



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, January 26, 2020

Volume 11, Issue 04



This-N-That

This last week Josh Harder (D-CA) and Pete Stauber (R-MN) introduced H.R. 5610 Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act which would add several illnesses related to Agent Orange Contamination presumptive list, and I do think this is a good move in the right direction, however, makes me wonder why they're doing this in bits and pieces when there are already so many connected AO illnesses still no where to be seen on the presumptive list.

One of the big ones is glioblastoma!!

Glioblastoma, also known as glioblastoma multiforme (GBM), is the most aggressive cancer that begins within the brain. Initially, signs and symptoms of glioblastoma are nonspecific. They may include headaches, personality changes, nausea, and symptoms similar to those of a stroke.

Another which would relate to those who served in the Navy would be mesothelioma.

Mesothelioma is a malignant tumor that is caused by inhaled asbestos fibers and forms in the lining of the lungs, abdomen or heart. Symptoms can include shortness of breath and chest pain.

And these are just two important ones and we know there are many other illnesses all directly tied to Agent Orange contamination and those on ships and submarines which were insulated with asbestos.

Then we have the VA Accountability Act which also does not go far enough in my opinion!

Each VA Medical Center has an annual line item budget, and is required to report monthly and where this Accountability Act falls short is forcing the VA to post each VA Medical Centers Annual Budget and also force them to post Monthly reports. These should all be public information, and for those who can read and understand them we would literally see where every penny is spent and if it's spent where it was prescribed to be spent or "shifted" to another line item category and why.

We already know there is a lot of "shifting" of funds in fact it's been going on for decades.

Each facility is allotted so much for building improvements, building additions and maintenance and repairs of all those buildings. But no one is really paying attention to what is or has been going on at each VA Medical Center.

For those here in Southern California and had been going to the Long Beach VA Medical Center you know what I'm talking about. That center was not even good enough to be considered a Veterinary Hospital for Animals!

When my dad got really sick, we refused to take him there as we knew for damn sure they'd kill him. And after dad passed I managed to make friends with an insider and was able to get my hands on five years worth of budget reports and I saw where there was hundreds of thousands of dollars budgeted annually for renovations and new buildings and was never used.

I don't know I was the only one, I'm sure I wasn't but I did begin to make a huge stink over it, stayed on top of both state and federal legislators and after two, nearly three years boom, construction began, improvements being made and things were improving dramatically and now, from all the reports I've been getting from Vets over the past few years, it's a "great place to go!"

West LA is another story. The deed was a gift to VETERANS for a Veterans Home, several hundred acres of land.

Over the past two decades it's turned into a battle ground providing land and buildings to Brentwood elitists for Car Rental businesses, Hotel Laundry Business, Private School, Dog Park, ball park and

more, but homeless Veterans are banned from the property, and well over a million dollars was wasted to construct a very high, very sturdy steel fence all around the property and more GESTAPO style VA Police had been hired.

A law suit was brought against the VA and the Secretary by the ACLU and was won, however, the civilian tenants remain and homeless Veterans continue to be ignored and banned from the facility.

Now the word is they want to literally tear down the VA Facility buildings which by the way are historical landmarks and do a full reconstruction which would cost millions more than is needed and in my humble opinion a serious waste of taxpayer money.

There is more than sufficient land to build a "mini Veteran Village" and several years ago I did provide the plans how they could have constructed 2,000 mini homes for homeless Veterans, renovated the current empty buildings and removing all the asbestos and have made mini apartments to house additional homeless

Veterans.

I wasn't able to provide costs as construction isn't my thing, but I'm sure would have cost roughly \$5 million dollars to have accomplished all of this. And not only would it be providing housing for homeless Veterans, they would be very close to the hospital in case of emergency, and the plan also called for visiting nurses to just check in doing well checks, plans for a reintegration program and training them to go out on their own and be fully self sufficient.

And as I said in the newsletter last week now the current plans would put off for yet another decade in dealing with homeless Veterans in the Los Angeles area which numbers more than 8,000.

I know I ask all the time for help in various aspects, but we're on the war path on a number of problems and issues, so now we'd like to hear from Veterans, even family members and tell us the experiences you have encountered with the VA Medical Centers you've been seen at and we don't care if it's good or bad, we'd like to hear it

In addition to this we're still looking for more Veterans willing to share their story if you've been a victim or MST (Military Sexual Trauma aka rape).

No matter the case or situation, we guarantee 100% confidentiality, no names, E-Mail addresses, home addresses, phone numbers or locations will ever be given to anyone.

The stories and information is all that is important to us, and with this we build up an arsenal to be able to continue to fight on your behalf.

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.

Our new web master has been working on the website in the background to make repairs so the system runs faster and more efficiently, and is also working on the operational side which you as a user can see.

We've added 90 more web links, mostly state

benefits for Veterans, and there are still hundreds more links to come.

And hopefully by next Friday we will have been able to add at least 100 new documents to the library.

If you subscribe to the web site, be sure to look for the authentication E-Mail and click on the link. If it doesn't come into your IN box, be sure to check your spam or junk folder. The link does have an expiration on it.

If you don't see or receive it, I do check every few days and I will manually approve your account and send you an E-Mail.

Also I'd like to thank one of our readers who let us know we had a broken web link, and when we know this we do our best to put in a new link, but in this case the hosting site completely removed the information so we had to remove the link, but there are still well over 6,000 web links.

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



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 Tampa 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@mvadvocacy.org. To register go [here](#).



Legislation Introduced to Add New Presumptive Diseases for Agent Orange Exposure

Last Wednesday, Representatives Josh Harder (D-Calif.) and Pete Stauber (R-Minn.) introduced VFW-supported H.R. 5610, the [Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act](#). This important bipartisan legislation would expand the list of presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure to include parkinsonism, bladder cancer, hypertension, and hyperthyroidism. In October 2019, it was revealed that White House officials impeded the inclusion of these diseases as presumptive conditions despite a recommendation from former Secretary of Veterans Affairs David Shulkin that they be added. In a press release, Representative Harder stated, “No more studies. No more excuses. Everyone seems to think this is the right thing to do except for some Washington bureaucrats – it’s time to stop playing games and give our Vets the benefits they earned.” The VFW has long advocated for the inclusion of these diseases on the list of presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure, and thanks Rep. Harder and Rep. Stauber for introducing this legislation. [Read more.](#)



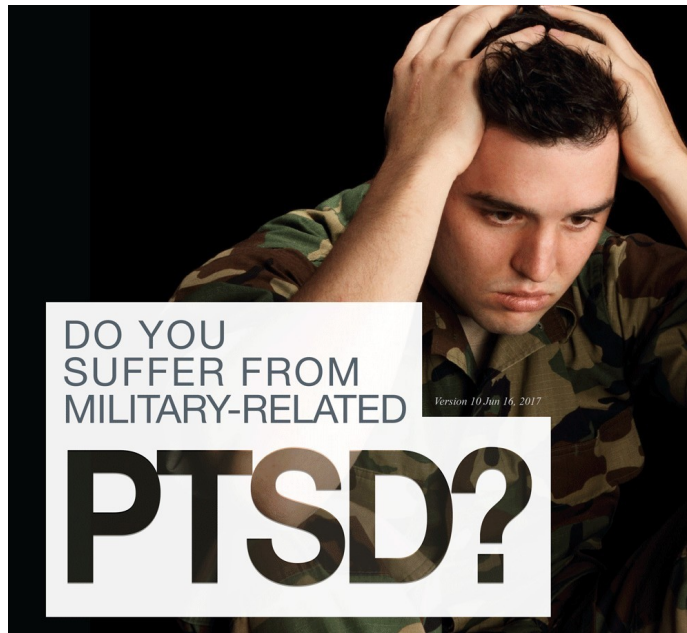
Links to Other Stories

1. From their graves, voices of Tampa Bay Veterans exposed to herbicides are heard in Washington
2. Dallas VA Police Fire 19 Rounds At Man Seeking Psychiatric Care Killing Him
3. Success with Health and Well-Being Coaching Codes
4. Thieves among honor: counterfeit Veterans
5. Miami VA employee under investigation for trading sexual favors for overtime approval
6. VA accountability bill passes U.S. Senate, Sen. Manchin's office says
7. VA drops its star ratings system for hospitals
8. TRICARE Deductibles and Catastrophic Caps Reset Jan. 1
9. Agent Orange exposure
10. Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act claims now being determined
11. US government website hacked with pro-Iranian messages, image of bloodied Trump
12. Secretary Wilkie's Statement Regarding House Veterans' Affairs Ranking Member Phil Roe's Retirement

13. [Woodworker gifts handcrafted flags to Veterans](#)
14. [Air Force Veteran Fatally Shoots Robbery Suspect Who Pistol-Whipped Him](#)
15. [Caldwell University Agrees To Pay More Than \\$4.8 Million To Resolve Allegations Of Violating False Claims Act](#)
16. [7 stress resources Veterans can use right now](#)
17. [Deny 'til you die? Vets exposed to Agent Orange face struggles for coverage](#)
18. [New interactive map helps 'blue water' Vietnam Veterans locate ship positions](#)
19. [New Veterans find themselves employed and connected but battling health woes after discharge](#)
20. [Russian trolls are targeting American Veterans, and Trump's government isn't helping, group says](#)
21. [What You Need to Know About VA Dependent Benefits](#)

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





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



**Filling Prescriptions With TRICARE:
You've Got Options**

The TRICARE Pharmacy Program provides prescription drug coverage for all TRICARE beneficiaries. There are several options for filling your prescriptions. They include military pharmacies, TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery, TRICARE retail network pharmacies, and non-network pharmacies. As described in the TRICARE Pharmacy Program Handbook, how you fill your prescription depends on your beneficiary category and the type of drug prescribed.

To learn more, [read the full article](#).



[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 **3,843** hits per day, and downloads average **6,678** per day with a total **5,773,225** 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 **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: **9,383**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **6,705**, Added **90** New Links (Updated: 01/22/20)

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



Memorializing Veterans Act Now Law

Last Friday, the president signed the VFW-supported Memorializing Veterans Act into law. The new law permits VA to establish a grant program to conduct cemetery research and produce educational materials for [the Veterans Legacy Program](#) (VLP). Under the current program, the VLP awards contracts to universities, colleges, and institutions to develop educational programs to teach students and others about the Veterans interred in national, state, or tribal cemeteries in their communities. Transitioning to a grant-based program would broaden the reach of the VLP beyond large universities to smaller groups that wish to engage with VA in memorializing Veterans. “Perpetuating

the memory and history of our dead is one of the VFW's founding principles," said Carlos Fuentes, Director National Legislative Service. "The Veterans Legacy Program ensures the memories and stories of the brave men and women who have worn our nation's uniform are preserved in perpetuity." The VFW thanks Rep. Connor Lamb (D-Calif.), Senators Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) for introducing this legislation, and for their efforts to promote civic engagement and foster respect for service and sacrifice. [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!](#)
7. [S. 2810, the Veterans Hearing Benefits Act of 2019](#)





Join the TRICARE Webinar

Do you have questions about your TRICARE benefits? Here's your chance to get some answers. Please join TRICARE on Thursday, Jan. 30, from 1-2 p.m. EST for the "Ask TRICARE" webinar. The Q&A webinar will include a panel of subject matter experts to answer your stateside and overseas questions about TRICARE health care, pharmacy and dental programs. You must be registered and in the webinar platform to submit a question electronically. If you call in by phone, you'll only be able to listen to the webinar. Don't miss this unique opportunity to ask questions directly to TRICARE experts. [Register for the webinar.](#)



All-Female USAF Team Wins Bomb-Building Competition with 'Rosie the Riveter' Tribute

The first all-female team to compete in the Rapid Aircraft Generation and Employment competition at Aviano Air Base, Italy, took home the win, the Air Force announced this month. And they did it while wearing costumes that paid tribute to Rosie the Riveter. The RAGE contest began last October to highlight several adaptive basing procedures and is being held quarterly. Last year, a team named "Wing it" won. 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





HOME *of the* FREE
BECAUSE *of the* BRAVE

Honoring those who served



VA Inspector General Finds Long Wait Times for Community Care

Last Thursday, the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (OIG) released a report that addressed the consult process for community care appointments in VISN 8. VISN 8 is composed of the seven VA Medical Centers (VAMC) in Florida and one in Puerto Rico. The report found that the average wait time in VISN 8 for community care appointments under MISSION Act authority is 106 days. VA OIG found that while contributing factors included staffing shortages and a higher community care workload than VAMC directors had planned, the average

time to forward a community care consult between offices within the VAMC itself was 10 days and an additional 18 days were spent waiting for VA to authorize the care. The report cites an example of ophthalmology care at the James A. Haley VAMC in Tampa where of the 66 days it took on average to receive treatment, 34 of those days were spent “waiting for community care staff to create an authorization for care.” Wait time goals under the MISSION Act are 20 days for primary care and 28 days for specialty care. Recommendations to remediate the issues identified in the report include hiring to fill staffing shortages, adjusting assignments to cover the workload, and better monitoring of staff processing time. [Read the report.](#)



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](#).



New Navy Aircraft Carrier to be Named After Doris “Dorie” Miller

On Monday, the Navy announced that it will be naming a new aircraft carrier after Mess Attendant 3rd Class Doris Miller. Miller was the first black service member to receive the Navy Cross for valor. On Dec. 7, 1941, during the attack on Pearl Harbor, Miller got his mortally wounded officer to a safer location and manned a machine gun to fire at the Japanese aircraft until he was ordered to leave, even though he had never been trained to operate the machine gun. Miller continued his service in the Navy after the Pearl Harbor attack, he died when the carrier he was serving on was sunk by a Japanese torpedo. [Read more.](#)



Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Information

The VR&E program commonly known as Voc Rehab is an excellent benefit offered by VA that is not utilized by as many eligible Veterans who may need it. VR&E services can assist eligible Veterans with resume development skills, job search training, employment accommodations, and education in order to keep employed through different avenues. The VR&E program offers individual counselors to accommodate the different needs of the clients they serve. We encourage all Veterans to learn more about VR&E services to see if you may be eligible for this great benefit. [Learn more about VR&E.](#)



**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



DHA Begins to Exclude Some Drugs from Coverage

The FY2018 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L.115-91, H.R.2810) that was signed into law Dec. 12, 2017, allows for the Defense Health Agency to identify drugs that provide little or no clinical effectiveness relative to available alternatives. The drugs can be partially or fully excluded from being covered by the TRICARE Pharmacy Benefit Program. Drugs excluded from coverage are referred to as Tier 4 on the prescription drug formulary list.

The DHA believes that this will align the TRICARE Pharmacy Benefit Program with industry standards among commercial healthcare plans. The exclusion has the potential to save the Department of Defense \$30 million per fiscal year. Previously, all prescriptions were categorized in one of three tiers - generic, brand name and non-formulary. Each having varying copay costs for beneficiaries.

The prescription drugs that DHA categorizes as

Tier 4/non-covered and are excluded from coverage. These Tier 4 drugs are not available in pharmacies at military treatment facilities. They also are not available through the TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery Program.

Tier 4 drugs are only available at retail pharmacies and beneficiaries will have to pay the full price out-of-pocket. The costs for Tier 4 drugs do not apply to the annual TRICARE catastrophic cap. The FRA is working with other military organizations to ask the DHA to create an appeals process for drugs placed on the Tier 4/non-covered list.



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](#).



Office of Inspector General

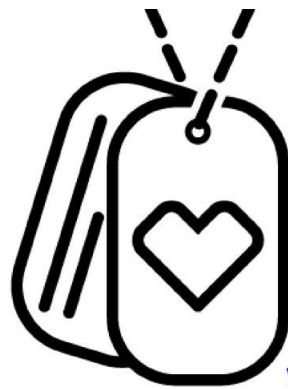
1. Artificial Intelligence in Health Care: Benefits and Challenges of Machine Learning in Drug Development
2. Department of Defense: Actions Needed to Reduce Accounting Adjustments
3. U.S. Secret Service: Investigative Operations Confer Benefits, but Additional Actions Are Needed to Prioritize Resources
4. Federal Property: GSA Guidance Needed to Help Agencies Identify Unneeded Property in Warehouses



**Bring Your TRICARE Benefit
Questions to Jan. 30 Webinar**

Do you have questions about your TRICARE benefit? Start the year off right by getting your questions answered. Join the "Ask TRICARE" webinar on Jan. 30, from 1 to 2 p.m. ET. The Q&A webinar will include a panel of subject matter experts to answer your stateside and overseas questions about TRICARE. Don't miss this unique opportunity to ask questions directly to TRICARE experts. Register today.

To learn more, [read the full article](#).



**Our values
match yours.**



www.veterans-for-change.org



Looking for Answers? TRICARE Publications Can Help

Do you have specific questions about your TRICARE health, dental, and pharmacy benefits? Do you wish you had a resource to turn to for answers quickly? You do. TRICARE publishes handbooks, brochures, fact sheets, and other benefit resources. You can view, print, or download these products from the TRICARE Publications page.

To learn more, [read the full article](#).



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](#).



Coast Guard Museum Construction Delayed

Construction of the National Coast Guard Museum in New London, Connecticut has been delayed, despite the fact that the National Coast Guard Museum Association has raised more than \$56 million for the museum. The new museum will tell the story of the Coast Guard. At the same time, construction of the museum, which was supposed to start last year, has been pushed back due to two other big projects going on in the area.

The project, which has been years in the making, got a boost in late December when President Donald Trump signed a massive spending package that included another \$5 million in federal funding for the museum. To date, federal contributions total \$15 million out of an anticipated \$30 million, private donations have topped \$21 million and the state has bonded \$20 million for the project. Museum officials are not publicly releasing an updated cost until a bid is issued for the construction work.

The FRA is supporting the United States Coast

Guard Commemorative Coin Act (H.R.1257-S.509) that has been introduced in the House and Senate. The act is sponsored by Rep. Joe Courtney (Conn.) and Sen. Mike Murphy (Conn). This bill directs the Department of the Treasury to mint and issue in commemoration of the U.S. Coast Guard \$5 gold coins, \$1 silver coins and half-dollar clad coins. The design of each coin shall represent the traditions, history and heritage of the Coast Guard and its role in securing the United States since 1790. The issuance of the coins is restricted to a one-year period. Proceeds from the coin shall be paid to the National Coast Guard Museum Association to help finance the design, construction, operations and maintenance of the museum.

This bill honors the men and women of the Coast Guard and supports the establishment of the National Coast Guard Museum. Despite its significant role in our national defense, the U.S. Coast Guard is the only uniformed service without a national museum to showcase its 229-year history. Legislation was passed authorizing the museum to be located in New London, Connecticut. FRA members are urged to use the

Action Center to urge their legislators to pass this important legislation.



1st Air Force Unit Begins 'Beta Testing' No-Fail Practice PT Test

Airmen who fall under Air Force Materiel Command will start to see a new option when it comes to their physical fitness test. Starting Jan. 20, the command will begin "beta testing" the diagnostic PT test, similar to an idea first unveiled by Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright last year. It is a no-fail trial PT test that, if passed, would count as the airman's official score. Read more [here](#).





Last Call for FRA's 2020 Survey on Military and Veteran Benefits

Your thoughts and concerns are important to the 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 will be available for a few more days. Members can participate by going to the [2020 Legislative Priorities survey](#).



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](#).



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](#).



CLICK HERE TO FOLLOW US ON TWITTER!





Listen to New TRICARE Beneficiary Bulletin Podcast #537

Listen to this latest podcast to hear about:

- "Ask TRICARE" Webinar
- Qualifying Life Events
- TRICARE Pharmacy Options

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



Implementation of SBP-DIC Offset -- Widow's Tax SBP/DIC Offset or Widow's Tax - Update

The Enlisted Association worked hard with Congress, veterans and military service organizations, and beneficiaries to eliminate the so-called "Widow's Tax" or the Survivor Benefit

Plan (SBP) - Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) offset. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2020 was signed into law on December 20, 2019.

Why is this important to surviving military family members and veterans?

- The law eliminates the SBP-DIC offset or "Widows Tax."
- The law applies to surviving spouses who qualify for both benefits.
- The law is not retroactive, and no back payments will be made.
- The SBP-DIC offset elimination will be phased in over 3 years.

How will the Phased Elimination work?

- No changes will take place in 2020.
- Beginning February 1, 2021, surviving spouses who qualify for both benefits will have one-third of their SBP restored, in addition to getting the full DIC.
- Beginning in 2022, surviving spouses who qualify for both benefits will have two-thirds of their SBP

restored, in addition to getting the full DIC.

- Beginning in 2023, surviving spouses who qualify for both benefits will receive both their SBP and DIC in FULL.

Status of surviving spouses who elected the child-only option

- If you elected the child-only option, nothing will change for you until January 1, 2023, when you'll have the option to re-select SBP in your name permanently. The child-only option will be phased out.
- If your children had previously aged out, you will still be able to re-select on January 1, 2023.

The Defense Finance and Accounting Services (DFAS) is the Department of Defense entity administering these benefit changes. DFAS established a webpage, [SBP-DIC Offset Phased Elimination News](#), to keep everyone informed and updated on the status of the implementation. TREA understands that DFAS has already contacted beneficiaries and shared a fact sheet and this webpage.

Key Facts on the DFAS Webpage

- Based on the NDAA, Spouse SBP annuitants who are subject to the DIC offset will see the first change in the SBP annuity payment they receive on February 1, 2021. Beneficiaries do not need to notify DFAS that your SBP payment has changed.
- The most important action SBP annuitants can take is to ensure your annuity account information is up-to-date and includes your correct mailing address so DFAS can contact you, if needed. DFAS also recommends using myPay, and if you are not, [set up a profile now](#) and add your email address.
- DFAS is unable to provide individual estimates of the upcoming changes in spouse SBP annuity payments due to this change in the law. Please do not call the DFAS Customer Care Center to request an individual estimate.
- If you previously received a refund of SBP premiums paid due to the SBP-DIC offset, you will not need to pay back that refund because of this change in the law.
- The "Repeal of Authority for Optional Annuity for Dependent Children" and "Restoration of Eligibility for Previously Eligible Spouses" in the NDAA only

affect those spouses and children of service members who died on active duty when the surviving spouse previously elected to transfer the SBP annuity to a child or children. They do not affect previous or future SBP elections by retirees or SBP annuities for a retiree's beneficiaries.

TREA will continue to keep you updated and urges surviving military family members to check the DFAS webpage. If you have questions, please email legislativeinfo@trea.org.



Your actions
could save a life.

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

VeteransCrisisLine.net

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



**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](#).



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](#).





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.](#)

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](#).





The Washington Office continues to be TREA's eyes and ears on Capitol Hill, at VA and DOD. Legislative priorities are listed below.

- **Suicide Prevention and Mental Health:**

Including S. 785 Commander Hannon Bill; TREA also supports and works with the PREVENTS Task Force and actively began supporting HR 4305, the PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act.

- **EHRM Contract with Cerner:** Hold VA

accountable for the rollout planned in March in the Pacific North West, assure VA and DOD have interoperability so that VA and DOD records can be shared and clinicians can access records. Ensure the Interagency Program Office is properly staffed.

- **MISSION Act, Community Care Network,**

Urgent Care & Caregivers Expansion: TREA supports but has heard from Veterans that care is not always available by a local provider. Urgent Care in many rural locations do not have an in-network provider. Caregivers waiting on VA to publish regulations for expansion to pre 9/11 Veterans.

• **Navy Blue Water Implementation:** TREA is pleased VBA received funds in the 2020 appropriations bill to assist. VBA must follow through and make decisions as promised on Jan. 1, 2020. TREA also supports adding the 4 presumptive conditions from Agent Orange exposure.

• **Appeals Modernization Act:** TREA is tracking whether or not the VA is meeting its new targets for processing appeals. VA notes they are, but they need to be held accountable.

• **GI Bill:** Hold VA accountable on processing Forever GI Bill benefits and be sure BAH issues are not repeated.

• **Toxic Exposure:** Health Care eligibility and service-connected claims for those exposed to toxic chemicals and agents. TREA is a proud member of The Toxic Exposures in the American Military Coalition (TEAM) and has been actively working on legislation.

• **Improve Services & Benefits to Women Veterans:** TREA fully supports HR 3224, the Deborah Sampson Act, and was pleased to see its passage in the House.



Tax & Credit Information



1. IRS willing to consider requests for relief from double taxation related to repatriation
2. IRS Free File can save families money; find tax benefits all for free
3. IRS: Don't be victim to 'ghost' tax return preparers
4. Gig economy work can affect a taxpayer's bottom line
5. Members of the military can take advantage of special offer to file taxes for free



If you received this newsletter as a courtesy or a forward from a friend or relative, you can sign up to receive in your E-mail every week.



CLICK HERE TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE VFC WEEKLY NEWSLETTER!



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](#).





The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one new identification, and five 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:

Army Cpl. Arthur C. Ramirez, 19, was a member of Battery B, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in

action on Dec. 6, 1950, when enemy forces attacked his unit near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. His remains could not be recovered following the attack. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ramirez.](#)

Army Pvt. Horace H. Middleton, 20, of Northumberland, Pennsylvania, was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), also known as Merrill's Marauders. After taking the airfield in Myitkyina, Burma, from the Japanese on May 17, 1944, Middleton's battalion was tasked with holding the airfield and taking part in the siege of Myitkyina. Middleton was reported to have been killed during fighting on July 12, 1944. Middleton will be buried April 18, 2020, in Milton, Pennsylvania. [Read about Middleton.](#)

Army Sgt. John V. Phillips, 25, of Cassville, Missouri, was a member of Headquarters Company, 31st Infantry Regiment, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands in December 1941. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan peninsula on April 9, 1942, and of Corregidor Island on May 6, 1942.

Phillips was reportedly captured after the surrender of Corregidor and held at the Cabanatuan POW camp, where records show he died July 27, 1942. Phillips will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Phillips.](#)

Army Pvt. Roy Brown, Jr., 22, of Des Moines, Iowa, was a member of Company I, 126th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Infantry Division, when his unit was forced into intense engagement with Japanese forces in the vicinity of Soputa-Sanananda Track in the Australian Territory of Papua (present-day Papua New Guinea). Brown was reported missing and presumed dead when he could not be accounted for by his unit. Brown will be buried in his hometown. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Brown.](#)

Army Pvt. Charlie M. Waid, 26, of Chico, California, was a member of the Medical Detachment of the 31st Infantry Regiment when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan peninsula on April 9, 1942, and of

Corregidor Island on May 6, 1942. Waid was among those reported captured after the surrender of Corregidor and held at the Cababatuan POW camp, where records show he died on Nov. 19, 1942. Waid will be buried in Hollywood Hills, California. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Waid.](#)

Army Cpl. William L. Brown, 18, of Sesser, Illinois, was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. 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 battle, his remains could not be recovered. Brown will be buried in Mound City, Illinois. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Brown.](#)



Veterans-For-Change, Inc.

Riverside County, CA

Visit our website today

www.Veterans-For-Change.org

Serving those who served!

**Please pass on to all your Veteran Friends
and Family!**



**Please do not reply to this E-Mail,
this is an unattended E-Mail address,
please send all correspondence to:**

Jim.Davis@Veterans-for-change.org

©2020 Veterans-For-Change.org | CA 92584-8870

[Web Version](#)

[Preferences](#)

[Forward](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)

Powered by
[GoDaddy Email Marketing](#)®