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Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, June 21, 2020

Volume 11, Issue 22



This-N-That

Good afternoon Jim,

This weekends newsletter are things that are going on across the board, a few new articles and fresh Take Action items list.

And we'd like to wish all our fathers a Happy Fathers Day!

If you have any ideas or thoughts, please do share them with us and we will certainly look at them and see if we can merge some or all of it into the new look.

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



Happy Father's Day



Save the Date!

Herbicide Exposure and the VA Presented in conjunction with the Fleet Reserve Association

When: June 30, 2020

Where: Westin Alexandria Old Town
400 Courthouse Square
Alexandria, VA 22314

Hotel: Fleet Reserve Association has arranged discounted rooms (\$109.00 n-er night) at the hotel. Use the following link to register or call 703-253-8600
[Book your group rate for FRA Herbicide Exposure Training Meeting](#)

Due to social distancing requirements, the course is limited to the first 50 persons to register. Anyone in excess will be placed on a wait list.

Cost: Attorneys - \$180.00
MVA/FRA Members - \$55.00
Others - \$90.00

MVA has requested 5.0 hours of Continuing Legal Education credit from the State of Louisiana including ½ hour of ethics. For more information please contact John Wells, Director of Litigation at 985-641-1855 or email John.Wells@madvocacy.org. To register go to <https://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/reception.html>



ADVOCATES SEEK REVERSAL OF POLICY THAT DENIES AGENT ORANGE CLAIMS TO GUAM, AMERICAN SAMOA, JOHNSTON ISLAND VETERANS

Military-Veterans Advocacy, a Slidell, Louisiana based veterans advocacy group, has reacted to a denial of their request for rulemaking to cover veterans exposed to herbicide on Guam, American Samoa and Johnston Island. The letter, signed by Mr. Paul Lawrence, Under Secretary for Benefits, claimed that herbicides sprayed on the central pacific islands were commercial rather than tactical herbicides. In a letter to VA Secretary Wilkie dated June 8, 2020, MVA Chairman of the Board and Director of Litigation CDR John B. Wells (USN, Ret.) addressed the reasons for the denial and asked that the Secretary overrule Lawrence and grant the rulemaking request.

"Lawrence's dismissal of herbicides as commercial rather than tactical is a distinction without a difference," Wells wrote. "The Government Accounting Office (GAO) noted in a 2018 report that both commercial and tactical herbicides contain the chemicals 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D which combine to make the deadly dioxin 2,3,7,8-TCDD.

"It is not the label assigned," Wells added, "but the

chemical composition of the herbicide that wreaks havoc on the human body. Veterans exposed to that herbicide who have manifested a covered disease or disability should be covered."

Wells said evidence shows herbicide use on Guam from 1958 through 1980. Pertinent documents have been provided to the VA.

Although Lawrence admitted in his denial that leaking barrels of Agent Orange herbicide were stored on Johnston Island, he claimed that coverage should be denied because civilian contractors rather than military personnel maintained the leaking drums.

In his letter to Wilkie, Wells scoffed at this reasoning noting that the island was only 241 hectares or less than one square mile of area. Wells wrote that "civilians and military shared common areas including latrine and shower facilities, recreational facilities, a common laundry, dining hall, chapel etc. In these close quarters, cross-contamination between civilian and military would have been rampant."

Wells also submitted an affidavit from Dr. Wayne Dwemychuck, a noted Canadian environmental scientist and Agent Orange specialist who has confirmed this analysis.

Wells closed his letter with a request for Wilkie to overrule Lawrence and a promise to commence litigation by mid-July if this did not occur.

For the VA denial see:

https://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/1/0/3410338/va_ltr_denying_rulemaking_2020_05_12.pdf

For the MVA response go to:

https://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/1/0/3410338/wilkie.guam04.4-620.final.with_attachments.pdf

Source:

CDR John B. Wells, USN (ret)



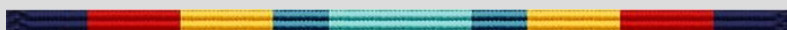
Your actions
could save a life.

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

VeteransCrisisLine.net



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



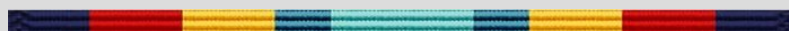
Take the VFW 2020 Voter Survey

Today there are 2.1 million U.S. service members and 20 million veterans. Including spouses, surviving parents, and voting age children, this powerful voting bloc exceeds 100 million. With another federal election year upon us, the VFW believes it is important to survey our members and supporters to better understand your voting habits. The 10-question survey, which should take about two minutes to complete, will run through June 30, 2020. Your feedback is important to the VFW. [Take the survey.](#)



Links to Other Stories

- [1. CARES Act Extends VA Home Loan Pre-Foreclosure Options](#)
- [2. Former Veterans Affairs Doctor Indicted on Multiple Civil Rights Charges](#)
- [3. NMRTC Bremerton Radiology enhances connectivity with MHS GENESIS](#)
- [4. Tricare Prescriptions Would Be Free During Pandemic Under New Proposal](#)





VA Resumes in-person Compensation and Pension exams at select locations

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today it will resume in-person Compensation and Pension (C&P) exams in select locations across the country.

VA Veterans Benefits Administration's (VBA) contracted medical examination providers will immediately begin contacting Veterans in select locations with claims pending C&P exams to schedule exam appointments.

“Resuming C&P exams allows VA to continue delivering the benefits our Veterans have earned,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “We’re keeping the safety of Veterans and our medical providers as our highest priority and have put a robust set of measures in place to ensure medical providers can safely conduct these examinations.”

Safety measures include COVID-19 screening for Veterans and employees, physical distancing and appropriate personal protective equipment to include face coverings and gloves. VA is working closely with

its medical providers to ensure the safety of Veterans and providers remains a top priority.

VA expects to start conducting in-person exams within the next few weeks based on the availability of Veterans in the following approved locations:

- White River Junction, Vt.
- Syracuse, N.Y.
- Erie, Penn.
- Huntington, W. Va.
- Danville, Va.
- Charleston, S.C.
- West Palm Beach, Fla.
- Johnson City, Tenn.
- Cleveland, Ohio
- Tomah, Wis.
- Shorewood Hills, Wis.
- Kansas City, Mo.
- Little Rock, Ark.
- San Antonio, Texas
- Fort Harrison, Mont.
- Seattle, Wash.
- Boise, Idaho
- Las Vegas, Nev.
- Tucson, Ariz.
- Fargo, N.D.

Veterans outside of these service areas will continue to be served through telehealth appointments or the

acceptable clinical evidence process, which includes a review of existing medical records to provide information needed to complete the claim, whenever possible.

Veterans within resumed service areas who do not yet feel comfortable receiving in-person exams may opt to schedule their exam for a later date without impact to their disability claim. No final action will be taken on a claim while a required in-person exam is pending.

VA expects to expand the list of available locations as conditions allow, with guidance from various agencies driving decision making.

For more information, visit [VA benefits](#).

Source:

<https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5458>

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is the only national Vietnam veterans organization congressionally chartered and exclusively dedicated to Vietnam-era veterans and their families. www.vva.org



PREVENTS Roadmap Released

On Wednesday, VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence attended the release of the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS), which is a nationwide plan for ending suicide. The PREVENTS Task Force calls for a number of steps to be taken, including a nationwide public health campaign to change the culture around suicide and mental health, launch a National Research Strategy for effective solutions for the prevention of suicide, and build partnerships among organizations to share best practices. [Learn more.](#)



VFW Participates in SVAC Roundtable on Toxic Exposure

On Wednesday, VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director Matthew Doyle participated in a roundtable hosted by the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. The purpose of the roundtable was to discuss a possible legislative solution to address toxic exposure during military service. Doyle stated, "The VFW affirms its support for a permanent framework to grant disability benefits to veterans who have developed health conditions as a result of their exposure... This framework would be evidence-based so that science would drive the granting of benefits, and benefits would not be granted without adequate science." The VFW thanks Chairman Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Ranking Member Jon Tester (D-MT) for hosting the roundtable, and for their efforts to expand veterans' disability benefits for toxic exposure. [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! (Updated 06/21/20)

1. [Support Veterans Economic Recovery Act!](#)
2. [Support NDAA Provision to Authorize A Study of Agent Orange Exposure of Service members on Guam](#)
3. [Temporarily Waive TRICARE Mail Order Co-pays](#)



Washington Post Hosts Toxic Exposure Event

On Tuesday, the Washington Post hosted another segment in the series [Veterans Frontline Concerns](#) (scroll down for the June 16 segment) on the harmful effects of burn pits and other toxic exposure incidents during military service. The event featured a discussion with Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC), Rep. Raul Ruiz, M.D. (D-CA), and actor Jon Stewart on the legislative efforts to address toxic exposure. At the event, Sen. Tillis stated, “We need an independent agency to really understand the nature of the exposures and then they can give us guidance on the population that was actually affected. But this is something that we should be talking about getting done in this Congress or the next Congress.” The VFW thanks Sen. Tillis and Rep. Ruiz for their efforts to expand VA benefits for veterans who have developed health conditions as a result of their exposure to toxic substances. [Learn more](#) about the VFW’s proposed framework for providing VA disability benefits and treatment to veterans who were exposed to toxic substances during military service.



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

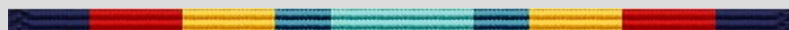
HOMELESS HEROES PROGRAM OF VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE

AMVETS GROUP

VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP

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

AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY



**VA to Host Virtual Women Veterans
Event June 23**

Next week, the VFW will join VA Acting Deputy Secretary Pam Powers who will host an event for women veterans on June 23 from 12:30-3:30 p.m. EST. VA Secretary Robert Wilkie will kick off the event to include presenters from all three VA administrations, as well as the Center for Women Veterans, and the Veterans Experience Office. The discussion will focus on how VA responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, address how VA has changed as a result of it, and the post-pandemic environment. [Learn more.](#)



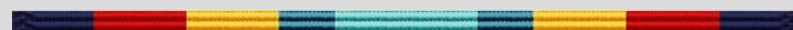
Office of Inspector General

1. [Public Health Preparedness: HHS Should Take Actions to Ensure It Has an Adequate Number of Effectively Trained Emergency Responders](#)
2. [Retirement Security: BLS Should Explore Ways to Improve the Accuracy, Timeliness, and Relevance of Its Cost-of-Living Measurements](#)
3. [Military Justice: DOD and the Coast Guard Need to Improve Their Capabilities to Assess Racial Disparities](#)

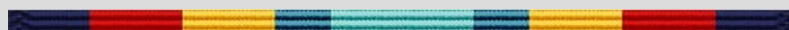


TRICARE Dental Program Increasing Annual Maximum

United Concordia, the TRICARE Dental Program contractor, announced it will be raising every enrollee's annual maximum an additional \$300. For the contract year that runs from May 1, 2020, to April 30, 2021, the annual maximum will be \$1,800. The change is automatic. Enrollees do not need to take any action for this to apply. [Learn more.](#)



CLICK HERE TO FOLLOW US ON TWITTER !



President Brings Veteran's Suicide to the Forefront

President Trump held a news conference at the White House to announce the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS) Task Force created by Executive Order 13861. After the press conference, FRA staff were invited to participate in the conference call with Barbara Van Dahlin, the executive director of PREVENTS, Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie and other senior White House officials.

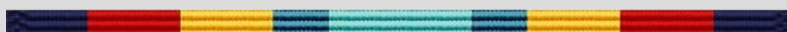
PREVENTS seeks to change the culture surrounding mental health and suicide prevention through enhanced community integration, prioritized research activities, and the implementation of strategies that emphasize improved overall health and well-being. The goal of PREVENTS is to prevent suicide - not just among veterans but all Americans. By adopting a holistic public health approach, PREVENTS is acting on the knowledge that suicide prevention is everyone's business. By working together, both locally and nationally, they can prevent suicide. PREVENTS is building on the successes of suicide prevention pioneers and agencies that are working with service members and veterans. The PREVENTS task force is partnering with stakeholders from multiple sectors, including nonprofits, state and local organizations, Fortune 500 companies and government leaders, to implement best practices to improve [mental] health and prevent suicide.



VA Denies Agent Orange Presumption for Service on Guam

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has denied a request for rulemaking to cover veterans exposed to herbicide on Guam, American Samoa and Johnston Island. The VA Under Secretary for Benefits Paul Lawrence claimed that herbicides sprayed on the central pacific islands were commercial rather than tactical herbicides. Presumptive service connection only applies to chemicals in "an herbicide used in support of the United States and allied military operations."

As noted in the May 22 issue of NewsBytes, the FRA and several other organizations have dispatched a letter to key lawmakers on the Senate and House Armed Services Committee urging them to add a provision to the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to authorize the National Academy of Medicine to perform an independent study to determine if Agent Orange was or was not used in Guam. Go to the [Action Center](#) online to ask their legislators to support this important provision.



HASC-MP Hearing on Racial Disparity in Military

In the wake of the George Floyd killing in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the Rayshard Brooks killing in Atlanta,

Georgia, the House Armed Services, Military Personnel Subcommittee held a hearing to discuss racial disparity in the military. The hearing focused on a recent Government Accountability Office report (GAO-19-344) regarding racial disparity in the military justice system and the need for reform, based on the recommendation of the GAO report. Some of the recommendations include the collection of demographic information for all types of courts-martial, evaluations to identify the causes of disparities, and taking steps to appropriately address these disparities. Col. Don Christensen (Ret.) from Protect our Defenders also made recommendations for Congress to maintain an active account of the issue by requiring the DoD to send an annual report (as is now required for sexual harassment cases) and command requesting input from rank and file.

African Americans make up 12 percent of the U.S. population and make up 16 percent of active duty military. Less than 9 percent of military officers are African American and only 7 percent are flag officers (Admiral or General). The Navy and Marine Corps have no African American admiral or general above the two-star level. The Army has one African American four-star general out of 14 four-star general positions.

General Collin Powell once served as Chairman of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff and later served as Secretary of State, but no African American has ever served as chief of staff. However, the Senate recently approved (98-0) General Charles Brown, Jr. to serve as the Air Force Chief of Staff. He will be sworn into office in the near future.

The Navy and the Marine Corps recently banned Confederate flags on ships, vehicles and elsewhere across the service. In addition, the Chairman of the Naval Academy Board C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger has requested that buildings on campus with Confederate names be changed.

The Senate version of the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act has been amended to require the Defense Department to rename military installations that were named after Confederate generals.



DHA Allows TRS Beneficiaries Who Failed to Pay Premium to Be Reinstated

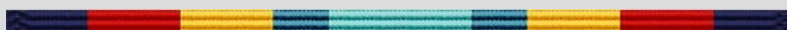
The Defense Health Agency has extended the period for the Reserve Component using TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) who lost coverage because of unpaid premiums to request reinstatement from three to five months. The extension is an acknowledgment of the financial turmoil the COVID-19 pandemic has caused some members of the Reserves. Once qualifying members pay all delinquent and current premiums, they can request reinstatement back to the date their coverage terminated. This policy is in effect for 90 days, following the end of the national health emergency. For more information [go online](#).



TRICARE Patient Portals Keep You Connected

Staying healthy means staying on top of your health care needs. But COVID-19 has upended many of our routines. TRICARE can help you stay healthy and at home using electronic tools. These online tools can help you manage your health care during this time at home, but also at any time throughout the year.

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



TRICARE FAQs: COVID-19 and Resuming Elective Procedures

As you begin to adjust to the new normal, you may have questions about your TRICARE benefit. You can find answers to your frequently asked questions (FAQs) and more on the TRICARE Coronavirus FAQs page. The following are some of the most frequently asked questions about elective surgeries or procedures and COVID-19.

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



It Takes What it Takes©

At times through our lives, we have had to do the impossible.

We did it, generally for others, for parents, for spouses, for children, for employers.

Somehow, we reached deep within, to a reserve of strength, that even amazed us we possessed such.

We made selfless sacrifices.

We gave when we thought we could give no more.

So, why is it we find it so hard to do the same for

ourselves?

Perhaps we feel that we do not deserve it.

Perhaps we feel we are being selfish, to do something for ourselves.

Perhaps we do not any longer value ourselves.

Or perhaps it is difficult, to think of self-altogether.

That same reserve is still within us.

That same strength is ours, for the asking.

That same spirit, to persevere, is available.

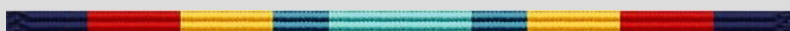
That same higher power, that made all possible before, is still there for us today.

In all the other years and all the other circumstances, for others, It took what it took.

Today, for us,

It Takes What It Takes.

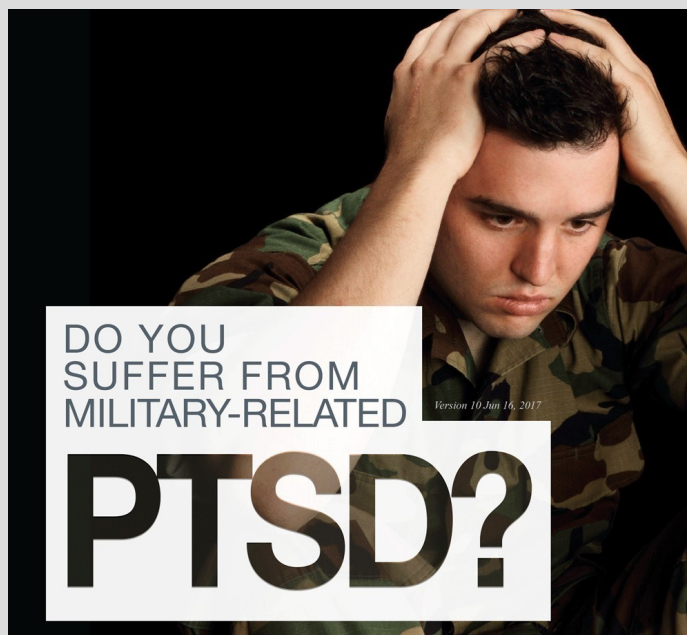
Richard G. Shuster



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



One Veteran's Pledge©

When it was my time, I served. My sons served, because I shared with them the value and meaning of serving. I wear the badge of doing the right thing, but also the pain of sending my sons into harms way. Today I can justify that it still is right, but am troubled over the pain my son has and the pain of so many other sons and daughters and the pain of their loved ones, who, like myself, sent them off to war. So, today, I proudly serve our Veterans in the best ways I can. I am an activist for Veterans issues, I honor our standing military and I help with health and well being issues of our Veterans of all Era's and for the active duty military of today. This is the focus, this is our purpose, this is what we owe to our Veterans.

Richard G. Shuster



The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced three new identifications 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. Billie Joe Hash, 18, of Corbin, Kentucky, was a member of Headquarters Battery, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 6, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Hash will be buried Aug. 29, 2020, in his hometown. [Read about Hash.](#)

Navy Radioman 3rd Class Irvin F. Rice, 22, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Rice. Interment services are pending. [Read about Rice.](#)

Navy Seaman 1st Class Wesley E. Graham, 21, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits,

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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!**



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