



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, May 09, 2021

Volume 12, Issue 19



## ***This-N-That***

Good afternoon Jim,

First off, I would like to take this moment to wish all our Mom's a happy and wonderful Mother's Day!

This week the news from various sources has been flying in and it took quite a bit of time to sort through what was just everyday "pat on the back" type news and what was valid information which could be useful.

Also, this week, we did a fax blast to the Senators

and another fax blast to the Congressmen asking for their support on all legislation pending in their respective houses and provided a detailed list of bills to each.

If I can manage to get the same type of information on a monthly basis, that will be a priority for VFC is doing fax blasts to the Senate and House on any open legislation requesting they co-sponsor and vote YES on each bill, and requesting they do what they can to get them all to the floor for a vote and passage quickly.

It looks like our current homeless Veteran situation might end up getting worse and sooner than anyone could anticipate.

The Supreme Court declared that the CDC didn't have the authority or power to issue any mandate to prevent evictions due to covid, and so far, I've not been able to get any kind of a response from those in DC I attempted to address the issue with.

I know our numbers have dramatically increased here in California, but the majority of those are individuals who have crossed the Mexican/California border illegally.

Many of our Veterans live in rented apartments and homes, and when landlords get word, they can evict we will be seeing hundreds if not thousands more being kicked to the curb!

If you've not visited our website, [www.veterans-for-change.org](http://www.veterans-for-change.org) or not visited in a while, please be sure to check often for updates on documents, web links, etc., we are a bit slow, but are moving as fast as we can, yet not over-loading to put more work on our Webmaster when we get to the transition 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](mailto:Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org)



## **VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE**

Chairman's Remarks

A lot has been going on this spring as MVA emerges from the pandemic ready to continue to

litigate, legislate and educate on behalf of our armed forces and veterans. I am planning my first Washington trip in over a year to take place this month. I will be attending the roll out for the Lonnie Kilpatrick Central Pacific Island Relief Act, meeting with officials from the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee and with our partners at the Association of the United States Navy. It will be a short, but hopefully productive trip.

The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC) held a legislative hearing on April 28, 2021. The bills under consideration included several that were highlighted as MVA Bills of the Week. We filed a written statement for the record that can be found on our web site at:

[http://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/1/0/3410338/written\\_testimony.svac.421.pdf](http://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/1/0/3410338/written_testimony.svac.421.pdf) The House will also be holding a hearing this month.

One of the bills considered by SVAC was the MVA authored HR 657, which would extend the presumption of Agent Orange exposure to bases in Thailand through June 30, 1976. Senator Boozman testified on this bill and thanked MVA for their assistance. The entire hearing can be viewed at: <http://www.veterans.senate.gov/hearings/hearing-on-pending-legislation-04-28-21>

We have also filed our opening brief in our suit against the VA concerning Thailand. This suit also addresses coverage of Vietnamese airspace and expansion of the Blue Water Navy coverage. The opening brief can be found at:

[http://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/1/0/3410338/opening\\_brief.pdf](http://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/1/0/3410338/opening_brief.pdf)

Our efforts to cover Guam, American Samoa and Johnston Island are also moving forward. The Lonnie Kilpatrick Central Pacific Island Relief Act will be introduced on May 20, 2021. It will be sponsored by Congressmen Mike San Nicholas of Guam and Gus Bilirakis of Florida. It appears that we will have over 30 original co-sponsors. We are still looking for original co-sponsors so please contact your Member of Congress and ask them to sign on.

We have also filed our opening brief on the Guam lawsuit. It can be found at:

[http://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/1/0/3410338/20.opening\\_brief.pdf](http://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/1/0/3410338/20.opening_brief.pdf)

The Association of the United States Navy and Senator Therese Terlaje of the Guam Legislature have filed amicus curiae briefs in support of our action.

We are continuing to attempt to locate a sponsor for a bill to cover the Panama Canal Zone. We have also sent additional evidence to the VA Secretary concerning our rulemaking request on Panama.

[https://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/1/0/3410338/rulemaking\\_doc\\_for\\_panama\\_cz.amplification\\_03.pdf](https://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/1/0/3410338/rulemaking_doc_for_panama_cz.amplification_03.pdf)

Jerry Balmes, our Section Chief and Director for Okinawa, and I are planning to get together soon to finalize a rulemaking request for Okinawa. We are also hoping to get a bill introduced this Congress. Currently we are working on a request for a report on herbicide use on Okinawa as part of the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act.

As promised, the annual rifle raffle is now a reality. This year we are raffling off a Springfield M1A1 as first prize, a Smith and Wesson Model 686 7-shot revolver as second prize and \$250 cash as third prize. The drawing will be June 6, 2021. You do not have to be present to win. For details and to sign up please go to

<https://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/rifle-raffle.html> Tickets are \$45.00 apiece. We have only printed 300 tickets so sign up now.

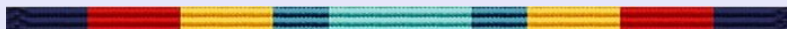
We will have another seminar/Continuing Legal

Education online presentation sometime this summer. More on that next month.

Please take the time to participate in our Bill of the Week program. So far, we have almost 650 advocacies who have sent over 4600 emails to Congress. That is a good start, but we need more support. Not every advocate has participated every week. Please take a minute to review our past Bills of the Week and sign up to send an email supporting these bills. It's important!

I hope you are enjoying our newsletter. We will continue to try to publish on a monthly basis. Feedback is always appreciated. Stay safe and God bless!

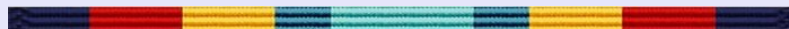
John B Wells  
Commander USN (ret)  
Chairman  
(Courtesy Military Veterans Advocacy)



**Student Nurse Day honors 25,000 students  
training at VA**

Student Nurse Day honors student nurses, approximately 25,000 of whom train at VA each year. Registered nurse and nurse practitioner residents are critical to VA and nation's nursing workforce.

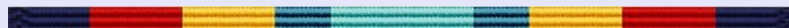
[Read More](#)



### **Wave CARSON+ deploys new EHR to 25 more MTF commands**

Over the weekend, the Military Health System deployed the MHS GENESIS electronic health record (EHR) to 25 military medical treatment facility (MTFs) commands to more sites in 12 states.

[Read More](#)



### **Military Sexual Trauma survivors: You're Not Alone**



A victim of Military Sexual Trauma can have unique needs for support and healing. VA offers help to MST victims with no required documentation.

[Read More](#)



### **#VeteranOfTheDay Army Veteran Jason Pak**

Today's #VeteranOfTheDay is Army Veteran Jason Pak, a West Point graduate and Ranger who survived an IED blast during a deployment to Afghanistan.

[Read More](#)



## **Defense Commissary (DeCA) Conference Call**

FRA staff (ADLP Theo Lawson) among other organizations held a meeting with the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) to discuss a range of issues concerning commissary benefits. Mr. William Moore, Director of DeCA, presented the current state and the future of the agency as well as asking for feedback from the audience on improvements and new ideas.

A recent focus group conducted on junior enlisted service members revealed the lack of knowledge on the benefits of the commissary. Mr. Moore also stressed the importance of educating certain groups of veterans of their commissary benefits which started in January 2020 as part of the FY2020 NDAA. The agency believes the pandemic hindered the outreach program to inform veterans about these benefits.

The agency plans on an early education program of the commissary benefits as early as the completion of Bootcamp. The Patron Council, which originally provided guidance on the needs and wants of the commissary users, was shut down due to the cost of logistics. With the onset of virtual meetings, the

agency is looking into reinstating the council.

The commissary with its tax-free shopping and other perks grants users about 23.7 percent in savings compared to the local market, the agency is looking to increase the savings up to 25 percent. The agency is planning an expansion of their online shopping and curbside pickup currently at 11 stores to about 200 stores by the end of the year with a possibility of home delivery.

Veterans can find out how to gain access to their [commissary benefits](#).



**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

The advertisement features two men, one in a light blue shirt and glasses, and another in a dark sweater, standing together. The text is in blue and black, with a white background for the text area.

## House Veterans Affairs Committee

On May 5, 2021, at 10:00 am the House Veterans

Affairs Committee, Chairman Mark Takano and Ranking Member Bost will hold a full Committee hearing entitled “Legislative Hearing on: H.R. 1273, Vietnam Veterans Liver Fluke Study Act (Rep. Zeldin); H.R. 1355, K2 Veterans Care Act of 2021 (Rep. Lynch); H.R. 1585, Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act of 2021 (Rep. Meng); H.R. 1972, Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act of 2021 (Rep. Harder); H.R. 2127, TEAM Act (Rep. Bost); H.R. 2268, Keeping Our Promises Act (Rep. Westerman); H.R. 2368, COVENANT Act (Rep. Luria); H.R. 2372, Presumptive Benefits for War Fighters Exposed to Burn Pits and Other Toxins Act (Rep. Ruiz); H.R. 2436, Veterans Burn Pits Exposure Recognition Act of 2021 (Rep. Slotkin); H.R. 2530, Enewetak Atoll Cleanup Radiation Study Act (Rep. Nehls); H.R. 2569, Veterans Agent Orange Exposure Equity Act (Rep. Cartwright); H.R. 2580, Palomares Veterans Act of 2021 (Rep. Hayes); H.R. 2607, FASTER Presumptions Act (Rep. Trone); H.R. 2742, PFAS Registry Act of 2021 (Rep. Pappas), and H.R. 2825, Fort McClellan Health Registry Act (Rep. Tonko)”

Vietnam Veterans of Americas submitted a Statement for the Records and can be view at <https://vva.org/category/vva-testimony/> on May 5, 2021

<https://vva.org/what-we-do/veterans-advocacy/legislative-action-center/> view hearing bills

Hearing can be watched live at:

<https://veterans.house.gov/events/hearings/04/29/2021/full-committee-legislative-hearing>



## **VA 3D Printing: Innovative rapid prototyping and custom solutions**

Kaila Grenier fabricated hundreds of "ear savers" for face masks. She identified a failure in protective helmets where the disposable face shield attaches. She was able to 3D print replacement side clips.

[Read More](#)



## **VVA Applauds Major Policy Reversal by Joint Chiefs on Military Sexual Trauma**

(Washington, D.C.) --"Vietnam Veterans of America applauds the recent decision of Joint Chiefs Chair

Gen. Mark Milley to drop his opposition to policy changes on how the military handles sexual assault and his current openness to removing Military Sexual Assault investigations from the chain of command,” said John Rowan, VVA National President.

“We are grateful for the leadership of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who formed an independent review commission to carry out a critical, 90-day review of Pentagon policies and procedures on the handling of sexual assaults,” said Rowan. “This major reversal of military practice on the part of the Joint Chiefs follows the review commission’s recommendation that the prosecution of servicemembers for sexual assault be made by independent authorities.”

“Vietnam Veterans of America has been at the forefront of the fight for justice for the women and men of our armed forces who have suffered incidents of sexual trauma and harassment,” said Rowan. “This major reversal of military practice, which comes amid mounting pressure from both the administration and Congress, is long overdue,” said Rowan.

“On Capitol Hill, we are grateful for the tenacious

leadership of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) who, for over a decade, has led the charge, building bipartisan support for this change, and for her forty-two Senate colleagues who stand with her. We encourage swift passage of S.1520, the Military Justice Improvement Act Military and Increasing Prevention Act,” noted Rowan.

“For over a decade, Vietnam Veterans of America and fellow advocates have pushed for changing the way the U.S. military handles Military Sexual Assault cases, including advocating for these cases to be adjudicated outside the chain of command. This disturbing climate in our military is unacceptable and has existed for far too long.”

“As veterans, we know only too well the power and constraints that military commanders can--and often do--exert on those who have come forward to report the circumstance of their assaults and indignities,” noted Rowan. “These crimes go unreported, and until now, silence has been the only safe choice for these active-duty men and women who have been betrayed by the chain of command.”



## **#VeteranOfTheDay Army Air Forces Veteran Ben Kuroki**

During Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, today's #VeteranOfTheDay is Army Air Forces Veteran Ben Kuroki, who in World War II as a gunner.

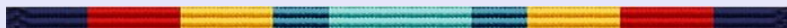
[Read More](#)



## **IT health care leaders among DOD's 'Top 100 Innovators List' for 2021**

Two pioneering Department of Defense health care information technology professionals have been selected by FCW magazine as among the top 100 federal innovators in their field for 2021, known as the 'Federal 100.'

[Read More](#)



## **VA medical rotation provides unique virtual training experience**



The teleurgent care in the VA medical rotation offers students the opportunity to learn how to deliver care in a virtual setting, namely by telephone and secure video.

[Read More](#)



## ***Links to Other Stories***

1. [Jury Convicts South Dakota Woman of Health Care Fraud and Identity Theft](#)
2. [Alabama Doctor Sentenced for Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Substance](#)
3. [Neurosurgical Associates, LTD and Dignity Health, D/B/A St. Joseph's Hospital, Paid \\$10 Million to Resolve False Claims Allegations](#)
4. [Waubay Woman Sentenced for Federal Program Theft](#)
5. [Incyte Corporation to Pay \\$12.6 Million to Resolve False Claims Act Allegations for Paying Kickbacks](#)
6. [Texas woman handed significant sentence for health care fraud scheme](#)
7. [Owner of Dog Training School Sentenced for](#)

## Defrauding V.A. of over \$1.5 Million in GI Bill Benefits

8. House Panel Advances Legislation to Expand VA Medical Employee Bargaining Rights

9. Florida dental hygienist found guilty in cold-case killing of Navy recruit

10. Florida Army Vet of Afghanistan gunned down on daughter's 4th birthday

11. WWII Veteran recalls V-E Day meaning 76 years later

12. Miami VA staffer says co-worker exposed himself to her — and learns he's a disgraced ex-cop

13. Austin still mum on whether to prosecute sexual assaults outside chain of command

14. Lt. Col. Allen West challenges reporter to drop and do 30 pushups

15. Skeptics question VA promise to increase diversity in senior management

16. New panel to advise VA leaders on better response to sexual misconduct issues

17. Dayton sues Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, DoD for water pollution

18. Senators urge Veterans Affairs to explore cannabis as an alternative treatment for Vets

19. Veteran, 74, has message for people reluctant to get vaccine



## **Governor Appoints Hartsell Veterans' Affairs Director**

Cabinet Members Unanimously Approve

TALLAHASSEE (May 4, 2021) – Retired Marine Corps Major General James S. “Hammer” Hartsell was appointed Executive Director of the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs by Gov. Ron DeSantis during the May 4, 2021 Cabinet Meeting. Florida’s three Cabinet Officers also approved the appointment.

“We appreciate you and thank you for your service to our country,” said Governor DeSantis in offering his congratulations.

FDVA is a 1,500-member constitutionally chartered State Veterans’ Affairs department with a \$160 million annual budget responsible for serving the nation’s third largest veteran population. Operating as the premier point of entry for Florida’s 1.5 million veterans, FDVA operates a network of seven state veterans’ homes and provides outreach to connect veterans with their earned services, benefits and support. Two additional state veterans’ homes will open in the second half of 2021.

“There is no higher calling than veterans serving veterans. I’m very honored to receive this appointment and thank Governor DeSantis and the Cabinet for their faith in me,” said General Hartsell. “Working together and building on our previous successes, we’ll ensure Florida continues to be the most veteran-friendly state in the nation.”

The general served with honor for 37 years of active and reserve duty, beginning as an enlisted Marine in 1981 and completing a distinguished and highly decorated military career as a Major General.

His 22-year civilian career in the Healthcare Industry included serving in Marketing, Product Management, U.S. and Global Business Development, Hospital Administration and Healthcare Leadership. Upon retirement from the Marine Corps, he moved back to his home state of Florida and joined the Pasco Sheriff’s Office, where he stood up the Future Operations Division.

Appointed as deputy executive director of the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs in April 2019, he had been performing the duties of Agency Head since June 2020.

For more information on FDVA, visit



## **Standing Ready #3: The Academic Advancement**

In the latest edition of the Standing Ready podcast, Dr. Murray Levin recalls his early days in the 1950s as a medical school resident in a VA hospital and shares his insights about the partnership between Northwestern and the VA during his time there.

[Read More](#)



## **DOD offers financial advice for families & children**

Military families may face financial challenges for a variety of reasons, and without assistance these issues could affect the health and well-being of children of those families.

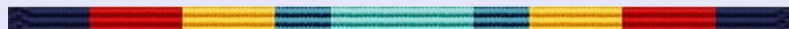
[Read More](#)



## **BAMC honors WWII soldiers through Bataan Death March remembrance**

Earlier this month, soldiers currently assigned to Brooke Army Medical Center's Soldier Recovery Unit organized and participated in the Bataan Death March remembrance event on Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston.

[Read More](#)



## **New DoD Discharge Appeal Review Board**

The Department of Defense (DoD) recently announced a new discharge characterization upgrade board of appeals for service members with separation dates on or after December 20, 2019. This new board, titled the Discharge Appeal Review Board (DARB), will provide final review of discharge or dismissal characterization upgrade requests when petitioners have exhausted all available administrative remedies.

These service members, who have exhausted all available appeals with the appropriate Service Discharge Review Board (DRB) and Board for Correction of Military/Naval Records (BCM/NR), may apply to the DARB. If a current or former Service member is deceased or incapacitated, the surviving spouse, next of kin, or legal representative

may apply on their behalf. The DARB is a document review board with no requirement for personal appearances. Only records from the Service BCM/NR case file will be reviewed. Any petitioner wishing to present new evidence must first submit a reconsideration request to, and receive a decision from, their Service BCM/NR before that new evidence may be considered. If the DARB recommends that the petitioner's service characterization be upgraded, this recommendation will be transmitted to the Secretary of the Military Department concerned for final action.

The DARB was created by Congress in the Fiscal Year 2020 National Defense Authorization Act and is the final level of administrative review provided by the Department. The DoD has designated the Air Force as lead agent to execute and operate the DARB process.

Individuals who believe their discharge or dismissal was unjust, erroneous, or warrants an upgrade, are encouraged to apply for review. To learn more about the DARB and how to apply for review, visit the [Air Force Review Board Agency Portal](#). The link may ask you to "click on Advance".



## **#VeteranOfTheDay Army Veteran George H. Rhea**

Today's #VeteranOfTheDay is Army Veteran George H. Rhea, who was on guard duty Dec. 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

[Read More](#)



## **QLE Fact Sheet: Your Guide for Learning About TRICARE Qualifying Life Events**

Did you know that certain life events may change your TRICARE health plan options? They're known as Qualifying Life Events (QLEs). Now, why are QLEs important to you? QLEs are the only times you can make changes to your TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select coverage outside of TRICARE Open Season. If you're ready to learn more, the TRICARE Qualifying Life Events Fact Sheet can help.

[Read More](#)





# 4 WAYS TO HELP HOMELESS VETERANS

- 1 Encourage the Veteran or their families to visit the closest VA Medical Center or Community Resource and Referral Center for help.
- 2 Give the Veteran the phone number to the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (1-877-424-3838).
- 3 Call the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (1-877-424-3838) on behalf of the Veteran.
- 4 Explore [www.va.gov/homeless](http://www.va.gov/homeless) to learn about VA programs for Veterans who are homeless and share that information with others.

NRD.GOV

## Suicide Prevention Resources for Military and Veterans

### Military & Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255, Press 1  
Text 838255, 24/7

**Vets 4 Warriors**  
855-838-8255

**InTransition**  
1-800-424-7877

### Office of Warrior Care Policy

[warriorcare.dodlive.mil/](http://warriorcare.dodlive.mil/)

**Military One Source**  
1-800-342-9647

### Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors [TAPS]

1-800-959-8277



## MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHIEF OF STAFF LEGISLATIVE NEWS

Here it is another month, and we haven't passed 1600 members. We NEED everyone to help in

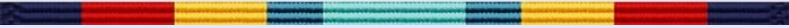
helping us grow. Spread the word about our organization, we need new members. We all know other Veterans. We all belong to other Veteran, ship, and other types of pages. Please drop a hint on those pages about our group and the work we have done and are doing for Veterans.

If you follow our Members Only pages, you should have noticed that we are mainly posting there. The reason for this is because we feel that while the information we give is important to all Veterans, we need to support the Veterans that are supporting us. Also, you should have noticed that we are not just sitting back doing nothing. We keep fighting by doing Rulemaking requests to the VA, and if that fails, we go to court. You will also notice that on the Members Only page, we will post bills and ask you to ask your Member of Congress and Senators to support these bills. Even if these bills do not pertain to your section, we ask for your support. These are some of the things that by paying dues, it allows us to keep fighting.

Mike Yates

MVA Chief of Staff

(Courtesy Military Veterans Advocacy)



## **Ahead of Legislative Hearing, Chairman Takano Highlights Bills to Recognize Toxic Exposure as a Cost of War**

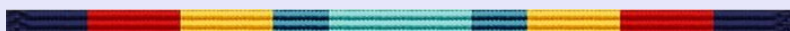
WASHINGTON, D.C — Today, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Mark Takano (D-Calif.) highlighted legislation that aligns with the Committee's efforts to comprehensively grant benefits and presumptions for all veterans exposed to toxic substances—regardless of where or when they served. At Wednesday's [full Committee Legislative Hearing](#), the Committee will discuss 15 bills and hear from Members, VSO leaders, and VA officials as it works to comprehensively address toxic exposure. Hear more from the sponsors of these bills [here](#).

<https://veterans.house.gov/news/press-releases/ahead-of-legislative-hearing-chairman-takano-highlights-bills-to-recognize-toxic-exposure-as-a-cost-of-war>



## **VA Restarts Johnson & Johnson Vaccines**

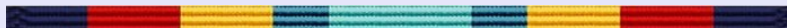
The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will resume offering the Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) COVID-19 vaccine to individuals 18 years and older, in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidance, following a 10-day pause recommended by the CDC and FDA after a very small number of people who received the vaccine experienced rare but serious blood clots. After careful review and evaluation, the FDA and CDC have confidence that this vaccine is safe for use and effective in preventing COVID-19. The available data show that the vaccine's benefits outweigh its risks and the chance of blood clots occurring following its administration is very low. Anyone who is offered the J&J vaccine from VA will receive information about the potential risks and benefits of the vaccine, including the rare risk of blood clots and will be made aware of alternative vaccine options. The primary goal of COVID-19 vaccination is to protect those we serve from COVID-19, and VA's priority remains the safety of all those receiving vaccine from VA, including veterans, their spouses, caregivers, employees and federal partners.



## Live Whole Health #69: Progressive Muscle Relaxation: Tensing to relax

Have you ever heard the saying, "The issues are in the tissues?" Stress is something that we all face, and often when that stress builds up, we can feel it in our muscles (the "tissues") and throughout the whole body. When you feel stressed, does your body feel relaxed and at ease? Or does it feel tight and tense?

[Read More](#)



[Veterans-For-Change Website](#)

The Veterans-For-Change website has been around since 2009. The look 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. And we're sincerely hoping to roll out the new website sometime this coming June.

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, whatever 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 **2,547** hits per day, and downloads average **4,072** per day with a total **7,334,974** visitors as of Saturday evening.

If you subscribe you will have full access to the entire website and best of all it's **FREE of CHARGE!** You just need a valid E-mail address so the system can send us a notification to approve your account. Once received, and we approve, the system will send you an E-Mail letting you know your account has been approved. Be sure to check your junk and spam folders just in case you don't

receive it in your In-Box.

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

- Documents Library with over **19,535** documents in 237+ Libraries, added 235 new documents on-line (Updated: 03/18/21)
- FAQ's on-line with **1,843** FAQs 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: **10,493**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **8,094**, Added 78 New Links (Updated: 04/20/21)

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



### **House Veterans Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**

On May 6, 2021, at 10:00 am the House Veterans Affairs, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, Chairman Pappas and Ranking Member Mann will hold a virtual hearing entitled “Transforming the VA Workforce: Assessing Progress on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives.”

Hearing can be watched live at:

<https://veterans.house.gov/events/hearings/transforming-the-va-workforce-assessing-progress-on-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-initiatives>

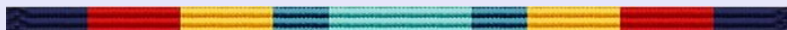




## **VA genetics program aims to increase mental health treatments for Veterans**

Leaders of the Million Veteran Program (MVP) are addressing this gap through a new initiative called MVP MIND. It will survey 50,000 new participants with serious mental health conditions about their experiences. MVP officials believe such efforts will lead to more powerful research into these issues and better treatments.

[Read More](#)



## **Janssen COVID-19 vaccines return to the Military Health System**

Doses of the Janssen COVID-19 vaccine are now available to those in the Military Health System eligible and authorized to receive COVID-19 vaccinations, said Air Force Col. Jennifer Garrison, DoD COVID-19 Vaccine Program Operation Team Lead for the Department of Defense.

[Read More](#)



## **ASBP blood supply not only for service members, but also family**

When the average person hears "Armed Services Blood Program," they likely think first about the men and women serving the U.S. military, both at home and overseas.

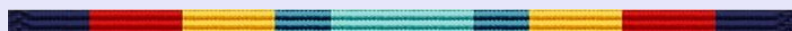
[Read More](#)



### **My Life, My Story #10: Jess, talking about trauma**

When we ask Veterans to tell us about their lives, some choose to avoid painful subjects, and that's just fine by us. The aim of "My Life, My Story" isn't to drag out confessions or extract difficult memories. Here, Jess opened up.

[Read More](#)



**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 05/08/21)**

Please note, we've added **0** new items to the TAKE ACTION list.

1. HR 1014 - Furnish Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) to a Veteran who has a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTS)
2. HR 109 will establish an advisory committee on the implementation by the DVA of an electronic health record
3. Concurrent Receipt Legislation Introduced
4. Expand Concurrent Receipt
5. FRA and Others asks SecDef Not to Raise TRICARE Fees
6. H.R. 333, Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act
7. H.R. 344, Support the Women Veterans TRUST Act
8. H.R. 914, the Dental Care for Veterans Act
9. Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act
10. Oppose TRICARE fee Increases

11. S. 134/H.R. 637, the Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2021
12. S. 437, Take Action for Veterans Exposed to Burn Pits
13. S. 89, Ensuring Survivors Benefits during COVID-19 Act of 2021
14. STOP TRICARE Fee Increases
15. Support Bills to Expand Coverage for ChampVA and TRICARE Young Adults
16. Veterans Economic Recovery Act Introduced
17. Support Bipartisan Bill to Expanding COVID-19 Vaccine Access for Veterans and Families
18. H.R. 855, the Veterans Expedited TSA Screening (VETS) Safe Travel Act
19. HR 1355 and S 454. These companion bills will provide health care and benefits to Veterans who were exposed to toxic substances while serving as members of the Armed Forces at Karshi Khanabad Air Base, Uzbekistan.
20. Support Repeal of TRICARE Select Enrollment Fee
21. HR 1585 & S 565- Provide for the treatment of Vets who participated in the cleanup of Enewetak Atoll as Radiation Exposed
22. Please Support S. 344, the Major Richard Star Act
23. Support the Military Retiree Survivor Comfort

Act

24. S. 810 & H.R. 1972, the Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act of 2021

25. HR 109 Establish an Advisory Committee on Implementation by the DVA of an electronic health record

26. HR 2372 and S 952 will Provide for Presumption of Service Connection for certain diseases associated with exposure to toxins

27. Please Ask you Senator to support S.952 the Warfighters Act

28. Support Improving VA Homelessness Program

29. S. 976, Caring for Survivors Act of 2021

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

31. H.R. 912, American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans Mental Health Act

32. S. 976, the Caring for Survivors Act of 2021

33. HR 2269 and S 657 cover herbicide exposure in Thailand

34. Bipartisan Bill Introduced to Help Military Survivors

35. Legislation asks for Study of Involuntary Discharges for Women

36. H.R. 2436, the Veterans Burn Pit Exposure Recognition Act

37. H.R. 958—the Protecting Moms Who Served Act

## 38. HR 2127 and S 927, the TEAM bills Veterans Exposed to Toxic Substances



### **LEGISLATIVE NEWS**

MVA Secretary Mike Kvintus and I will continue to work together by guiding you to get these bills to cross the finish line. Robin Barr, John Wells, and I are working on a list of bills that we support. We are sending support letters to the sponsor of each bill, as well as to every Congressman and Senator we are meeting with virtually. There are 61 new Congressmen. We only have about 14 left to contact.

We have more bill numbers since the April newsletter. Bills that were introduced under the previous session are now being reintroduced. Some of those bills are:

Note: Numbers in parenthesis are the number of co-sponsors.

S 657 - Senator Boozman's Thailand Bill (11)

HR 2269 - Rep. Westerman's companion Bill (41)

S 454 - Senator Blumenthal's K2 Bill (6)

HR 1355 - Rep. Lynch's companion Bill (63)

Note: Thank you Jackie for helping get the word out

for this bill.

S 952 - Senator Gillibrand's Warfighters' Bill (1)

HR 2372 - Rep. Ruiz's companion Bill (9)

S 927 - Senator Tillis' TEAMS Act (8)

HR 2127 - Rep. Bost's companion Bill (18)

HR 855 - Rep. Gosar's TSA Bill (28)

HR 1014 - Rep. Murphy's HBOT Bill (6)

HR 1022 - Rep. Rutherford's PAWS Act (32)

HR 1448 - Rep. Stivers' PAWS Act (312)

We support all dog bills

HR 109 - Rep. Hudson's Electronic Health Records  
(2)

We have more bills that we support. John and Robin send support letters to the Senators and Congressman who support these bills. The Bill of the Month certainly helps in asking Congressman to co-sponsor.

If anyone wants to do additional work, let me know on Facebook.

Hearings on both the SVAC and HVAC committees will be held within the next week or so on toxic exposure bills. John is providing written testimony to represent MVA.

Susie Belanger

Legislative Director  
Military Veterans Advocacy, Inc.  
(Courtesy Military Veterans Advocacy)



## **VVA Applauds Major Policy Reversal by Joint Chiefs on**

### **Military Sexual Trauma**

(Washington, D.C.) --“Vietnam Veterans of America applauds the recent decision of Joint Chiefs Chair Gen. Mark Milley to drop his opposition to policy changes on how the military handles sexual assault and his current openness to removing Military Sexual Assault investigations from the chain of command,” said John Rowan, VVA National President.

“We are grateful for the leadership of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who formed an independent review commission to carry out a critical, 90-day review of Pentagon policies and procedures on the handling of sexual assaults,” said Rowan. “This major reversal of military practice on the part of the Joint Chiefs follows the review commission’s



recommendation that the prosecution of servicemembers for sexual assault be made by independent authorities.”

“Vietnam Veterans of America has been at the forefront of the fight for justice for the women and men of our armed forces who have suffered incidents of sexual trauma and harassment,” said Rowan. “This major reversal of military practice, which comes amid mounting pressure from both the administration and Congress, is long overdue,” said Rowan.

“On Capitol Hill, we are grateful for the tenacious leadership of Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) who, for over a decade, has led the charge, building bipartisan support for this change, and for her forty-two Senate colleagues who stand with her. We encourage swift passage of S.1520, the Military Justice Improvement Act Military and Increasing Prevention Act,” noted Rowan.

“For over a decade, Vietnam Veterans of America and fellow advocates have pushed for changing the way the U.S. military handles Military Sexual Assault cases, including advocating for these cases to be adjudicated outside the chain of command. This disturbing climate in our military is

unacceptable and has existed for far too long.”

“As veterans, we know only too well the power and constraints that military commanders can--and often do--exert on those who have come forward to report the circumstance of their assaults and indignities,” noted Rowan. “These crimes go unreported, and until now, silence has been the only safe choice for these active-duty men and women who have been betrayed by the chain of command.”



### **Chats with the Chief: VA Secretary: "VA's common purpose – The Veterans"**

Join Jon Jensen, VHA's chief of staff, for the latest edition of host of "Chats with the Chief." This week, he's joined by VA Secretary Denis Richard McDonough, who discusses family, books and his vision for VA.

[Read More](#)



### **VR&E recognizes the service and commitment of military spouses**

On Military Spouse Appreciation Day, VR&E would like to express our gratitude to the husbands and wives that support their loved one's military careers.

[Read More](#)



## **VA minority health care professionals talk COVID-19 vaccine**

VA minority health care professionals explain their personal and professional views of the COVID-19 vaccine to minority communities hit hardest by the pandemic. The video is hosted by Emmy award winner, James Reynolds.

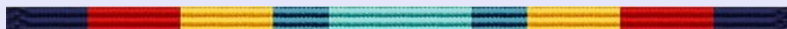
[Read More](#)



## **ScriptCenter Kiosks Offer Easy Prescription Pick Up**

Are you looking for a simpler way to pick up your TRICARE prescriptions? ScriptCenter automated pharmacy kiosks and locker systems provide a safe, secure, and controlled way to pick up your prescriptions at certain military hospitals and clinics.

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



### **Watch New TRICARE COVID-19 Vaccine Video Series: Got Your 6**

Have you watched the latest "Got Your 6" video? If not, make sure you check it out. "Got Your 6" is a new TRICARE video series to keep you in the know about the latest on COVID-19. It gives you a peek into the status of Department of Defense vaccine distribution, vaccine availability, and other COVID-19 information that relates to your TRICARE benefit.

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



**CONTACT YOUR  
MEMBERS OF CONGRESS!**

To Call your Representative:  
202-225-2305

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

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

TOLL FREE: 866-272-6622

**PLEASE... STOP Making Excuses!**  
[www.veterans-for-change.org](http://www.veterans-for-change.org)



**RANKING MEMBER BOST'S STATEMENT  
ON SENDING 25 BIPARTISAN VETERANS'  
BILLS TO THE HOUSE FLOOR**

Bost Statement on Sending 25 Bipartisan Veterans'  
Bills to the House Floor

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Rep. Mike Bost (R-Ill.), the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, released the following statement after the Committee favorably forwarded 25 bills to benefit our nation's veterans to the House Floor.

"I am proud of our Committee's work to find common ground and pass over two dozen bipartisan bills today. These bills would support

veterans, bolster VA's supply chain, and more. One of those is my bill, the VA Trust & Transparency Act. It would provide much needed transparency for veterans and taxpayers on the tens of billions of dollars of COVID-relief funds that Congress has provided over the last year. Another one of those bills is H.R. 1448, the PAWS Act. The PAWS Act is sponsored by more than 300 Members of the House and I am happy to be among them. Service dogs can have a lifesaving impact on veterans in need. The PAWS Act will help more veterans connect with them. I look forward to supporting it and all of these bills on the House Floor as soon as possible."

Ranking Member Bost is the lead cosponsor for 4 of the 25 bills that the Committee voted on today, as indicated in the list below.

1. H.R. 2911: The VA Transparency & Trust Act of 2021 (Bost)
2. H.R. 2082: The VA Supply Chain Resiliency Act (Bost)
3. H.R. 290: The GI Bill Transferability Protection Act of 2021 (Bost)
4. H.R. 293: VA Hospitals Establishing Leadership Performance (HELP) Act (Bost)
5. H.R. 2419: Affordable Housing for Homeless

Veterans Act of 2021 (Mann)

6. H.R. 1510: The Veterans' Camera Reporting (VCR) Act (McKinley)

7. H.R. 1448: The PAWS Act (Stivers)

8. H.R. 2494: The VET OP Act (Wenstrup)

9. H.R. 2545: To clarify the role of doctors of podiatric medicine (Wenstrup)

10. H.R. 234: The Korean American VALOR Act (Takano)

11. H.R. 2195: Justice for Servicemembers Act (Cicilline)

12. H.R. 1948: The VA Employee Fairness Act of 2021 (Takano)

13. H.R. 958: The Protecting Moms Who Served Act (Underwood)

14. H.R. 239: The Equal Access to Contraception for Veterans Act (Brownley)

15. H.R. 2441: The Sgt. Ketchum Rural Veterans Mental Health Act of 2021 (Axne)

16. H.R. 2093: The Providing Benefits Information in Spanish and Tagalong for Veterans and Families Act (Jeffries)

17. H.R. 2935: VA Beneficiary Debt Collection Improvement Act (Pappas)

18. H.R. 1257: Homeless Veterans Credit Act (Pallone)

19. H.R. 2704: Improving VA Accountability to

Prevent Sexual Harassment & Discrimination Act  
(Pappas)

20. H.R. 2788: VA Equal Employment Counseling  
Modernization Act (Lamb)

21. H.R. 2429: VA Police Improvement and  
Accountability Act (Rice)

22. H.R. 2726: VA FOIA Reform Act (Gallego)

23. H.R. 711: West LA VA Campus Improvement  
Act of 2021 (Lieu)

24. H.R. 2167: GI Bill National Emergency  
Extended Deadline Act (Sherrill)

25. H.R. 2878: Native VetSuccess Act (Gallego)



**WWII Veteran recalls V-E Day meaning 76  
years later**



Then-Army Air Forces pilot Warren Halstead flew missions daily out of Coulommiers, France, during World War II. On May 8, 1945, he was at his duty station, on break from dropping supplies and transporting wounded to hospitals in England. The news came in: the war in Europe was over. Seventy-six years later, the retired Air Force colonel still remembers the mixed emotions of Victory in Europe, or V-E, Day.

[Read More](#)



### **#VeteranOfTheDay Marine Corps Veteran Romus "RV" Burgin**

Today's #VeteranOfTheDay is Marine Corps Veteran Romus "RV" Burgin, who served during World War II and was depicted in the HBO series "The Pacific."

[Read More](#)



### **MHS's four tips for patient-centered digital health**

Digital health and the move to patient-centered care: both accelerated across the Military Health System throughout 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Read More](#)



## **SVAC Wants "Bold New Plan" for Veterans Toxic Exposure**

At a recent Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee (SVAC) legislative hearing, Chairman Jon Tester (Mont.) announced the committee's "bold" plans to take up comprehensive legislation to provide generations of veterans suffering from military toxic exposure their earned benefits and care. The SVAC Chairman claimed the process is "broken" and "disjointed" for ensuring coverage for veterans who are experiencing adverse health effects of toxic exposures. He wants comprehensive legislation to provide health care for all veterans suffering from the consequences of toxic exposure, from the past, present, and into the future. "It is a cost of war," he said, "and the country must take care of these veterans."

This issue was included in FRA's testimony by

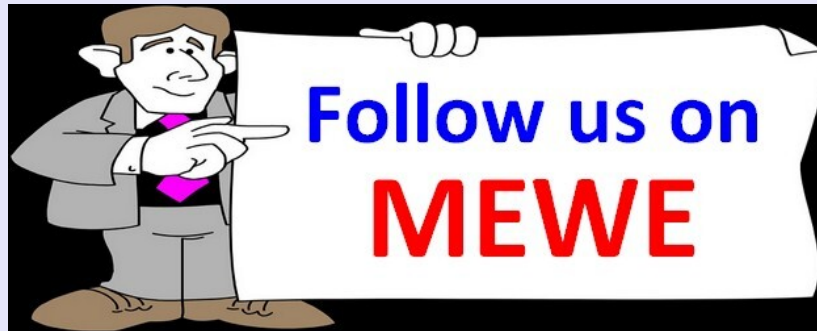
National President Mick Fulton during the March 18, 2021 joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. In addition, FRA provided a statement for the record of the April 28, 2021, SVAC toxic exposure hearing. The FRA is a member of the Toxic Exposures in the American Military (TEAM) Coalition and wants to ensure that no veteran who had exposure to burn pits or other environmental toxins goes without access to VA health care benefits. This issue is listed on the FRA Action Center and everyone is urged to weigh in on this issue by going to the [Action Center](#).



## **Debt Relief Extended for Veterans**

VA recognizes that some Veterans and beneficiaries continue to be impacted by COVID-19. To provide relief, VA is suspending the collection of Veteran benefit overpayments incurred between April 6, 2020, and Sept. 30, 2021. Additionally, medical and pharmacy copayments incurred during this period will be canceled and any payments refunded. Use our new online tool to check the status of your VA debt, as well as options to resolve it.

[Read More](#)



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](#)

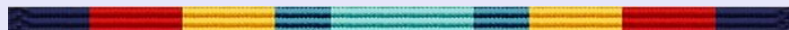
[HOMELESS HEROES PROGRAM OF  
VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE](#)

[AMVETS GROUP](#)

[VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP](#)

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

[AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY](#)



**After Failures to Curb Sexual Assault, a  
Move Toward a Major Shift in Military Law**

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand has fought for years to remove commanders from deciding assault cases. Now, more colleagues and a Pentagon panel agree.

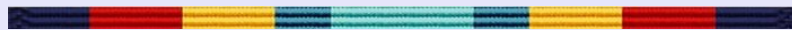
[Read More](#)



### **How VA patient advocates help Veterans**

Patient advocates are available at VA medical facilities to listen, document and manage feedback received from Veterans, family members, and caregivers. There's one in every VA hospital.

[Read More](#)



### **Pentagon's approach to countering sexual assault: 'All options are on the table'**

The Department of Defense is taking a multi-pronged approach to combat sexual assault in the military. One initiative – the Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault in the Military – is reaching out to service members, Veterans, experts and survivors to get it right.

[Read More](#)



## **FRA Supports Improvements to USERRA**

The FRA has signed onto a letter of support for the "Protecting the Employment Rights of Service Members Act" (PERSA), (H.R.2195) sponsored by Rep. David Cicilline (R.I.). This important, bipartisan bill ensures our service members can enforce their rights under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

USERRA prohibits discrimination based on Reserve and National Guard military service and states they are entitled to the reemployment rights and benefits of their civilian job after serving in the military. Returning service members must be promptly reemployed as if they had they not been absent for military service. If an employer does not offer the same pay, benefits, or status when a service

member returns from duty, USERRA allows the service member to hold the employer accountable for these violations in court.

However, some service members have been unable to exercise their USERRA rights due to increased use of forced arbitration clauses hidden in the fine print of employment contracts and personnel policies. Usually presented on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, these clauses preclude access to the judicial system. Instead of an unbiased review of their case, service members are forced into private arbitration systems set up by the very employer they are bringing charges against. PERSA gives service members the ability to pursue USERRA claims in court while preserving the option to enter into an arbitration agreement after a dispute arises. FRA wants to eliminate discrimination against uniformed service members in employment by ensuring enforcement of USERRA.

Everyone is urged to ask their Representatives to support this bill by going to the [Action Center](#).



**Office of Inspector General**



1. Domestic Abuse: Actions Needed to Enhance DOD's Prevention, Response, and Oversight
2. Veterans Affairs: Use of Additional Funding for COVID-19 Relief
3. Management Report: Internal Revenue Service Needs to Improve Financial Reporting and Information System Controls
4. Behavioral Health: Patient Access, Provider Claims Payment, and the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic
5. U.S. Postal Service: Volume, Performance, and Financial Changes since the Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic
6. Prescription Drugs: U.S. Prices for Selected Brand Drugs Were Higher on Average than Prices in Australia, Canada, and France



## **SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HOLDS LEGISLATIVE HEARING**

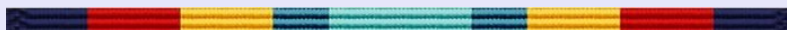
On April 28, 2021, the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee held a legislative hearing for 22 bills including the Thailand herbicide bill, the TEAM bill, and the Warfighter bill. MVA filed written testimony in support of these and other bills.

<https://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/uploads/3>

[/4/1/0/3410338/written\\_testimony.svac.421.pdf.](#)

There seems to be bi-partisan support to address the problem of toxic exposure, but we need to make certain that it does not wind up mired in the morass of partisan bickering. Both Senators Tester (Dem Chairman) and Moran (Rep Ranking Member) promised cooperation. You can help by participating in MVA's Bill of the Week program. Every office tabulates phone calls and emails from constituents concerning legislation. Please check out all of MVA's bills of the week to date and sign on to send a support email to your Member of Congress and Senators. We are sending out hundreds of emails each week - we need to be sending out thousands. You can participate by going to <https://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/bill-of-the-week.html>. It only takes a minute to sign up and just a few seconds to support each bill. Let's see if we can convince Congress to pass these bills!

(Courtesy Military Veterans Advocacy)



**Celebrate National Nurses Month with VA  
and explore a new nursing career**

In honor of National Nurses Month and in celebration of VHA's 75th anniversary, VA thanks its nurses and highlights nursing career opportunities.

[Read More](#)



## **Borne the Battle #240: Benefits Breakdown: Interest Rate Reduction Refinance Loan (IRRRL)**

Home interest rates are at historic lows and VA home loans offer lower rates than any other type of home loan. Navy Veteran John Bell, deputy director of the VA Loan Guaranty Service, joins Borne the Battle to break down VA's Interest Rate Reduction and Refinance Loan (IRRRL), mortgage refinancing, VA home loans and how they help Veterans stay in their homes.

[Read More](#)



## **Nurses Week 2021: Nurses continue to advance the MHS mission**

National Nurses Week honors the commitment, dedication and contributions of the nursing profession.

[Read More](#)



## **SAC Subcommittee Holds Hearing on VA Telehealth**

The Senate Appropriations Committee, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee (Milcon/VA) held their first meeting of the year to discuss the use of telehealth to care for veterans.

Prior to the pandemic, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) used telehealth to reach veterans in rural communities. In addition to care going directly to veterans in their homes, the ATLAS Project, started placing self-contained rooms in veteran service organization (VSO) facilities and Walmart stores to provide a secure location where a wide array of health care services could be provided to one veteran at a time. ATLAS is a unique capability for rural areas. Right now, there are 11 of them and the VA expects to expand to 15 by the end of this year. The VA is seeking more locations to help rural veterans.

Demand for telehealth skyrocketed during the pandemic across all settings, including urban areas. The VA responded by providing internet-enabled tablets to veterans without technology. They also set up a help line to aid veterans in using the devices and also teach them how to access a telehealth visit. For more information on VA telehealth, [go online](#).



1. FDA Approves Treatment for Chronic Kidney Disease
2. Acella Pharmaceuticals, LLC, Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Certain Lots of NP Thyroid® (Thyroid Tablets, USP) Due to Sub Potency
3. Prescription Drug User Fee Amendments
4. A New Approach to Pharmacometrics: Recurrent Neural Networks for Modeling Drug Exposure and Drug Response
5. Russ Davis Wholesale Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Soy in Veggie Pizza
6. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (05-07-21)
7. Generic Drugs in the 21st Century: FDA's Actions Create Transparency and Value for Complex Generic Product Development
8. COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions
9. Hospira Issues A Voluntary Nationwide Recall for

One Lot of Sterile Water for Injection, USP, Due to the Potential Presence of Visible Particulate

10. Hospira Issues A Voluntary Nationwide Recall for One Lot of 0.5% Bupivacaine Hydrochloride Injection, USP and One Lot of 1% Lidocaine HCl Injection, USP Due to Mislabeling

11. Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update: FDA Outlines Inspection and Assessment Activities During Pandemic, Roadmap for Future State of Operations

12. Hershey Voluntarily Recalls Hershey's Chocolate Shell Topping Due to Undeclared Almonds

13. Frito-Lay Issues Voluntary Allergy Alert on Undeclared Milk In Ruffles All Dressed Potato Chips Distributed Regionally to Sam's Club

14. How computational analysis of a 3D mucociliary clearance model can help predict drug uptake and lead to more generic nasal drug products

15. FDA Drug Shortages

16. Retail Food Protection

17. Outbreak Investigation of Salmonella Duisburg and Urbana: Jule's Cashew Brie (April 2021)

18. Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update: May 7, 2021



**Defense Commissary (DeCA) Conference  
Call**

FRA staff (ADLP Theo Lawson) among other organizations held a meeting with the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) to discuss a range of issues concerning commissary benefits. Mr. William Moore, Director of DeCA, presented the current state and the future of the agency as well as asking for feedback from the audience on improvements and new ideas.

A recent focus group conducted on junior enlisted service members revealed the lack of knowledge on the benefits of the commissary. Mr. Moore also stressed the importance of educating certain groups of veterans of their commissary benefits which started in January 2020 as part of the FY2020 NDAA. The agency believes the pandemic hindered the outreach program to inform veterans about these benefits.

The agency plans on an early education program of the commissary benefits as early as the completion of Bootcamp. The Patron Council, which originally provided guidance on the needs and wants of the commissary users, was shut down due to the cost of logistics. With the onset of virtual meetings, the agency is looking into reinstating the council.

The commissary with its tax-free shopping and



other perks grants users about 23.7 percent in savings compared to the local market, the agency is looking to increase the savings up to 25 percent. The agency is planning an expansion of their online shopping and curbside pickup currently at 11 stores to about 200 stores by the end of the year with a possibility of home delivery.

Veterans can find out how to gain access to their [commissary benefits](#).



## **Paying it forward during Military Appreciation Month with Operation Gratitude**

New changes passed by Congress and signed by the President have expanded eligibility and access to the Department of Veteran Affairs' home loan program.

[Read More](#)



## **DoD Civilian Employees Can Go to Exchanges**

The Defense Department (DoD), effective May 1, 2021, has expanded military exchange shopping

privileges to nearly 600,000 civilian DoD and civilian Coast Guard employees for at least a year, according to DoD directive 21-003. "Shopping the Exchange brings convenience to civilians working on installations," said Exchange Director and CEO Tom Shull. "They can stop by the Exchange for essentials on breaks or to and from work instead of shopping outside of the gate - and 100% of Exchange earnings go right back to the military community."

Tax-free shopping is authorized for active DoD and Coast Guard appropriated fund and non-appropriated civilian employees in the United States and the U.S. territories. Retired DoD and Coast Guard civilian employees will have access to online exchange shopping later this year. The Exchange, the DoD's largest retailer and the 61st largest retailer in the United States, has served Warfighters since 1895. The Exchange offers tax-free shopping and military-exclusive pricing. Exchange earnings support service members and their families. Approximately 60 percent of earnings support Quality-of-Life programs on military installations worldwide. In the past 10 years, the Exchange has contributed \$2.2 billion to Child, Youth and School Services; Armed Forces Recreation Centers; and

other programs to support troops and their families. All remaining earnings are reinvested in enhancing the customer shopping experience.

The privilege expansion marks the third time since 2017 that the Exchange's shopping base has grown. In January 2020, all veterans with service-connected disabilities were welcomed back to the installation to shop in person. On Veterans Day 2017, all honorably discharged veterans were welcomed home to [shop tax free](#).



## **VFW Testifies Before Senate on Toxic Exposure**

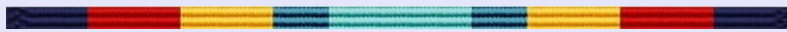
On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a hearing on pending legislation. VFW National Legislative Service Director Patrick Murray testified on the VFW's top legislative priority of toxic exposure. Murray stressed the importance of combining the best pieces of each bill to cover as many veterans as possible. "Since we seem to expose nearly 100% of our troops to hazardous substances and environments, it is entirely unreasonable that almost 75% of them have their claims denied for exposure. It is time we establish a new framework to take care of veterans who were exposed to hazards both foreign and domestic, now and in the future," said Murray. [Watch the hearing](#), which starts at the 18:27 mark or [read the testimony](#).



## **VA Benefits for Family Caregivers**

Through VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC), Veterans can appoint one primary and up to two secondary caregivers who may be eligible to receive financial assistance, training, and more to support their important role of caring for a Veteran. Find out if you're eligible and how to apply for PCAFC.

[Read More](#)



## **GI Bill Is Going Digital**

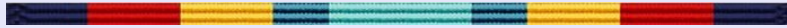
We're modernizing your education benefits, and soon 1 million GI Bill beneficiaries will enjoy improved customer service. With the Digital GI Bill, you will have faster access to your educational benefits to pursue your academic and career goals. Stay tuned for more information!

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## **AT-RISK VETERANS**

### VA Induced Addiction

Nobody in this group needs to be convinced that the government has and will expose service members to dangerous chemicals and other environmental hazards. Nobody here needs to be reminded of the potentially devastating consequences of these exposures or the VA's ability to deny any responsibility for treating them. But what happens when the exposure begins at the VA, rather than during service?

This is the case for many thousands of veterans that have sought treatment at the VA and have been subsequently prescribed opioids, benzodiazepines, and other dangerous drugs. Note, they are classified as Controlled Dangerous Substances (CDS) by the DEA.

The VA knows that these drugs are addictive. They know they increase the likelihood of a veteran committing suicide. They know that they increase the likelihood of a veteran engaging in criminal activity, including acts of violence. And they know that these drugs increase the chance of additional substance abuse and interfere with the recommended therapies for PTSD and other mental health issues. So, what has the VA done about it?

The VA should be congratulated for the way in which it has handled opioids over the past six years. Beginning with Secretary Shulkin, the VA implemented a robust program designed to educate veterans about the dangers of opioids. They developed educational materials and required doctors to get signature informed consent from veterans before beginning an opioid regimen. This has resulted in veterans choosing alternative pain treatment at record rates and has reduced opioid connected instances of suicide among veterans. In other words, when the VA educates vets about the dangers of specific drugs, those veterans make better decisions for their own treatment and realize the benefits.

Sadly, opioids have proven to be the exception.

Since 2010 the VA and DoD have declared benzodiazepines (Xanax, Valium, Klonopin, etc.) contraindicated for the treatment of PTSD and TBI among veterans. But they never made their doctors stop, nor did they tell this to the veterans.

Study after study has proven that benzodiazepine addiction leads to increased rates of aggression, violence, suicidal ideation, and substance abuse among veterans with PTSD and TBI. And, according to the VA themselves, they also interfere with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, the front-line recommended treatment for PTSD. Think about that for a second. VA psychiatrists continue to prescribe these drugs to tens-of-thousands of veterans knowing that they are not only dangerous, but that they will actually make it harder for veterans to realize the benefits of treatment.

That alone would be bad. But let us follow the logical consequences a step further. Among any population, substance abuse increases the chances a person will wind up in the criminal justice system. But in this case, study after study shows that veterans are particularly vulnerable to those types of behaviors. For instance, both PTSD and TBI reduce impulse control and increase aggression and violent impulses. Then the VA goes and makes



those things worse for many of the veterans they are supposed to be helping, and they've done it for decades.

Now, we have two more problems. First, the VA refuses to educate veterans about the dangers of benzodiazepines in the same way it educates them about opioids. They meet all the same critical criteria, yet the VA treats them in a totally different manner. We know, because we filed a rule-making request with the VA, asking them to better educate vets before starting these drugs, but they declined. Worse yet, they admitted that the problem is so severe that they educate their doctors about it, but don't feel these same doctors need to share that level of information with veterans. This violates AMA, VA, and DoD guidelines on informed consent. It also defies common sense. We will be appealing it.

Second, and perhaps worse, the VA washes its hands of veterans who predictably find themselves in trouble with the law as a consequence of these drugs, and their known side effects. Now, we aren't arguing vets are immune from responsibility, but we firmly believe the science needs to be better shared with justice system officials and veterans alike so

that better decisions about guilt and consequences can be made. Right now, the VA policy is to shut off benefits to incarcerated veterans and deny that they have any hand in the problem. In other words, veterans, families, victims, and local governments are left cleaning up a mess the VA knows it has had a hand in creating.

At MVA our goal is to change VA policy. First, we want the VA to better inform veterans about the dangers of these drugs. Then, we want them to increase and improve their support of justice-involved veterans. We will work with them. We will ask them to change. But if they refuse to do it on their own, we will pursue legislative changes and fight them in the courts. Too many veterans and their communities have suffered from the VA's prescribe-first-inform-later or never approach to treatment. But we won't let them be forgotten or ignored any longer.

We hope we will have your support as we take on this challenge to make veterans healthier and our communities safer.

Brian O'Callaghan  
Director, At-Risk Veterans  
(Courtesy Military Veterans Advocacy)



## **Tennessee Veteran receives first-of-its-kind prosthetic leg**

Army Veteran at Tennessee VA receives a new type of prosthetic leg that features a motor-powered microprocessor prosthetic knee that uses artificial intelligence and cutting-edge technology.

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## **Be Red Cross Ready when disasters happen**

Disaster preparedness can help Veterans, families, caregivers and survivors stay safe by preparing, responding and recovering quickly.

[Read More](#)



## **Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program Open Now**

Veterans who are unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic now have the opportunity for education or training for high-demand jobs with the Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program (VRRAP). Veterans can use VRRAP for assistance with programs approved under the GI Bill and Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses to include associate degrees, non-college degrees, and certificate programs. If eligible, veterans can receive up to 12 months of tuition and fees, and a monthly housing allowance based on Post-9/11 GI Bill rates. VRRAP will stop making payments on Dec. 11, 2022, or when the funding limit or the participant limit is reached. [Learn more.](#)



**Discover Your VA Benefits**

Are you transitioning or planning to transition out of active-duty service? VA's Military Life Cycle (MLC) modules are available to help you plan for the future. These brief 30- to 45-minute online courses can be completed at your own pace and cover topics including your available VA benefits and other resources to help you adjust to civilian life. Learn more about MLC and download our resource guides.

[Read More](#)



## RESEARCH

Americans Must Step Up to the Line and Protect

## Veteran Rights

### AGENT ORANGE SURVIVORS OF GUAM

April has been a busy month on the Guam front. Our opening brief has been filed on our suit to extend coverage to Guam, American Samoa, and Johnson Island. Thanks to the fine folks at Orrick Law Firm in Washington DC, we were able to file a thought provoking and effective brief. The Association of the United States Navy and Senator Therese M. Terlaje, Speaker of the Guam Legislature, also filed amicus curiae briefs in support of our position. MVA's brief can be found at:

[https://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/1/0/3410338/20.opening\\_brief.pdf](https://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/uploads/3/4/1/0/3410338/20.opening_brief.pdf)

On another front, the Lonnie Kilpatrick Central Pacific Island Relief Act is planned for introduction on May 20, 2021. Congressman Mike San Nicholas, (D-Guam) and Congressman Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) will join with 30+ other Members of Congress to introduce this important bill. There will be a Zoom conference call with the media to roll out the legislation. This bill is one of MVA's top priorities.

MVA's position is that we will continue to push for

success on both the legislative and litigation fronts until we achieve success on either or both fronts. You can help us by joining MVA and referring your friends to MVA. We were denied an opportunity to testify on this bill because we are not yet recognized as a Veteran's Service Organization. We need a minimum of 2000 members to apply for that status. Help us get there.



## **Veterans can get tools, resources at Military OneSource**

Military OneSource is a website that provides various tools and resources for Veterans, service members, their families, military academy cadets and designated Department of Defense expeditionary civilians.

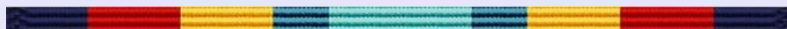
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## **VA telehealth clinic focused on cognitive issues helps Veterans in rural areas**

"VA has been investing in telehealth for years, so the necessary equipment and infrastructure was there," Kraft says. "It just seemed like it was meant to be. The need was there, the resources and support were there, and the motivation was there."

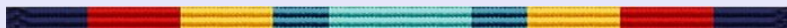
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### **Guitars for Vets offers free lessons, guitar for Veterans**

The G4V program starts with a 10-week instruction period. During this time Veterans are given one-on-one individualized lessons. After completing the lessons, the graduation process involves receiving a free acoustic guitar and guitar accessory kit.

[Read More](#)

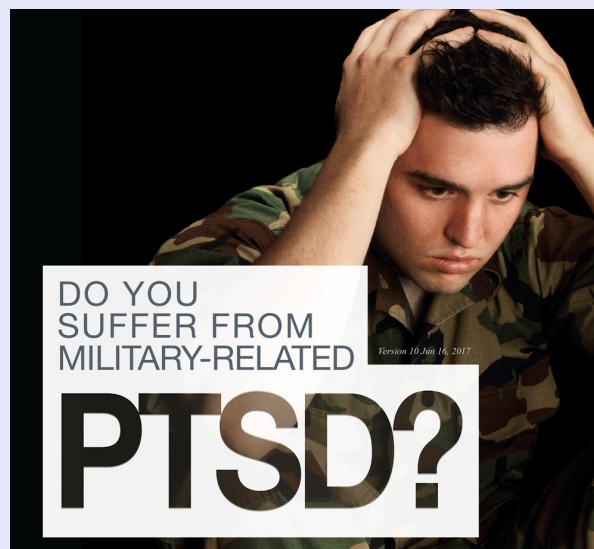


### **Paying it forward during Military Appreciation Month**



May is Military Appreciation Month. To help raise awareness, Blue Star Families and Operation Gratitude are joining forces to impact thousands of military families in a tangible way. We are asking you, our Veteran community, to support this nationwide campaign in three actionable ways, from the comfort of your home.

[Read More](#)



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



**VETERANS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA**  
VETERANS OF PANAMA CANAL ZONE

In the news...We continue to wait for an answer from the new VA Secretary regarding our Rulemaking Request.

<https://www.militaryveteransadvocacy.org/vets-of-panama.html>.

We have received a letter back from the VA Undersecretary. It is not a No, not a Yes, but a “we are still reviewing the evidence.” I am still hopeful that the VA Secretary will someday soon add Panama to the list of places where dioxin (TCDD) was used based on the clear evidence of the U.S. Commerce records and the testing that was done by Aberdeen for its presence.

**Wins recently for Panama CZ veterans...** We have had a handful of Veterans win in 2020 by using these shipment records. The judge ruled in favor of the Veteran due to “overwhelming evidence” when speaking of the U.S. Census records. The shipments form 1958-1977 can be seen in the references attached to our Rulemaking Request.

**Asked for a bill to be introduced in Congress...** With COVID still plaguing our ability to travel to DC and meet face-to-face, we have not yet found a

Congressional representative to introduce a bill for Panama. I have posted on many FB pages a draft of a letter of important information for Veterans to use (i.e., the shipments and the Judge's ruling in the win we got for a Panama veteran in 2020).

Please use this information to write your own version to your representative asking for a bill to be introduced for the Panama Veteran. If your representative is interested in helping to introduce a bill, have them contact myself and/or Commander Wells. Commander Wells has the wording of the bill we need to cover all Panama Veterans.

We did speak with a few Congressional Representatives and although they have not stepped up to the plate, we are now in contact with the Research Committee at the House of Representatives. We continue to provide more proof to both the House of Representatives and the Secretary of the VA.

We had asked that the representative relay to the GAO that we want the GAO to send individuals to test for these chemicals in the old Canal Zone. We are positive they will be found if they agree to look. We have not heard an answer regarding our request.

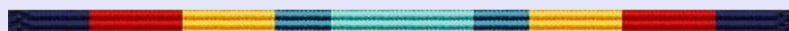
**Lastly...**a BIG THANK YOU for your continued support in this journey. And a BIG THANK YOU to the members who have recently joined. We need membership to be heard. Together we can cross the finish line. Please ask all of your contacts to join and support our effort.

There are other ways to support us other than membership. We are a Nonprofit, a good place to make donations for tax purposes. And if you shop on Amazon, if you would just put a smile in the URL, you can pick MVA as the place Amazon will donate a small sum to. The prices are the same, but Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price to Military-Veterans Advocacy Inc. Bookmark the link. <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/38-3890520> and support us every time you shop.

Your support is greatly appreciated!

Donna Tornoe, Director, Veterans of Panama Canal Zone

(Courtesy Military Veterans Advocacy)



**#VeteranOfTheDay Navy Veteran Chaiyant  
Chanchang**

During Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, today's #VeteranOfTheDay is Navy Veteran Chaiyant Chanchang, who served in Afghanistan.

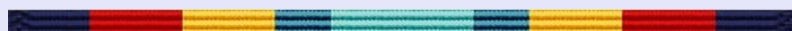
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## **Treating dizziness one of many services of VA Audiology**

VA Audiology's role in life-altering services and programs. Marking Better Hearing & Speech Month, an opportunity to raise awareness about communication disorders with the theme "Building Connections."

[Read More](#)



## **Kids are resilient, but far from immune to pandemic effects**

Children have had an especially rough time since March 2020.

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## **Gulf Coast VA welcomes back volunteers**

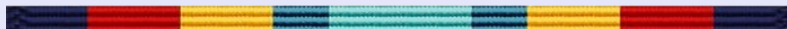
Despite the pandemic, Gulf Coast VA Voluntary Services have remained consistent. While volunteers were unable to volunteer in person, they continued to donate.

[Read More](#)



The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one burial update for a service member who has been missing and unaccounted-for from Korea. Returning home for burial with full military honors is:

**Army Cpl. Henry L. Helms**, 24, of Collbran, Alabama, was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Helms will be buried May 22, 2021, in Ringgold, Georgia. [Read about Helms.](#)



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Riverside County, CA

Visit our website today

[www.Veterans-For-Change.org](http://www.Veterans-For-Change.org)

Serving those who served!

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



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[Jim.Davis@Veterans-for-change.org](mailto:Jim.Davis@Veterans-for-change.org)

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