



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, March 29, 2020

Volume 11, Issue 13



## **This-N-That**

As I'm sure you are all aware the Corona Virus (COVID-19) has caused wide spread panic from hoarding to actually contracting the virus itself.

It's also caused a severe need for blood donations nationwide!

Here is a list of things we should all be doing to help prevent the spread of the Corona Virus:

- Avoid large events and mass gatherings.
- Avoid close contact (about 6 feet) with anyone who is

sick or has symptoms.

- Keep distance between yourself and others if COVID-19 is spreading in your community, especially if you have a higher risk of serious illness.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow or a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw away the used tissue.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth if your hands aren't clean.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces you often touch on a daily basis.
- Avoid eating raw or undercooked meat or animal organs.
- If you're visiting live markets in areas that have recently had new coronavirus cases, avoid contact with live animals and surfaces they may have touched.

If you think you've been exposed even if not sure, then you should self quarantine for a period of 14 days. If you have been in fact exposed, tested and diagnosed, then a self quarantine of 7 days minimum until symptoms go away, then add to that an additional 3 days to make sure all symptoms are gone.

I don't have hard core stats for nationwide, but I do

know in Los Angeles, CA there are more than 2,600 diagnosed cases with 31 deaths, most have been between 40-65 with one being under 18, so what ever you do, please be careful.

Invest in disposable surgical masks, a box of latex gloves and only go out when necessary, be sure to keep a distance of no less than 6 feet from others. When you get home, go immediately and remove all clothing and change, tossing the clothes you had on in the wash immediately.

If you're not sick, haven't been exposed we ask that everyone please consider donating blood through the Red Cross or local blood bank.

Many pharmacies and food outlets are offering free delivery of medications and meals, so instead of going out, think about taking advantage of the free delivery many are offering. And if you need groceries, many of the grocery stores are also offering free delivery.

If you're struggling to meet your mortgage payment, before you become past due, call your bank and see if they are one of many banks offering up to as long as 4 months extension of time.

If you're a renter and have been served eviction notices please check with your local police or sheriff's

department as many evictions are also being stayed up to May 2020.

If you're unemployed due to the COVID-19 virus, have applied for and been approved for unemployment, part of the stimulus package includes an added payment of up to \$600.00 per check. Check with your local unemployment office to see how much additional pay you will receive. Each state is different.

As a reminder, under the "Take Action" section one more bill has been added where you can read about the bill, then send out the pre-written E-Mails.

With your help, we can win again! So please, send off the E-Mail, follow it up with a phone call to your Rep in DC, go on to their website and ask them to support this legislation. And I know many don't like doing this over and over again, but please do this once weekly.

Copy and paste it or forward the newsletter onto friends and family and ask that they too do the same. We certainly need all the help we can get to insure it passes!

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)



## **Red Cross Urges Healthy Individuals to Give Blood Amid COVID-19 Pandemic**

The American Red Cross strongly urges healthy, eligible individuals who are feeling well to give blood or platelets to help maintain a sufficient blood supply and prevent shortages as the numbers of COVID-19 infected patients rise in the U.S. Cold and flu season has already impacted the nation's ability to maintain its blood supply. As the number of COVID-19 cases grows in the U.S., the number of people eligible to give blood for patients in need could decrease further. "We're asking the American people to help keep the blood supply stable during this challenging time. As communities across the country prepare for this public health emergency, it's critical that plans include a readily available blood supply for hospital patients," said President of the Red Cross Blood Services Chris Hrouda. "As fears of the coronavirus rise, low donor participation could harm blood availability at hospitals, and the last thing a patient should worry about is whether lifesaving blood will be on the shelf when they need it most." Please make an appointment to donate blood now by using the Red Cross Blood Donor app, visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org) or calling 1.800.RED.CROSS (1.800.733.2767). Type O and platelet donations are especially needed right now.





## **TRICARE Covers Certain Telemedicine Services in the U.S.**

TRICARE covers certain telemedicine services. You may be able to see a TRICARE-authorized provider without leaving your home. Using a computer or smartphone, you connect with your provider by secure video conferencing.

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



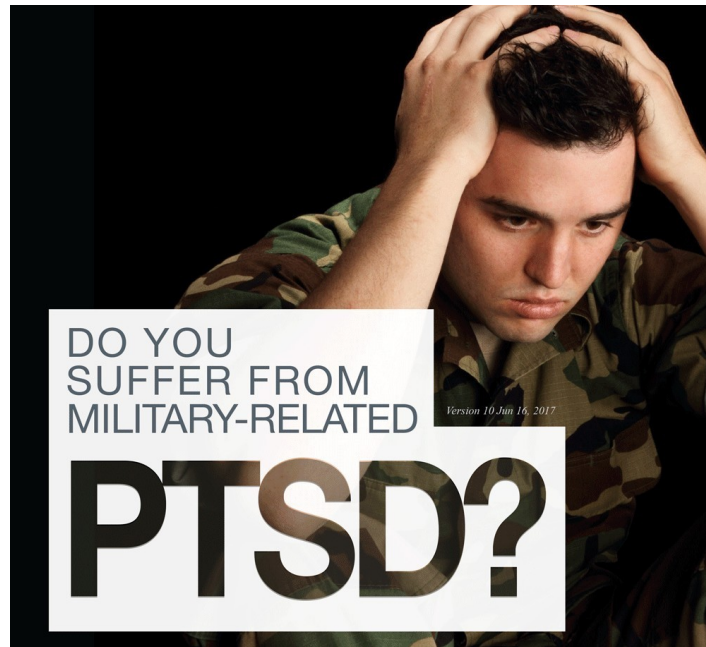
Links to Other Stories

1. Fmr. Ocean City Man's Death Raises Questions For Veterans Affairs
2. Maine men transform trailers into temporary homes for Veterans
3. Proposed VA Budget Would Increase Funding for Cancer Treatment
4. Here's the List of Military Clinics That Will No Longer Serve Retirees, Families
5. Lost Care and Broken Promises: Military Retirees React to Tricare Changes
6. More water contamination detected near Delaware's Dover Air Force Base
7. Mom of Veteran who died by suicide at Dublin VA files \$8.2 million claim against the agency
8. 'Our Agent Orange': Veterans who served at toxic Uzbekistan base want help from Congress

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**

**News Flash**



## **HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS PASSES 17 BIPARTISAN BILLS, REAUTHORIZES WOMEN VETERANS TASK FORCE**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a Full Committee Markup passing all 17 bills on the agenda to strengthen family leave, assist homeless veterans and their dependent children through reintegration programs, expand

access to contraception, streamline GI Bill processing, and improve the lives of millions of veterans.

The Committee also unanimously voted to reauthorize the Women Veterans Task Force. Under Chairwoman Julia Brownley's leadership, the Task Force has worked to increase the visibility of the two million women who have served in the U.S. military and promote inclusivity and equitable access to comprehensive healthcare, benefits, education and economic opportunity, and other federal resources, particularly at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

A full list of bills passed can be found below:

1. H.R. 712 – VA Medical Cannabis Research Act, as amended (Rep. Correa)
2. H.R. 1647 – Veterans Equal Access Act (Rep. Blumenauer)
3. H.R. 2224 – Homeless Veterans with Children Reintegration Act, as amended (Rep. Brownley)
4. H.R. 3798 -- Equal Access to Contraception for Veterans Act, as amended (Rep. Brownley)
5. H.R. 5781 Offered by Rep. Bost -- a bill to improve liability for GI Bill debts, as amended (Rep. Bost)
6. H.R. 6036 -- VA Family Leave Act of 2020, as amended (Rep. Roe)
7. H.R. 5766 Offered by Rep. Levin – VET TEC Expansion Act, as amended (Rep. McCarthy)

8. H.R. 6140 – Veterans in STEM Act (Rep. Underwood)
9. H.R. 6018 – to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to collect overpayments of specially adapted housing assistance (Rep. Correa)
10. H.R. 6157 – Transparency for Student Veterans Act (Rep. Luria)
11. H.R. 6168 – Veterans’ Compensation COLA Act (Rep. Luria)
12. H.R. 5284 – Vet OUTREACH Act (Rep. Khanna)
13. H.R. 2816 – Vietnam Era Veterans Hepatitis- C Testing Enhancement Act (Rep. Stefanik)
14. H.R. 2628 – VET CARE Act (Rep. Bilirakis)
15. H.R. 1527 – Long Term Care Veterans Choice Act (Rep. Higgins)
16. H.R. 5750 – Streamlining GI Bill Processing Act of 2020 (Rep. Bilirakis)
17. S. 3084 – A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the limitation on pay for certain high-level employees and officers of the Department of Veterans Affairs

All bill language can be found on the Committee Repository [Here](#).

Source: <https://veterans.house.gov/news/press-releases/house-committee-on-veterans-affairs-passes-17-bipartisan-bills-reauthorizes-women-veterans-task->

force



## 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 our new webmaster has been making repairs to things that haven't worked properly in over a year.

There are still repairs being made, but the polls are now working 100% and there are five polls open to all to take.

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 **4,257** hits per day, and downloads average **5,534** per day with a total **6,036,756** 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 **18,649** documents in 171+ Libraries, added 1 documents on-line (Updated: 03/13/20)
- 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: 02/26/18) (115 Added)
- News (Articles On-Line: **9,601**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **7,406**, Added 97 New Links (Updated: 02/27/20)

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



## **The Senate Passed Economic Stimulus**

In the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic the Senate passed (96-0) a \$2.2 trillion economic stimulus to counter-act the depressing economic impact of the virus. The bill (H.R.748) includes about \$500 billion that can be used to back loans and assistance to companies, including \$50 billion for loans to U.S. airlines, as well as state and local governments. It also has more than \$350 billion to aid small businesses.

For individuals, the package would provide direct payments to Americans of \$1,200 for each adult, as well as \$500 for each child for individuals with less than \$75,000 of annual income or married couples with income less than \$150,000. The benefit will be scaled down until it reaches a \$99,000 income threshold for an individual or \$198,000 for a couple. The bill would add \$600 per person per week onto the base maximum unemployment benefit for four months. It also provides additional funding for many government agencies including Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

As NewsBytes goes to press the House is expected to pass the bill and send it to President Trump to be sign into law.







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](#)
8. [Support H.R.4985, the Veterans Residential Care Choice Act](#)
9. [New Concurrent Receipt Bills Introduced!](#)
10. [STOP Downsizing of Military Treatment facilities](#)
11. [Support H.R. 5610 and S. 3444 to add Agent Orange Presumptives](#)



The Defense Health Agency claims it has enough coronavirus test kits. The DHA and the Department of Veterans Affairs beneficiaries must meet certain criteria to be tested. The VA and DHA have instituted similar rules around who qualifies for testing:

- The patient has COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever, cough and shortness of breath.
- The patient has traveled to one of the affected areas, like China or Italy.
- The patient has been in close contact with someone infected with COVID-19.

The VA also requires that the patient lives in an area where there has been community spread of COVID-19.

The DHA has indicated that there will be no-cost if the test was prescribed by a network or non-provider, but the usual copay or cost-share for the doctor visit will apply.

The VA is offering free testing to enrolled veterans, and this extends to Civilian Health and Medical Program

(CHAMPVA) beneficiaries. Both the DHA and the VA are asking patients NOT to go directly to a medical center without first calling.

The DHA wants beneficiaries to call into the Military Health System **Nurse Advice Line** () and chat with a registered nurse to assess their symptoms. The VA is urging veterans to receive care virtually by downloading its **VA Telehealth App**.



## **HR 748 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act**

Chairman Takano on COVID-19 Relief Legislation:

“This funding will save veterans’ lives.”

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Chairman Mark Takano (D-Calif.) spoke on the House floor in favor of the Senate amendment to HR 748 “Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act.” See a video of Chairman Takano’s floor speech here and his remarks as prepared below.

Chairman Takano’s remarks as prepared:

Mr. Speaker,

I rise in support of S. 748 the CARES Act.

571 veterans in the VA's healthcare system have tested positive for the coronavirus. We have already lost 9 veterans to this virus. 120 veterans have been admitted to VA hospitals. 185 VA employees, including doctors and nurses providing lifesaving health care to veterans with coronavirus, have also been infected. Because of the lack of widespread testing due to supply chain challenges like low levels of reagents, shortages of swabs and testing kits, a dwindling supply of masks to protect health care workers, understaffed VA hospitals without providers to administer the tests, and a 2 to 7 day lag for veterans to receive results—we know that the magnitude of this public health emergency and the number of veterans sickened by this deadly virus are underreported. It will only become more severe in the weeks to come.

Providing nearly \$20 billion to VA to combat this virus is vital. This funding will save veterans' lives, protect VA's health care providers and first responders, and give VA the resources it needs to serve as the nation's backup health care system in communities where local hospitals are overwhelmed with coronavirus patients.

This relief package provides nearly \$16 billion in funding for VA to provide health care to veterans, including the purchase of essential medical supplies like ventilators. VA will have the funds to purchase more COVID-19 testing kits, N95 masks, gowns, face shields, and gloves—personal protective equipment—to keep health care providers and staff at VA hospitals safe. Health care providers and workers caring for veterans in their homes, at VA-run nursing homes, community living centers, and State Veteran homes will also receive personal protective equipment.

\$100 million is allocated for emergency management so VA first responders have the resources they need to help veterans and communities during this public health emergency.

\$590 million is set aside for veterans most vulnerable to COVID-19: homeless veterans and elderly veterans in community living centers and assisted living facilities.

Over \$2 billion is provided to support VA's IT systems and strengthen VA's telework capabilities. Greater telework capacity reduces the risk of coronavirus transmission in VA's workforce and keeps the Department running.

Over \$600 million is set aside for VA to retrofit its

hospitals and clinics to increase the number of beds and treatment rooms to care for veterans with COVID-19 and deploy mobile treatment units.

Over \$2 billion is appropriated for veterans who need urgent or emergency care in the community for COVID-19.

Finally, this funding ensures the VA health care providers putting their lives on the line to treat veterans are paid for the overtime hours they work.

This relief package also makes veteran owned small business owners eligible for loans to pay their employees and keep their businesses afloat and prevents veterans from losing their homes to foreclosure. And it ensures veterans who receive stimulus checks remain eligible for pension and means-based VA benefits.

This package is far from perfect, but there is so much in this legislation that is critical to helping veterans and ordinary Americans survive this pandemic. I expect there will be more legislation to ensure no veterans or Americans are left behind. I urge all my colleagues to support this relief package.

Thank you Mr. Speaker, I yield back.

Source: <https://veterans.house.gov/news/press-releases/chairman-takano-on-covid-19-relief-legislation-this-funding-will-save-veterans-lives>



## **VA Making Adjustments to MISSION Act During COVID-19 Pandemic**

VA is not pausing the MISSION Act. The department is ensuring the best medical interests of veterans are met by adhering to the law in a manner that takes into account whether referrals for community care are clinically appropriate during the COVID-19 outbreak. VA is taking the following steps in order to ensure the safety of veterans as they access care:

- VA community care referrals for emergent or urgent clinical needs will continue as necessary.
- Veterans with care currently scheduled in the community should continue with this care as clinically appropriate and if available.
- Referral requests for non-emergent care with community providers will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for immediate clinical need and with regard to the safety of the veteran when being seen in-person, regardless of wait time or drive time eligibility.
- VA is expanding the use of c telehealth and telephone sessions to address many of veterans

routine medical needs.

“We understand the need for community providers to halt in-person, non-emergent care to veterans, and all patients for that matter, in order to lessen the curve of this virus sweeping our nation,” said VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence. “Many private health care providers around the country are being forced to make similar difficult decisions, but ultimately decisions that keep the overall safety of all patients in mind. Vigilance is required in slowing this coronavirus pandemic. The Department of Veterans Affairs is taking the correct approach in handling this matter but it remains vital that many of our veterans are able to still receive the care they require. Telehealth and telephonic medical sessions are good adjustments to current conditions but VA must make accommodations for veterans who are unable to access these means of care.”



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We hope you will join us on this new site.

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[{USAVET} SUPPORTING GOD & ALL WHO SERVED OUR GREAT NATION](#)

[AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY](#)





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

*Honoring those who served*



**News Flash**



## **HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS STATEMENT ON HEARING POSTPONEMENT TO MITIGATE SPREAD OF COVID-19**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Mark Takano (CA-41) made the following statement to announce the postponement of all previously scheduled Committee hearings between March 23rd to April 3rd, 2020 to mitigate spread of COVID-19:

“Due to the public health risk posed by the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic and the uncertainty of the House of Representatives voting schedule, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs will postpone all

hearings currently scheduled between March 23rd and April 3rd. Congress has a responsibility to ensure we deliver the best care and services to our veterans - especially during a national emergency. This schedule change will help ensure the safety of our witnesses, Veteran Service Organizations and stakeholders, VA staff, and congressional staff.

“This temporary postponement will not keep us from the important work we are doing to ensure VA continues to prepare and respond to cases of coronavirus-- any hearing scheduled during this time will focus on oversight of VA’s COVID-19 response. All other hearings will be rescheduled as soon as it is safe to do so in person or with increased capacity for virtual hearings so we can continue our mission to serve veterans.”

### Source



## **VA Suspends Five Colleges from Receiving Post 911 GI Bill Payments**

The Department of Veterans Affairs suspended future GI Bill use at five colleges due to deceptive marketing and recruitment practices. The five colleges are: University of Phoenix, Colorado Technical University, American InterContinental University, Bellevue

University, and Temple University. The decision by the VA will apply only to new enrollments, both in residence and online. The suspension will not affect those students currently enrolled in classes during the current semester if there are no breaks in enrollment for current GI Bill beneficiaries.

Additionally, while the VA's action will not impact current students who maintain continuous enrollment, the state approving agencies responsible for approving courses at these schools may also take independent actions based on the VA's decision. If such action occurs, a decision by the relevant state approving agency to withdraw program approval would remove VA's authority to issue benefit payments to currently enrolled students as well as new students. However, the VA will take appropriate actions to keep beneficiaries informed of any developments that would impact them. The VA is encouraging students attending or considering attending schools, to contact the department's Education Call Center at 888-442-4551 between 7 a.m.-6 p.m. Central Time, Monday through Friday or [go online](#) to submit any questions.





## **Medical, Dental Elective Procedures will be Postponed 60 Days Due to COVID-19**

As of March 31, all military treatment facilities and dental treatment facilities will postpone elective surgeries and procedures for 60 days, the Department of Defense announced today. The policy applies to all beneficiaries: active duty service members and their families, retirees, and Reserve and National Guard service members on active duty or a delayed effective date active-duty order.

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



## **Senate Passes Legislation to Expand Access to Tele-Hearings**

On Wednesday, the Senate passed VFW-supported H.R. 4771, the [VA Tele-Hearing Modernization Act](#). This important legislation would permit appellants in disability compensation cases before the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) to appear remotely by picture and voice transmissions, also known as "tele-hearings," from locations other than VA facilities. Currently, veterans may appear via tele-hearing from one of roughly 65 locations in BVA cases. This legislation would undoubtedly improve access for veteran appellants in disability compensation cases and would permit a greater number of veterans to attend their own hearings. The bill passed the House in November and now heads to the president. The VFW urges the president to swiftly sign this important legislation. [Learn more](#).



**CONTACT YOUR  
MEMBERS OF CONGRESS!**

To Call your Representative:  
202-225-2305

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

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

TOLL FREE: 866-272-6622

**PLEASE... STOP Making Excuses!**

[www.veterans-for-change.org](http://www.veterans-for-change.org)



## **Share Your Story: S. 3393 or H.R. 5995**

The [Major Richard Star Act](#), would enable Chapter 61 veterans who have been medically discharged due to combat-related injuries to rightfully receive retirement pay and disability compensation without offset. In FY18, there were 42,163 disabled veterans affected by this offset. An [Action Corps Action Alert](#) was launched this week. For veterans who are affected by this offset, [please share your story](#) by writing a short essay detailing your years of service, DOD/VA disability percentages, and how the offset has impacted your standard of living. The VFW will use these stories to build support for the passage of the Major Richard Star Act. If you are interested in participating, please send your story to [vfwac@vfw.org](mailto:vfwac@vfw.org). Learn more and/or [take action](#).




**National Vietnam War Veterans Day to  
Be Honored Virtually**

This coming Sunday, March 29, 2020, is National Vietnam War Veterans Day. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, VFW Posts have been forced to cancel their events commemorating this day. In response, the VFW will be hosting a [virtual event](#) on the VFW Facebook page, where the VFW will pay tribute to Vietnam veterans across America. Organizations such as VA, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Vietnam Veterans of America, and others will also be holding virtual events. [Learn how to participate.](#)



## Office of Inspector General

1. [Intergovernmental Issues: Key Trends and Issues Regarding State and Local Sector Finances](#)
  2. [Drug Misuse: Sustained National Efforts Are Necessary for Prevention, Response, and Recovery](#)
  3. [Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute: Review of the Audit of the Financial Statements for FY 2019](#)
- 





## **TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery Brings Your Prescriptions to Your Door**

When practicing social distancing, you may want an alternative to having to travel to the pharmacy. Now is a good time to ensure you have adequate medication on hand to cut down on leaving the house. The TRICARE Pharmacy Program gives you three ways to get up to a 90-day supply of your covered prescriptions, including delivery right to your door.

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



## **Retired VA Health Care Workers Are Called to Serve**

With the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) approval, VA announced this week that they are inviting retired physicians, nurses, pharmacists, laboratory technicians, respiratory therapists, and other medical professionals to consider coming back to VA during the COVID-19 pandemic. Opportunities are available in Tele/Virtual Care, the National Call Center, and Direct Patient Care/Support. VA is asking that interested individuals [register online](#) so that the individual can be matched with a VA location according to the individual's profession, location, and interest. [Read more](#). Share the stories of those medical professionals who are [#StillServing](#).



## **U.S. Army Gauging Interest of Retired Personnel to Assist with COVID-19 Response**

On Wednesday, the U.S. Army sent emails out to retired personnel trying to gauge the interest of retired officers, noncommissioned officers, and soldiers who would be willing to assist in the COVID-19 response should their skills and expertise be needed. The Army is looking for those who are still qualified as 60F: Critical Care Officer; 60N: Anesthesiologist; 66F: Nurse Anesthetist; 66S: Critical Care Nurse; 66P: Nurse Practitioner; 66T: ER Nurse; 68V: Respiratory Specialist; 68W: Medic. The Army did note that they want to know if the interested individual is already working in a civilian hospital or medical facility as they do not want to take people away from the work they are already doing. Interested persons should contact Human Resources Command, Reserve Personnel Management Directorate, at [usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.g3-retiree-recall@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.knox.hrc.mbx.g3-retiree-recall@mail.mil) or call 502.613.4911, and provide your phone number, address, email, and MOS/Branch.



**Our values  
match yours.**



[www.veterans-for-change.org](http://www.veterans-for-change.org)



## **U.S. Navy to Allow Enlistment Extensions and Veteran Re-Entry Due to COVID-19**

On Thursday, the Navy released a memo authorizing enlistment extensions and re-entry opportunities. In an effort to keep the fleet manned, the Navy is offering waivers and monetary incentives for many enlisted and officers to extend their careers. The Navy is also opening up for separated enlisted and officers to return to active duty. While the Navy would like recently separated sailors, they encourage all former sailors who are interested to contact a prior enlisted or officer recruiter. [Learn more.](#)





## **Get Answers to Questions About TRICARE and COVID-19**

TRICARE put together answers to some common questions about TRICARE and COVID-19, including about testing, your health plan, pharmacy coverage, quarantine, and more.

To learn more, visit the [Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions page](#).



## **VA Suspends Committal Services**

As of March 23, 2020, the VA has suspended all committal services, including honors, until further notice at all National Cemeteries. Additionally, volunteer hours are discontinued. However, National Cemeteries are open, and families can still choose to have a burial and witness it from a distance (the 10 or fewer people rule applying) but without honors and without a committal service. Families can also have a committal service at a future time if they choose to go with immediate burial at a National Cemetery. [Learn more.](#)







## Intimate Partner Violence Cases Rise with COVID-19 Pandemic

VA recently updated their VHA Social Work — Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program (IPVAP) website to include information on staying safe during the COVID-19. Early reports from across the globe indicate domestic violence and child abuse cases are on the rise as families become isolated along with fear, uncertainty, anxiety, depression, and stress. For some individuals staying home may not be the safest option. An IPVAP Coordinator at each VA Medical Center can assist with resources such as; shelters, health care, clinical intervention within and outside the VA, safety planning, and related legal assistance. [Learn more.](#)



**News Flash**



# **COVID-19 RESOURCES FOR VETERANS**

## **House Veterans Affairs Committee**

### **Chairman, Mark Takano Ranking**

### **Member, Dr. Phil Roe**

#### **Information regarding the Department of Veterans Affairs**

In light of the ongoing 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, many veterans have been asking questions about what the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and its medical facilities are doing to protect and care for veterans during the outbreak. The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs is in daily communication with VA leadership and would like to share the following information:

Since this situation is evolving rapidly, we encourage veterans and their families to consult [VA's Website](#) for the most current information. Guidance from local VA medical facilities about their current operating status is available on each facility's website, which can be found through [VA's Facility Locator Tool](#).

#### **What should veterans do if they think they have COVID-19?**

Before visiting local VA medical facilities, community providers, urgent care centers, or emergency departments in their communities, veterans experiencing COVID-19 symptoms — such as fever,



cough, and shortness of breath — are encouraged to call their VA medical facility or call MyVA311 (844-698-2311, press #3 to be connected). Veterans can also send secure messages to their health care providers via [MyhealthVet](#), VA's online patient portal. VA clinicians will evaluate veterans' symptoms and direct them to the most appropriate providers for further evaluation and treatment. This may include referral to state or local health departments for COVID-19 testing.

### **What about routine appointments and previously scheduled procedures?**

VA is encouraging all veterans to call their VA facility before seeking any care — even previously scheduled medical visits, mental health appointments, or surgical procedures. Veterans can also send secure messages to their health care providers via [MyhealthVet](#) and find out whether they should still come in for their scheduled appointments. VA providers may arrange to convert appointments to [Video Visits](#), where possible and veterans should feel free to request telehealth appointments from their VA providers.

### **Can visitors still access VA medical facilities?**

Many VA medical facilities have cancelled public events for the time being, and VA is urging all visitors who do not feel well to postpone their visits to local VA medical facilities. Facilities have also been directed to

limit the number of entrances through which visitors can enter. Upon arrival, all patients, visitors, and employees will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and possible exposure.

### **What about VA nursing homes and spinal cord injury units?**

On March 10, 2020, [VA Announced](#) that its 134 nursing homes (also called VA community living centers) and 24 spinal cord injury and disorder centers would be closed to all outside visitors. All clinical staff will be screened for COVID-19 daily before entering the nursing home or spinal cord injury units, and staff will work only within those units to limit possible transmission of the virus. Exceptions to the visitor policy will only be made for cases when veterans are in their last stages of life on hospice units or inpatient spinal cord injury units.

### **What Congress has been doing?**

#### **How are student veterans impacted?**

On March 19, the House passed Senator Moran's legislation ensuring student veterans will receive waivers for classes changing to completely online instruction because of COVID-19 – mirroring the fix detailed in Chairman Takano's HR 6212 that was introduced last week.

Even though students may be forced to switch to online classes, which under normal circumstances would lower the amount they receive for their monthly housing allowance, student veterans will now be able to maintain their current monthly housing allowance rate under this legislation.

### **Pressing VA for answers**

On March 18, Chairman Takano, Ranking Member Roe, and 25 members of the Committee sent a letter to Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie asking for frequent answers and updates on the Department's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Members asked for daily updates on:

1. Number of COVID-19 test kits available to VHA
2. Number of veterans tested, both internally and outside VA
3. Number of employees tested
4. Status of all test results including the number of positive and presumptive positive results and the location and status of those patients
5. Data on testing time: time required to complete testing, both initial testing to establish a presumptive positive and time it takes to receive CDC confirmation
6. Criteria for testing veterans and employees

And weekly updates on:

1. Number of acute care or ICU beds, current use statistics, and number used to treat COVID-19 patients
2. Number of ventilators and percentage in current use
3. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supply levels
4. Number of negative pressure beds and current use statistics
5. Pharmaceutical supply levels
6. Current staffing levels, including the number of employees out of work due to illness and/or not at work due to a positive test for COVID-19 or exposure to an individual positive for COVID-19
7. Current guidance given to VA employees and contractors who feel they may have been exposed, have symptoms, or are responsible for a child or family member who must remain home as a result of COVID-19

Read their full letter [Here](#).

### **Taking action to protect veterans**

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted governments, companies, and the general public to take action to help mitigate the spread of the disease. The Committee has taken the following actions to ensure VA has the required resources to carry out these tasks and protect veterans:

- Worked to eliminate copayments for testing and medical appointments for veterans

- Received continuous updates on VA's COVID-19 response and emergency preparedness
- Continued Committee oversight of VA's mission to respond to a national emergency
- Protected student veterans
- Ensured VA's ability to maintain continuity of operations

A full description of the Committee's actions can be found [Here](#).

### **How can the Committee on Veterans' Affairs help?**

If there is any way the Committee on Veterans' Affairs can be of assistance to you or a veteran you know, please email [Hvac.Majority@Mail.House.Gov](mailto:Hvac.Majority@Mail.House.Gov).

The Committee is also interested in hearing about veterans' experiences accessing care in their communities. Please feel free to e-mail any stories that could help inform the Committee's oversight of VA's response to COVID-19.

### **How you can help prevent the spread of COVID-19?**

The CDC released [Guidelines](#) individuals can follow to protect themselves and their communities from COVID-19. These precautions include washing your hands for 20 seconds with warm water and practicing social distancing so the virus does not unintentionally spread to other people.

Since many veterans care for family members at high risk of contracting COVID-19, it is important to contact state and local health authorities for next steps and treatment.

### **Supporting others**

The significant impact COVID-19 has on daily routines may cause unanticipated stress on some veterans in crisis. Help is available for veterans in crisis by calling the Veteran Crisis Line at 1 (800) 273-8255 and pressing 1, at [VeteransCrisisLine.Net/Chat](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/Chat), or by texting 838255.

[Source](#)



## **Navy, Marine Corps Leaders Brief on COVID-19 Response**

Acting Navy Secretary Thomas B. Modly, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David H. Berger and Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps Troy E. Black discussed the Navy and Marine Corps' role in the latest coronavirus response efforts during a briefing at the Pentagon.

[Watch the video.](#)





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## **DOD Modeling for COVID-19 Helps with Response Planning**

Though Defense Department modeling of the COVID-19 virus isn't quite robust enough yet to determine where the next outbreak will happen, the modeling is good enough now for general planning efforts, the Joint Staff surgeon said. Gen. (Dr.) Paul Friedrichs told reporters at the Pentagon today that, "we've not tried to predict that we're going to see a hotspot here, or we're going to see X number there. We used it for broad planning. Like in the community, if the outbreak occurs and X percent of people are infected over time, what does that mean as far as health care requirements?"

[Learn more.](#)



## **Thousands of Guardsmen Called Up for COVID-19 Response**

Nearly 10,000 National Guardsmen called up across the United States, with more expected soon, are performing a variety of missions in response to COVID-19 pandemic response efforts. Some are even federally funded, though they remain under the control of their respective state governors, but none of those Guardsmen are involved in law or quarantine enforcement, the chief of the National Guard Bureau said. [Learn more.](#)



## Your actions could save a life.

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

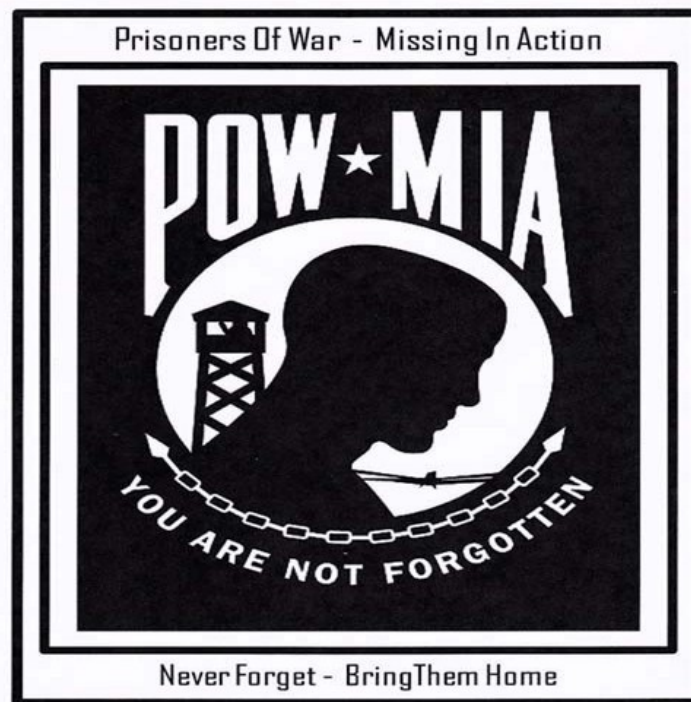
VeteransCrisisLine.net





## Switch to TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery During COVID-19 Outbreak

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 virus guidance includes the recommendation to have a supply of necessary medications on hand. TRICARE offers beneficiaries the option to get a 90-day supply of their prescriptions at military pharmacies, via [TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery](#), or at retail network pharmacies. During this outbreak receiving prescriptions at home will help lessen the spread of COVID-19 for vulnerable populations. [Learn how to switch to home delivery.](#)



DOC



## **I talked to a Man Today**

I talked with a man today, an 80+-year-old man. I asked him if there was anything I can get him while this Coronavirus scare was gripping America.

He simply smiled, looked away and said: "Let me tell you what I need! I need to believe, at some point, this country my generation fought for... I need to believe this nation we handed safely to our children and their children...

I need to know this generation will quit being a bunch of sissies...that they respect what they've been given...that they've earned what others sacrificed for."

I wasn't sure where the conversation was going or if it was going anywhere at all. So, I sat there, quietly observing.

"You know, I was a little boy during WWII. Those were scary days. We didn't know if we were going to be speaking English, German or Japanese at the end of the war. There was no certainty, no guarantees like Americans enjoy today.

And no home went without sacrifice or loss. Every house, up and down every street, had someone in harm's way. Maybe their Daddy was a soldier, maybe

their son was a sailor, maybe it was an uncle. Sometimes it was the whole damn family...fathers, sons, uncles...

Having someone, you love, sent off to war...it wasn't less frightening than it is today. It was scary as Hell. If anything, it was more frightening. We didn't have battlefield news. We didn't have email or cellphones. You sent them away and you hoped...you prayed. You may not hear from them for months, if ever. Sometimes a mother was getting her son's letters the same day Dad was comforting her over their child's death.

And we sacrificed. You couldn't buy things. Everything was rationed. You were only allowed so much milk per month, only so much bread, toilet paper.

EVERYTHING was restricted for the war effort. And what you weren't using, what you didn't need, things you threw away, they were saved and sorted for the war effort. My generation was the original recycling movement in America.

And we had viruses back then...serious viruses. Things like polio, measles, and such. It was nothing to walk to school and pass a house or two that was quarantined. We didn't shut down our schools. We didn't shut down our cities. We carried on, without masks, without hand sanitizer. And do you know what? We persevered. We overcame. We didn't attack our President, we came

together. We rallied around the flag for the war. Thick or thin, we were in it to win. And we would lose more boys in an hour of combat than we lose in entire wars today."

He slowly looked away again. Maybe I saw a small tear in the corner of his eye. Then he continued:

"Today's kids don't know sacrifice. They think sacrifice is not having coverage on their phone while they freely drive across the country. Today's kids are selfish and spoiled. In my generation, we looked out for our elders. We helped out with single moms whose husbands were either at war or dead from war. Today's kids rush the store, buying everything they can...no concern for anyone but themselves. It's shameful the way Americans behave these days. None of them deserve the sacrifices their granddads made.

So, no I don't need anything. I appreciate your offer but, I know I've been through worse things than this virus. But maybe I should be asking you, what can I do to help you? Do you have enough pop to get through this, enough steak? Will you be able to survive with 113 channels on your tv?"

I smiled, fighting back a tear of my own...now humbled by a man in his 80's. All I could do was thank him for the history lesson, leave my number for emergency

and leave with my ego firmly tucked in my rear.

I talked to a man today. A real man. An American man from an era long gone and forgotten. We will never understand the sacrifices. We will never fully earn their sacrifices. But we should work harder to learn about them.. learn from them...to respect them.



**Action Alert: Stand Up For Combat Injured Veterans!**

## **Background:**

More than 42,000 veterans have been discharged from military service because they sustained injuries while serving our country in combat. These veterans were denied the ability to accomplish their military career goals, by no fault of their own. To make matters worse, the benefits they receive as a medical retiree are reduced if they receive earned VA benefits.

This demeaning offset, created by Congress to save money, forces those who have shed blood, sweat, and tears for our country in combat to do without benefits they need to provide for their families.

## **Take Action:**

Contact your members of Congress and urge them to cosponsor the [Major Richard Star Act](#). Our nation is still at war. We must ensure that benefits for combat-wounded veterans are improved, not eroded.

**TAKE ACTION**





## **VRE Signature Guidance COVID-19 Veteran Program Participants**

Greetings, Veterans enrolled in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program, VR&E Service recognizes the current challenge we face with obtaining a wet, electronic, or digital signature from our participants. Therefore, during the period of national emergency, we have released guidance to all Regional Offices that policy will be adjusted to accept a typed signature, which will apply to any form that requires a participant's signature. All forms are available in PDF format at [www.va.gov/vaforms](http://www.va.gov/vaforms). The most commonly used VR&E forms are as follows:

- VBA-28-1900: Application for Vocational Rehabilitation for Claimants with Service-connected

## Disabilities (Fillable)

- VBA-28-8832: Education/Vocational Counseling Application (Fillable)
- VBA-21-686c: Application Request to Add and/or Remove Dependents (Fillable)
- VBA-21-674: Application Request to Add and/or Remove Dependents (Fillable)

In addition, VR&E Field staff are encouraged to communicate with participants electronically during this time. This includes utilizing tele-counseling which is accessible on any web-enabled device with a webcam and microphone (Smartphone, Tablet or Laptop). This will allow you to meet with your Counselor virtually through VA Video Connect. If interested in this service, we encourage you to contact your Counselor as soon as possible.

A grateful nation thanks you for your service.

Sincerely,

-VR&E Service



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The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one new identification, and four burial update 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 Air Forces 2nd Lt. Earl W. Smith**, 22, was a pilot assigned to the 80th Fighter Squadron, 8th Fighter Group, 5th Air Force. On Aug. 20, 1943, Smith was piloting a P-38 Lightning fighter on a test flight near Port Moresby, Australian Territory of Papua (current day Papua New Guinea), when he crashed into the harbor off of Paga Point. Smith did not eject and his

body was not recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Smith.](#)

**Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Earl F. Ferguson**, 26, of Philip, South Dakota, was a pilot assigned to the 329th Bombardment Squadron, 93rd Bombardment Group (Heavy), 8th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 aircraft on which Ferguson was the co-pilot crashed as a result of enemy anti-aircraft fire during Operation Tidal Wave, the largest bombing mission against the oil fields and refineries at Ploiesti, north of Bucharest, Romania. His remains were not identified following the war. The remains that could not be identified were buried as Unknowns in the Hero Section of the Civilian and Military Cemetery of Bolovan, Ploiesti, Prahova, Romania. Ferguson will be buried in his hometown. The date has yet to be decided. [Read about Ferguson.](#)

**Army Maj. Harvey H. Storms**, 34, of McAllen, Texas, was a member of Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, which was part of the 31st Regimental Combat Team. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 1, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Storms will be buried June 12, 2020, at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. [Read about Storms.](#)

**Army Cpl. Ralph L. Cale**, 19, of Covington, Virginia, was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. His remains could not be recovered following the attack and he was not reported as a prisoner of war. Cale will be buried Aug. 14, 2020, at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. [Read about Cale.](#)

**U.S. Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. George M. Johnson**, 23, of Seaford, Delaware, was a member of the 38th Bombardment Squadron, 30th Bombardment Group, stationed at Hawkins Field, Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands, when the B-24J bomber he was co-piloting crashed into Tarawa lagoon shortly after takeoff. Johnson and the nine other servicemen aboard the aircraft were killed. Johnson will be buried May 8, 2020, in his hometown. [Read about Johnson.](#)



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