contact and did not observe a parachute following the incident. Ward will be buried in Lake Tahoe, Nevada. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Ward.](#)





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