



Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

A Voice of the Veterans

Week Ending Sunday, September 30, 2018

Volume 9, Issue 38



This-N-That

VA is touting a huge accomplishment of resolving 81,000 appeals in 2018, but again, no stats on how many were approved, nor how many were denied. So without numbers of either would seem to me they did another clean sweep and "resolved" by an immediate denial of claims, at least a huge chunk of them.

But then when the VA touts numbers I've grown to fully disbelieve them. Example, they claim only 40,000 homeless Veterans nationwide, yet checking with all the Health and Human Services offices nationwide it's still estimated to be 1.5 million. That would barely cover California alone. Another example, they claim only 20 suicides per day,

again, with all the claims delays, claims denials, then add to that homeless Veterans we feel that number is a heck of a lot closer to 50, especially since most are not reported to the VA.

And there would be no reason to report it to the VA if the claims or appeals were denied, there'd be no reason to report it as those reporting would be to stop benefits.

This has been a very busy week with all sorts of news articles coming out regarding TBI, PTSD, Alzheimer's, Suicide Prevention and more, so further down under links to other articles you will find over 60 new articles that have been posted on numerous topics.

But I do ask that everyone, please read all the articles on Suicide and Prevention. Educate yourselves on the signs to look for, BE that one person to help and save a life!

And if you're a Veteran and have PTSD or TBI, consider adopting a dog or puppy, you'd be surprised how much of a difference they can make in your life. And they don't have to be a "certified service dog", almost all dogs, all breeds have a built in sense to detect when their owner is in distress, some can even figure out your in distress before you even get to that point.

You just might be saving two lives! Yours and theirs too!

Sadly the Congress and GAO haven't been all that busy, it would seem that some are or were too busy in smear tactics than resolving issues for both Veterans and

Civilians.

But that is supposed to come to an end today, and hopefully they will all be getting back to the jobs at hand.

One that I can't push hard enough is HR 299 which would finally once passed would provide benefits and medical care to thousands upon thousands of Blue Water Navy Veterans, and they still need your help!

Although the petition is closed you can still make the phone calls to both your Senators, those numbers are in a box further down in this newsletter with a bold red border.

Please take the 10-20 minutes every week to call them and kindly ask them to pass this bill immediately. And you don't have to be a Veteran, you can be a family member, friend, or just a Veteran friendly Civilian too!

Then if you would, please share the information in an E-Mail with your entire address book and ask them all to make the calls then forward the E-Mail on to all in their address book asking them to do the same.

Two weeks we created a new category on our web site under web links called "Health Topics" where we've added 353 new links where you can read about symptoms, causes, treatment and prevention for over 1000 diseases, illnesses, health conditions and wellness issues.

We still have approximately 3,000 more to add, but I do apologize we are behind but in time they will be uploaded

so do check back often, you never know we might post a link to information you've been looking for.

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



Blue Water Navy Bill Still up in the Air

As of Tuesday afternoon this week, the fate of the Blue Water Navy Bill that would give Vietnam era Blue Water Navy veterans the presumption of exposure to Agent Orange remains unclear. The bill is being held up in the Senate, largely because of opposition to the bill by the Department of Veterans Affairs. If the bill is eventually passed, it seems unlikely that will happen by the end of this week. Once we get into October all the members of the House who are not retiring will be back home campaigning for re-election, together with one-third of the members of the Senate who are also up for re-election.

The Blue Water Navy Bill will still be alive until this end of this year so there will still be a chance for the Senate to pass it before then. We are closely watching this and we encourage you to contact your own Senators and urge them to support and pass the Blue Water Navy Bill this year.

(H.R.299 - Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017)

Source: TREA





VA Renews Assertion on Agent Orange

In a letter to the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs (SVAC), newly-confirmed Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Robert Wilkie has renewed VA's assertion that there is no basis for the presumption of Agent Orange exposure for Blue Water Navy veterans. The VA remains opposed to a current bill that will extend disability benefits covering medical conditions associated with Agent Orange to veterans who served off the coast of Vietnam, despite overwhelming support from Congress and veterans service organizations. Only those who served on land and in Vietnam's inland waterways are presently eligible to receive these benefits. H.R. 299 passed unanimously out of the House with a vote of 382-0.



REMEMBER THOSE WHO SERVED



ALL GAVE SOME, SOME GAVE ALL



VA to Hire Justice Outreach Specialists

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it is ready to hire an additional 50 Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) specialists following President Trump's signing of the [Veterans Treatment Court Improvement Act of 2018](#), a new law shoring up support services to veterans impacted by the justice system. The law requires VA, within one year of enactment, to hire 50 additional VJO specialists and place them at eligible VA medical centers (VAMCs); the VJO specialists will, either exclusively or in addition to other duties, serve as part of a justice team in a Veterans Treatment Court or other veteran-focused court. Created in 2009, VA's [Veterans Justice Outreach](#) (VJO) Program currently funds 314 VJO specialist positions across the U.S. For more information, visit the [VA Homeless Veterans webpage](#).



VA Updates Beneficiaries Regulations

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently updated [regulations](#) related to how it governs the oversight of beneficiaries, who, because of injury, disease, or age, are unable to manage their VA benefits, and the appointment and oversight of fiduciaries for these vulnerable beneficiaries. The new regulations clarify beneficiaries' rights, including the right to appeal fiduciary appointments and other fiduciary decisions, the 4 percent limit on fiduciary fees, and the procedures to remove a fiduciary, for instance, when a beneficiary demonstrates the ability to manage their own funds or when VA determines that the fiduciary misused VA benefits. This is the first full revision of the Fiduciary Activities regulations since they were first published in 1975.



Veterans-For-Change Web Site

The Veterans-For-Change website has been under construction since day one back in 2009 and every day since then. The looks pretty much stay the same, but in the

background 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 **2,900** hits per day, and downloads average **1,840** per day with a total **4,392,901** 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

- Documents Library with over **16,662** documents on-line (Updated: 08/27/18)
- FAQ’s with more than **1,600** FAQ’s and answers

- 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: 01/11/18)
- News (Articles On-Line: **7,790**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **4,020**, Added **153** New Links (Updated: 09/19/18)

If you have a submission for the memorial pages, E-Mail:

Jim.Davis@veterans-for-change.org





Blue Water Navy Bill Stalled in Senate

Background: During the Vietnam War, veterans who served in the offshore waters of Vietnam drank, bathed in, and cooked with water contaminated by Agent Orange. They are now arbitrarily and unjustly denied benefits for illnesses associated with Agent Orange exposure. On July 25, 2018, the House of Representatives unanimously passed H.R. 299, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2018. This bipartisan legislation would end the injustice of denying care and benefits to veterans who suffer from life-threatening health conditions.

H.R. 299 is now stalled in the Senate. The VFW needs your help to make sure this bill is passed before the end of the year. If the Senate fails to do so, the bill will die and may never be considered again.

Take Action: Contact your Senators to demand that the Senate swiftly pass H.R. 299. The Senate must not delay passage of this important bill while Blue Water Navy veterans sicken and die from diseases related to exposure to Agent Orange.

[**CLICK HERE TO TAKE ACTION**](#)



**The Legion Testifies on Discharge
Upgrades**

Greg Nembhard, Assistant Director for Discharge Upgrade Claims in the Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation Division for The American Legion, recently testified before the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs on protecting honorable burials, family members and benefits earned by veterans. H.R. 4312, The Fallen Warrior Battlefield Cross Memorial Act will ensure the Secretary of Veterans Affairs allows the display of battlefield crosses in national cemeteries. Watch a video of the hearing on the House Committee on Veterans Affairs [website](#).



Octobers's Featured Song

Wings Against The Moonlight

By

LT Bobby Ross

LT Bobby Ross - Voice Of America

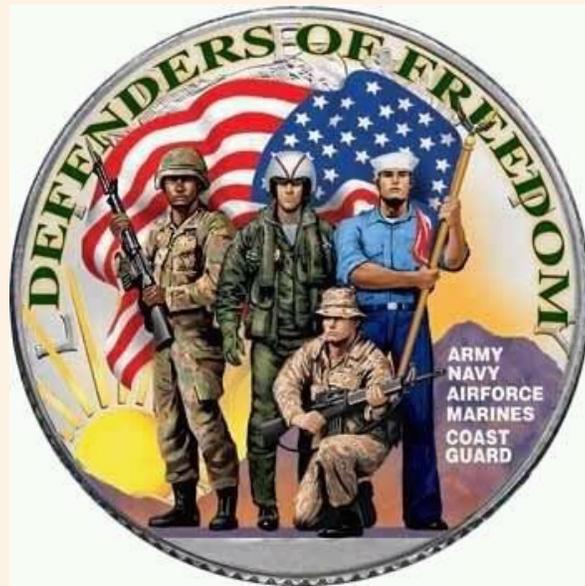
Previous Featured Songs



**VA Releases National Suicide Data
Report for 2005-2016: Analysis Is
Part of VA's Data-driven Approach to
Suicide Prevention**

WASHINGTON - Today, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released national and state-level findings from its most recent analysis of Veteran suicide data, from 2005 to 2016. The analysis is part of VA's ongoing examination of non-Veteran and Veteran death records that is being used to evaluate and improve VA's Suicide Prevention Program.

Click [HERE](#) to read report.



Suicide Prevention Resources

September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Help spread the message about suicide prevention awareness on social media by using VA's hashtag #BeThere. The VA has downloadable materials to spread the message about the crisis hotline, examples of support messages to send to a loved one, and #BeThere information at the [Be There website](#). If you are in crisis, or know a veteran who is, call the VA Crisis Line toll-free at (800) 273-8255 and then press 1; text the number 838255; or [chat online](#).

Veteran Support Spotlight: Fisher House

One of the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) partners is the Fisher House Foundation, a not-for-profit organization that builds comfort homes where military families can stay free of charge while their loved ones receive medical treatment nearby. Thirty-two out of 72 total Fisher Houses are located at VA medical campuses nationwide, with new constructions currently underway. Fisher House Foundation also operates the Hero Miles Program, which provides round-trip airfare for servicemembers and their families requiring treatment at a military or VA medical center. The program is supported by frequent flyer donations from individuals. For more information, visit the Fisher House Foundation [website](#) and the Hero Miles Program [webpage](#).





**VA launches welcome kit to guide
Veterans to the benefits and
services they've earned**

This is where Veterans should start.

VA's onboarding process can be overwhelming at times. Veterans who have visited a VA outreach booth, VA eligibility office, or have gone through a Transition Assistance Program know that VA has no shortage of technical handouts, benefits books and materials. But, even with all of these resources, Veterans are telling us "Where do I start?"

Now, VA can point all Veterans to the VA Welcome Kit. Click on the button below to check it out.

Click [HERE](#) to get your VA Welcome Kit.



New TBI/PTSD Report Available

The American Legion's TBI/PTSD Committee and the National Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation Commission recently released *The Road Home*, a report of developments in treatment and therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury among veterans. The booklet rounds out three reports from the Legion's National VA&R Commission completed this summer, including a white-paper report on veteran suicide and the annual System Worth Saving document that details best practices and areas in need of improvement at several VA health-care facilities around the country. Download the three reports from the American Legion [website](#).



Support Provisions within S. 3479, Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2018

The Senate has approved S. 3479, the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2018. The bill has now been reported to the House and, without its approval, will not be enacted.

S. 3479 contains important provisions for veterans

consistent with DAV policy, including:

Extension of requirement to provide nursing home care to certain veterans with service-connected disabilities. (DAV Res. 085)

Extension of authority for pilot program on assistance for child care for certain veterans receiving health care. (DAV Res. 173)

Extension of authority for pilot program on counseling in retreat settings for women veterans newly separated from service. (DAV Res. 019)

Extension of temporary expansion of payments and allowances for beneficiary travel in connection with veterans receiving care from vet centers. (DAV Res. 119, 285)

In addition, S. 3479 would provide permanent authority for specially adapted housing assistance for certain veterans with disabilities that cause difficulty with walking and to provide rehabilitation and vocational benefits to members of the Armed Forces with severe injuries or illnesses. It also supports an extension of the specially adapted housing assistive technology grant program.

S. 3479 would extend important authorities within the homeless veterans' program including rehabilitation programs, child care, referral and counseling programs for "at-risk" veterans; programs for seriously mentally ill and homeless veterans; supportive services for low-income families in permanent housing and grants for homeless veterans with special needs. VA has made remarkable

progress in reducing homelessness among veterans and DAV Res. 291 supports sustained and sufficient funding to continue this effort.

The bill would also support the monthly allowance for Office of Sports Programs and SpecialEvents as supported by DAV Res. 065.

DAV strongly supports this bill to continue important programs for America's disabled veterans. Please use the prepared letter to encourage your Representative to take action on this important legislation reported by the Senate. Thank you for your support of the Commander's Action Network.

Take Action



**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



**Army Medic to Receive Medal of
Honor**

The White House announced that former Army medic Staff Sgt. Ronald J. Shurer II will be presented the Medal of Honor on Oct. 1 for fighting his way through an enemy ambush to render aid to wounded Special Forces soldiers and Afghan commandos. On April 6, 2008, his team was navigating its way through Shok Valley in northeastern Afghanistan when a firefight forced his unit into a defensive fighting position. [According to an Army press release](#), Shurer heard that their forward assault element was also pinned down at another location with multiple casualties. He moved through a hail of bullets to reach the pinned-down element, stopped to treat a wounded teammate's neck wound, then spent the next hour fighting across several hundred meters, before finally arriving at the forward location, where he immediately rendered aid to four critically wounded U.S. soldiers and 10 injured commandos. Soon after, Shurer and his team sergeant were shot at the same time. Despite a gunshot wound to his arm, the medic ran 15 meters through a barrage of gunfire to pull his teammate to cover and rendered care. Moments later, Shurer moved back through heavy fire to help another teammate who had suffered a traumatic amputation to his right leg. Shurer saved the lives of all casualties under his care, to include lowering three critically wounded, non-ambulatory, teammates down a near-vertical 60-foot cliff, while avoiding rounds of enemy gunfire and falling debris caused by numerous air strikes. He was initially awarded the Silver Star, the third-highest award for valor.



The Legion's National Emergency Fund

As the threats of hurricane season intensify, The American Legion has updated its National Emergency Fund (NEF) publications. A brand-new booklet, available on the national website, consolidates three previous brochures into one. The [NEF Preparation Guide](#) provides steps to take before, during and after a natural disaster strikes. Also, you can download an [NEF donation brochure](#) that details the history of NEF and how the program assists veterans in need and how donations help.



AMERICAN SOLDIERS

**WILLING TO DIE FOR THE COUNTRY
THAT ISN'T WILLING TO PAY THEM!**



VA Implements New Fiduciary Regulations

Rules provide additional protections to Veterans and family members

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently updated regulations related to how it governs the oversight of beneficiaries, who, because of injury, disease, or age, are unable to manage their VA benefits, and the appointment and oversight of fiduciaries for these vulnerable beneficiaries.

Managed by VA's Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), the new regulations, which took effect in August, update and reorganize fiduciary rules consistent with current law and VA policies, and clarify the rights of beneficiaries and the roles of VA and fiduciaries in the program.

“These new regulations clarify the protections in place for Veterans and family members who apply for or are currently part of our fiduciary care program,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This furthers our commitment to care for those who have given so much to our country.”

Among other things, the new regulations clarify beneficiaries' rights, including the right to appeal fiduciary appointments and other fiduciary decisions, the 4 percent limit on fiduciary fees, and the procedures to remove a

fiduciary, for instance, when a beneficiary demonstrates the ability to manage their own funds or when VA determines that the fiduciary misused VA benefits.

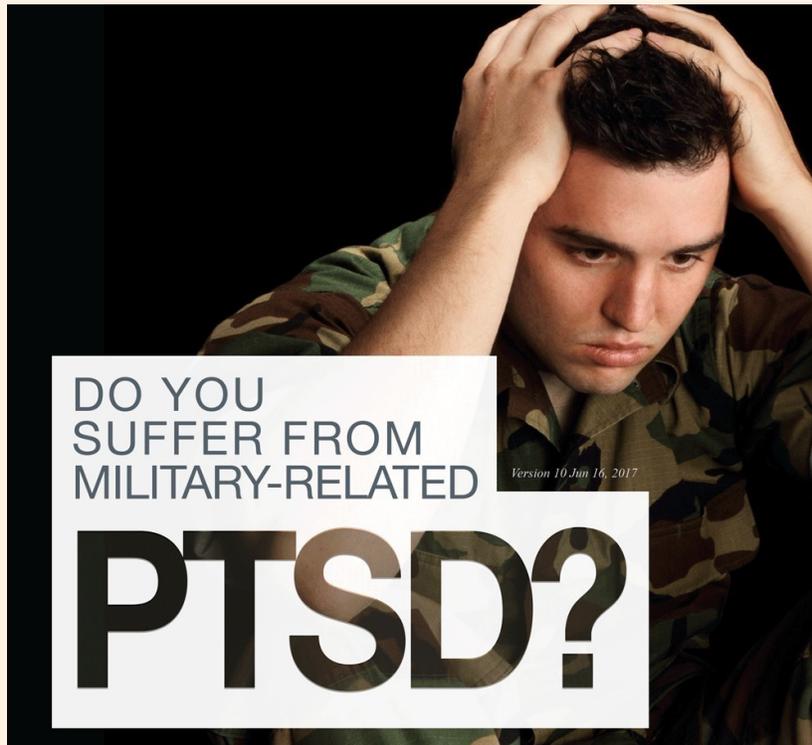
This is the first full revision of the Fiduciary Activities regulations since they were first published in 1975.



TRICARE Webinar for New Dental Program

The TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) will end on Dec. 31, 2018. Starting Jan. 1, 2019, new dental plan options for those enrolled in TRDP will be available through the [Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program \(FEDVIP\)](#). FEDVIP vision coverage will also be available for the first time. Join the [TRICARE webinar on Sept. 27](#), from 1 to 2 p.m. ET, to learn about your new dental and vision plan options. The '[New Dental and Vision Coverage Options for TRICARE Beneficiaries](#)' webinar will discuss who is eligible for FEDVIP, as well as how and when to enroll. If you want to enroll in TRDP, the last day to do so is Oct. 31, 2018. To register for the webinar, visit the [registration page](#).





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



Update Your Contact Information Online

Moving? Taking an extended vacation? New phone number? Simply want VA to reach you at a different address?

Whatever the reason may be, updating your contact information is now much easier. [Learn more.](#)



WWII Pilot Found

It has been more than 70 years since the 21-year-old, WWII Navy ensign Harold DeMoss crashed in his plane in a remote outcrop on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. DeMoss went down during a night flight training on July 23, 1945. DeMoss' recently retrieved remains are being buried in Nashville. Some 83,000 fallen soldiers from past wars have not come home. Learn about the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency on the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency [website](#) and on [Wikipedia](#).



**Our values
match yours.**

www.veterans-for-change.org

The image features two dog tags hanging from a chain. The tag in the foreground has a heart shape on it. To the right is the logo for 'Veterans For Change', which includes an eagle with wings spread, perched on a stylized American flag. Below the eagle, it says 'Est. 2006'.



For Military Personnel and Veterans: Two Down and One to Go

Each year there are three bills in Congress that military

people and veterans are especially interested in: the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), the defense appropriations bill, and the MilCon/VA bill which, simply put, authorizes programs and funds the Department of Veterans Affairs.

This year, Congress actually looks like it will accomplish passing all three by the end of this fiscal year, which ends this coming Sunday. The NDAA passed a few weeks ago and last week President Trump signed into law the fiscal year 2019 Military Construction-VA spending bill as part of a three-bill appropriations package.

That legislation included \$1.75 billion in discretionary money to pay for the new VA Mission health law. However, lawmakers say the Trump administration has kept them in the dark about the cost of the new law on veterans' health care, a looming long-term expenditure that could complicate future budget negotiations.

The VA MISSION Act is meant to give veterans more flexibility to seek subsidized health care at private facilities outside the Department of Veterans Affairs. It also changed the program's funding, leaving it to lawmakers to provide discretionary money each year rather than relying on an automatic, or mandatory, cash stream. That led to a debate over how much the new law will cost in fiscal 2019 and beyond, and how the legislation will be carried out. The administration hasn't sent Congress a formal cost estimate, according to the joint explanatory statement appropriators released with a bill funding the program.

The members of Congress on the House and Senate appropriations committees still haven't received details from the administration on the department's plan to carry out the new law. That means lawmakers aren't sure if the \$1.75 billion, based on a Congressional Budget Office estimate, will be enough to pay for the program until the end of fiscal 2019, or how much the program will cost in later years.

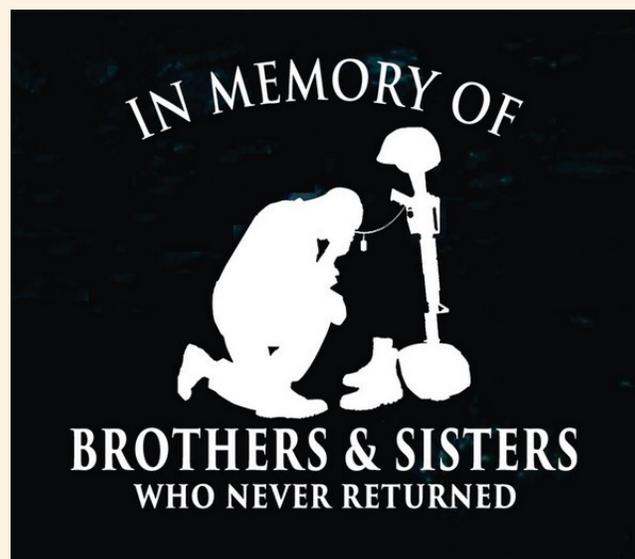
Even if the spending measure has enough money for the program until the end of fiscal 2019, lawmakers will have to determine how much the new law will cost in future years. And that's important because if more money is needed than has been appropriated or projected to be appropriated to pay for the VA MISSION Act, Congress will either have to borrow more money to pay for it or cut other existing programs because right now it refuses to raise taxes to pay for new programs.

Source: TREA



Breakthrough in Depression Treatment

A four-year clinical trial of revealed that 20% of veterans fail to respond to traditional treatments for depression. Since Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) was cleared by the FDA in 2008, about 30 VA veteran centers throughout the country have been using TMS machines to treat patients suffering from various mental health problems and finding success where pharmaceuticals have not. TMS 'helmets' fire electromagnetic pulses into a patient's dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, stimulating and activating nerve cells in the cerebral cortex that regulate mood and motivation. The treatments are non-invasive, and the short-term side effects are minimal. For more information, read the [VA Vantage Point Blog](#).



Use TRICARE Online Tools to Help You Choose a Health Plan

If you're eligible for TRICARE, you can choose from a variety of plans. This gives you options for where and how you seek medical care. But how do you decide which plan or plans are best for you and your family members? The TRICARE website can help you learn what health plans you may be eligible for and compare plan features and costs.

Read the full article [here](#).



Report: DoD Needs to Better Monitor TRICARE Providers

A new report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) finds that while DoD is monitoring families and troops to ensure they get proper healthcare at military treatment facilities, those same criteria aren't applied to community-based providers. For more details, see this [article](#).





Health Net Federal Services to Cease Participation in Veterans Choice Program

VA and Health Net Federal Services (HNFS) have elected to end their Patient-Centered Community Care (PC3) and Veterans Choice Program (VCP) contracts effective Sept. 30, 2018. In anticipation of this change, VA medical facilities have already ceased sending new community care authorizations to HNFS. Authorizations already approved by HNFS remain valid and HNFS will continue to assist veterans who need to reschedule appointments for authorized care as long as the new appointment is with the same provider and occurs on or before Sept. 30, 2018. Veterans who wish to change providers or need appointments after Sept. 30 must coordinate appointments through their local VA medical facilities. [Click here](#) to find your nearest VA medical facility. For assistance during this transition, contact the VFW by calling 1-800-VFW-1899.



TRICARE Rx Help Following Hurricane

There are TRICARE emergency procedures in place in Georgia, Washington, D.C., Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia due to Hurricane Florence. To get an emergency refill, take your prescription bottle to any TRICARE retail network pharmacy. To find a network pharmacy: (1) call Express Scripts at 1-877-363-1303 or search the [network pharmacy locator](#). If possible, visit the pharmacy where the prescription was filled. If you use a retail chain, you can fill your prescription at another store in that chain. If your provider is available, he or she may call in a new prescription to any network pharmacy. You can request assistance at another pharmacy, but it is at that pharmacy's discretion to help you.





Defense Appropriations Bill Still Not Finished

The third bill we are waiting for is the defense appropriations bill. This year it was combined with three other federal departments: Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education.

Although the Senate has passed the final version, the House is still working on passing it. By the time you read this the vote could have already taken place - or not. They may wait until Friday.

There's been controversy and uncertainty about the bill because President Trump had not stated he would sign the bill since Congress has not appropriated money to pay for his border wall. Earlier today, however, House Speaker Paul Ryan said he had spoken with the President and he believes he will sign the bill.

This is critical because if the President refuses to sign the bill we could have a government shut-down beginning on Monday. If he signs the bill, that means about 70% of the government will be funded for the entire 2019 fiscal year and Congress will finish the other 30% after it returns following the November elections.

So stay tuned.

Source: TREA



Navy Expands Dependent Travel Eligibility

The U.S. Navy has expanded the eligible categories for advanced dependent travel (ADT) and delayed dependent travel (DDT). For permanent change of station (PCS) moves within the 50 states, the policy allows for dependent travel of up to six months before or after the sponsoring Sailor's PCS move in the following situations: spousal employment or education, dependents in elementary or secondary school (K-12), dependent enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program, or caring for an immediate family member with a chronic or long-term illness. Requests for DDT or ADT must be submitted to Navy Personnel Command (PERS-451). For more information, email NXAG_N130C@navy.mil.



Veteran Crisis Resources

Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1
Military Crisis Line 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
1-877-4AID-VET (424.3838)
VA Caregiver Support Line 1-855-260-3274



VA Secretary Wilkie Testifies before Senate Committee

On Wednesday, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie testified before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs to discuss the progress he has made in his first 60 days. He spoke at length about a variety of topics including implementation of the VFW-supported VA MISSION Act of 2018, Blue Water Navy, accountability of wrongdoers, and the department's efforts to modernize its electronic health record. Secretary Wilkie said at the hearing, "the state of VA is better" when describing the department's recent progress. Committee members and Chairman Isakson discussed the need to pass the VFW-supported [H.R. 299](#), Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2018. [Watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 14:00-minute.



How to Respond if Someone You Know Contemplates Suicide

Often, a friend or a family member is likely to notice suicidal thoughts in a friend or loved one first. This places you in the best position to offer help, or at least offer the first step toward help. As we continue to mark Suicide Prevention Month, here's a [guide for how to respond to a suicidal friend](#). For more suicide prevention resources, visit the [Suicide Prevention page](#).



Links to Other Stories

1. [3 deaths found in investigation of impaired pathologist at VA hospital in Fayetteville, Ark.](#)
2. [3 Marines killed in Vietnam War helicopter crash to be buried at Arlington](#)
3. [43 years after the Vietnam war, many Navy Veterans are still battling for benefits for potential Agent Orange exposure](#)
4. [5 poorly performing VA hospitals ready to graduate from high-risk list: Report](#)
5. [After years of work, cabins for homeless Veterans open on Togus campus](#)
6. [Annual Event Links Homeless Veterans With Services](#)
7. [Army observes September as Suicide Prevention Month](#)
8. [Army Veteran survives multiple medical challenges and is now inspiring other Veterans at annual VA event](#)
9. [Aurora VA Paid \\$769k To Drive Employees 176 Yards](#)
10. [Beer and Wine at the Commissary? Here's How It's Going](#)
11. [Daily low-dose aspirin found to have no effect on healthy life span in older people](#)
12. [DoD Needs to Better Monitor Tricare Care Providers: Report](#)
13. [Dothan Veterans Affairs clinic to close](#)
14. [Expanding Video Visits for Veterans](#)

15. Female Veterans push for eligibility for spouses to join American Legion Auxiliary
16. Five Doctors Out at Minneapolis VA Over Bio-pharma Improprieties
17. Former VA employees blow whistle on alleged wrongdoing in Jennings
18. Former VA secretaries spar over 'Blue Water' Navy benefits
19. Glyphosate is Clearly Carcinogenic – and Monsanto Hid The Evidence
20. Home Safety and Alzheimer's Disease
21. Internal VA report questions Manchester whistleblowers' claims
22. Local Janesville program houses homeless Vets
23. Longer daily fasting times improve health and longevity in mice
24. Naval Hospital Jacksonville selected as first Navy facility to transition to DHA
25. New garden serves homeless Veterans at Jefferson Barracks
26. New tool helps VA assess patient Rx's
27. New Veterans' health clinic to open in 2020
28. Noise impact on hearing loss
29. October is National Protect Your Hearing Month
30. Plans for Vietnam War education center on National Mall shut down over funding concerns
31. Podcast: What Is The 'Bro-Vet' In Veteran Culture, Anyway?
32. Police officer gets year in prison for assaulting Veteran at VA hospital
33. President signs bill into law requiring VA to hire 50

outreach specialists to support Veterans involved in justice system

34. Save the VA. Veterans' lives depend on it - Opinion

35. Secretary of Veterans Affairs talks about future of VA during recent visit to the valley

36. Secretary of Veterans Affairs talks about future of VA during recent visit to the valley

37. Sexual assault risk at your military base: Here's a searchable database

38. Sexual assault: Here are the bases where troops are most at risk

39. State Police investigating Livingston County Veterans agency after donor complaint

40. Students using GI Bill receive incorrect housing payments due to VA technical errors

41. Trump signs the largest VA budget ever

42. Unique protein networks in blood could offer new way to detect diseases of aging

43. Use TRICARE online tools to help you choose a health plan

44. VA achieves historic goal by delivering 81,000 appeals decisions to Veterans in fiscal 2018

45. VA Cites Improvements at Five Hospitals Removed from 'High-Risk' List

46. VA exceeds goals for delivering appeals decisions on disability claims

47. VA national cemeteries welcome nonprofit volunteers providing tree-and landscape-care services

48. VA researchers work to create 3D-printed artificial lung that may revolutionize treatment of Veterans with lung disease

49. VA SAIL report scorecard shows majority of VA medical centers have improved over past year in quality of services provided to Veterans
50. VA secretary: 'Las Vegas is where we see what VA will become'
51. VA Social App Connects Veterans
52. VA working to treat polytrauma and TBI Veterans who suffer headaches
53. Vet groups fighting to get Agent Orange benefits for Vietnam-era Blue Water sailors
54. Veteran Affairs official charged in Temple corruption case
55. Veteran Finds Salvation in VA Treatment Program
Suicide Prevention Month
56. Veterans Affairs Official Charged With Taking Bribes To Help Business Associates Rig Federal Contracting Process
57. Veterans Affairs to open VistA e-health record maintenance contract this week
58. Veterans facing judges to get more courtroom advocates as legal assistance program expands
59. Veterans Legacy Program: Cpl. Earl LaPan, South Florida artist and World War II Veteran
60. Vietnam War Veteran donates life-saving kidney to fellow US airman after reuniting nearly 50 years later
61. Voluntary drug recall alert: Valsartan
62. Wilkie's first hearing as VA secretary: Four issues he's likely to address

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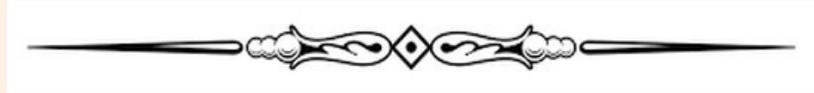
New Rule Changes How VA Calculates Income for Needs-based Benefits

Last week, VA published a [final rule in the Federal Register](#) that will establish a three year look-back period when determining eligibility for income-based benefits, including pension with aid and attendance. The new rule goes into effect on Oct. 18, 2018. It makes several changes, such as increasing the amount of net worth a veteran can have to qualify for pension, and expanding the definition of custodial care to allow veterans to deduct medical expenses for dementia care and third-party care providers. The three year look-back rule is intended to limit asset transfers done solely to qualify for governmental assistance. Such transfers may bar the veteran from receiving pension benefits, until the assets are used for their living expenses. There are some protections in place for veterans to transfer funds without a penalty, such as special needs trusts for the benefit of helpless children and helpless adult children, and trusts where the veteran retains control over the funds. Veterans can also reverse the transfer or buy back the asset in order to avoid the penalty. For questions about VA benefits and assistance with filing a claim, contact a professional, accredited and highly trained Service Officer near you.



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Roundtable on Enewetak Atoll Cleanup

VFW National Legislative Service Director Carlos Fuentes represented the VFW at a House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs roundtable discussion on the health effects experienced by veterans who were exposed to atomic radiation during the Enewetak Atoll Cleanup project. The VFW supports [H.R. 632](#), the [Mark Takai Atomic Veterans Healthcare Parity Act](#), which would expand VA health care and benefits to Enewetak Atoll Cleanup veterans. Subcommittee members and other supporters of H.R. 632 discussed the way forward with DOD and VA officials.



AAFES Ops Normal Following Hurricane

Exchange stores at most installations affected by Hurricane Florence are gradually returning to normal operations. The one exception is Fort Bragg, which saw a great deal of flooding in Exchange facilities, forcing most operations to remain closed. All facilities at Fort Bragg should open by Tuesday, September 18, 2018 except for South Post Exchange shopping center, which was flooded. The North Post Qdoba was damaged as well and will remain closed. Other locations affected by Hurricane Florence include: (1) Seymour Johnson AFB Exchange and Expresses reopened Monday, September 18, 2018; (2) Joint Base Charleston, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, and Fort Lee have all operations open and running normally.



*** RED ALERT ***

**Everyone Call The Senate Committee
On Veterans Affairs Members Ask
Them To Support and Vote to pass
HR 299 Blue Water Navy
Vietnam Veterans Act Of 2018 to the
Full Senate for a Vote!**

**Jon Tester (D - MT)202-224-2644-Tony
Murray, Patty (WA)202-224-2621-Ryan
Sanders, Bernie (VT)202-224-5141-Matt
Brown, Sherrod (OH)202-224-2315-Anna
Blumenthal, Richard (CT)202-224-2823-Ethan
Hirono, Mazie (HI)202-224-6361-Adam
Manchin, Joe (WV)202-224-3954-Emily**

**Please Ask everyone to Make The
Calls and Share this with
Everyone!**

**Thank You Michael F Kvintus
Sr. BWNVVA
National Vice Commander**



What Congress didn't Do - Thankfully

This year in a way, at least from our standpoint, it's almost as important what Congress didn't do in the two defense bills and the VA bill than what it did do. What it didn't do is raise health care costs for military retirees as the Senate had wanted to do.

It also didn't authorize a test program that would have allowed military retirees to take Medicare Advantage instead of Tricare for Life. TREA believes this was very dangerous because had the test been allowed, and had it been deemed successful in the eyes of DoD and Congress, it could have led to the end of Tricare for Life and military retirees being forced to take Medicare Advantage. The fact is, Tricare for Life, in almost all instances, is a better plan than Medicare Advantage.

Source: TREA





Congress Hosts Hearing on Veteran Suicide

The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held its last full committee hearing for the 115th Congress on Thursday. The hearing focused on maximizing effective methods of prevention for veteran suicide and raising awareness for the epidemic. Members of the committee mostly focused their questions on the extensive amount of efforts both within VA and outside the government to eradicate the suicide epidemic, trying to determine which efforts are the most effective. Other topics of conversation included veterans with increased risk of suicide, such as women, survivors of sexual trauma and individuals struggling with dependency or addiction to opioids and benzodiazepines. Watch the [hearing](#).



TRICARE Retiree Dental Program Update

The current TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) will end Dec. 31, 2018, and will be replaced by the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) dental coverage options. Vision plans will also be available to eligible TRICARE beneficiaries through FEDVIP. The first opportunity to enroll in FEDVIP is during the 2018 Federal Benefits Open Season, which runs from Nov. 12, 2018, through Dec. 10, 2018 (EST). Coverage begins on Jan. 1, 2019. In general, retired uniformed service members and their families who were eligible for TRDP in 2018 are eligible for FEDVIP dental coverage, and if enrolled in a TRICARE health plan, FEDVIP vision coverage, beginning in 2019. Family members of active-duty uniformed service members who are enrolled in a TRICARE health plan are eligible for FEDVIP vision coverage. Click [here](#) for more information.



Office of Inspector General

1. [A Strategy and Implementation Plan Would Help DHS Better Manage Fragmented Chemical Defense Programs and Activities](#)
2. [Observations on DOD's Reported Reductions to Its Headquarters and Administrative Activities](#)
3. [Pharmacy Inventory Management Could Benefit from System-Wide Oversight](#)
4. [Strengthening Taxpayer Authentication Efforts Could Help Protect IRS Against Fraudsters](#)



USAF Secretary Discusses Future Initiatives

The VFW was at the National Press Club Wednesday to hear Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson discuss plans to expand the Air Force to counter growing military challenges from Russia and China. Wilson, an Air Force Academy graduate and former National Security Council staffer and congresswoman from New Mexico, commended Congress for being on track to pass a budget that will help her department improve readiness, add 74 new squadrons to the 312 existing ones, and build air power cooperation with allies. She conceded that the Air Force, which has not known peace in the 27 years since Desert Storm ended, is facing a challenge to retain aircrew, especially pilots, during a time of high demand in the civilian sector. Efforts to counter the exodus include improving career choices and reducing overseas deployments. She said she hopes to have 1,400 pilots trained annually under the 2020 budget, up by 300 from two years ago. When asked about the need for a separate branch of the service dedicated to space, Wilson said the U.S. is good at six of the seven arenas concerning space — from global navigation to weather to intelligence. The seventh arena, space superiority, is a problem, she said, and our ability to defend space assets is being challenged. Read more [here](#).



Credit Freezes: How They Can Help You

Credit freezes restrict access to your credit file, which makes it harder for your identity to be stolen. Previously, it would cost you money to have a credit reporting agency freeze access to your credit report, but times are a-changing. For more details, see this [Paycheck Chronicles post](#).



**“We Proudly Support our
Military Personnel & Families”**



Use TRICARE Online Tools to Help You Choose a Health Plan

If you're eligible for TRICARE, you can choose from a variety of plans. This gives you options for where and how you seek medical care. But how do you decide which plan or plans are best for you and your family members? The TRICARE website can help you learn what health plans you may be eligible for and compare plan features and costs.

Read the full article [here](#).



Legislative Wrap-up

Congress passed several important bills this week, including [H.R. 6157](#), which will provide full year funding for the Department of Defense, and the Department of Health and Human Services and includes VFW-supported provisions to ensure DPAA has the resources it needs to fully identify American remains that were recently recovered from North Korea and authority to pay death gratuities during a government shutdown. [S. 3479](#), the [Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2018](#), which will ensure the continuation of important veterans programs that were set to expire Sept. 30. H.R. 6157 and S. 3479 head to the president's desk. The House also passed [H.R. 6398](#), the [Department of Energy Veterans' Health Initiative Act](#), which authorizes the Department of Energy to assist VA in genomic research as part of the [Million Veterans Program](#).





Second Chance to Register: Join TRICARE for October 11 Webinar on New Dental, Vision Coverage

In case you missed the September webinar, join the TRICARE webinar on Oct. 11, from 2 to 3 p.m. ET, to learn about new dental and vision coverage under the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP). By law, the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) will end on Dec. 31, 2018. New dental plan options for those enrolled in TRDP will be available through FEDVIP. FEDVIP vision coverage will also be available for the first time.

Read the full article [here](#).



**U.S. FOOD & DRUG
ADMINISTRATION**

1. Allergy Alert Issued in Whole Foods Market Stores Nationwide for Undeclared Milk in 365 Everyday Value White Corn Tortilla Chips
2. Getinge Issues Worldwide Voluntary Correction of Maquet/Getinge Cardiosave Intra-Aortic Balloon Pump (IABP) For Interruption and/or Inability to Start Therapy at Altitudes above 3,200 Feet/975 Meters
3. Mauna Loa Macadamia Nut Corporation Voluntarily Recalls
4. Purus Labs Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Milk and Soy in MyoWhey



Together We Can Prevent Suicide

Do you know somebody who has thought about or died by suicide? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), suicide is a top cause of death in the U.S. Suicide is a complex problem. It affects people from all backgrounds, age groups, races, education levels, and military ranks.

Read the full article [here](#).





SURVIVAL IS FUN



VA Mobile Units to Aid Veterans After Hurricane

Department of Veterans Affairs mobile units began operating in North Carolina on Thursday to aid veterans who missed appointments or need prescriptions filled in the aftermath of Hurricane Florence. For more details, see this [post](#) and this [article](#).



VA Having Problems with Forever GI Bill Implementation

The GI Bill was changed by a law passed more than a year ago, which was supposed to go in effect last month — but many of the changes haven't happened yet. For more details, see this [Paycheck Chronicles post](#).



VSOs Pressure Senate to Ignore VA Opposition

Every major veterans' group and most military associations have urged the Senate to move forward with a bill that would provide health care and compensation for veterans impacted by Agent Orange. The bill is being delayed due to the VA Secretary's opposition to extending VA health care and compensation to tens of thousands of former 'Blue Water' Sailors and Marines with Agent Orange-associated ailments.



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Eliminate Your Out of Pocket Costs with a TRICARE Supplement

Get a TRICARE supplement that pays your cost shares and can pay 100% of covered excess charges. [Get valuable coverage now.](#)



1. Combat-injured disabled Veterans may be due a refund
2. IRS extends upcoming deadlines, provides tax relief for victims of Hurricane Florence
3. IRS: 2018 employer reimbursements for employees' 2017 moves are generally tax-free
4. New credit benefits employers who provide paid family and medical leave
5. New employer tax credit for paid family and medical leave available for 2018 and 2019
6. Organizations around the country looking for volunteers to help taxpayers
7. Six Tax Law Changes You Need to Know About Now
8. Social Security Fast-Tracks Decisions for People with Severe Disabilities
9. Social Security, OIG Expand National Anti-Fraud Program
10. Taxpayers can connect with the IRS on their phone using IRS2Go
11. Victims of a natural disaster can visit IRS.gov for helpful resources



MIA Update

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced 10 new identifications, and the burial date and location for six previously identified servicemen. Returning home with full military honors are:

Marine Corps Capt. John A. House, II, 28, of Pelham,

N.Y., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Sept. 27, 2018 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. On June 30, 1967, House was the pilot of a CH-46A Sea Knight helicopter, who with three other crew members, was attempting to insert eight members of Company A, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, into hostile territory in Thua Thien-Hue Province, Vietnam. As the helicopter approached the landing zone, it was struck by enemy fire from the surrounding tree line, causing the aircraft to crash, killing House. [Read about House.](#)

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. John D. Killen, III, 18, of Davenport, Iowa, whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Sept. 27, 2018 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. On June 30, 1967, Killen was aboard a CH-46A Sea Knight helicopter that was struck by enemy fire attempting to insert eight members of Company A, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, into hostile territory in Thua Thien-Hue Province, Vietnam. As the helicopter approached the landing zone, it was struck by enemy fire from the surrounding tree line, causing the aircraft crash, killing Killen. [Read about Killen.](#)

Marine Corps Cpl. Glyn L. Runnels, Jr., 21, of Birmingham, Ala., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Sept. 27, 2018 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. On June 30, 1967, Runnels was aboard a CH-46A Sea Knight helicopter that was struck by enemy fire attempting to insert eight members of Company A, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion,

3rd Marine Division, into hostile territory in Thua Thien-Hue Province, Vietnam. As the helicopter approached the landing zone, it was struck by enemy fire from the surrounding tree line, causing the aircraft crash, killing Runnels. [Read about Runnels.](#)

U.S. Air Force Reserve Col. Fredric M. Mellor, 30, of Cranston, R.I., whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Sept. 28, in Exeter, R.I. Mellor was assigned to the 20th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, and on temporary duty with the 15th Reconnaissance Task Force. On Aug. 13, 1965, Mellor was flying the lead RF-101C aircraft in a flight of two on a mission to conduct photo and visual reconnaissance over North Vietnam when his aircraft was shot down. North Vietnamese witnesses claimed they saw or participated in the shoot-down of an American aircraft and the capture and death of its pilot on Aug. 13, 1965. [Read about Mellor.](#)

Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Merton R. Riser, 19, of Sanborn, Iowa, whose remains were previously identified, will be buried Sept. 28 in his hometown. Riser was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded. Riser died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. [Read about Riser.](#)

Navy Seaman 1st Class Robert V. Young, 23, of Bushnell, Ill., whose remains were previously identified, September 29 in Bardolph, Ill. Young was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Young. [Read about Young.](#)

Army Cpl. Edward M. Jones was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, supporting Republic of Korea Army attacks against units of the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces near Hoengsong, South Korea. On Feb. 12, 1951 Jones was reported missing in action when he could not be accounted for by his unit. Interment services are pending. [Read about Jones.](#)

Army Pfc. John W. Martin was a member of Medical Company, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. In late November 1950, his unit was assembled with South Korean soldiers in the 31st Regimental Combat Team on the east side of the Chosin River, North Korea, when his unit was attacked by Chinese forces. Martin was among more than 1,000 members of the RCT killed or captured in enemy territory and was declared missing Dec. 2, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Martin.](#)

Naval Reserve Seaman 2nd Class Deward W. Duncan, Jr. was assigned to Aviation, Construction, Ordnance, Repair, Navy Fourteen, Standard Landing Craft Unit 4, when a Japanese air raid on Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll,

Gilbert Islands, dropped a bomb near his tent. Duncan was killed January 12, 1944 and was reportedly buried the same day in Cemetery #33. Interment services are pending.

[Read about Duncan.](#)

Army Pfc. Lewis E. Price was a member of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 109th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division, which moved into the Hürtgen Forest in Germany, to relieve U.S. forces who had been fighting for weeks. The fighting in and around the forest was frequently chaotic, and while details surrounding his loss are sparse, he was reported missing in action as of Nov. 6, 1944 when his reconnaissance patrol failed to return from a mission. Interment services are pending. [Read about Price.](#)

Navy Seaman 1st Class Millard Burk was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Burk. Interment services are pending. [Read about Burk.](#)

Navy Seaman 2nd Class David B. Edmonston was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Edmonston. Interment services are pending. [Read about Edmonston.](#)

Navy Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Merle A. Smith was

assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Smith. Interment services are pending. [Read about Smith.](#)

Navy Fireman 1st Class Claude O. Gowey was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Gowey. Interment services are pending. [Read about Gowey.](#)

Navy Storekeeper 2nd Class Gerald L. Clayton was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Clayton. Interment services are pending. [Read about Clayton.](#)

Navy Musician 2nd Class Francis E. Dick was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship sustained multiple torpedo hits and quickly capsized, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Dick. Interment services are pending. [Read about Dick.](#)



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