



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

## *A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, April 10, 2022

Volume 13, Issue 15



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

Good evening Jim,

I know I've mentioned in the last couple of Newsletters and posted a couple of pieces here and there regarding cancer, potentials, treatments and more.

If you've noticed a new growth, difficulty in swallowing, urination, bowel movements and more, please, get to the doctor and see what it is. 75-90% of the time it's relatively minor and can be fixed just as easily, but then there is the 15%+/- risk of it being some form of cancer. Especially if you served in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. and been exposed to Agent Orange or other colored chemicals, burn pits, contaminated water on military bases.

I strongly urge you not to just let it go, thinking it will go away or

“heal” all on its own.

I was a cancer carrier back in 1980-1981, was never told, but thankfully that surgeon got all of it. But I had let it go for just over a year, long enough it truly could have gotten way worse.

Then in 2008 I had another growth, had it biopsied, removed and a biopsy done on the sample tissue, bad part was that surgeon never bothered to tell me it was cancerous nor did he recommend any other treatments or further action to be needed.

Then in 2014 I was sent to a surgical specialist who sent me for biopsies again then called me into his office to tell me we needed to schedule surgery, then do a CAT Scan again and then sent me to an oncology center for both chemo and radiation which of course kicked me in the butt big time and had me down for 4 ½ months.

A year later I was diagnosed as cancer free just needed all the final reconstructive surgeries done.

Then surprise, surprise we found even more cancer which hadn't been there originally, but a biopsy was done and diagnosed with cancer yet again.

I am now scheduled for a PET Scan whole body to make sure we have gotten all of it and doesn't appear any where else in my body, then we can begin the chemo and radiation again.

Now I understand, not everyone is the same, and most will not ever get cancer, but it's always a possibility due to all the horrible exposures many of you have been put through.

But I do hope you will have things that are strange or unusual for you and make sure it's nothing to be afraid of.

And most of all, I hope none of our readers ever come up with a diagnosis of any form of cancer!

A reminder, to download and make sure you have all the necessary documents in a folder or large envelope and stored in your safe. I uploaded to the VFC Website for you to download. The file is called "[The Paper Safe-2022](#)", feel free to download or prints and keep safe.

If you don't currently follow us on [MEWE](#), please be sure to do so. Or you can follow us on Twitter, or sign up for the newsletter if you don't already receive in your E-mail.

We're still in a battle with Congress and need everyone's help! We have almost 100 pieces of legislation we need Congress to pass and sent on to POTUS to sign into law, but we can't get it done without your help to push and push so please be sure to visit the "TAKE ACTION" section of the newsletter and send each one of the pre-written E-Mails to your Reps and Senators asking for their vote to passage.

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)



## Toxic Exposures

TREA continues to be a leading advocate on Toxic Exposures related legislation, which has been dubbed the “new generation’s Agent Orange.” TREA is proud to report that our advocacy has help ensure the passage of “The PACT Act” in the U.S. House! “The PACT Act” incorporates similar provisions as its Senate counterpart called “The COST of War Act” that TREA has worked on with the Toxic Exposures in the American Military (TEAM) Coalition for nearly three years.

In addition, TREA is proud to report that the U.S. Senate unanimously passed TREA backed legislation that would provide health care for post-9/11 toxic exposed veterans, “The Health Care for Burn Pit Veterans Act!” We are grateful for the leadership in both the House and Senate to get these bills passed, especially that of Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Senator Jon Tester, Ranking Member Senator Jerry Moran, House Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Mark Takano, and Ranking Member Mike Bost for their continued support.

Finally, TREA is proud to share that the VA has formally announced its intent to begin processing disability benefits claims for veterans suffering from 9 different rare respiratory cancers as a result of Toxic Exposures during their military service! TREA has advocated for policy changes and legislation to address these concerns extensively and is pleased to see that VA has acknowledged their importance in conjunction with Congress.



**Marine Veteran's music helps recovery from PTSD**

His two passions in life are the Marine Corps and music. "My music gives me hope and offers me a chance to reach out to my fellow Veterans."

[Read More](#)



## **Dedicated and Driven: Marco Polo Smigliani**

Marine Corps Veteran Marco Polo Smigliani received a Purple Heart for his service during the Vietnam War. He was a crew member of SS Columbia Eagle, the first American ship to be hijacked in 150 years.

[Read More](#)



## **Veterans in Lexington VA nursing home Dress Up for Dinner**

Civic group volunteers and VA staff turned business shirts into vest-like garments for nursing home Veterans to dress up at meals.

[Read More](#)



**Military Veterans Advocacy**

Military Veterans Advocacy is offering some free memberships for those who are struggling to get their claims through, are having financial difficulties. Annual dues are \$25.00 per year. Our organization includes special sections, Blue Water Navy, Veterans of Southeast Asia, Central Pacific Islands, Veterans of Panama Canal Zone, and Okinawa. We have gift members available which can be paid by your fellow brother or sister Veterans. Gift members are kept confidential. Click [HERE](#) and help a Veteran.



You may contact Robin Barr at [robin.barr@madvocacy.org](mailto:robin.barr@madvocacy.org)



## **HVAC Markup Hearing**

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs conducted a full committee markup on legislation previously discussed in pending legislation hearings. The committee recommended that 17 bills be moved to the House floor. These bills would improve VA's claim process, extend VA work-study allowance, improve Office of Inspector General oversight, increase entrepreneurship opportunities, and offer medical foster homes to veterans who qualify for long-term care. One of the advanced bills, [H.R. 5754](#), Patient Advocate Tracker Act, stemmed from a proposal by 2021 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellow Cameron Zbikowski. The VFW has provided congressional testimony on several of these bills and will closely monitor their progress. [Watch the markup.](#)



**This Second Chance Month, let's ensure  
successful reentry for our Veterans**

Health Care for Reentry Veterans program includes assessment services for Veterans in prison and linkages to medical, mental health services.

[Read More](#)



## South Texas VA assists in annual San Antonio homeless count

In San Antonio, volunteers prep before dawn for the annual Point-In-Time Count. They also provided food and resources to homeless Veterans.

[Read More](#)



**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 a clean, sans-serif font. The logo includes a blue star and a speech bubble icon.

## A sense of pride – Vietnam Veteran recognized for war service

Robert Luebbert never mentioned he was a Vietnam Veteran until his treatment at Harry Truman VA re-instilled a sense of pride in his service.

[Read More](#)



## **White River Junction VA welcomes K9 Ripp to police team**

K9 Ripp, a black labrador retriever, saves hours of man work when looking for a lost person or patient. He can rapidly find hidden drugs and his presence alone is a deterrent.

[Read More](#)



## **Concurrent Receipt and Retirement Pay**

TREA is proud to report that both H.R. 1282 and S. 344, “The Major Richard Star Act” are making strides in both the U.S. House and Senate. TREA has been hard at work securing cosponsors in both chambers, with now 57 cosponsors in the Senate, and over 209 cosponsors in the House!

As you may know, this bipartisan legislation would finally provide combat-injured veterans that were forced to medically retire with less than 20 years of military service their full benefits, meaning they would receive both their earned DoD Retirement Pay, and their earned VA Disability Pay, with no offset. This legislation is a very positive step in correcting the larger concurrent receipt issue.





## Know the Warning Signs

**It Matters.**

**Sometimes, a crisis may involve thoughts of suicide. Learn to recognize these warning signs:**

- Hopelessness, feeling like there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends

**The presence of the following signs requires immediate attention:**

- Thinking about hurting or killing themselves
- Looking for ways to kill themselves
- Talking about death, dying or suicide
- Self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse

..... Confidential chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net) or text to **838255** .....



**Month of the Military Child**

April is a time to acknowledge and reflect on the sacrifices and challenges military children experience as a result of their parents' service to our nation. These children maneuver childhood like their civilian peers but with stressors that are unique to the military lifestyle. Separations from parents, frequent relocations, and missed milestones like birthdays are commonplace. Further still, some of them must care for service-injured parents while others experience the loss of a parent as a result of service. Learn more about children's [monthly activities](#) or [health resources](#).



## **VA Veterans Day poster journeys to Hollywood and back**

This Veterans Day poster ended up in multiple scenes of the show, "This Is Us" and was signed by the cast and presented to its creator.

[Read More](#)



## **Veterans share their stories on a VA podcast that emphasizes the importance of research**

While on deployment, Marino became confused, forgetful, angry, and depressed, and he struggled to perform his regular duties. "The depression took me to a very, very dark place, and I was quite ready to take my own life," he said.

[Read More](#)



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

- 1) 'They don't know us': With a VA hospital threatened with closure, Veterans warn that community caregivers are not prepared to treat those with military experience
- 2) 'We fought for liberty:' Michigan WWII Vets welcome memorial
- 3) Illinois Veteran who launched Fire Department Coffee leaves fire service to run 'brew' business
- 4) On Gold Star Spouses Day, a time to remember, support military families
- 5) Tech glitches at one VA site raise concerns about a nationwide rollout
- 6) VA secretary promises improvements in medical wait time data
- 7) Veterans are at higher risk of eating disorders. The pressure of military life may be one cause.



### **Supporting military sexual trauma survivors means believing**

Veterans who experienced MST can find the support they need at VA to heal physically and emotionally. Treatment is free and personalized.

[Read More](#)



**VA woman Veteran author: Army Veteran M.B. Dallocchio**

Each month, VA's Center for Women Veterans profiles a different woman Veteran author as part of its Women Veteran Authors Book Corner. This month's author is Army Veteran M.B. Dallochio, who served from 1998 to 2006. Dallochio's service included a tour to Iraq in 2004-2005. She is the author of "The Desert Warrior," a memoir that chronicles her journey home from the Iraq War.

[Read More](#)



## **New Orleans Fisher House welcomes 500th guest**

At Fisher Houses, Veterans and families stay free. Available to families of Veterans receiving care at the medical center or nearby community hospitals.

[Read More](#)



## **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/

### **Military One Source**

1-800-342-9647

### **Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors [TAPS]**

1-800-959-8277



## **Vets invited to Gulf War Illnesses Research Committee Veteran engagement sessions**

If you are a 1990-91 Gulf War Veteran with questions or concerns about Gulf War Illness, you're invited to join research committee sessions.

[Read More](#)



## **"Six Triple Eight" women to receive Congressional Gold Medal**

On March 14, President Joe Biden signed the Six Triple Eight Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2021 into Public Law 117-97. The legislation awards the Congressional Gold Medal to the 855 members of the Women's Army Corps, who were assigned to the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion – the "Six Triple Eight" – during World War II.

[Read More](#)



## **Providence VA opens Capt. John H. Harwood Research Center**

Researchers working on interventions to reduce Veteran suicide, substance abuse, depression in elderly Veterans and other health care issues.

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*[CLICK HERE TO GO TO THE VFC WEBSITE](#)*



## **Mental Health and Suicide Prevention**

TREA continues to advocate for alternative therapies in addition to conventional methods of treatment for servicemembers and veterans who experience the invisible wounds of war, including post-traumatic stress, traumatic brain injury, and military sexual trauma. Specifically, since the passage of the TREA backed PAWS For Veterans Therapy Act, our team has been tracking the implementation efforts that are currently underway at the Veterans Health Administration. We are proud to report that VA has announced 5 locations nationwide for the pilot program, which include Anchorage, Alaska, San Antonio, Texas, West Palm, Florida, Ashville, North Carolina, and Pal Alto, California.



## **VetServe 2022: Strengthening Volunteerism with Veterans April 21**

As part of National Volunteer Week, VA is hosting VetServe 2022, a campaign to strengthen volunteer capacity across the nation on April 21.

[Read More](#)



## **Everyone Has a Story, We Can Learn from Every Experience, By Lourdes Tiglao, Director, CWV**

Every individual has a story. Each is a story worth telling...worth knowing. Each person's story contributes to the tapestry that makes this nation unique...special. My story is but one of the threads interwoven to create the beautiful fabric that is America.

[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 03/19/21)

Please note, we've added zero 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) [H.R. 333, Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act](#)
- 6) [H.R. 344, Support the Women Veterans TRUST Act](#)
- 7) [H.R. 914, the Dental Care for Veterans Act](#)
- 8) [Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act](#)
- 9) [S. 134/H.R. 637, the Veterans Economic Recovery Act of 2021](#)
- 10) [S. 437, Take Action for Veterans Exposed to Burn Pits](#)
- 11) [S. 89, Ensuring Survivors Benefits during COVID-19 Act of 2021](#)
- 12) [STOP TRICARE Fee Increases](#)
- 13) [Support Bills to Expand Coverage for ChampVA and](#)



## TRICARE Young Adults

- 14) Veterans Economic Recovery Act Introduced
- 15) H.R. 855, the Veterans Expedited TSA Screening (VETS) Safe Travel Act
- 16) 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.
- 17) Support Repeal of TRICARE Select Enrollment Fee
- 18) HR 1585 & S 565- Provide for the treatment of Vets who participated in the cleanup of Enewetak Atoll as Radiation Exposed
- 19) Please Support S. 344, the Major Richard Star Act
- 20) Support the Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act
- 21) S. 810 & H.R. 1972, the Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act of 2021
- 22) HR 109 Establish an Advisory Committee on Implementation by the DVA of an electronic health record
- 23) HR 2372 and S 952 will Provide for Presumption of Service Connection for certain diseases associated with exposure to toxins
- 24) Please Ask you Senator to support S.952 the Warfighters Act
- 25) Support Improving VA Homelessness Program
- 26) S. 976, Caring for Survivors Act of 2021
- 27) H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act
- 28) H.R. 912, American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans Mental Health Act
- 29) S. 976, the Caring for Survivors Act of 2021
- 30) HR 2269 and S 657 cover herbicide exposure in Thailand
- 31) Bipartisan Bill Introduced to Help Military Survivors
- 32) Legislation asks for Study of Involuntary Discharges for Women
- 33) H.R. 2436, the Veterans Burn Pit Exposure Recognition Act
- 34) H.R. 958—the Protecting Moms Who Served Act
- 35) HR 2127 and S 927, the TEAM bills Veterans Exposed to

## Toxic Substances

- 36) Ask your Senator to Support S.1520 Military Justice Improvement Act
- 37) Ask your member to support S.810 and H.R. 1972 The Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act of 2021
- 38) Ask your member and senator to support HR 2580 and S 1151 to provide for a presumption of service connected disability for certain Veterans who served in Palomares, Spain, and for other purposes
- 39) Ask your Senator to Support S.1520 Military Justice Improvement Act
- 40) HR 855, VETS Safe Travel Act
- 41) HR 3368, the Guam, American Samoa, and Johnston Island bill
- 42) H.R. 2521, Delivering Optimally Urgent Labor Access (DOULA) for Veterans Affairs Act of 2021
- 43) H.R. 1273, the Vietnam Veterans Liver Fluke Cancer Study Act
- 44) H.R. 2968, the Military and Veteran Student Loan Relief Act
- 45) H.R. 845, the VA Billing Accountability Act
- 46) Comprehensive Toxic Exposure Bill Introduced in House
- 47) HR 303 and S 1147 The Retired Pay Restoration Act
- 48) Ask Your Legislators to Support Concurrent Receipt Reform HR-1282
- 49) HR 1656 TREAT PTSD Act
- 50) S. 1664, the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Processing Claims Improvement
- 51) H.R. 2724 — VA Peer Support Enhancement for MST Survivors Act
- 52) Please Support H.R. 3452 —Veterans Preventative Health Coverage Fairness Act
- 53) HR 2192, The Camp Lejeune Justice Act of 2021
- 54) HR 5026, The Panama Canal Zone Veterans Act of 2021
- 55) HR 3368, HR 5026, HR 2269, S 657 are all Toxic Exposure

Bills that need special attention and more pressure to get passed!

- 56) H.R. 4627, Veterans' Culturally Competent Care Act of 2021
- 57) S. 2172, Building Solutions for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness
- 58) H.R. 4571, the SERVICE Act of 2021
- 59) H.R. 4732, Protect Individual Unemployability Benefit for All Disabled
- 60) S. 1937, the Delivering Optimally Urgent Labor Access (DOULA) for Veterans Act of 2021
- 61) S. 2283 and H.R. 5073—the Crisis Hotline REACH for Veterans Act
- 62) HR 852 and S 221, United States - Israel PTSD Collaborative Research Act
- 63) Ask Congress to Preserve Arlington National Cemetery
- 64) HR 4949 and S 692, the Hello Girls Congressional Gold Medal Act of 2021
- 65) HR 2963, the VOW to Hire Heroes Extension Act of 2021
- 66) S 1970, The Clean Water for Military Families Act
- 67) Support S. 1198/H.R. 2819—the Solid Start Act of 2021
- 68) H.R. 3402/S. 976—Caring for Survivors Act of 2021
- 69) HR 3537 and S 1813, Accelerating Access to Critical Therapies for ALS Act
- 70) S. 2386/H.R. 4575, the Veteran Peer Specialist Act
- 71) H.R. 5721—the VIPER Act
- 72) H.R. 5607, Justice for ALS Veterans Act
- 73) HR 2601 and S 1188, SFC Heath Robinson Burn Pit Transparency Act
- 74) S. 3017, Veterans Dental Care Eligibility Expansion and Enhancement Act
- 75) H.R. 4794 and S. 2533, the Making Advances in Mammography and Medical Options (MAMMO) for Veterans Act
- 76) HR 1361 and S 444, AUTO for Veterans Act
- 77) H.R. 4880 and S. 2720, the Veterans' Prostate Cancer Treatment and Research Act
- 78) HR 2800, the WINGMAN Act

- 79) H.R. 5944, Veterans Administration Backlog Accountability Act of 2021
- 80) HR 3400, VA Emergency Transportation Act
- 81) HR 2992, TBI and PTSD Law Enforcement Training Act
- 82) HR 6260, the Casualty Assistance Reform Act of 2021
- 83) H.R. 6064, VA Compensation and Pension exams for claims related to military sexual trauma
- 84) H.R. 5819, Autonomy for Disabled Veterans Act
- 85) HR 3596, the Lawrence J. Hackett, Jr. Vietnam Veterans Agent Orange Fairness Act
- 86) H.R. 2327 – to Remove Delimiting Dates for Survivors and Dependents' Educational Assistance
- 87) S. 2513/H.R. 4772, Improved VA Clothing Allowance Benefit for Disabled Veterans
- 88) S. 3293, the Post 9-11 Veterans Mental Health Care Act of 2021
- 89) HR 6402 and S 1725, will grant a Federal charter to the National American Indian Veterans, Incorporated
- 90) HR 6659 and S 3541, the Health Care for Burn Pit Veterans Acts
- 91) Ask your member to support S.810 and H.R. 1972 the Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act of 2021
- 92) H.R. 6543, Restore Veterans Compensation Act
- 93) H.R. 3967, Honoring Our PACT Act Going to House Floor for a Vote
- 94) H.R. 2916/S. 1467, the VA Medicinal Cannabis Research Act of 2021
- 95) S. 3483, Justice for ALS Veterans Act
- 96) H.R. 6273 and S.3397, the VA Zero Suicide Demonstration Project Act of 2021



**Sexual Assault Awareness Month**

VA is raising awareness of its [available resources](#) for military sexual trauma (MST) survivors. One in three women and one in fifty men stated “yes” when asked by a VA provider if they experienced MST. Like other types of trauma, MST can negatively impact a person’s physical and mental health. Some MST survivors may feel unsafe and isolated, or struggle with sleep or substance use issues. VA offers a wide range of mental and physical treatments for those who experienced MST. [Watch a VA video](#) or contact your local [VA MST Coordinator](#) for more information. If you need assistance with a VA claim, reach out to a [VFW Accredited Service Officer](#).



*[CLICK HERE TO GO TO THE VFC WEBSITE](#)*

**[The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs \(VA\)](#)**

Several key nominations have been sent to the U.S. Senate for confirmation in the past few weeks, including Shereef Elnahal to be Under Secretary for Health, Rita Landgraf to be Assistant Secretary for Aging, and Roselyn Tso to be Director of the Indian Health Service.

In addition, 8 different nominations were made for individuals to be members of the Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission (AIR) at VA. Created by the TREA backed "MISSION Act" of 2018, the AIR Commission is based upon the military's BRAC process. In a nutshell, VA has spent the past few years conducting market assessments on where veterans currently live and trends as to where they might be in the future. VA Secretary McDonough has based his set of recommendations for the AIR Commission upon those assessments. The Department published its criteria for those recommendations in the May 28, 2021, Federal Register, and the recommendations were released on Monday, March 14, 2022.

If the President accepts the report, Congress will have one opportunity to vote against the final set of recommendations before they go into effect. Neither the President nor Congress has the option of choosing which part of the final report to accept. More to come on this important topic as it has been announced that several VA Medical Centers are facing closure or re-configuration.



**North Texas VA fair educates patients and employees on women's health care**

Women Veterans' health fair and engagement session were held to get feedback and ideas and integrate them into programs and services.

[Read More](#)



## **Five ways to access VA care virtually during and after COVID-19 pandemic**

This March marks a difficult anniversary: two years since the COVID-19 pandemic began. In that time, all of us have been affected by COVID-19 – most of all, those who have lost loved ones to the virus. We all want to return to a sense of normalcy. To keep the most vulnerable members of our communities safe, please continue to follow the precautions deemed necessary in your area.

[Read More](#)



# SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS

## TALK:

- Killing themselves
- Feeling hopeless
- Having no reason to live
- Being a burden to others
- Feeling trapped
- Unbearable pain



## BEHAVIOR:

- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Looking for a way to end their lives
- Withdrawing from activities
- Isolating from people
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Visiting or calling people to say goodbye
- Giving away possessions
- Aggression
- Fatigue

## MOOD:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loss of interest
- Irritability
- Humiliation/Shame
- Agitation/Anger
- Relief/Sudden Improvement



## Dr. Preston Igwe discusses diversity in medicine, care of Veterans

After an encounter with a Black Veteran at VA, Dr. Preston Igwe sent a popular Tweet that showcased the needs for more diversity in the medical profession.

[Read More](#)



## Voter Access Initiative

As part of a government-wide effort to tackle barriers to voting that many Americans face, [VA announced a new initiative this week](#) to provide voter assistance to Veterans, families, caregivers and survivors at VA facilities across the country. VA is doing this because we recognize that advocating for all Veterans include advocating for their ability to exercise the rights they fought for and



to participate in the civic life that they defended in uniform. During his speech at the 57th anniversary of Bloody Sunday in Selma, AL, [Deputy Secretary Donald Remy](#) said, "For too long, too many Americans have fought too hard around the globe to protect our rights and freedoms only to fight brutal battles here at home for their own rights and freedoms." This work ensures "Veteran access to that most sacred right they fought for and so many died for."

As part of this effort, our goal this year is to establish a pilot voter assistance program in select facilities in six states where Veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors can go to receive voter assistance information and support.

As we work towards establishing this pilot program, [we are asking you to complete this survey](#) which would help us identify the barriers that Veterans face when registering to vote. Additionally, we ask you to disseminate this survey to your networks to ensure that we get as much participation from our Veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors, especially from communities that are more likely to be affected by barriers to voting.

Finally, we invite you to visit [va.gov/vote](http://va.gov/vote), which is our new online portal for resources available to Veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors on registering to vote. We encourage you to visit the site and we welcome any feedback you may have on how we can make the site more effective at meeting the needs of our customers.

[Read More](#)



**From Afghanistan to Aspen, USMC Veteran Ryan Garza pushes boundaries**

Marine Veteran Amputee Ryan Garza crosses snowboarding off his bucket list at the 36th National Disabled Veterans Winter Sport Clinic.

[Read More](#)



## **Air Force Veteran Stacy Colussy: "Unbelievable strides in women's care at VA."**

Veteran Stacy Colussy really likes her VA health care. "If I'm coming in for a Pap smear, do I have to go in with all these guys? No."

[Read More](#)

**A Year of Firsts for Women Vets**

In honor of Women's History Month, here are several feats accomplished by remarkable women Veterans over the last year. Last year saw a number of firsts for Women Vets across the country.

[Read More](#)



## **Center for Women Veterans remembers Women Vietnam War Veterans**

On March 29, 2012, President Barack Obama proclaimed March 29 as National Vietnam War Veterans Day. Each year, Vietnam Veterans are honored and thanked in public ceremonies and via media outlets, giving them the thanks and welcome home they did not receive during or after U.S. involvement in Vietnam. What too often goes unsaid during conversations and commemorations about the Vietnam War is recognition of the women who served during that time: the Women Vietnam Era Veterans.

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



**WomensHealth.VA.gov website revamped**

Women Veterans now have a newly refreshed website for their health care needs. . Each page details health concerns specific to women.

[Read More](#)



**CalVet Celebrates Construction Kickoff for New  
Skilled Nursing Facility and Memory Care at  
Veterans Home of California-Yountville**

YOUNTVILLE – Construction on the new \$269 million, 240-bed skilled nursing and memory care facility at the Veterans Home of California-Yountville is under way, with the facility expected to open early in 2024.

The project is a partnership with the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet), the Department of General Services

(DGS), and contractors Rudolph and Sletten Inc. and CannonDesign.

Yesterday, CalVet hosted a kickoff event for the Home's residents, staff and members of the public at the construction site. "Today is a giant step toward ensuring we continue to our care for our veterans for generations to come. This activity – resculpting the earth, laying the foundation, cementing the cornerstone - is writing the next chapter in this Home's amazing and unique history," said CalVet Secretary, Vito Imbasciani MD, as he gestured to the construction equipment behind him.

Rudolph and Sletten CEO, Jon Foad, the Home's Allied Council Chair, Gary Sloan and Home Administrator, Lisa Peake joined Imbasciani to discuss the project and the amenities it will provide to Yountville veterans and their spouses.

"This facility will be built to withstand the test of time," said Foad. "I pledge to you that our team will provide CalVet, the CalVet staff and our veterans with a place they are proud to call home."

When completed, the new facility will become the first new free-standing structure built on the Yountville campus since Jefferson Hall – located on the hill above the new hospital site – opened in 1978. The new SNF and memory care facility will replace the 90-year-old Nelson M. Holderman Hospital, which opened in 1933. The East Wing was added in 1948, followed by the West Wing in 1953, and the C.M. Miller Medical Center in 1962.

"It is amazing that this home – the oldest and largest in California – will also have the newest state-of-the-art skilled nursing facility," Administrator Lisa Peake said. "Our veterans and their spouses deserve nothing less than the best California has to offer, and they will have the opportunity to see what that means when we open the doors of the new Skilled Nursing Facility."

All of the rooms in the new facility will be single bed occupancy. Each will have its own bathroom. Each floor will include dining and social areas, and other amenities. It will include a main dining room and shops on the first floor.

**HISTORY OF THE HOME:** The Veterans Home of California-Yountville was founded by a private group of citizens who, in 1881, saw the need to help aging Civil War and Mexican War veterans. The group raised \$17,500, acquired 910 acres, and began building the veterans home that opened in 1884. When the federal government quit funding privately-owned facilities in 1897, the state purchased the Home for a \$10 gold coin. The state has owned and operated the facility ever since, with CalVet taking over after the agency's formation in 1946. The Home ultimately became the flagship for CalVet's Veterans Homes of California system of care; eight Homes located throughout California—from Redding to Barstow to Chula Vista. It is the oldest and largest home for veterans in the United States.

For more information on the VHC-Yountville SNF project, including live feed of the construction site, visit

[www.calvet.ca.gov/yountvillesnfproject](http://www.calvet.ca.gov/yountvillesnfproject)



# Always



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## **DoD Wants \$1 Billion More for Hawaii Water Cleanup**

The FY2023 Defense budget asks for \$1 billion for expenses related to the fuel-tainted water in Hawaii. The money would address the continuing needs of military families, drain the fuel storage tanks and provide more cleanup. The new "Red Hill Recovery Fund" in the fiscal 2023 budget request is in addition to the \$1 billion that Congress has already provided to deal with the effects of the fuel leak. The \$1 billion flexible funding would allow DoD to start to address the draining of the Red Hill Bulk Fuel Storage Facility, built in 1943, as well as address the needs of military families.



## **VA launches value-driven framework for evaluating health care innovations**

A new value-driven framework will ensure Veteran needs are at the forefront of innovations at VHA. Veterans' priorities drive decisions.

[Read More](#)



## **Dear Caregivers**

Dear Fellow Caregivers -

I became a peer mentor with the Caregiver Support Program (CSP) in March of 2021. As a caregiver for my husband Jim, and as a retired hospice nurse and administrator, I would like to urge you to take action on a very important topic: advance care



planning. Having conversations about what matters most to you and what you do (or do not) want in the event of a health crisis is sometimes difficult. I hope my letter will help you understand why it is so important.

Recently, my niece and her husband had severe COVID-19. He went by ambulance to a hospital in another town where beds were available and was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). He was then transferred to a routine hospital bed.

Three days later, my niece's condition worsened, and she was admitted to the same hospital. That same day her husband was transferred back to the ICU with blood clots in both lungs. Shortly thereafter, his attending doctor came to her room and said she needed to decide if she wanted her husband placed on a ventilator. She called me crying while having difficulty breathing, and asked me "How do I make a decision like that? I don't know what to do!" We prayed and I sent out messages to prayer partners and family members. The next day, her husband was feeling much better with no ventilator. The doctor said it was a miracle!

Decisions shouldn't be made during a crisis. If a loved one is dying, that is a time for grieving, not decision making. My husband and I discussed our wishes when we made our wills many years ago. Please talk about health care preferences before a crisis. If you are unsure how to start the conversation or what steps to take, reach out to a social worker or nurse. They can make sure you document your wishes and your Veteran's wishes using the correct forms at no charge.

CSP has been so helpful, and they have linked me to excellent resources and support. Additionally, caregivers helping each other and finding comfort in others through the [Peer Mentor Program](#) has been powerful for me. My lifetime hospice career allowed me

to see how important advance care planning is for families. I also learned that everyone should have their wishes written down in an advance directive no matter their age or situation. Once written down you can share your wishes and advance directive with family members and teach them to be prepared as well. My role as a caregiver and peer mentor has given me a sense of urgency to encourage others to have these conversations when things are going well and you are feeling healthy.

Sincerely,  
Susie



## Office of Inspector General

- 1) [COVID-19: Information on HHS's Public Education Campaign](#)
- 2) [Defense Health Care: DOD Expects New IT System Capabilities to Improve Other Health Insurance Processing](#)
- 3) [Fiscal Year 2023 Budget Request: U.S. Government Accountability Office Statement of Gene L Dodaro](#)
- 4) [Indian Health Service: Information on Third-Party Collections and Processes to Procure Supplies and Services](#)
- 5) [Indian Health Service: Relief Funding and Agency Response to COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- 6) [Medicaid: CMS Should Assess Effect of Increased Telehealth Use on Beneficiaries' Quality of Care](#)
- 7) [Medicare: Information on Geographic Adjustments to Physician Payments for Physicians' Time, Skills, and Effort](#)
- 8) [Mental Health Care: Access Challenges for Covered Consumers and Relevant Federal Efforts](#)
- 9) [Mental Health Care: Consumers with Coverage Face Access Challenges](#)
- 10) [Military Health Care: Preliminary Observations on DOD's Monitoring of Provider Qualifications and Competence](#)

- 11) Older Workers: Opioid Misuse and Employment Outcomes
- 12) Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute: Review of the Audit of the FY 2021 Financial Statements
- 13) Science & Tech Spotlight: Long COVID
- 14) Tribal Epidemiology Centers: HHS Actions Needed to Enhance Data Access
- 15) VA Health Care: Incomplete Information Hinders Usefulness of Market Assessments for VA Facility Realignment
- 16) VA Health Care: Incomplete Information Hinders Usefulness of Market Assessments for VA Facility Realignment
- 17) Veterans Community Care Program: VA Should Improve Its Ability to Identify Ineligible Health Care Providers
- 18) Veterans Community Care Program: VA Should Improve Its Ability to Identify Ineligible Health Care Providers
- 19) Veterans Health Care: Efforts to Hire Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists
- 20) Veterans Health Care: Efforts to Hire Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselors and Marriage and Family Therapists



## **Live Whole Health #117: Social connection**

Social connection is essential to our Whole Health. When we live in harmony with others and through a shared community, our well-being is strengthened.

[Read More](#)



## **April Is Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM)**

During SAAM and year-round, VA works to raise awareness of its resources for survivors of military sexual trauma (MST). VA believes in MST survivors, and we believe there are many paths to healing.

[Learn More](#)



- 1) B&G Foods Issues Voluntary Allergy Alert for Undeclared Egg and Milk in a Limited Number of Boxes of Back to Nature® Cheddalicious® Cheese Flavored Crackers Mistakenly Containing Animal Shaped Crackers
- 2) Best Brand Consumers Products, Inc. Issues Voluntary Recall of Mickey Mouse Hand Sanitizer Ethyl Alcohol 68% Due to Presence of Methanol and the Mandalorian Hand Sanitizer Ethyl Alcohol 68% Due to the Presence of Benzene
- 3) CDER Office of Surveillance and Epidemiology
- 4) COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions
- 5) F&S Medical Supply, DBA Pink Toyz Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Pink Pussycat Capsules Due to the Presence of Undeclared Sildenafil
- 6) FDA Advises Restaurants and Retailers Not to Serve or Sell Potentially Contaminated Raw Oysters from Canada (April 2022)
- 7) FDA approves alpelisib for PIK3CA-related overgrowth spectrum
- 8) FDA Drug Shortages
- 9) FDA Roundup: April 5, 2022
- 10) FDA updates Sotrovimab emergency use authorization
- 11) Outbreak Investigation of Listeria monocytogenes: Dole Packaged Salad (December 2021)
- 12) Two Giant Eagle Stores Recall Cookies Due to Undeclared Milk Allergen
- 13) UPDATE: Change in Reprocessing Methods with Certain Karl Storz Urological Endoscopes – Letter to Health Care Providers
- 14) Use Duodenoscopes with Innovative Designs to Enhance Safety: FDA Safety Communication



**Dr. Preston Igwe discusses diversity in medicine,  
care of Veterans**

As a medical professional, you never know what kind of impact you may have on a patient, as Dr. Preston Igwe, M.D., learned during a rotation at VA. In a viral tweet from January 2022, Dr. Igwe shared that he was the first Black physician that his patient, a Black Veteran, had seen in his 50 years coming to VA for medical care.

[Read More](#)



## **Family and Friends**

As a family member or friend of a Veteran with mental health challenges, you can play an important role in providing support for their recovery. People who are close to Veterans are often the first to notice that they are facing a challenge. Letting a Veteran know you're there for them can help start a conversation.

[Learn More](#)



## **Resources for Older Veterans**

As you age, you can become an expert in resiliency and coping. However, later life can also bring fresh challenges. VA has many programs to support older Veterans and their families and caregivers.

[Learn More](#)





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## **Live Whole Health Blog #117: Social connection**

Social connection is essential to our Whole Health. When we live in harmony with others and through a shared community, our well-being is strengthened. Social connections can be gained through active participation with family, groups and communities.

[Read More](#)

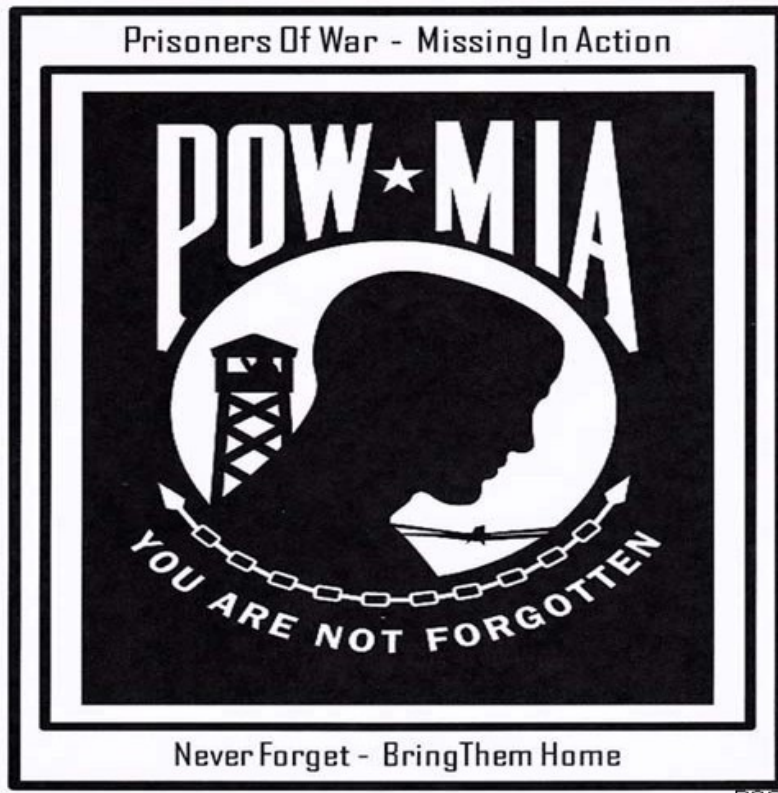


## **Learn About Depression and Treatment Options**

Everyone feels sad at times, and those feelings typically pass within a few days. But if you can't seem to rally, and it's starting to interfere with your daily life, it could be a sign of depression. Depression is a common but serious disorder — one that typically requires treatment to manage. The good news is that even the most severe cases of depression are treatable.

[Learn More](#)





## **HASC-MP Holds Oversighting Hearing on DHA Quality of Care**



The House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee (HASC-MP) held an oversight hearing on the quality of care of the Defense Health Agency. The taxpayers spend more than \$50 billion each year on the Military Health System, which provides health care services to 9.6 million beneficiaries, including servicemembers, retirees and dependents. This sizeable investment should provide timely, safe, high-quality care.

The 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) reorganized the military health system and standardized clinical quality processes. Before the reform, the Army, Navy, and Air Force each operated separate health care systems, and the military had 24 different policies on patient safety and quality of care. Now, the Defense Health Agency oversees all medical treatment facilities and, since 2019, the DoD has a single policy on patient safety and quality of care. According to Sharon Silas Director of the Health Care Team for the Government Accountability Office (GAO), there no evidence that real improvement has occurred. She stated: "In fact, I hear too often about medical errors that cause grievous harm to patients and quality assurance investigations that drag on for years while suspect providers continue to practice."



## **#OperationSong Gloria Savage**

This #OperationSong spotlight is on "Peacemaker" by Veteran Gloria Savage, who served in the United States Air Force for 20 years. In 2019, Savage was invited to participate in an Operation Song Veteran's event in Nashville, Tennessee. She was very excited to attend because she loves music; she had to pinch herself to prove she was not dreaming.

[Read More](#)



## Evidence-Based Therapy from VA Can Help

Evidence-based therapies (EBTs) have been shown to treat a variety of mental health conditions and improve overall well-being. These treatments are tailored to each Veteran's needs, priorities, values, preferences, and goals for therapy. EBTs often work quickly and effectively, sometimes within a few weeks or months, depending on the nature or severity of your symptoms. Work with your VA provider to choose the treatment options that work best for you.

[Learn More](#)



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## VA promotes greater access to voter information to Veterans and families

The Department of Veterans Affairs [unveiled a series of measures](#), March 24, promoting greater access to voter information for Veterans and their families as part of the department's proposed designation as a voter registration agency under the [National Voter Registration Act](#).

In accordance with [Executive Order 14019](#): Promoting Access to Voting, these steps are part of VA's "whole health" approach to care, ensuring Veterans and their families are able to exercise the right to vote which Veterans fought and served to protect.

"We're doubling down on the voting support we already provide — expanding access where we can and looking to do even more," said Deputy Secretary for Veterans Affairs Donald Remy. "We're providing assistance with the voting process for tens of thousands of inpatients and residents at our hospitals, nursing homes and treatment centers, along with homebound Veterans and their caregivers. This is a major undertaking as VA expands this effort, putting voting access right at the fingertips of all Veterans who may need it."

VA [launched a survey](#) to over 12 million Veterans and their families in a first-of-its-kind effort to better understand Veterans' experience with the voter registration process, and to better assist Veterans in addressing and overcoming any challenges. VA also [developed a website](#) for Veterans with nonpartisan information about voter registration and elections.

By summer 2022, VA plans to seek designation, by state officials in six states, as a voter registration agency under NVRA and to launch a pilot voter assistance program at VA facilities in those states — with an eye to the geographic and demographic diversity of the Veteran population.

To learn more or to take the survey, please visit [VA.gov/vote](https://va.gov/vote).

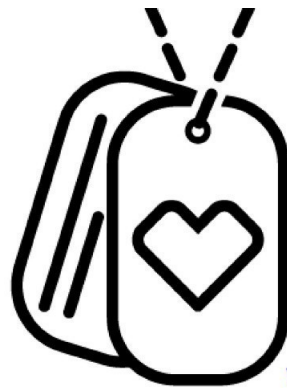
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**Hope Heals**

Ray had a positive Army experience. His trouble started after he transitioned out of the service. Through Veterans Treatment Court, Ray was ordered into mental health treatment. That's when the Army Veteran's life started to change for the better.

[Read Ray's Story](#)



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## **Women vital to historic Tuskegee medical center**

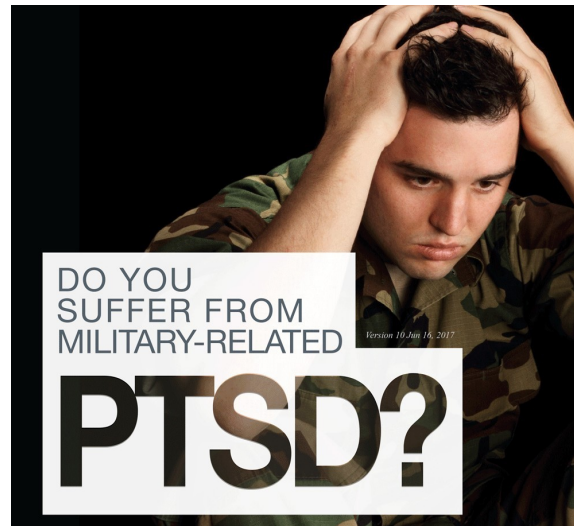
Countless women have served Veterans on the Tuskegee Campus of the Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System. The care they provide has set the foundation of what is now one of the most historic medical centers in our nation.

[Read More](#)

## **VA supports military sexual trauma survivors in their path of healing**

Healing after military sexual trauma (MST) can take time. Veterans who experienced MST can find the support they need at VA to heal physically and emotionally. Treatment is free and personalized.

[Read More](#)



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



**House Approves Bill to Make Binding Arbitration Unenforceable**

House passed the FAIR Act (H.R.963) that would prohibit pre-dispute agreements that require workers and consumers to pursue claims through binding arbitration rather than in court. Often these arbitrators are hired by the employer or lender. The FRA works to ensure that active-duty personnel are protected from predatory lenders and supports making mandatory arbitration agreements in financial contracts unenforceable. The bill now moves to the Senate for further consideration.



## **A VA skeptic finds support through homeless program**

Homeless off and on for 30 years, Army Veteran finally takes his son advice, goes to VA and receives benefits he earned...and a place to live.

[Read More](#)



## **VA skeptic finds housing and support**

Homeless off and on for 30 years, Army Veteran Gary East finally took his son's advice, went to VA and got connected with a place to live.

"Go to VA, there is a program for you."

[Read More](#)





## **Innovation Revolutionary: Designing accessible blood pressure monitoring**

Kimberly Jones and Bob Smith: VA Innovation Ecosystem  
Revolutionaries designing a new accessible blood pressure cuff for at-home use.

[Read More](#)



## **Women Veterans website refreshed**

Women Veterans now have a newly refreshed website for their health care needs. Each page details health concerns specific to women.

[Read More](#)



## **Social connections**

Social connection is essential to Whole Health. We invite you to join this brief movement meditation for embodying social connectedness.

[Read More](#)



**First Woman Nominated for USCG Commandant**



Admiral Linda Fagan has been nominated by President Biden to be the first woman to serve as U.S. Coast Guard Commandant. Admiral Fagan has served in the Coast Guard for 36 years. She has served as Vice-commandant since June of 2021. Previously she was commander of the Coast Guard Pacific Area, overseeing operations from the Rocky Mountains to the waters off the east coast of Africa. Fagan is also the Coast Guard's first Gold Ancient Trident, the officer with the longest service record in the Marine Safety field. She graduated from the Coast Guard Academy in 1985 with a B.S. degree in Marine Science. She later earned a Master of Marine Affairs degree from the University of Washington in 2000 and an M.S. degree in National Security Strategy from the National Defense University in 2008. The nomination requires Senate confirmation.



## **Veterans to benefit from launch of new electronic health record in Walla Walla**

Veterans in Walla Walla, Washington, are one step closer to attaining an electronic health record (EHR) system that allows clinicians to easily access their full medical history, including their active-duty service, in one location.

[Read More](#)



## **U.S. Navy Submarine Day**

This Monday, April 11 marks the 122nd anniversary (1900) of the U.S. Navy's first commissioned submarine, the USS Holland, that was acquired by the United States Navy. The Holland was not the first Navy sub, however. That honor goes to the Alligator which was the first submarine ordered and built by the Navy, although it was never commissioned.



The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one burial update and two new identifications for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from World War II. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

**Navy Seaman 2nd Class Walter R. Pentico**, 17, of Lexington, 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 Pentico. He will be buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) in Honolulu, on April 29, 2022. [Read about Pentico.](#)

**Navy Storekeeper 3rd Class Harry E. Nichols**, 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 Nichols. Interment services are pending. [Read about Nichols.](#)

**Army Air Forces Sgt. Elvin L. Phillips**, 23, was assigned to 66th Bombardment Squadron, 44th Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft on which Phillips was serving as gunner crashed as a result of anti-aircraft fire during Operation Tidal Wave. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. Interment services are pending. [Read about Phillips.](#)



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