



# **Veterans-For-Change Newsletter**

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, March 22, 2020

Volume 11, Issue 12



## **This-N-That**

This week there isn't really much in the news for Veterans as Coronavirus has taken control, which it should and everyone should be careful when you need to go out and be in public.

When at home if you and any other family member have mild symptoms, do your best to wash your hands after every contact, try not to prepare meals for entire family if you can, use hand sanitizer, and if you must go out, please stop by the pharmacy and pick up a box of disposable face masks to use both at home and in

public.

From what we've been hearing, many doctors are telling patients to not come in for their appointment, to just sit in the car, call and let them know you are there, and they will send a staff member out to get you and take you straight to an exam room, thus limiting contact with everyone.

Veterinarians are also asking the same but also for med refills and food refills, they will bring it to you, collect payment and again reducing your amount of contact with others.

I also want to apologize for the abbreviated newsletter this week. This is entirely my fault, but after having radiation five days a week and chemo once this week, the chemo took the wind right out of me for two solid days. So I was not able to collect all that I normally collect to share with you.

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

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

and over again, but please do this once weekly.

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

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

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

[Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org](mailto:Jim.Davis@Veterans-For-Change.org)



## **Update on COVID-19 Measures**

President Donald Trump declared a national emergency over the coronavirus outbreak. The president asked Americans to stop eating inside restaurants, bars and food courts and to avoid groups of 10 or more people for the next 15 days to help stop the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus. Hospitals in the U.S. are adding more beds, limiting visitors and canceling elective surgery in preparation for an influx of coronavirus cases. President Trump urged Americans to work at home, if possible, to disrupt chains of transmission. The Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention is the leading federal public health agency responding to COVID-19, and is working with the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs and other government agencies.

For TRCARE beneficiaries, the Military Health System has established a [microsite](#) to be the primary information resource for Military Health System beneficiaries.

The administration has authorized the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to broaden access to telehealth for Medicare so that beneficiaries can receive a wider range of services from their doctors without having to travel to a health care facility. For more information on Medicare telehealth [go online](#).

Regarding how COVID-19 travel restrictions will impact military members and families, a FAQ can be found [online](#).

Regarding the VA response, FRA members are urged to reference last week's NewsBytes (03-13-20). The Veterans Health Administration is heavily encouraging veterans to call their local medical center before they visit the facility and consider using VA telehealth. The VA's telehealth providers can evaluate patient's symptoms to make a diagnosis and provide comprehensive care from a telephone. For more

information on VA telehealth, [go online](#).

Currently, all Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration cemeteries continue to remain open for public burials and visitations. To schedule a burial, please call 800-535-1117, and choose option 1. In light of concerns regarding the community spreading of COVID-19, the NCA is strongly urging that all committal services adhere to the [CDC guidelines](#) to avoid groups of more than 10 people. Additionally, volunteer and military honor guard availability may be limited, based on local conditions.

In related news, the FRA National Board of Directors' April meeting, storming the Hill, and the Capitol Hill Pinnacle Award reception have been postponed until the last week of June. The Navy Recruiter of the Year (ROY), and the Navy's Sailor of the Year (SOY) activities have also been postponed.

Some of the staff at the FRA National Headquarters will be on a "work from home" basis. There will be a limited number of staff available at NHQ during regular business hours. Response to member inquiries may be delayed.

The FRA urges Shipmates to stay healthy and safe during this national pandemic.



## Links to Other Stories

1. Sailors  
Contribute  
During  
Vietnam  
Port  
Call
2. Novel  
Coronavirus  
Disease  
(COVID-  
19)
3. Parkinson's  
Disease  
and  
Pesticides:  
What's  
the  
Connection?
4. VA  
Claims  
for  
Parkinson's  
Disease  
and  
Agent  
Orange
5. Veterans

should  
be  
involved  
in  
appropriation  
of  
VA  
funds  
and  
decision-  
making

6. Sons  
of  
the  
American  
Legion  
remember  
a  
friend  
and  
toast  
Veterans

7. Donald  
Stratton,  
Pearl  
Harbor  
survivor  
who  
fought  
for  
recognition  
of  
hero

sailor,  
dead  
at  
97

8. TTU  
research  
on  
Veterans'  
mental  
health  
points  
to  
a  
need  
to  
improve  
health  
care  
assessments

9. Dozens  
of  
Iwo  
Jima  
Veterans  
mark  
battle's  
75th  
anniversary  
at  
Camp  
Pendleton

10. VA  
purchased

technology  
from  
blacklisted,  
banned  
foreign  
companies,  
officials  
say

11. Philadelphia  
non-  
profit  
gives  
Veterans,  
homeless  
dogs  
a  
second  
chance
12. DOD  
Closing  
Dozens  
of  
Military  
Clinics  
to  
Retirees,  
Families
13. Schumer:  
U.S.  
should  
cover  
four  
ailments

linked  
to  
Agent  
Orange  
in  
Vietnam  
Vets

14. Granting  
VA  
Disability  
Claims  
by  
Remote  
Questionnaire  
Led  
to  
Fraud,  
Report  
Shows

15. Inspector  
gives  
Dayton  
VA  
list  
of  
problems  
to  
fix  
after  
patient's  
death

16. Video  
captures

delivery  
driver  
fixing  
fallen  
American  
flag  
at  
Veteran's  
home

17. Agawam  
Man  
Charged  
with  
Defrauding  
VA  
Hospitals  
by  
Failing  
to  
Inspect  
Medical  
Gas  
Systems

18. Onslow  
Community  
Outreach  
offers  
new  
program  
for  
homeless  
Veterans

19. Vets

group  
sounds  
the  
alarm  
after  
VA  
greenlights  
controversial  
Ashford  
University  
for  
GI  
Bill  
funds

20. Softball  
fundraiser  
to  
fight  
Veteran  
homelessness

21. VA  
'negligent'  
in  
Veteran's  
parking-  
lot  
suicide,  
mother  
says

22. Seabrook  
police  
go  
above

and  
beyond  
in  
call  
to  
help  
WWII  
Veteran  
in  
the  
cold

23. Decision  
to  
move  
Royal  
Oak  
Veterans  
Memorial  
sparks  
controversy

24. As  
VA  
works  
through  
backlog,  
NH  
providers  
waiting  
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\$134M

25. 22  
studies  
agree:

'Medicare  
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All'  
saves  
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26. Evidence  
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27. Schools  
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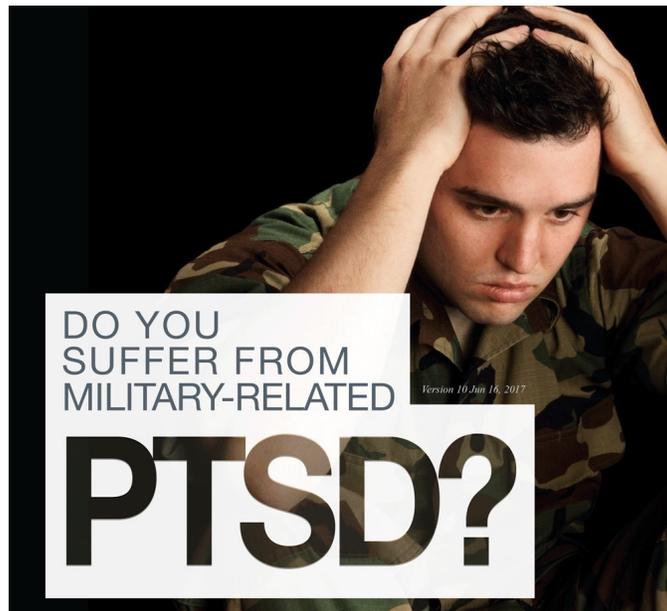
28. Lawsuit  
charges  
VA  
mistakes,  
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to  
Veteran's  
parking  
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suicide

29. 51  
years  
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30. Veteran  
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Vietnam  
War

Check us out today: [www.Veterans-for-change.org](http://www.Veterans-for-change.org)



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



## **SASC-P has Hearing on Personnel Issues**

The Senate Armed Services, Personnel Subcommittee

held a hearing on personnel issues and had Pentagon officials testify. The FRA submitted a written statement for the record regarding issues of concern to Shipmates. The FRA statement includes the association's opposition to scheduled annual pharmacy and treatment co-pay increases, restricting retirees and military dependents from selected Military Treatment Facilities and proposed drastic cuts to military medical staff. In addition, the FRA statement urged the subcommittee to expand concurrent receipt and increase Congressional oversight of the Defense Department's suicide prevention program.

Among the many topics discussed, Pentagon officials spoke of "rightsizing" the Military Health System (MHS) with a focus on readiness. The DoD officials assured members of the subcommittee that the agency will continue to closely monitor MTFs and make any necessary adjustments. Members can go the [FRA Action Center](#) to weigh in on expanding concurrent receipt and expressing opposition to restricting retirees and military dependents from obtaining health care services at select MTFs.



[Veterans-For-Change Web Site](#)

The Veterans-For-Change website has been around since 2009. The looks pretty much stay the same, but in the background our new webmaster has been making repairs to things that haven't worked properly in over a year.

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

Constant improvement and change is being done to make our website the most user friendly “**One-Stop-Shop**” website to find almost everything you might have tried to find searching the internet.

Almost a hundred people have been involved; collecting web links to documents now houses on the VFC website, collecting thousands of web links for various issues, illnesses and benefits. Creating forums for all eras of service and two forums one just for men and one just for woman where you can go question, comment, share medical and personal concerns, what ever you'd like it to be.

We also have a forum with for Mental Health and are currently seeking a new Licensed Mental Health Worker, where you can seek help or just ask questions.

We average **4,079** hits per day, and downloads average **4,895** per day with a total **6,006,045** visitors as of Friday.

If you subscribe you will have full access to the entire website and best of all it's **FREE of charge!** You just need a valid E-mail address so the system can send you a confirmation E-Mail. Once received, click on the link to be authorized automatically.

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

- Documents Library with over **18,649** documents in 171+ Libraries, added 1 documents on-line (Updated: 03/13/20)
- FAQ's on-line with **1,790** FAQ's on **101** topics! (Updated 08/29/19 - 128 NEW)
- Multiple Forums
  - o Afghanistan Veterans
  - o FMP - Foreign Medial Program
  - o Gulf War & Desert Storm Veterans
  - o Iraq Veterans
  - o Korean Veterans
  - o Men Veterans Forum
  - o Mental Health for Veterans (Counselor Needed)
  - o Political Issues
  - o Suggestion Box
  - o The Mess Hall

- o VA Hospitals and Medical Centers
- o Veteran Affairs
- o Vietnam Veterans
- o Welcome Mat
- o Women Veterans Forum
- o WW II Veterans
- Job Postings
- Memorial Pages (Updated: 02/26/18) (115 Added)
- News (Articles On-Line: **9,593**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **7,406**, Added 97 New Links (Updated: 02/27/20)

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



## **Defense Health Agency Officials Answer Questions on COVID-19**

In case you missed the March 17 Facebook Town Hall on COVID-19 hosted by the Defense Health Agency. Check out this article highlighting some of the answers to COVID-19 questions from the event.

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





Below are links to all currently active pre-written E-Mails to many pieces of legislation. We ask that you go to each one, and send the pre-written E-Mails, and to also call your Reps or Senators and ask for their support on a weekly basis!

You don't need to be Active Duty or a Veteran, in fact we ask all Veteran friends to also help!

1. [Allow Active Duty to Sue Military for Medical Malpractice \(H.R. 2422\)](#)
2. [Urge Congress to Pass the Retired](#)

Pay  
Restoration  
Act

3. Protect  
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Veterans  
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Benefits
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5. S.  
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Benefits  
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Choice  
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9. New  
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10. STOP

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11. Support  
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3444  
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Orange  
Presumptives



**BILLS PASSED OUT OF COMMITTEE**

H.R. 712*	VA Medical Cannabis Research Act ( <i>Rep. Correa</i> )	H.R. 6168	Veterans' Compensation COLA Act ( <i>Rep. Luria</i> )
H.R. 1647	Veterans Equal Access Act ( <i>Rep. Blumenauer</i> )	H.R. 5284	Vet OUTREACH Act ( <i>Rep. Khanna</i> )
H.R. 2224*	Homeless Veterans with Children Reintegration Act ( <i>Rep. Brownley</i> )	H.R. 2816	Vietnam Era Veterans Hepatitis-C Testing Enhancement Act ( <i>Rep. Stefanik</i> )
H.R. 3798*	Equal Access to Contraception for Veterans Act ( <i>Rep. Brownley</i> )	H.R. 2628	Vet CARE Act ( <i>Rep. Billrakis</i> )
H.R. 5781*	a bill to improve liability for G.I. Bill debts ( <i>Rep. Bost</i> )	H.R. 1527	Long Term Care Veterans Choice Act ( <i>Rep. Higgins</i> )
H.R. 6036*	VA Family Leave Act of 2020 ( <i>Rep. Roe</i> )	H.R. 5750	Streamlining G.I. Bill Processing Act of 2020 ( <i>Rep. Billrakis</i> )
H.R. 6140	Veterans In STEM Act ( <i>Rep. Underwood</i> )	H.R. 5766*	VET TEC Expansion Act ( <i>Rep. Levin</i> )
H.R. 6018	to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to collect overpayments of specially adapted housing assistance ( <i>Rep. Correa</i> )	S. 3084	A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to modify the limitation on pay for certain high-level employees and officers of the Department of Veterans Affairs
H.R. 6157	Transparency for Student Veterans Act		

\*as amended

**House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
Passes 17 Bipartisan Bills, Reauthorizes  
Women Veterans Task Force**

On March 12, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a Full Committee Markup passing all 17 bills on the agenda to strengthen family leave, assist homeless veterans and their dependent children through reintegration programs, expand access to contraception, streamline GI Bill processing, and improve the lives of millions of veterans.

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

TREA Members please contact your Congressman and urge them to support each of these Bills on the House floor! If you have questions, please email TREA at [legislativeinfo@trea.org](mailto:legislativeinfo@trea.org).



## **Student Veteran Housing Bill Passes**

This week, the House and the Senate passed **S. 3503**, a bill to make sure student veterans impacted by the COVID-19-related closures would not see a decrease

in their monthly housing stipends. Due to most classes around the country converting to online instruction for the remainder of the semester, VA determined those students should receive the “online only” housing rate, which is significantly less money each month. Veteran advocates and Congress swiftly stepped in to make sure students using distance learning due to the outbreak would not be affected. The bipartisan, bicameral bill quickly passed the House and Senate and is now headed to the president’s desk to be signed into law. The VFW thanks all the representatives and senators who made sure student veterans and their families are taken care of during this difficult time.



**~~Follow us on MEWE~~**

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](#)

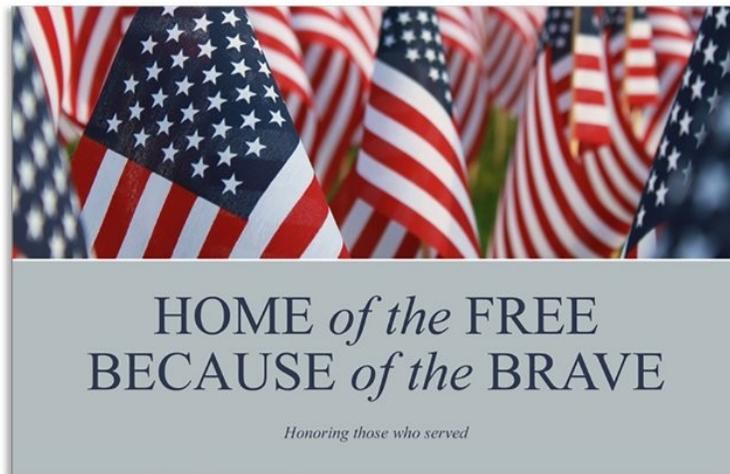
[HOMELESS HEROES PROGRAM OF VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE](#)

[AMVETS GROUP](#)

VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP

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

AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY



## **FRA Urges SecDef to Re-consider Changes to DoD Childcare Centers for USCG Families**

The FRA has dispatched a letter to the secretary of defense urging him to re-consider his decision to restrict attendance at child development centers for kids from U.S. Coast Guard families. Press reports indicate that one of the unintended consequences in this changed policy is that as many as 1,000 children of active-duty Coast Guard families could lose their

spots at base child development centers. The association believes it is important to provide adequate childcare at all military installations. The FRA advocates that the DoD should increase funding for child development centers rather than restrict usage. The association also wants to ensure funding parity with the DoD on pay, benefits and housing for Coast Guard personnel. At a recent House Appropriations Committee hearing, Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Karl Schultz expressed serious concerns about the changed DoD CDC policy.



## **VA Proposed regulations to improve the Caregivers Program**

The Department of Veterans Affairs met with several Veteran Service Organizations, including the FRA, to discuss the recent roll out of a draft regulation to completely overhaul the VA Caregiver Program to match the expansion required by the FRA-supported Mission Act, that was enacted into law in 2018. This expansion was part of FRA's 2018 Legislative Agenda. The program will provide a monthly stipend, and health care benefits for a caregiver. The new law will provide training for caregivers, and up to 30 days of respite care. The regulations will expand eligibility for the caregiver program for eligible veterans from all eras,

beginning with those who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975. Two years after the first phase of program expansion, the program will include eligible veterans who were seriously injured in the line of duty between May 7, 1975 and Sept. 11, 2001. Prior to expanding, the VA must fully implement an information technology system required by the Mission Act.

The regulation calls for the development of clear eligibility tools will promote objective consistency within the program. Part of the improvements consists of standardized eligibility by expanding the definition of "serious injury." It also proposes inclusion of illnesses are Diabetes, ALS, MSM, Dementia and Cancer. As proposed, staffing will increase from approximately 200 to nearly 700 to cater for the demands of the program and more will be added as the program expands.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the VA invited feedback on draft regulation. The VA will consult the VSOs before finalizing the policies and regulation to avoid essential complaints from the participants of the program

To learn more about support services available for disabled veterans [go online](#) or call the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274.



## **Coronavirus Halts Military Travel In and Out of Iraq and Afghanistan**

No U.S. forces will move into U.S. Central Command's area of responsibility — a region that includes the war zones in Iraq or Afghanistan — under a 14-day “stop movement” order issued Friday by the U.S. military command responsible for the Middle East.

[Read full article](#)

## **Legislation Introduced to Add New Presumptive Diseases for Agent Orange Exposure**

Last week, Senator Tester (D-MT) introduced VFW-supported S. 3444, the [Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act of 2020](#). This important legislation would expand

the list of presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure to include parkinsonism, bladder cancer, hypertension, and hyperthyroidism. “Vietnam veterans did our part,” said VFW Commander-in-Chief William J. “Doc” Schmitz. “After winning every battle they fought while they were in Vietnam, many of them have lost their fight to the horrible health conditions they received from Agent Orange exposure. It’s unacceptable that the list of conditions presumed to be associated with Agent Orange exposure does not include bladder cancer, Parkinson-like symptoms, hypertension, and the other conditions that the scientists have said are connected to military service. The VFW is proud to support the Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act of 2020, which would correct this wrong.” [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)**



## FRA Supports Improved Hazard Duty Pay for Reserve Component

The FRA supports the Guard and Reserve Hazard Pay Equity Act (S.3308 and H.R.5887) that would provide the Reserve Component with same hazard-duty incentive pay (HDIP) as active duty members receive. As part of their service, qualified active duty, National Guard, and Reserve servicemembers are entitled to HDIP while performing hazardous duties such as flying duty, parachute jumping, and demolition of explosives. However, Reserve component are only awarded 1/30th of HDIP compared to their active duty counterparts, while still being required to perform the same requirements and being subject to the same risk. This legislation would allow Reserve Component members to be awarded HDIP at the same rate as their active duty counterparts in hazard duty fields.

Go to the [Action Center](#) and weigh in on this issue.



## Office of Inspector General

1. [Medicare and Medicaid: Alignment](#)

of  
Managed  
Care  
Plans  
for  
Dual-  
Eligible  
Beneficiaries



## **Major Richard Star Act Supported by the Military Coalition**

Yesterday, The VFW joined its Military Coalition partners, a consortium of uniformed services and veterans' associations representing more than 5.5 million current and former service members, their families, and survivors, in writing a letter to express support for H.R. 5995 and S. 3393, the [Major Richard Star Act](#). The bill would enable veterans who have been medically discharged due to combat-related injuries, and less than 20 years of service be rightfully entitled to Department of Defense longevity pay and Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation payment without offset.



## **Trump Declares National Emergency Over Coronavirus**

President Donald Trump invoked a national emergency over coronavirus on Friday, a move that he said will unlock tens of billions of dollars in federal aid to state and local governments, provide access to millions of tests and allow him to loosen legal strictures on hospitals to help them respond to the pandemic.

[Read full article](#)



## **VA Notice on Novel Coronavirus**

The Department of Veterans Affairs has issued a statement that the Veterans Health Administration is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services and other federal agencies to monitor and respond to the current outbreak of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the United States. The VHA is operating in accordance with CDC guidance and is actively

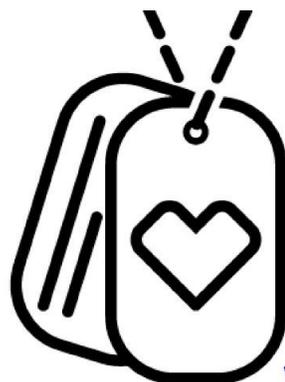
participating in response efforts in local communities to address the outbreak.

The VHA has a comprehensive plan in place to protect the health of everyone who visits or works at VA facilities. The Emergency Management Coordination Cell has been activated and is responding to this rapidly changing situation. Supply chain measures are in place, negative airflow beds are available across VHA facilities, and COVID-19 testing kits are available. The VHA is reinforcing adherence to the standard, contact, and airborne precautions, which include the use of personal protective equipment. Healthcare personnel evaluating or treating a patient suspected or confirmed to have a COVID-19 infection have been directed to use these precautions.

The VHA is constantly communicating with employees about the importance of common-sense behaviors for reducing the spread of illness, such as washing hands for at least 20 seconds, avoid touching their faces, covering coughs and sneezes, getting vaccinated against the flu, avoiding other people who are sick and encouraging employees to stay home if they are sick.

In addition, the VHA is heavily encouraging veterans to call their local medical center before they visit the facility and telling them to consider using VA telehealth. The VA's telehealth providers can evaluate

patient's symptoms to make a diagnosis and provide comprehensive care from a telephone. For more information on telehealth [go online](#).



**Our values  
match yours.**



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

## **VA Closes Regional Offices to the Public, VFW Service Officers Still Available**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, VA made the decision to close its regional offices to the public, postponing hearings for the duration of the national emergency. The VFW similarly made the difficult decision to close its Pre-Discharge locations to the public. However, Veterans Benefits Administration is still working, processing benefit claims for veterans. Veterans and advocates must also note that all VA filing deadlines still apply. The VFW is pushing VA to extend these deadlines and has started working with Congress, in case such an extension requires an emergency legislative fix. VFW National Veterans

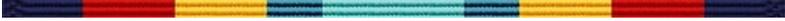
Service (NVS) continues to send guidance to the VFW's global network of accredited service officers, many of whom continue to work from safe locations. Veterans should still be able to reach their VFW Service Officers and Pre-Discharge reps via email. [Find your representative](#). If you do not hear from your representative within two business days, please contact NVS via [email](#).



## **Fleet Reserve Association's Membership Survey**

FRA is asking all members to complete the 2020 Fleet Reserve Association's Membership Survey. This short 18 question survey will help FRA with future planning. For more information about the survey see the March issue of FRAtoday. Please type or click the following

link [www.fra.org/survey](http://www.fra.org/survey) We welcome your feedback and you may email additional questions and comment to [christinah@fra.org](mailto:christinah@fra.org).



## COVID-19 Guidance for VA Patients

VA is urging all its patients to follow the [CDC guidance](#) regarding COVID-19. Any veteran with symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath should immediately [contact their local VA facility](#). VA urges veterans to call before visiting. Upon arriving at VA, all patients will be screened for flu-like symptoms before they enter in order to protect other patients and staff. A VA health care professional will assist you with next steps once this screening process is complete. [Read more](#). [Contact the VFW](#) if you are having issues accessing health care.





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

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



## **Addressing Emotional Responses to Threat of Coronavirus**

With mounting worry and fear about the current outbreak of coronavirus, it's worth taking a pause to look at how to mitigate some of the emotional and behavioral effects that might come from media coverage and the threat of coronavirus.

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

## **VA Debt Management Financial Relief**

This week, the VA Debt Management Center (DMC) released a statement asking that any veteran or family member who has a VA debt and is impacted by the COVID-19 virus reach out to them to request temporary financial assistance. The VA DMC can be reached at 1.800.827.0648. [Learn more](#).



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## **Call before visiting your VA facility**

Got a fever, cold, cough or flu-like symptoms? Are you worried that you have a viral illness? The last thing you want to do is get out of the house to see the doctor, exposing yourself (and others) to more potential bugs and viruses.

VA can make it easier and safer to get back to health with virtual care through My HealtheVet and the VA Video Connect app on your smartphone, tablet or computer.

[Learn More](#)



## **Blood Donations Desperately Needed**

The American Red Cross is now facing a severe blood shortage due to the massive amounts of blood drives that have been canceled due to the COVID-19 virus. Eligible and healthy donors are strongly urged to make

an appointment soon to donate blood, as donating blood is a safe process. [Learn more](#).



## Regional Offices' Public Contact Closures

The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Regional Offices will be closed to the public starting March 19.

Regional offices will remain open, but will no longer accept walk-ins for claims assistance, scheduled appointments, counseling and other in-person services. This decision protects our older Veterans and those with underlying conditions as well as our employees.

Veterans can continue to get information about benefits or file a claim for benefits by visiting our website at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov). Veterans with claims specific

or other questions may request information via [Inquiry Routing & Information System](#) (IRIS) or telephone at 1-800-827-1000.

VBA benefits and services provided to Veterans, families, and survivors will continue to be delivered throughout the duration of COVID-19 impacts.

Please continue to check [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) for updates. You also may follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

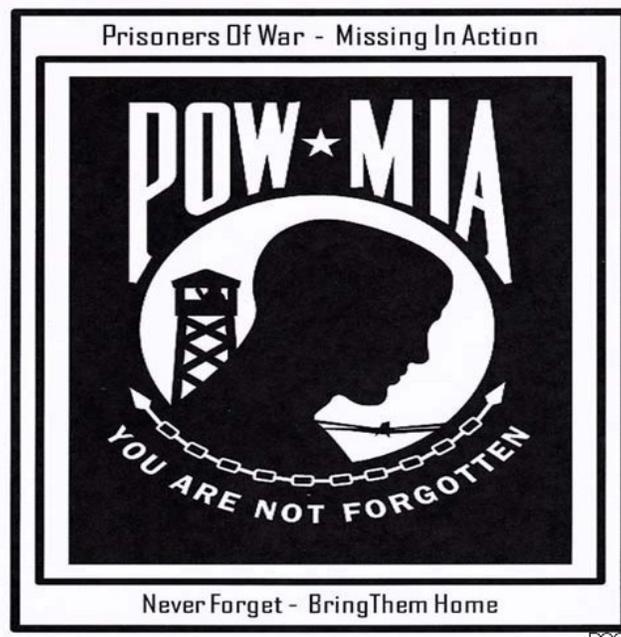
Thank you,  
Veterans Benefits Administration



## **Beware of COVID-19 Virus Scams**

The White House is warning the public to ignore rumors of a national quarantine due to the COVID-19 virus outbreak, which were circulated by erroneous text messages. “Text message rumors of a national #quarantine are FAKE,” according to a March 15 tweet posted on the Twitter page of the National Security Council. “There is no national lockdown.” Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman told defense reporters Monday that he “was not familiar” with any plans of using the U.S. military to enforce a national quarantine to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Social media has been flooded with virus-related rumors,

many of which are being perpetrated by cybercriminals, according to U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command. [Read more.](#)



## Place addresses DHA COVID-19 response

Army Lt. Gen. Ronald Place, director of the Defense Health Agency, spoke of agency efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic within the United States in a telephonic press conference.

[Read More](#)



## **DOD Implements Policy Change for Child Care Priorities**

The Department of Defense will implement a policy change to the current priorities for child care starting June 1. Over time, service members have faced long wait lists for child care due to facilities opening their doors to DOD civilians, retirees and others. As directed by Defense Secretary Dr. Mark T. Esper in a [memo](#) signed Feb. 21, 2020, the department will afford priority access to military families. "The department's system of child care was established to assist service members as they face the unique challenges associated with the demands of military service," said Virginia Penrod, acting assistant secretary of defense for manpower and reserve affairs. "Over time, child care access expanded to serve the total force, but we must not lose sight of the service member and mission requirements. We must ensure that our military

members and families have the support needed in order to be mission ready.”



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## **DoD ready to help with Coronavirus, but capability limited**

"The Department of Defense is ready, willing and able to support civilian authorities to the greatest extent possible with the direction of the president," Jonathan Rath Hoffman said during a Pentagon news conference. "We just want to make sure that the conversation that is being had is informed by the facts

...

[Read More](#)



The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one new identification, and three burial update for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from WWII and the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

**Navy Seaman 1st Class Orval A. Tranbarger**, 20, of Mountain View, Missouri, 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 Tranbarger. He will be buried in his hometown. The date has yet to be decided. [Read about Tranbarger.](#)

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

**Navy Fireman 3rd Class Herbert B. Jacobson**, 21, of Grayslake, Illinois, 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 Jacobson. Jacobson will be buried May 15, 2020, at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. [Read about Jacobson.](#)

**Marine Corps Sgt. Jerome B. Morris**, 22, of East St. Louis, Illinois, was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, while the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Morris was killed on the third day of the battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Morris will be buried in Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. The date has yet to be determined. Read about Morris.



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