



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, October 25, 2020

Volume 11, Issue 34



This-N-That

Good morning Jim,

It's been a couple of weeks now since the last newsletter and it's helped a bit and saved a little time in the process so we will shoot for every other week and see how well it works.

I received an E-Mail from someone I had not heard from in a long time, Bonnie King, she was informing me that her husband Tim King, a Vietnam Veteran and longtime Journalist had passed away on October 4, 2020 from a serious motor cycle accident.

I met Tim not long after my father passed away and VFC came to life back in 2006. We'd talked about a lot of issues when it came to Veterans and their families and over time we discussed getting together to work as a team to develop a documentary on base contaminations.

We finally met in 2007 at MCAS El Toro and were easily able to walk the grounds on the former base and we took soil samples didn't even dig that far down, maybe an inch or two in quite a number of locations and put each sample into a paper cup and put a lid on each cup, then we took samples from a local orange farm that was just outside the base, then over to the community called Turtle Rock and same there we took a few more samples.

All the samples were sent to a biologist/chemist friend of ours in Boston who tested all the samples. The reports came back as to all the chemicals found were 100-300x higher than acceptable EPA Standards.

Sadly, our financial backer just had to go run and open his mouth to the land developer and the just put a stop to our actions and ordered all video to be destroyed, so the story and the truth was never allowed out.

But it sure did explain why many family members had been or would be and have been diagnosed with several different forms of Cancer and other illnesses.

For those who knew Tim and would like to send an E-Mail to Bonnie, you're more than welcome to send to me and I will gladly forward for you. I know I will miss Tim, he was one of the good, if not great guys!

My heart goes out to Bonnie, family and staff members, I am so sorry for your loss!

Recently, another Veteran forwarded to me a CBO report where it outlines a potential solution which once you read it, you as well will feel your blood coming to a boil!

I've not had time yet to get it uploaded to the website, so if you'd like a copy please send me an E-Mail and I will gladly share it with you.

Bottom line is to begin cutting benefit pay amounts, cut amounts of claims approved, and stop accepting some forms of claims to help reduce the VA Budget!

I can assure you this is no joke, not false information, and over the next two weeks I will be asking for everyone's help to put a halt to this crap. It will affect EVERY VET and EVERY WIDOW, so there is no time

to be making excuses to why not.

On the good news side of this newsletter, I know I have been saying for over a year now we'd end up with a brand-new look and face lift for the VFC Website.

Well with our new web master, he's been working on it for the past three months and actually shared his conception with me on a virtual web site, and it's looking pretty damn good and will be a huge change, not to mention the first major change since 2007.

Kristijan has been putting in countless hours on the new web site making sure everything has a new look! The actions, pages, library, etc. will all still act the same, but it will look a lot nicer, hopefully giving us that pizzazz and entice more people to give us a try.

We did limit the access to the library documents so non-subscribers only see about ¼ of the full library and subscribers see 100%, that has helped keep the bot's usage of the system to a minimum. And I just recently restricted comments to the various articles posted to subscribers as I was deleting 1,000's per week from spammers and bots.

There is absolutely ZERO cost to subscribe, it was intended to be a free system and will remain a free

system forever.

It looks like we might be getting closer to having a COVID-19 vaccine hopefully sometime in the next 8-12 weeks. There are at least six agencies working on this, and have just begun human testing phase, so keep your fingers crossed that something comes soon.

Please be safe, please practice the guidelines, don't let your friends or family wake up to your passing!

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



DHA Extends Grace Period for TRICARE Fee

The Defense Health Agency has extended the grace period from 90 days to 180 days for disenrollment from TRICARE Select. This was done in response to a request from the FRA and several other groups to increase the enrollment period for Group A retirees

(Joined the service before Jan. 1, 2018) to set up a payment plan for the new TRICARE fee enacted 4 years ago that takes effect Jan. 1, 2021. FAILURE TO PAY WILL MEAN LOSS OF COVERAGE until the following open enrollment period. The fee does NOT apply to TRICARE-for-Life beneficiaries and Chapter 61 retirees.

TRICARE Select beneficiaries under age 65 that joined the military before Jan. 1, 2018 (Group A) will be required to pay a monthly fee beginning Jan. 1, 2021. The monthly fee for an individual is \$12.50 and \$25 for a family. This must be done via allotment, where feasible. To maintain health care coverage, TRICARE Select Group A retired beneficiaries must take action and pay their TRICARE Select enrollment fees. These and other fee increases were opposed by FRA and were authorized four years ago by the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA-S.2943-P.L.114-328). The FRA opposition resulted in a smaller fee and a four-year delay.

Beneficiaries who fail to set up their TRICARE Select enrollment fee payment by Jan. 1, 2021 will be disenrolled from TRICARE Select due to non-payment. Those beneficiaries will have 180 days (originally 90 days) from their termination date to request reinstatement. If a beneficiary does not act, they will only be able to get care from a military

hospital or clinic if space is available (i.e. all civilian healthcare costs will be their full responsibility).

Fees are waived for Chapter 61 retirees and their family members and survivors of deceased active duty service members. For more information about the fees please [go online](#).



Information Alert: Caregiver Expansion Now in Effect

Today marks an important day and a decisive victory for seriously disabled Veterans who were wounded or became ill prior to September 11, 2001, as well as for their family caregivers.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie finally announced the long-awaited certification of its new information technology system for its caregiver support program, which means that starting today, Veterans from World War II, the Korean and Vietnam war eras with severe injuries or illnesses that occurred on or before May 7, 1975, are now eligible for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). A second expansion phase—currently expected to begin two years after this initial expansion—will cover Veterans whose injuries or illnesses

occurred between May 8, 1975 and September 10, 2001.

Newly eligible Veterans can learn more about the caregiver expansion and download an application to submit by mail or in person at the [VA Caregiver Support website](#), or you can use [VA's Online Application process](#).

According to VA, if your application for benefits is approved, and your designated caregiver is approved into the program, your benefits may be payable back to the date the application was received (on or after October 1st) if your caregiver was already providing personal care services at your home. If you do not currently have a caregiver but you are found to be eligible for the program, and your application is approved and clinical need is determined, the effective date would be the date the designated caregiver begins providing personal care services to the eligible Veteran.

While we are pleased that VA has finally begun the first phase today, rest assured DAV will continue to push to expedite the second expansion phase so that Veterans and their caregivers have access to the support services they need, without unnecessary delay, and we will keep you updated on our progress.



Reschedule Cancelled VA Health Care Appointments

Veterans whose VA health appointments were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, can contact VA to reschedule by calling or messaging their care team. Primary care and mental health appointments can be rescheduled using the [VA appointments tool](#) and use of telehealth services are encouraged. VA reminds Veterans with in-person appointments to wear masks and be prepared for COVID-19 symptom screening when they arrive. To receive answers on COVID-19, as well as VA benefits and services, Veterans can interact with the [coronavirus chatbot](#) found on VA's website. [Learn more.](#)

VA's Collaboration with NARA Digitizes Vietnam-era Deck Logs for AO Claims

The FRA-supported Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act enacted in 2019 required the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to consider new and previously submitted Blue Water Navy claims. Now, thanks to collaboration with the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the VA and NARA are helping to determine ship locations and to digitize more than 1,800 vessels' deck logs.

The data contained in these ships' deck logs are critical in determining qualifying ship locations in accordance with the law. For the first time, the VA will have each of these ships mapped with precision, providing a comprehensive view of their locations.

VA estimates that there are between 420,000 and 560,000 Vietnam-era Veterans who may be considered Blue Water Navy Veterans. The law also extends benefits to survivors and dependents of those Veterans with confirmed service and whose claims would have been granted as a result of the new law.

The collaboration between the VA and the NARA has already assisted in granting more than 22,524 claims since Jan. 1, 2020. The effort digitized more than 29 million images from U.S. Navy and Coast Guard deck

logs. It has also provided data, such as ship name, date, and coordinates to feed an internal claims-related technical processing system that identifies the vessels that may have traveled within the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam. This approach ensures that VA claims adjudicators have the evidence needed to render a decision the first time a case is reviewed.

This effort has resulted in faster service for Veterans and reduced the need for physical handling of archival records which preserves our nation's historical documents. The NARA is in the process of redacting the images to make them publicly accessible on the [National Archive's website](#).

If Veterans, survivors, or dependents have previously filed and were denied a claim, they can file a supplemental claim. The VA encourages Veterans to work with an approved claims representative or VSO to determine if they qualify.

To learn more, please [go online](#).



Links to Other Stories

1. [VA](#)

recognized
for
advancements
in
health
care
access,
3D
printing
applications

2. Trucking
School
Owner
Sentenced
to
4
Years
in
Federal
Prison
for
Fraudulently
Obtaining
\$4.1
Million
in
Veterans'
Education
Benefits

3. DHA
priorities
focused
on
readiness,
patients,

outcomes

4. 'I
am
Navy
Medicine'
—
helping
another
in
need
-
Hospitalman
Grace
Pridmore
of
NMRTC
Bremerton
5. AARP
offers
free
caregiving
resources
for
Veterans,
families
6. VA
awards
adaptive
sports
grants
for
Veterans
7. VA
wins
presidential

award
for
its
in-
house
innovations
improving
health
care
services
for
Veterans

8. Fighting
flu
together:
Get
an
immunization!

9. VA
achieves
historic
milestone
for
issuing
appeals
decisions

10. Volunteers
return
safely
to
national
cemeteries
during
COVID-
19

11. VA recognizes HeRO award winners for safety initiatives, COVID-19 efforts
12. VA awards \$1.3 million to support Veterans at elevated risk of suicide from experiencing or being at risk of homelessness
13. Veterans Affairs respiratory therapist

pleads
guilty
to
stealing
and
selling
COVID-
19
respiratory
supplies

14. Rochester
Man
Sentenced
To
20
Years
in
Prison
for
Chinappi's
Gun
Store
Burglary
and
Lying
About
Military
Medals
15. OC
Man
Who
Fraudulently
Obtained
VA
Benefits

by
Falsely
Claiming
to
Be
a
Wounded
Marine
Sentenced
to
Over
One
Year
in
Prison

16. Texas
Woman
Sentenced
to
Prison
for
Role
in
\$5.5
Million
Federal
Worker's
Compensation
Overbilling
Scheme

17. VA's
collaboration
with
NARA
digitizes

Vietnam-
era
deck
logs

18. How
Veterans
can
reschedule
a
cancelled
VA
health
appointment

19. How
the
Appeals
Process
Works
and
Why
It
Can
Take
So
Long

20. VA
resumes
in-
person
benefits
services
halted
by
the
COVID-

19
response

21. Fighting
flu
together:
Get
an
immunization!

22. Vietnam
Veterans'
Income
in
Retirement

23. Secretary
Wilkie
Applauds
President
Trump
for
Signing
Suicide
Prevention
Bill

24. Veterans
Affairs
has
approved
22,500
—
34%
—
of
all
Blue
Water

- Navy
claims
filed
after
14
months
25. Pilot
DoD/VA
hearing
program
virtually
trains
technicians
26. DVBIC
blood
plasma
study
assists
in
TBI
and
PTSD
diagnosis
27. Can
You
Work
and
Receive
VA
Unemployability?
28. VA
finishes
digitizing
deck
logs

for
blue
water
Vietnam
Veterans,
should
speed
disability
claims

29. Maintaining
positive
social
media
interactions
during
COVID-
19

30. VA
breaks
ground
on
American
Indian
Veterans
Memorial
at
Riverside
National
Cemetery

31. Easy
steps
to
understanding
&
thwarting

depression
during
COVID-
19

32. Army
Sgt.
Maj.
implores
others
to
seek
help
for
suicide
ideation

33. Women's
mental
health
mini
residency
engages
with
DHA/VA
providers

34. Who's
got
YOUR
six?



BREAKING: Takano, Roe, Tester, Moran Statement

on House Passage of Groundbreaking Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Bill, Congressional Veterans' Affairs leaders' top legislative priority—connecting Veterans with life-saving mental health care—heads to President's desk

<https://Veterans.house.gov/news/press-releases/breaking-takano-roe-tester-moran-statement-on-house-passage-of-groundbreaking-commander-john-scott-hannon-Veterans-mental-health-and-suicide-prevention-bill>

Tester Spearheads Senate Call to Ensure his Landmark Agent Orange Exposure Bill is Included in Final Annual Defense Bill

<https://www.Veterans.senate.gov/newsroom/minority-news/tester-spearheads-senate-call-to-ensure-his-landmark-agent-orange-exposure-bill-is-included-in-final-annual-defense-bill->

TAKE ACTION: Please ask your member of Congress to support Tester/Harder amendment in the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act

<https://vva.org/what-we-do/Veterans-advocacy/legislative-action-center/>

Senate VA Committee Advances Two Bills to Expand Veteran Benefits

<https://www.Veterans.senate.gov/newsroom/news/senate>

va-committee-advances-two-bills-to-expand-Veteran-benefits

Lawmakers question VA approach on burn pits, advance bill to help military toxic exposure victims

<https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2020/09/23/lawmakers-question-va-approach-on-burn-pits-advance-bill-to-help-military-toxic-exposure-victims/>

VA notifies Veterans of compromised personal information

<https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5519>



Survivors' Benefits Bill Introduced in House

Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-CT) introduced VFW-

supported [H.R. 8559](#), the House companion bill to [S. 4594](#). This important legislation would expand the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefit for surviving spouses. This bill is the result of recommendations made in The [Independent Budget](#) co-authored by Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. [Learn more](#).



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.

Minor repairs being made, the polls are working 100% and there are fourteen polls open to all to take.

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

Almost a hundred people have been involved;

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

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

We average **4,035** hits per day, and downloads average **4,842** per day with a total **6,805,271** 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. Once we receive notification we will automatically authorize your account and you will receive notification.

www.Veterans-for-change.org

- Documents Library with over **19,504** documents in 171+ Libraries, added 46 documents on-line (Updated: 09/24/20)
- FAQ's on-line with **1,843** FAQ's on 104 topics!

(Updated 05/30/20 - 46 NEW)

- Multiple Forums
 - o Afghanistan Veterans
 - o FMP - Foreign Medial Program
 - o Gulf War & Desert Storm Veterans
 - o Iraq Veterans
 - o Korean Veterans
 - o Men Veterans Forum
 - o Mental Health for Veterans (Counselor Needed)
 - o Political Issues
 - o Suggestion Box
 - o The Mess Hall
 - o VA Hospitals and Medical Centers
 - o Veteran Affairs
 - o Vietnam Veterans
 - o Welcome Mat
 - o Women Veterans Forum
 - o WW II Veterans
- Job Postings
- Memorial Pages (Updated: 04/23/20) (3 Added)
- News (Articles On-Line: **10,027**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **7,730**, Added 56 New Links
(Updated: 08/31/20)

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

Caregivers at the Forefront

The 5th Annual National Virtual Convening, Caregivers at the Forefront, presented by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Philips, will be held virtually on Monday, Oct. 19 from 1:00 – 4:30 p.m. EDT. This event is free and open to the public. There will be remarks from Sen. Elizabeth Dole, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Mark Takano, Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Jerry Moran, along with others. It will include virtual networking sessions, presentations, and critical resources to help the military and Veteran population. [Learn 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 10/16/20)

1. Support
Veterans
Economic
Recovery
Act!
2. NDAA
Amendment
to
Provide
Benefits
to
Vets
Exposed
to
Agent
OrangeAsk
Your
Senator
to
please
support
HR.
3224
The
Deborah
Sampson
Act
3. Please
Support
Addition

of
Agent
Orange
Presumptive
Diseases

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

Allow
Homeless
Veterans
to
Stay
With
Their
Children
While
Receiving
Services

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

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

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

11. S

179
and
HR
712,
VA
Medicinal
Cannabis
Research
Act
of
2019

12. H.R.
1200,
the
Veterans'
Compensation
Cost-
of-
Living
Adjustment
Act
of
2019

13. S.
785,
the
Commander
John
Scott
Hannon
Veterans
Mental
Health
Care
Improvement

- Act
14. H.R.
96,
to
Provide
Dental
Care
for
All
Veterans
Enrolled
in
Veterans
Health
Care
 15. H.R.
6590,
DAV
Supports
Deferring
Debt
Collections
during
COVID-
19
Crisis
 16. H.R.
6933,
the
Caring
for
Survivors
Act
of
2020

17. Support
S.
3761/H.R.
7443
to
re-
establish
VSO
review
period
on
VBA
decisions
18. S.
4166,
Ensuring
Survivors
Benefits
during
COVID-
19
Act
of
2020
19. Please
Ask
Your
Member
Of
Congress
To
Support
Tester/Harder
Amendment
In

The
Fy2021
National
Defense

20. NDAA
Final
Passage
Coming
Soon



**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



**National Museum of the United States
Army to Open Soon**

This Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2020, the National Museum of the United States Army located at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, will officially open to the public. The museum will open with enhanced health and safety

measures for visitors. Free, timed-entry tickets are required and there will be no walk-up tickets available. This is the first national museum to capture over 240 years of Army history. [Learn 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](#)



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



COLA Increase Announced for 2021

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) recently announced a 1.3 percent increase in the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in the calendar year 2021 for military and federal civilian retirees, survivor benefit annuitants, disabled Veterans and Social Security recipients. The new COLA rate is effective December 1, 2020 and the adjustment will appear in the December 30, 2020 payment.

By law, COLA is based on the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W), which is a broad measure of consumer prices generated by the Bureau of Labor Statistics from the third quarter of the previous year to the third quarter of the current year. It measures price changes for food, housing, clothing, transportation, energy, medical

care, recreation and education. Since 2008, the annual COLA has been above two percent only once and has been zero three times.



President Trump Signs Veterans Bills into Law

The President recently signed into law two bills impacting Veterans:

S.785, the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019, which amends several VA authorities related to helping Veterans transition from military to civilian life; suicide prevention; mental health care research and oversight; mental health care staffing; and health care for women Veterans; and

S.2661, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, which designates 9-8-8 as the universal telephone number of the purpose of the national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline system.



News Flash



VA PCAFC expands eligibility for eligible

Veterans today who served on or before May 7, 1975

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today implementation of a new information technology (IT) system marking the official launch of the first phase of expansion of the [Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers](#) (PCAFC) to caregivers of eligible Veterans of earlier eras.

The Caregiver Records Management Application (CARMA) automates manual processes and integrates with other VA systems, resulting in increased efficiencies and effectiveness for VA staff.

The expansion rolls out in two phases. Effective Oct. 1, the first phase includes eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975. Effective Oct. 1, 2022, the second phase will include eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty between May 7, 1975 and Sept. 11, 2001.

Through CARMA, with a click of a button, an electronic health record will be created for a family caregiver where Caregiver Support Coordinators will document their clinical interactions. CARMA will also help guide consistency by systematically adjusting

VA's stipend payment calculations, as appropriate, and alerting VA users when annual reassessments of PCAFC participants are due, among other key functionalities. In addition, this program expansion also includes a new digital version of the application which allows individuals to apply for the PCAFC online.

“Caregivers provide stability and security to our most vulnerable Veterans, allowing them to stay in their homes with their loved ones for as long as possible,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Today begins the first phase of expansion of the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. Through this expansion, VA is able to give more family caregivers access to essential resources so we can support them as they care for Veterans of earlier eras.”

Since [publishing the final regulation](#) July 31, to improve and expand PCAFC — VA also expedited hiring key staff who bring the clinical qualifications and organizational skill sets to ensure consistent eligibility decision making across the enterprise, support program needs and provide strong infrastructure for consistent and standardized application processing and adjudication.

This past year, the Caregiver Support Program expanded to approximately 1,100 staff and will grow

to approximately 1,800 staff within the next six months. These changes ensure Veterans and caregivers receive timely, accurate assessments and eligibility determinations, as well as an improved customer experience.

Previously, only available for eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001, PCAFC provides education, support, a monthly stipend, health care coverage and certain beneficiary travel to qualifying family caregivers of eligible Veterans.

VA's Caregiver Support Program offers a wide variety of support services for caregivers of Veterans. Partnerships continue to be created or enhanced to broaden services and supports for caregivers. Learn more by visiting the [Caregiver Support Program website](#) or by calling the Caregiver Support Line at 855-260-3274 for more information.



VA Resumes In-person Benefits Services Halted by the COVID-19 Response

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced the reestablishment of in-person benefits services in select locations throughout the country.

Currently, there are 10 regional offices (RO) open to the public and more are expected to reopen in the coming weeks since the reopening phases will vary by RO and local conditions.

"During the last few months, VA regional offices continued performing our essential mission virtually - to provide benefits to Veterans and eligible family members," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "We have robust safety measures in place that will allow us to resume in-person services while protecting the health and safety of Veterans, their families and our team members who serve them."

Regional offices will continue to adhere to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, which includes the use of social distancing, face coverings, hand sanitizer and asking sick individuals to stay at home. Veterans can continue to interact with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) virtually for accessing benefits [information online](#) or when filing a [claim online](#). For claim-specific questions, call 800-827-1000. To check the availability of an RO near you, visit [VA benefits offices](#).





CLICK HERE TO FOLLOW US ON TWITTER !



National Suicide Hotline Bill Becomes Law

Last Saturday, [S. 2661](#), the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 was signed into law. This legislation designates 9.8.8 as the telephone number for the national suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline. The existing hotline, which can be reached by dialing 1.800.273.8255, is operated by the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and through the [Veterans Crisis Line](#). Both hotlines offer confidential support from qualified responders 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Many of the responders with the Veterans Crisis Line are Veterans themselves.



National Veterans Small Business Week

Join the Small Business Administration (SBA) the week of Nov. 2 - 6, 2020, for the seventh annual National Veterans Small Business Week. This week is a way to bring service members, Veterans, National

Guard and Reserve members, and military spouses together to celebrate the Veteran- and military-owned small business community. Every day of the week, SBA will highlight different aspects of the Veteran entrepreneurship journey from transition assistance, to accessing capital. [Learn more.](#)



Monument Honoring Women in the Military Unveiled

On Saturday, the Washington, D.C., area's first monument to honor women in the military was unveiled at the Women in Military Service for American Memorial in Arlington, Virginia. The Pledge, sculpted by Susan Bahary, is a bronze statue of a kneeling service woman in full combat gear, locking

eyes with her working military dog, meant to honor the promise of loyalty made between a soldier and their combat dog in faithful allegiance to our country.

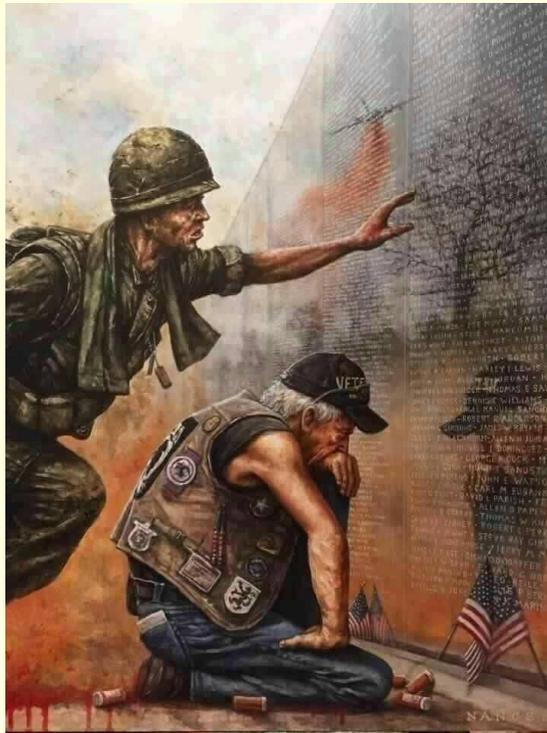
Following the unveiling, Sgt. Britany Gavit stated, "I've been a dog handler for four years now, and to see a female statute for the first time, it feels great ... She could be any one of us, in any rank of the military, and it's so significant." [Learn more.](#)



Update to TRICARE Select Enrollment Fee to Start Jan. 1

DOD announced that TRICARE Select Group A retirees will be required to pay an enrollment fee beginning on Jan. 1, 2021. Congress directed the Defense Health Agency in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 to implement TRICARE Select retiree enrollment fees, but delayed the implementation. Group A is comprised of retirees and their family members if the sponsor's initial enlistment or appointment occurred before Jan. 1, 2018. The enrollment fee is waived for medically retired individuals and their family members, and for survivors of active-duty deaths. During [TRICARE Open Season](#), which will run from Nov. 9 to Dec. 14, beneficiaries must set up an allotment with their regional contractors for the enrollment fee to begin on

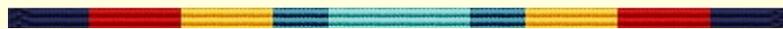
Jan. 1, 2021. Beneficiaries who do not set up their allotment by the deadline will be unenrolled due to nonpayment. These individuals would have previously had 90 days from the termination date to request reinstatement. However, recently the Defense Health Agency has agreed to extend the reinstatement period to 180 days. [Learn more.](#)



Calling All Middle and High School Students

It is not too late to participate in the annual VFW [Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen](#) essay competitions. Open to eligible high school students, the Voice of Democracy program is one of the top patriotic audio

essay competitions in the nation, with more than \$2.1 million in educational scholarships and incentives up for grabs, and a first-place prize of \$30,000. More than 64,400 students participate in the competition each year. This year's theme challenges students to answer the question, "Is This the Country the Founders Envisioned?" Open to eligible sixth through eighth grade students, more than 165,400 students compete in the Patriot's Pen essay competition each year to win their slice of more than \$1.4 million in state and national awards. The top individual VFW Department winners are vying for the first-place prize of \$5,000. This year's Patriot's Pen theme asks, "What is Patriotism to Me?" Essay entries must be submitted through a participating [local VFW Post](#). [Learn more](#).



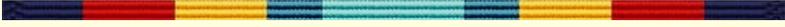
Need Help with Voting?

The general election on Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020, is less than two weeks away. If you or anyone you know needs assistance with voting, please visit the U.S. Election Assistance Commission's website. The website has information on voting accessibility for disabled Americans, as well as other important topics such as voting by mail, in-person voting, and election security. [Learn more](#).



Poll Workers Still Needed in Some Locations

Healthy elections require poll workers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, election officials in some parts of the country are still reporting shortage of poll workers. Without sufficient numbers of poll workers, it is possible that polling locations could have long lines, lack of staff to assist voters, or possible closures of polling locations. The VFW encourages any member, advocate, or supporter, who is healthy and willing, to consider becoming a poll worker for the general election on Tuesday, Nov. 3. The Stanford-MIT Healthy Election Project has partnered with Power the Polls, which helps to follow up with applicants, confirm their commitment, and assist them in completing the process. If you signed up through the special VFW link, you should have been contacted by Power the Polls, a partner organization, or your local election administrators. If you have not yet been contacted, [please reach out](#) to see if your assistance is still needed.





Tax & Credit Information



1. What happens after a disaster that leads to taxpayer relief
2. IRS announces 2021 Tax Counseling for the

Elderly
and
Volunteer
Income
Tax
Assistance
Program
Grants

3. IRS
releases
draft
Form
1065
instructions
on
partner
tax
basis
capital
reporting
4. IRS
offers
new
stricter
settlement
for
micro-
captive
insurance
schemes;
offer
letters
being
mailed
to

groups
under
audit

5. All
taxpayers
have
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to
privacy
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it's
the
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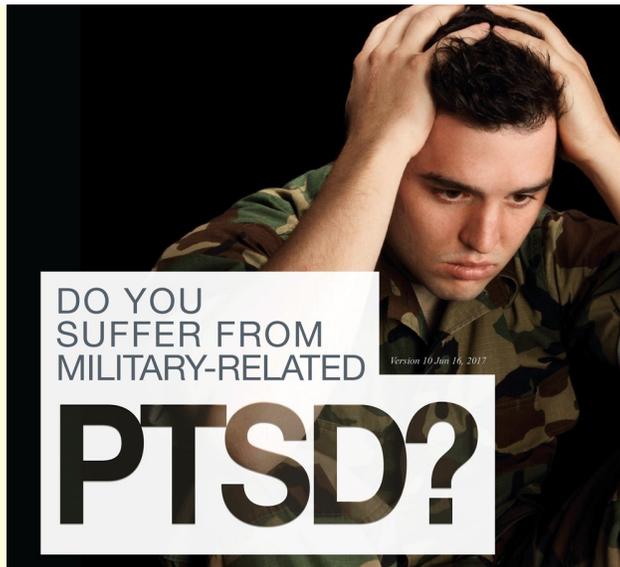


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Ntl Call Center for Homeless Vets
1-877-424-3838**



The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced five burial updates and four new identifications for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from WWII. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Earl W. Smith, 22, of Oakland, California, was a pilot assigned to the 80th

Fighter Squadron, 8th Fighter Group, 5th Air Force. On Aug. 20, 1943, Smith was piloting a P-38 Lightning fighter on a test flight near Port Moresby, Australian Territory of Papua (current day Papua New Guinea), when he crashed into the harbor off Paga Point. Smith did not bail out and his body was not recovered. Smith will be buried Aug. 20, 2021, at a location yet to be determined. [Read about Smith.](#)

Navy Seaman 2nd Class James M. Flanagan, 22, of Jacksonville, Florida, 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 Flanagan. Flanagan will be buried on Nov. 6, 2020, at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. [Read about Flanagan.](#)

Navy Seaman 2nd Class D.T. Kyser, 18, of Muskogee, Oklahoma, 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 Kyser. The date and location for Kyser's burial have yet to be decided by the family. [Read about Kyser.](#)

Navy Fireman 3rd Class William L. Barnett, 21, was assigned to the battleship USS West Virginia, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS West Virginia sustained multiple torpedo hits, but timely counter-flooding measures taken by the crew prevented it from capsizing, and it came to rest on the shallow harbor floor. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 106 crewmen, including Barnett. Interment services are pending. [Read about Barnett.](#)

Navy Shipfitter 1st Class Charles F. Perdue, 32, 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 Perdue. Interment services are pending. [Read about Perdue.](#)

Navy Fireman 1st Class Edward D. Johnson, 24, 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 Johnson. Interment services are pending.

[Read about Johnson.](#)

Navy Ship's Cook 1st Class Rodger C. Butts, 47, 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 Butts. Interment services are pending. [Read about Butts.](#)

Navy Seaman 1st Class Maurice V. Spangler, 20, of Defiance, Ohio, 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 Spangler. Spangler will be buried Sept. 12, 2021, at The National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. [Read about Spangler.](#)

Navy Fireman 2nd Class Martin D. Young, 21, of Hawesville, Kentucky, 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 Young. Young will be buried on May 15, 2021, in Lewisport, Kentucky. [Read about Young.](#)



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