



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, December 20, 2020

Volume 11, Issue 37



This-N-That

Good evening Jim,

Well, it's been nearly a month since our last newsletter, and we will be returning to weekly publication status within the next two weeks.

There is simply too much information that needs to be put out to all our subscribers, and still more needs to be added to the website. So, by end of December, we will be returning to our normal routine and adding more to the site, going back to weekly publication, and we're hoping for a roll out of the new website design

soon.

It appears from what news there has been put out regarding the COVID vaccine, that VA medical professionals will be the first to get it.

I've been asked and there is still no word when it will become available to Veterans and families, but the moment we hear anything we will put it out. So do check the news section on the website, if you're not on twitter or MEWE, join us there as it gets put out there first.

I know how hot the political arena has become, a lot of blaming, finger pointing, fighting, and it all really needs to come to a stop so our government can get back to doing its job properly and taking care of WE THE PEOPLE, and this includes Veterans and families!

Many states governors are setting down some pretty harsh COVID restrictions and I'm sure this is making it even more difficult to plan for the Christmas Holiday, but just do the best you can, protect yourself and your family, and try to make the best of the situation.

As we mentioned last month it's getting colder outside, rain has arrived in many locations, and in many areas, snow has finally hit! So, we'd like to remind everyone to please make clothing donations to the local DAV to

help our homeless Veterans. Clothing and food both are needed, and I'm sure they'd be glad to accept cash donations as well to possibly help cover costs of motel rooms.

On behalf of our Volunteers nationwide and myself, we wish you and your family good health and a Very Merry Christmas!

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org



NDAA Moves Forward with Veto Threat

The leaders of Congress are poised to bring the

FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA-H.R.6395) up for a final vote next week despite the veto threat from President Donald Trump. The president has indicated he will veto the bill unless Congress abolishes a law that protects technology companies from liability over most user content. Trump had also previously threatened to veto the must-pass legislation over provisions that would require changing the names of military bases honoring Confederate generals.

Both the House and Senate versions of the NDAA contained provisions related to changing the names of military installations named after Confederate generals but did not include anything related to eliminating liability protections for certain social media platforms. Leaders in both chambers have resisted the inclusion of such a massive change to an unrelated issue for the defense bill.

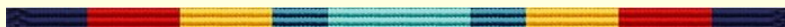
At press time, the text of the final bill was unavailable. The FRA was informed by congressional staff that the Senate provision adding three more conditions (bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and parkinsonism) to the list of diseases caused by exposure to Agent Orange herbicide was included in the final bill.



COVID-19 Update

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced that essential health care workers at the VA will be the first to be offered the COVID-19 vaccine. The VA has a limited number of vaccines and the distribution plan addresses vaccinations for veterans, staff and other federal partners including a prioritization framework for identifying the population(s) at highest risk to receive the vaccine. For more information on the VA vaccine program [go online](#).

Department of Defense (DoD) has announced that its health care workers have begun receiving the vaccine. The Defense Department's initial allocation of the vaccine is 43,875 doses. Each of the initial 16 U.S. military bases included in the first round of distribution has more than 1,000 people who are in the top priority group to receive vaccines, such as health care workers.



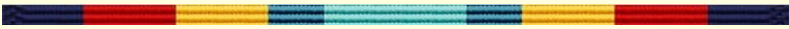


Your actions

could save a life.

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

VeteransCrisisLine.net



TRICARE Health Matters Newsletter Issue 4, 2020

Do you want to learn more about open season, which began Nov. 9 and ends on Dec. 14? Or do you want to learn about the new TRICARE Select 2021 enrollment fees? Here are just some of the topics you can read about in the latest issue of the [TRICARE Health Matters Newsletter](#):

- Act Now: TRICARE Open Season Ends Dec. 14
- Make Your FEDVIP Enrollment Choices Before Open Season Ends Dec. 14
- Don't Delay! Set Up Your TRICARE Select Enrollment Fees
- It's Not Too Late to Get Your Flu Shot

Download the latest East Region or West Region newsletter at www.tricare.mil/publications.



Team Rubicon Recruiting Medical Volunteers to Serve Navajo Nation

From disaster medicine to pandemic relief, Team Rubicon deploys EMTs, nurses, paramedics, physicians and more to serve people in need in the U.S. and around the world. Sign up to put your medical skills to work for good.

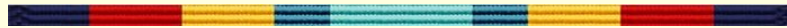
[Read More](#)



Congress Listens and Keeps Agent Orange Provision in NDAA

The Senate passed the final version of the NDAA which included the Agent Orange presumptive conditions, already passed by the House, which now heads to the president for signature. The VFW wishes to thank our members and advocates who responded to the VFW Action Alert last month and contacted their members of Congress regarding this very important provision. “The VFW commends the Senate and House Armed Services Committees conferees of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (NDAA) for including Senate Amendment 1972 in the final version of the bill. We thank Senator Tester

for introducing this important amendment which will finally add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and parkinsonism to the list of Department of Veterans Affairs presumptive conditions for herbicide exposure,” said VFW National Commander Hal Roesch. “We urge President Trump to sign the NDAA into law and provide our Vietnam veterans the long-awaited care and benefits they deserve.”



Links to Other Stories

1. Disabled Veterans get help with finances thanks to nonprofit's grants
2. Marine Who Earned Medal of Honor in Vietnam Finally

Receives
Burial
at
Arlington

3. Navy
sued
by
two
Vets
for
failing
to
assure
full
disability
ratings,
case
could
affect
thousands
of
sailors,
Marines
4. VA
Disability
Claims
Backlog
Spiked
to
300,000
During
Pandemic
5. VA
moving
ahead

with
plans
to
outsource
all
compensation
and
pension
exams

6. Community
providers:
VA
urgent
care
network
change

7. 'It's
unbelievable':
39-
year-
old
Veteran
and
father
among
Kentucky's
youngest
COVID-
19
deaths

8. VA
commemorates
addition
of
Western

New
York
National
Cemetery

9. VA
encourages
Veterans
to
leave
smoking
behind
during
annual
Great
American
Smokeout

10. VA
program
helping
more
Veterans
connect
with
bank,
credit
union
account
choices

11. VA
recognized
for
impact
on
lives
of

Blue
Water
Navy
Veterans

12. VA
Solid
Start
program
makes
strides
in
first
yearVA
Colmery
Act
IT
implementation
complete
13. Sec.
Wilkie
statement
on
the
passing
of
Chuck
Yeager
14. Thousands
of
face
shields
donated
by
all-
volunteer

group
to
help
VA
in
fight
against
COVID-
19
pandemic

15. VA
announces
initial
plans
for
COVID-
19
vaccine
distribution
16. VA
dedicates
Morovis
National
Cemetery
17. Former
Cleveland
VA
Medical
Center
supervisor
charged
with
theft
of
government

property
and
fraud

18. For-Profit Trade School Owner Charged with Defrauding VA, Student Veterans
19. Federal Indictment Charges Buncombe County Man For Receiving Veteran Benefits Based On Fraudulent Service-Connected Disabilities
20. Workrite Companies to Pay \$7.1

Million
to
Settle
Alleged
Furniture
Overcharges

21. Florida
Attorney
Admits
Role
in
\$7.5
Million
Bank
Extortion
Scheme

22. Michigan
Woman
Sentenced
For
Defrauding
U.S.
Department
Of
Veterans
Affairs
Of
Over
\$1.7
Million
In
Benefits

23. Three
Family
Members

Sentenced
In
Connection
With
Defrauding
Veterans
Health
Care
In
The
Villages

24. VA
announces
joint
final
rule
on
Equal
Treatment
of
Faith-
Based
Organizations
in
VA-
Supported
Social
Service
Programs

25. VA
begins
COVID-
19
vaccinations

26. VA

releases
COVID-
19
vaccine
distribution
plan,
vaccinations
began
this
week



Governor Newsom Makes Appointments at CalVet

SACRAMENTO—Governor Gavin Newsom made several appointments on Monday, November 30, to leadership positions at the California Department of Veterans Affairs, including reappointments of longtime CalVet staff.

"This team is highly experienced and has accomplished great things in the last several years. I am confident that they will continue to help lead this Department in its mission to serve our California veterans and their families," said CalVet Secretary, Vito Imbasciani MD.

Keith Boylan has been reappointed Deputy Secretary of Veteran Services at the California Department of Veterans Affairs, where he has served in that position since 2013. Boylan was Government Relations Liaison at the California Association of Veteran Service Agencies from 2012 to 2013 and Government Relations and Community Education Manager at the Institute for Veteran Policy from 2008 to 2012. He was Owner and Operator of Boylan Window Fashions from 2004 to 2008 and Gulf War Program Coordinator at Swords to Plowshares from 1998 to 2003. Boylan was a Tactical Fire Specialist in the U.S. Army from 1989 to 1992. He is a member of the Veterans for Peace, American Legion, and of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Sherri Gustinell has been reappointed Deputy Secretary of Administrative Services at the California Department of Veterans Affairs, where she has served in that position since 2016. Gustinell held multiple positions at the California Department of Consumer Affairs, including Assistant Personnel Officer from 2015 to 2016 and Staff Services Manager from 2006 to 2008. She was Office Chief for the Office of Business and Economic Opportunity at the Department of Transportation from 2008 to 2015. Gustinell was Labor Relations Analyst at the Bureau of Automotive Repair from 2002 to 2006. She is a

member of California Women Lead.

Lindsey W. Sin has been appointed Deputy Secretary of Communications, where she has served as acting Deputy Secretary of Communications since 2018 and as Deputy Secretary for Women Veteran Affairs since 2011. She was a Veterans Benefit Advisor and Certifying Official at Sacramento State from 2010 to 2011. Sin was Lead Certifying Official for Veterans Services at American River College from 2008 to 2010. She served in the U.S. Navy as a Cryptologic Technician Interpretive (CTI) from 1997 to 2005 and achieved the rank of Petty Officer First Class. She earned a Master of Business Administration degree from Drexel University.

John Spangler has been reappointed Deputy Secretary of Legislation and Government Relations at the California Department of Veterans Affairs, where he has served since 2017. He has served in several positions for the U.S. Army Reserve since 2010 and currently is a Major in the Army Reserve Judge Advocate General's Corps. Spangler held several positions at the U.S. Marine Corps from 2001 to 2010, including Military Police Platoon Sergeant and Regulatory Program Analyst for Marine Corps Installations West at Camp Pendleton. Spangler was Chief Consultant for the California State Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs from 2011 to 2017. He

served as a Regulatory Program Analyst in the U.S. Marine Corps from 2009 to 2011. Spangler was a Teacher for the Los Angeles Unified School District from 2007 to 2009. He served as a Deputy Attorney General at the California Department of Justice, Office of the Attorney General from 2002 to 2005, as Staff Counsel at the Office of the Inspector General from 2000 to 2002, and as Staff Counsel at the California Department of Toxic Substances Control from 1998 to 2000. Spangler earned a Juris Doctor degree from the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law.

Earlier this year, Dr. Imbasciani was reappointed as Secretary of CalVet, followed by the reappointments of Undersecretary Russell Atterberry and Deputy Secretary for Veterans Homes, Coby Petersen. Deborah Hoffman also joined the leadership team as Special Advisor.



Congress Passes Significant Veterans' Legislation Package

On Wednesday, the House passed its final vote on passage of [H.R. 7105](#), Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020, which passed the Senate earlier this month and now heads to the president for

signature. This legislation includes several VFW-supported bills that were pending in the 116th Congress.

- Most notably the Deborah Sampson Act, which would break the cultural barriers impacting women veterans by requiring VA to address privacy concerns and improve access, expand the amount of time new mothers are given to find health care coverage for their newborns, increase staff cultural competency, eliminate harassment and assault, and make other much-needed improvements to women veterans' health care. This forward-looking focus legislation would also examine outcomes to women veterans' services by requiring studies and reports on barriers to receipt of care, gap analysis on services for homeless women veterans, the availability of prosthetics for women, and other topics.
- Would require VA to make Disability Benefits Questionnaires available for public use, again.
- Would lower the age from 57 to 55 to remarry without incurring penalties for surviving spouses receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation
- Would modernize the Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (SDVI) program.
- Would require VA to study incidents of cancer and other illnesses experienced by service members who served at the Karshi-Khanabad (K2) Air Base in

Uzbekistan between Oct. 1, 2001, and Sept. 30, 2005.

- Would change the statutory definition of Vietnam veteran to include individuals who served in the Republic of Vietnam from Nov. 1, 1955, to Feb. 27, 1961.
- Would increase certain veteran funeral benefits and authorize VA to add spouses and eligible dependent children to VA-furnished headstones.
- Would increase from \$5 million to \$10 million the maximum amount VA may grant in a fiscal year to states and tribal organizations for maintaining veterans' cemeteries.
- Would call for the elimination of the 12-year limit on using Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) benefits.
- Would require VA to create a database on its website to explain public institution requirements for in-state tuition.
- Would expand benefits and services for homeless veterans.
- Would create certain education, employment, and housing protections for veterans impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The passage of this veterans' legislation package satisfies a number of VFW resolutions and legislative priorities regarding women veterans' health care, disability assistance and memorial affairs, and

economic opportunity issues.



VA Releases COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan

VA has announced publication of the [VA COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Plan](#). VA began vaccinating veterans and frontline employees this week after the authorization was given for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. The plan includes a prioritization for identifying those who are at highest risk, and addresses vaccinations for veterans, staff, and other federal partners in the U.S., Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories where VA provides health care to veterans. [Learn more.](#)



Veterans-For-Change Web Site

The Veterans-For-Change website has been around since 2009. The looks pretty much stay the same for now, but in the background our new webmaster has been working on a whole new look and feel, a facelift so-to-speak.

Constant improvement and change are 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 **1,678** hits per day, and downloads average **2,047** per day with a total **6,997,369** 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 us a confirmation E-Mail. Once received, we will approve.

www.Veterans-for-change.org

- Documents Library with over **19,646** documents in 171+ Libraries, added 142 documents on-line (Updated: 11/02/20)
- FAQ's on-line with **1,843** FAQ's on 104 topics! (Updated 05/30/20 - 46 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: 04/23/20) (3 Added)
- News (Articles On-Line: **10,100**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **7,809**, Added 79 New Links (Updated: 11/02/20)

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



Women Veterans: VA's Guide to Your Benefits & Services

VA's new Women Veterans Quick Start Guide (QSG) provides clear and concise information on how to apply for benefits and access VA health care.

[Read More](#)



Speaker of the House Calls on VA Secretary to Resign

Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi is calling on Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie to resign after the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General issued a report detailing a cover-up by VA senior leadership of a case of sexual assault targeting a veteran and House staffer. The House Speaker claims that "He has lost the trust and confidence to serve, and he must immediately resign."



Jim, 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!

Jim you don't need to be Active Duty or a Veteran, in fact we ask all Veteran friends to also help! (Updated 11/27/20)

1. [Support Veterans Economic Recovery Act!](#)
2. [NDAA Amendment to Provide Benefits to Vets Exposed to Agent Orange](#)
3. [Please](#)

Support
Addition
of
Agent
Orange
Presumptive
Diseases

4. Support
Amendments
That
Add
Diseases
Caused
by
Agent
Orange!
5. H.R.
6027,
the
Restore
Veterans'
Compensation
Act
6. H.R.
5867,
the
STOP
Veteran
Suicide
and
Substance
Abuse
Act
7. H.R.
95,

Legislation
to
Allow
Homeless
Veterans
to
Stay
With
Their
Children
While
Receiving
Services

8. H.R.
303,
the
Retired
Pay
Restoration
Act

9. H.R.
553,
Military
Surviving
Spouses
Equity
Act

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

11. Act
S
179
and
HR
712,
VA
Medicinal
Cannabis
Research
Act
of
2019
12. H.R.
1200,
the
Veterans'
Compensation
Cost-
of-
Living
Adjustment
Act
of
2019
13. S.
785,
the
Commander
John
Scott
Hannon
Veterans
Mental
Health

Care
Improvement
Act

14. H.R.
96,
to
Provide
Dental
Care
for
All
Veterans
Enrolled
in
Veterans
Health
Care
15. H.R.
6590,
DAV
Supports
Deferring
Debt
Collections
during
COVID-
19
Crisis
16. H.R.
6933,
the
Caring
for
Survivors
Act

of
2020

17. Support
S.
3761/H.R.
7443
to
re-
establish
VSO
review
period
on
VBA
decisions

18. Please
Ask
Your
Member
Of
Congress
To
Support
Tester/Harder
Amendment
In
The
Fy2021
National
Defense

19. S.
2950,
the
Veterans
Burn

- Pits
Exposure
Recognition
Act
20. Tell
Congress
to
Stand
Up
for
Vietnam
Veterans!
21. Ask
Your
Member
of
Congress
to
Support
Tester/Harder
Amendment
in
the
Fy2021
National
Defense
Author



VA Launches New Single Access Phone Number

VA announced a new phone number to access all VA services. 1.800.MyVA411 (1.800.698.2411) is

available 24 hours-a-day, 365 days-a-year, to serve veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. Callers have the option of pressing 0 immediately to be connected with a customer service agent. The Veterans Crisis Line (1.800.273.8255) and the White House VA Hotline (1.855.948.2311) will still be available at their current numbers. [Read 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



**AARP's Honoring Heroes Contest Offers
\$1,000 Prize to Outstanding Veteran,
Volunteer**

The Honoring Heroes contest celebrates Veterans who help their communities and volunteers who help improve the lives of Veterans. Submit a photo and essay of your hero by Dec. 31, 2020.

[Read More](#)



Disabled Veterans Security and Free Access to National Parks

President Trump recently signed into law several legislative proposals impacting veterans. One of the proposals (S.327, P.L.116-205) provides permanently disabled veterans free, lifetime access to national parks and other federal lands. "This bipartisan bill would allow our brave military men and women living with service-related disabilities the opportunity to experience our federal parks and lands, which can play an important role in their rehabilitation," said Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (N.H.), the bill's sponsor.

Another bill signed into law was the "Improving Safety and Security for Veterans Act" (S.3147, P.L.116-212), sponsored by Sen. Joe Manchin (W.V.) was drafted in response to the tragic murder of several veteran patients at the Clarksburg, West Virginia, VA Medical Center by a former nursing assistant who is awaiting sentencing for their deaths. This bipartisan legislation would require the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to submit detailed reports on patient safety and quality of care at VA Medical Centers (VAMC) The legislation

ensures that Congress, veterans, and their families are fully informed on the policies and procedures in place across the VA nationally.



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

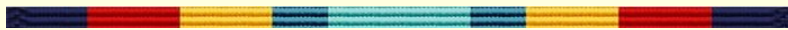
VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP

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

AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY



"History is not there for you to like or dislike. It is there for you to learn from it. And if it offends you, even better. Because then you are less likely to repeat it. It is not yours to erase. It belongs to all of us."



The Enlisted Association commends Senate for Passage of H.R. 7105 and urges House to take Swift Action

TREA is pleased with the Senate's passage of H.R. 7105, the Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 on December 9, 2020. The legislation would enhance the quality of life for veterans, their families, and caregivers:

TREA commends the House and Senate Veterans Committees in reaching agreement on this omnibus package containing provisions from more than twelve veteran-related bills. The legislation includes pandemic assistance, education and home loan enhancements, improvements in memorial services and retraining and employment assistance.

We are especially pleased that provisions of the Deborah Sampson Act are included to focus on

improving health care for women veterans, and addressing the unique challenges women face. Women veterans deserve these benefits and we look forward to working with VA as they implement these program enhancements.

TREA applauds Chairmen Moran and Takano and Ranking Members Roe and Tester for the bipartisan support to finalize the bill for the benefit veterans and their families.



BAH Rates for 2021

The Department of Defense (DoD) recently announced Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) adjustments for 2021. The DoD noted that overall average military BAH rates across the country increased an average of 2.9% between 2020 and 2021, slightly higher than the 2020 2.8% increase.

The BAH rates are based on the combination of local costs for rent and utilities for various housing types. Any fluctuation of one or more of those factors in a given location will affect BAH rates for that location. The BAH is based on geographic duty location, pay grade and dependency status. BAH is designed to provide uniformed service members housing compensation based on housing costs in each local

market. BAH is only payable when government quarters, such as barracks, are not provided or when a service member has dependents.

The FRA monitors BAH and is working to restore it to 100 percent of housing costs. The association also wants to reform enlisted housing standards by allowing E-7s and above to reside in separate homes, track BAH to ensure it is commensurate with actual housing costs, ensure adequate housing inventory and that housing privatization programs are beneficial to service members and their families.



Office of Inspector General

1. Navy
and
Marine
Corps:
Services
Continue
Efforts
to
Rebuild
Readiness,
but
Recovery
Will
Take
Years

and
Sustained
Management
Attention

2. Military
Child
Care:
Off-
Base
Financial
Assistance
and
Wait
Lists
for
On-
Base
Care
3. Military
Health
Care:
Defense
Health
Agency
Processes
for
Responding
to
Provider
Quality
and
Safety
Concerns
4. Drug
Pricing

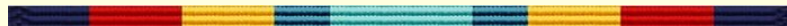
Program:
HHS
Uses
Multiple
Mechanisms
to
Help
Ensure
Compliance
with
340B
Requirements

5. Substance
Use
Disorder:
Reliable
Data
Needed
for
Substance
Abuse
Prevention
and
Treatment
Block
Grant
Program
6. Clinical
Labs:
Studies
Suggest
Biopsy
Specimen
Misidentification
and

Contamination
Errors
Are
Infrequent

7. Indian
Health
Service:
Actions
Needed
to
Improve
Oversight
of
Provider
Misconduct
and
Substandard
Performance
8. VA
Construction:
VA
Should
Enhance
the
Lessons-
Learned
Process
for
Its
Real-
Property
Donation
Pilot
Program
9. VA

Disability
Benefits:
Process
for
Identifying
Conditions
Presumed
to
be
Service
Connected
and
Challenges
in
Processing
Complex
Gulf
War
Illness
Claims



Free Yoga, Meditation, and Other Resources for Veterans

Vital Warrior founder Mikal Vega, is a Navy SEAL (Ret) and a 22-year combat Veteran who sustained injuries, including TBI and PTSD. He started Vital Warrior to help others, which includes free RA MA TV for Veterans.

[Read More](#)



News Flash



VVA Applauds the Passage of NDAA and Tester/Harder Amendment; Urges President Trump to Sign This Legislation Immediately

Bladder Cancer, Hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism to be Added to List of Conditions Recognized as Linked to Herbicide Exposure

(Washington, D.C.) – “Vietnam Veterans of America applauds the passage of FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act, which, when signed into law by the President, will add three Agent Orange-related diseases--bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism--to the Department of Veterans Affairs list of conditions linked to herbicide exposure in Vietnam and elsewhere,” said VVA National President John Rowan. “This legislation will correct a long-lingering injustice, allowing our afflicted Vietnam veterans to receive the care and benefits they have earned by their service in our long-ago, unpopular war.”

“We are deeply indebted to Sen. Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Rep. Josh Harder (D-Calif.) for their leadership on

behalf of our wounded veterans and for their amendment to the NDAA. We applaud their determination and that of their colleagues on both sides of the aisle. We are grateful to our colleagues in the veteran service community for their support. This has been a long battle, and Sen. Tester has persevered in the face of this injustice, once again, proving himself to be a true champion of veterans,” noted Rowan.

We encourage all veterans to write or call the President. Let him know how important this legislation is to our Vietnam veterans. With President Trump's signature on this bill, he will have done the right thing for our veterans, and his legacy will prevail. Contact the White House office at: 202-456-1111. Or write to the President at The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20500. Time is of the essence.

In 2016, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine deemed these illnesses, to be associated with exposure to defoliants used during the war. The academies have repeatedly linked hypertension to Agent Orange, VA officials have refused to accept the findings of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and have not added these conditions to the list of presumptive conditions.

“We will continue to battle on behalf of all veterans and their families suffering the ill health effects of their exposure to toxic substances while serving in the U.S. military, no matter where or when they served. We will not stand by silent as future generations receive the same poor treatment we have faced in our decades-long fight for recognition of our toxic wounds,” said Rowan.

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is the nation's only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA's commitment to all veterans is exemplified in its founding principle, "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."



Remembering Our Fallen at Pearl Harbor

On the 79th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the VFW solemnly honors the 2,403 men and women who died in the devastating attack on Dec. 7, 1941. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ceremonies honoring the fallen will be held virtually this year. The Pearl Harbor National Memorial will hold a live Commemorative Ceremony on Dec. 7, 2020, at

approximately 7:45 a.m. GMT-10. In addition, there will also be a virtual event, Beyond Pearl Harbor: Untold Stories of WWII that will run from Dec. 4 - 6, 2020. [Learn more.](#)



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Volunteer to Help Defeat COVID-19

VA is recruiting volunteers for COVID-19 clinical trials at select VA facilities across the country. Your decision to join a study, or not, will in no way affect your VA benefits or health care. Anyone over the age of 18 can sign up to volunteer.

[Read More](#)

NDAA to Add Agent Orange Conditions

On Wednesday, the final text of [S. 4049](#), the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (NDAA) was released, which includes a provision to

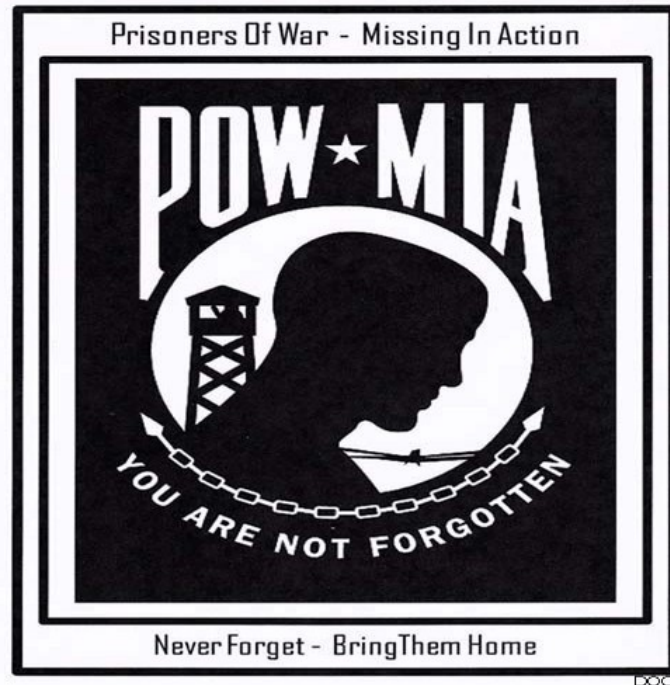
add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and parkinsonism to the list of conditions associated with exposure to Agent Orange. The VFW thanks all our advocates who took action and contacted their elected officials to urge them to keep this provision in the NDAA. The next step is for the House and Senate to vote on this legislation. Please stay tuned to the VFW Action Corps Weekly for updates about any possible VFW Action Alerts on this important legislation. [Learn more.](#)



AT&T Added to VA Video Connect Telehealth Program

Veterans using the [VA Video Connect](#) app on their mobile phones through AT&T's cellular network will no longer incur data charges when using this video telehealth technology. AT&T joins T-Mobile, TracFone by Safelink, and Verizon in allowing veterans the ability to video conference with their VA care providers on their smartphones, tablets or computer from any location with an internet connection. The agreement is part of VA's Anywhere to Anywhere initiative ensuring veterans have the best telehealth experiences. [Learn more.](#)





New DFAS Survivor SBP Newsletter

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) has launched a new twice-yearly Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) newsletter. This newsletter is specifically for survivors and SBP annuitants to assist with understanding the SBP program and how they can ensure their accounts are kept current. The VFW-supported elimination of the Widow's Tax that was finalized last year will be first phase of implementation 2021. This first issue of the newsletter has a detailed explanation of what will happen during each phase of the elimination that will continue over the next two years. [Read the newsletter.](#)

Women's Health Transition Training Program

Female service members and veterans can enroll in the [Women's Health Transition Training Program](#) (WHTT) to learn about the specific services available for women at VA health care facilities. The program focuses on the information necessary for women to transition from active-duty health care to VA health services, increasing the ability for them to proactively manage their health care. The program is offered online 10 times each week. The sessions are run by women, are unclassified, and confidential. [Read more.](#)



1. [Baxter Healthcare Recalls Baxter SIGMA Spectrum Infusion Pumps with Master Drug Library \(Versions 6](#)

and
8)
and
Spectrum
IQ
Infusion
Systems
with
Dose
IQ
Safety
Software
Due
to
Unplanned
Shutdown
Issues

2. Coronavirus
(COVID-
19)
Update:
FDA
Announces
Advisory
Committee
Meeting
to
Discuss
Second
COVID-
19
Vaccine
Candidate
3. Coronavirus
Disease

2019
(COVID-
19)

4. COVID-
19
Frequently
Asked
Questions
5. FDA
Announces
4
Grant
Awards
for
Projects
Exploring
the
Use
of
Real-
World
Data
to
Generate
Real-
World
Evidence
in
Regulatory
Decision-
Making
6. FDA
Approves
First
PSMA-

Targeted
PET
Imaging
Drug
for
Men
with
Prostate
Cancer

7. FDA
Drug
Shortages

8. Hong
Thai
Foods
Corp
Issues
Allergy
Alert
on
Undeclared
Milk
Allergens
in
Golden
Boy
Custard
Muffin
Pandan

9. Hong
Thai
Foods
Corp
Issues
Allergy

Alert
on
Undeclared
Milk
Allergens
in
Golden
Boy
Custard
Muffin
Original

10. Maribel's
Sweets
Issues
Allergy
Alert
on
Undeclared
Milk
Allergen
in
Product

11. MPM
Medical
LLC
Issues
Voluntary
Nationwide
Recall
of
Regenecare
HA
Hydrogel
Due
to

Burkholderia
cepacia
Contamination

12. WishGarden
Herbs
Issues
Voluntary
National
Recall
of
46
Units
of
Happy
Ducts
Compress
Due
to
Bacterial
Contamination

13. World
AIDS
Day
2020:
FDA
Continues
to
Drive
Advances
in
Care
and
Work
with
the

Global
Public
Health
Community

14. Coronavirus
(COVID-19)
Update:
FDA
Authorizes
First
COVID-19
and
Flu
Combination
Test
for
use
with
home-
collected
samples
15. Coronavirus
Disease
2019
(COVID-19)
(12/03/20)
16. FDA
approves
weight
management
drug
for

patients
aged
12
and
older
(12/04/20)

17. New
studies
show
diabetes
drug
not
proven
to
improve
blood
sugar
control
in
pediatric
patients
(12/04/20)

18. FDA
Guidance
on
Conduct
of
Clinical
Trials
of
Medical
Products
during
COVID-
19

Public
Health
Emergency
(12/2020)

19. Coronavirus
Disease
2019
(COVID-
19)
(12/03/20)

20. FDA
Alerts
Healthcare
Professionals
About
the
Risk
of
Medication
Errors
with
Tranexamic
Acid
Injection
Resulting
in
Inadvertent
Intrathecal
(Spinal)
Injection
(12/03/20)

21. FDA
Takes
Key
Action

in
Fight
Against
COVID-
19
By
Issuing
Emergency
Use
Authorization
for
First
COVID-
19
Vaccine

22. Coronavirus
(COVID-
19)
Update:
FDA
Holds
Advisory
Committee
Meeting
to
Discuss
Authorization
of
COVID-
19
Vaccine
Candidate
as
Part
of
Agency's

Review
of
Safety
and
Effectiveness
Data

23. Torrent
Pharmaceuticals
Limited
Issues
Voluntary
Nationwide
Recall
of
Anagrelide
Capsules,
USP
Due
to
Dissolution
Test
Failure

24. AvKARE
Issues
Voluntary
Nationwide
Recall
of
Sildenafil
100mg
Tablets
and
Trazodone
100mg
Tablets

Due
to
Product
Mix-
Up

25. Coronavirus
(COVID-
19)
Update:
FDA
Authorizes
First
Direct-
to-
Consumer
COVID-
19
Test
System
(12/09/20)

26. George
DeLallo
Co.,
Inc.
Issues
Allergy
Alert
on
Undeclared
Pecans
in
20
oz
Publix
Bakery

Holiday
Cookie
Platters

27. WishGarden
Herbs
Issues
Voluntary
Nationwide
Recall
of
Cord
Care
and
Goldenseal
Powder
Due
to
Bacterial
Contamination
28. Coronavirus
Disease
2019
(COVID-
19)
29. Project
Orbis:
Strengthening
International
Collaboration
for
Oncology
Product
Reviews,
Faster
Patient

Access
to
Innovative
Therapies

30. FDA
In
Brief:
FDA
Provides
Guidances
On
Proprietary
Naming
for
Drugs,
Changes
to
Naming
Analysis
Program

31. Flowers
Foods
Issues
Voluntary
Recall
of
Two
Canyon
Bakehouse
Products
Due
to
Possible
Presence
of

- Gluten
32. Market
of
Choice
Issues
Allergy
Alert
on
Undeclared
Almonds
in
Sour
Cherry
Baked
Brie
33. CDER
Focuses
on
Novel
Drug
Development
Tools
to
Help
Speed
Creation
of
New
Therapies
34. Interdisciplinary
Review
Team
for
Cardiac
Safety

Studies
(formerly
QT-
IRT)

35. The
Bad
Ad
Program
36. Public
Meeting:
Interim
Assessment
of
the
Program
for
Enhanced
Review
Transparency
and
Communication
in
the
Biosimilar
User
Fee
Act
37. Coronavirus
(COVID-
19)
Update:
FDA
Authorizes
Antigen
Test

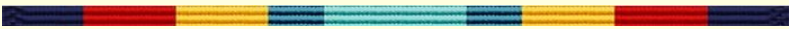
as
First
Over-
the-
Counter
Fully
At-
Home
Diagnostic
Test
for
COVID-
19

38. FDA
Approves
First-
of-
its-
Kind
Intentional
Genomic
Alteration
in
Line
of
Domestic
Pigs
for
Both
Human
Food,
Potential
Therapeutic
Uses



TRICARE Select Enrollment Fee to Start Jan. 1

DOD announced that TRICARE Select Group A retirees will be required to pay an enrollment fee beginning on Jan. 1, 2021. Congress directed the Defense Health Agency in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 to implement TRICARE Select retiree enrollment fees, but delayed the implementation. Group A is comprised of retirees and their family members if the sponsor's initial enlistment or appointment occurred before Jan. 1, 2018. The enrollment fee is waived for medically retired individuals and their family members, and for survivors of active-duty deaths. During [TRICARE Open Season](#), running now to Dec. 14, beneficiaries must set up an allotment with their regional contractors for the enrollment fee to begin on Jan. 1, 2021. Beneficiaries who do not set up their allotment by the deadline will be unenrolled due to nonpayment. These individuals would have previously had 90 days from the termination date to request reinstatement. However, recently the Defense Health Agency has agreed to extend the reinstatement period to 180 days. [Learn more.](#)





Soldiers' Angels Adopt-A-Family Program provides Holiday Support for Veterans

Through the Soldiers' Angels Holiday Adopt-A-Family program, eligible military and Veteran families are "adopted" by individuals, businesses, and organizations that are eager to support them and ensure a wonderful holiday season.

[Read More](#)

FRA Staff Meets with Biden-Harris Transition Team

The FRA staff and other members of The Military

Coalition (TMC) Veterans Committee met with the incoming Biden-Harris transitioning team to review goals concerning the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). NED Chris Slawinski serves as co-chair of this TMC committee. The review team led by Phillip Carter inquired about specific challenges facing Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) working with the VA.

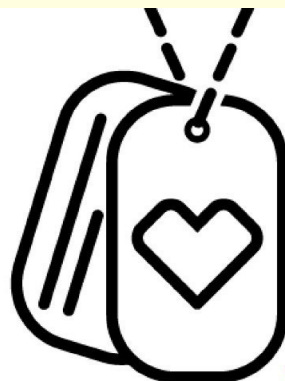
The FRA staff and other Coalition staff discussed pathways to solve some of the complex issues facing the VA. Due to the pandemic, there has been a sharp increase in backlogs for claims and appeals, and the FRA wants to work with the incoming administration on an effective strategy to clear the backlog of claims.

The issue of toxic exposure in the military has gained new traction due to rising reports of cancers and other illnesses facing veterans of the Global War on Terrorism. President-elect Biden believes his son Beau's death can be attributed to toxic exposure while serving in Iraq. At the meeting, several proposals were discussed that would benefit veterans who were exposed to toxic agents during their service. The committee also raised concerns about the veteran's suicide rate, proper oversight of appropriations, and funding of educational benefits such as the Vet Tec Program. The transition team promises to work hand in hand with the community to provide exceptional service to the nation's veterans.



Online Christmas Concert for WWII Veterans

2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands following the German occupation during World War II. Ninety young singers of the Haarlem Choir School in The Netherlands intended to travel to the United States during their spring break on a Thank You tour to honor U.S. veterans for their important role in the liberation. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tour cannot take place. In an effort to still show their appreciation, a special online Christmas concert will be streamed from the Cathedral of Saint Bavo in Haarlem, including the entire Cathedral Choir to honor U.S. veterans. This unique and short program can be viewed live on YouTube on Sunday, Dec. 20, 2020, at 1 p.m. EST. [Watch the concert.](#)



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Compare 2021 FEDVIP Plans Online

The Federal Benefits Open Season ends on Dec. 14. If you're eligible for dental or vision coverage through the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), don't miss your chance to enroll in or change your FEDVIP dental and/or vision plan. Not sure where to start? At [BENEFEDS](#), you can check your eligibility, explore plans, enroll in a plan, and more.

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



Funding Agreement to Keep Government Open Still Remains Elusive

As NewsBytes goes to press, Congressional leaders report progress on a year-end legislative package to fund the federal government, offer pandemic relief to small businesses and individuals and potentially extend temporary tax policies.

Despite multiple meetings, agreements have not been reached. Lawmakers and the White House have been discussing another relief package for months without reaching consensus on liability protections for

businesses and financial aid for states and cities that face pandemic-related budget shortfalls. If no agreement on funding can be reached, another short-term Continuing Resolution will probably be passed.



Modernization of VHA Eligibility Requirements

The House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) recently held an oversight hearing to review the eligibility requirements for enrollment in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system. The current enrollment priority group system has remained largely unchanged since its inception in 1996. The committee discussed expanding eligibility to veterans who received other than honorable discharges. No examinations or reforms have been made to the current eligibility system. Earlier this year

Rep Dr. Roe introduced "Modernizing Veterans' Healthcare Eligibility Act" (H.R.7469) that would establish an advisory commission regarding eligibility for health care furnished by the VA. This commission would assess veterans' eligibility for care in the VA health care system and they would make recommendations to the VA and congress on how eligibility could be improved. Concerns were raised about the potential problems of reforming the VHA during a pandemic. Additionally, many witnesses who testified emphasized the confusion and difficulty of the current priority group system. There are currently 8 priority groups for veterans using the VHA.



Change in Committee Leadership

The retirement of Reps. (Dr.) Phil Roe (Tenn.) and Mac Thornberry (Tex.), Ranking members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee and House Armed Services Committee respectively, has provided openings on these two important committees. The Ranking Member is the leading member of the minority party on the committee. The House Republican Caucus Selected Rep. Mike Rogers (Ala.) for Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Committee and Rep. Mike Bost (IL) for Ranking Member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

Their promotions take effect on the start of the new (117th) Congress that begins January 3, 2020.



H.R. 6395 FY2021 NDAA has passed the House/Senate and includes the Harder/Tester amendments

Today the Senate voted overwhelmingly on a bipartisan basis to pass the conference report for H.R.6395 National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (NDAA) by a vote of 84-13, the conference report passed the House by a vote of 335-78 on December 8, 2020.

The House and Senate passed bill retained the bipartisan Harder/Tester amendments to add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism as service-connected conditions in Section 9109.

See language below:

Sec. 9109. Additional diseases associated with exposure to certain herbicide agents for which there is a presumption of service connection for veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam.

Section 1116(a)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subparagraphs:

‘(I) Parkinsonism.

(J) Bladder cancer.

(K) Hypothyroidism.’”

The bill will now be presented to the President to sign into law.

VVA thanks Representative Harder/Senator Tester for their leadership on behalf of our wounded veterans and for their amendment to the FY2021 National Defense Authorization Act.

View conference report:

<https://docs.house.gov/billsthisweek/20201207/CRPT-116hrpt617.pdf>

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is the nation's only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA's commitment to all veterans is exemplified in its founding principle, "Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another."





Code Platoon Offers Coding Bootcamp for Veterans

Veterans and their spouses can train to become professional, certified software developers with Code Platoon's Coding Bootcamp, an immersive, hands-on training program with job placement opportunities as a web developer upon graduation.

[Read More](#)



A Day that Will Live in Infamy

Monday, December 7 is the 79th anniversary of the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor that led to America's entry into World War II. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, many annual ceremonies memorializing those who made the ultimate sacrifice on "the day that will live in Infamy" have been postponed.

Your Options to Get a Flu Shot

Do you normally receive your care at a military hospital or clinic? If the flu vaccine isn't available at a military hospital or clinic, you can still get the vaccine at no cost through the TRICARE network. First, check with your military hospital or clinic for availability. If the flu vaccine is unavailable, follow the guidance below.

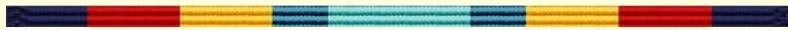
To learn more, [read the article](#).



House Holds Hearing on Toxic Exposures

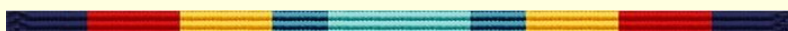
On Wednesday, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorials Affairs held a hearing on toxic exposures and VA's

presumptive service connection determination process. VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Kristina Keenan submitted a statement for the record in which she explained the difficulties veterans face when filing VA disability claims for conditions related to toxic exposures due to the lack of documentation proving direct service connection. Keenan expressed the need for a comprehensive framework for VA to study, assess, and grant presumptive service connection for past, present, and future veterans affected by toxic exposures. This framework is described in detail in VFW-supported [S. 4393](#), Toxic Exposure in the American Military (TEAM) Act of 2020. [Watch the hearing](#) or [read the testimony](#).



President Signs Mental Health Care and Services Bill

President Trump signed into law the VFW-supported H.R. 8247, the Veterans Comprehensive Prevention, Access to Care and Treatment (COMPACT) Act. This legislation will enhance a wide variety of much-needed services related to improving transition, suicide prevention, and care and services for women veterans. [Read more](#).



HVAC Women Veterans Task Force Holds Roundtable

On Wednesday, members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Women Veterans Task Force, VA, women veterans, and VSOs discussed the [2020 Report of the Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Women Veterans](#). The report recommends financial relief for female student veterans between school sessions, measurable standards for women veteran health coordinators, incentives for women's health providers to ensure a continuum of care, establishing a breast imagining services national strategic plan, assessing the End Harassment Campaign, and other critical issues specific to women veterans. Chairwoman Julia Brownley (D-CA) concluded the roundtable by quoting Dr. Mary Edwards Walker, the only female Medal of Honor recipient, "Let the generations know that women in uniform also guaranteed their freedom." [Watch the roundtable.](#)



Tax & Credit Information



1. [Interest](#)

rates
remain
the
same
for
the
first
quarter
of
2021

2. IRS
to
employers:
Remember
Feb.
1,
2021
deadline
for
Form
W-
2,
other
wage
statements
3. Taxpayers
should
check
out
these
tips
before
choosing
a
tax

preparer

4. National
Tax
Security
Awareness
Week,
Day
4:
Security
Summit
urges
businesses
to
tighten
security,
offers
new
protections
against
identity
theft

5. National
Tax
Security
Awareness
Week,
Part
3:
IRS
expands
Identity
Protection
PIN
Opt-
In

Program
to
taxpayers
nationwide

6. IRS
will
soon
conceal
sensitive
data
on
business
tax
transcripts

7. Tips
to
help
people
stay
safe
online

8. IRS
National
Tax
Security
Awareness
Week,
Day
2:
2021
online
tax
preparation
products
to

offer
multi-
factor
authentication
for
taxpayers,
tax
pros

9. National
Tax
Security
Awareness
Week
opens
with
warnings
to
all
taxpayers
and
tax
professionals
as
holidays,
2021
tax
season
approach

10. Get
ready
to
file
taxes:
What
to

do
before
the
tax
year
ends

11. National
Tax
Security
Awareness
Week,
Day
5:
Security
Summit
alerts
tax
professionals
to
potential
telework
scams
during
COVID-
19,
urges
all
practitioners
to
use
multi-
factor
authentication

12. Special
Tax

Deduction
for
Cash
Donations
to
Charities
in
2020

13. All
tax
prep
software
will
offer
multi-
factor
authentication
beginning
in
2021

14. Treasury
and
IRS
issue
final
regulations
on
the
deduction
for
qualified
transportation
fringe
and
commuting

expenses

15. IRS has begun sending letters to taxpayers that may need to take action related to Qualified Opportunity Funds. IRS provides guidance on legislation that increases automatic enrollment cap percentage and eases burdens for certain safe harbor

plans

16. Identity Protection PIN Program will soon be available to taxpayers nationwide

17. IRS warns people about a COVID-related text message scam

18. Get Ready for Taxes: What's new and what to consider when filing in

2021

19. Highlights from the 2020 National Tax Security Awareness Week
20. Every taxpayer has the right to challenge the IRS's position and be heard
21. Most taxpayers can deduct up to \$300 in charitable contributions without itemizing

deductions

22. IRS:
Volunteers
needed
for
free
tax
prep
help
23. Small
businesses
should
make
sure
to
use
the
right
form
when
filing
employment
tax
returns
24. New
things
taxpayers
should
consider
as
they
get
ready
to
file

taxes
in
2021
25. Get
Ready
for
Taxes:
Stay
home
and
stay
safe
with
IRS
online
tools



VA Adds Thousands of Jobs, Increases Remote Options

Even during challenging economic times, VA continues to increase its workforce, including remote positions. If you're looking for a clinical or non-clinical health career, consider VA.

[Read More](#)



CHAMPVA to Cover Autism Treatment

The Civilian Health and Medical Program of the

Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) will now support the treatment of children with autism. Applied Behavior Analysis is an evidence-based treatment for autism spectrum disorder that will now be available for the first time. [Learn more.](#)



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 NEWSLETTER!](#)



Found a TRICARE Plan? Enroll Using One of These Options

You've entered [open season](#) and decided on a TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select plan for you and your family. Ready for the next step? It's now time to enroll. Whether you're stateside or overseas, enrolling in a TRICARE plan or switching plans is easy. For a list of ways you can enroll in a plan or switch plans during open season, read the article.

Keep up with [TRICARE and COVID-19](#) updates.



Congress Passes One-week CR

As NewsBytes goes to press, the House passed and the Senate is expected to pass a Continuing Resolution (CR-H.R.8900) to keep the government operating until December 18, 2020. The current CR expired Friday, December 11, 2020. Top appropriators are "very close" to reaching a compromise on the unresolved issues for an omnibus spending package for FY2021. Sen. Richard Shelby (Ala.) Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee said negotiators have agreed to 95 percent of the issues in the FY2021 spending bill to fund the government. The Federal government has been operating under a stop gap spending measure since October 1, 2020, because Congress was unable to agree on and pass the dozen annual spending bills on time.



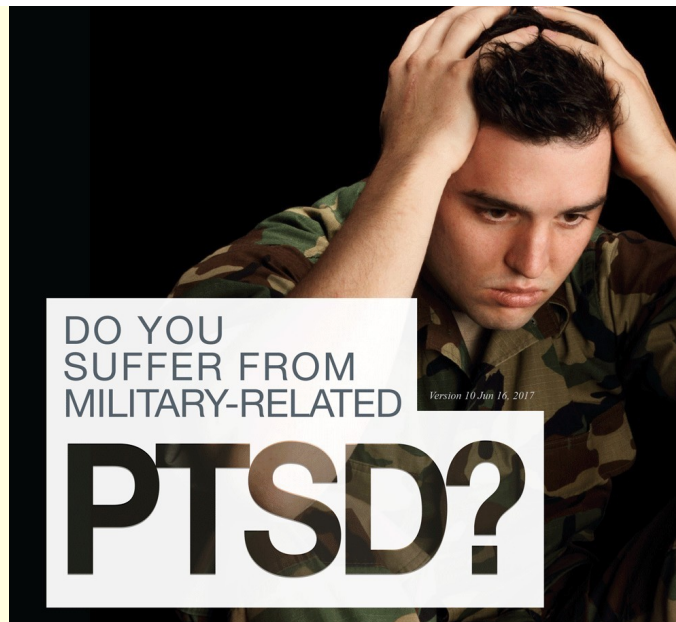
Biden Selects New SecDef and VA Secretary

Presumptive President elect Joseph R. Biden announced that he has selected retired Army General Lloyd Austin as his nominee for Secretary of Defense. General Austin, who would be the first African American to lead the Pentagon, needs a

congressional waiver to serve because he has not met the required seven years of being removed from the military to fill the Pentagon's top civilian job. Austin led the U.S. Central Command until he retired in 2016 and has served in the military since graduating from the U.S. Military Academy in 1975. His appointment has run into bipartisan resistance on Capitol Hill, where there are growing concerns about another former commander leading the Pentagon in a nation that has a long tradition of civilian control of the military.

Presumptive President elect Biden also announced he will nominate Denis McDonough, who served as White House chief of staff under President Obama, to head the Department of Veterans Affairs. McDonough, a longtime Senate staffer, also served as a Deputy National Security Adviser during the Obama administration.





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



Veterans in Congress


According to The Hill newspaper, the number of veterans who will serve in the new Congress (117th) continues a decades-long downward trend. Less than 90 members of the new Congress will have served in the military, which is the lowest figure in recent years. During the 1970s, at least 70 percent of lawmakers had served in the military, according to the Pew Research Center. Today, that number is less than 20 percent. There are still eight Congressional races that have yet to declare a winner.



Understanding TRICARE Coverage of COVID-19 Testing


If you have symptoms of COVID-19 and go to the doctor to get tested, will TRICARE cover your visit and your test? Will TRICARE cover your COVID-19 test if you don't have symptoms but want to get a test for peace of mind? If you're confused about COVID-19 tests and what TRICARE covers, be sure you check out the latest information on the TRICARE website.

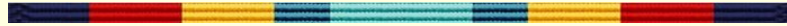
To learn more, [read the article](#).



FRONTLINE HEALTH CARE WORKERS AMONG FIRST IN DOD FOR COVID-19 VACCINE

Military hospitals and clinics in Washington, D.C., San Diego, and San Antonio received their first shipment of the COVID-19 vaccine and are already vaccinating health care workers like Army Capt. Horton, an internal medicine provider at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. Read more about this [step forward in the fight against the coronavirus](#).

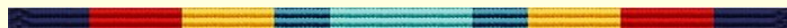




Make Your Mental Health a Priority this Holiday Season

Of course, even during a typical holiday season, extra travel, shopping, entertaining, and memories of lost loved ones may cause stress. Especially in this unusual holiday season, you should take time to think about ways to strengthen your mental health. Here are some tips and a reminder about your TRICARE coverage, which includes [mental health services](#).

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



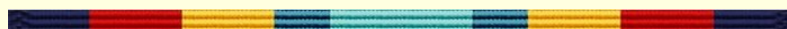
Congress Sends President an Omnibus Veterans Bill

Congress approved the "Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act" (H.R.7105) that increases resources for homeless veterans, creates a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) advisory committee for Native American veterans and

mandates that every VA hospital hire a dedicated women's health provider, among dozens of other measures.

The legislative package, which lawmakers described as an end-of-year omnibus bill for veterans, is more than 340 pages and includes numerous provisions for female veterans, Native American veterans, homeless veterans, student veterans and those veterans who are experiencing the effects of toxic exposures as well as those affected by the coronavirus. The bill creates a dedicated Office of Women's Health at the VA, provides \$20 million to retrofit VA hospitals with women's health spaces and makes permanent a program to provide childcare at VA facilities, among other measures.

Following the Senate's approval last week, the House passed the bill by voice vote without any objections. It now heads to President Trump's desk for his signature. The vote comes as Congress is wrapping up its 116th legislative session.



We know most Veterans have had issues both current

and in the past with the Veterans Affairs, and we'd really like to hear from you!

So now is your chance to voice your concerns, opinions, problems, compliments, advice, etc., anything you'd like to have heard.

We will be creating another category in the "NEWS" section of the website called "SOUND OFF" and instead of us continually sending this type of information in fax blasts to all 535 members of Congress, we will be adding to the website as we know many members of Congress do watch us, and this makes it a lot easier for us to track the number of people reading the issues.

In addition, it might even open the door for your fellow Veteran's to see they're not alone, and they too might voice their concerns.

Your story can be as long or as short as you'd like to express what you have to say, we can post as anonymous, or if you want we can post your name to the article, just tell us how you would like for us to post your story and we will adhere to your request.

We only ask that you keep it clean from foul language, and we will edit only to correct grammar, and if need be to edit out any foul language as that is an almost

immediate cut off from Congress to pay attention.

Send your story to JIM.DAVIS@VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE.org and we will get it posted as quickly as we can. And if you have a title for your story that would be fantastic, as we will be providing the story title and link to Congress.



The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced seven new identifications for service members and five burial updates who have been missing and unaccounted-for from World War II.

Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

Navy Fire Controlman 2nd Class Harold F. Trapp, 24, and **Navy Electrician's Mate 3rd Class William H. Trapp**, 23. were 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 the Trapp brothers. Interment services are pending. [Read about the Trapp brothers.](#)

U.S. Navy Chief Carpenter's Mate Tedd M. Furr, 39, 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 Furr. Interment services are pending. [Read about Furr.](#)

U.S. Navy Bandmaster James B. Booe, 42, 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 Booe. Interment services are pending. [Read about Booe.](#)

U.S. Navy Seaman 1st Class Carl S. Johnson, 20, of Phoenix, Arizona, was assigned to the battleship USS West Virginia, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS West Virginia sustained multiple torpedo hits, but timely counter-flooding measures taken by the crew prevented it from capsizing, and it came to rest on the shallow harbor floor. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 106 crewmen, including Johnson. Johnson will be buried Jan. 15, 2021, in his hometown. [Read about Johnson.](#)

U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Louis S. Doddo, 30, of South Norwalk, Connecticut, was a member of the 105th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Division. He was killed July 7, 1944, during a massive Japanese attack against the 105th on the island of Saipan. His remains were not known to have been recovered. The Army issued a finding of death on July 8, 1945. Doddo will be buried May 2021 in his hometown. [Read about Doddo.](#)

Navy Chief Warrant Officer John G. Connolly, 48,

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 Connolly. Interment services are pending.

[Read about Connolly.](#)

U.S. Navy Fireman 1st Class Paul E. Saylor, 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, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Saylor. Interment services are pending.

[Read about Saylor.](#)

Army Pvt. Hillary Soileau, 23, was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, when American forces went on the offensive to clear Guadalcanal of Japanese Forces. Soileau was wounded on Jan. 14, 1943, during fighting on a group of hills nicknamed Galloping Horse. Following the battle, he could not be found. Soileau was declared missing in action on Feb. 3, 1943, and officially declared killed in action on Dec.

13, 1945. Interment services are pending. [Read about Soileau.](#)

Navy Seaman 2nd Class Charles A. Jones, 21, of Harvard, Nebraska, 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 Jones. Jones will be buried in his hometown. The date is yet to be determined. [Read about Jones.](#)

Marine Corps Cpl. Elmer E. Drefahl, 22, of Milwaukee, 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 Drefahl. The date and location for Drefahl's burial have yet to be determined by the family. [Read about Drefahl.](#)

Army Sgt. Billy V. Rodgers, 19, was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 31st Regimental Combat Team, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950,

when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Rodgers will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Rodgers.](#)



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



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