



# Veterans-For-Change Newsletter

*A Voice of the Veterans*

Week Ending Sunday, March 03, 2019

Volume 10, Issue 09



## **This-N-That**

Ever wonder why it takes so long to be seen in a VA hospital, why it takes so long to get appointments, other than the books are still being cooked left and right?

Well when a medical provider is short staffed by nearly **49,000** that's your answer in a nutshell! That's nearly 1,000 licensed medical staff short in each state!

And while the VA offers up more excuses than

Depends manufactures adult diapers, the real reason is they fight the union who doesn't want to hire from outside the agency, and the VA doesn't want to pay a wage worthy to get those positions filled.

But they continue to maintain on staff those who have absolutely no business in the medical profession let alone treating Veterans! And add to that those who are working for the VA merely for a paycheck and go out of their way to do as little as possible.

But the VA has the money to purchase thousands of dollars in art and statuary work, which in my opinion was totally unnecessary. Local artists could easily be found to have provided artwork and statuaries who are trying to make their break in the art world, and would have gladly done the work for far less money.

And those funds not wasted on Artwork could have been re-directed into hiring qualified staff who actually want to help people, not just looking for a job.

Then the billions of dollars being spent on illegal immigrants (which now will almost certainly triple)

also could be used to provide the much needed care and benefits as well as assist in providing more staff to care for all those who have served.

Something I had always thought was already being done, was providing medical care to Purple Heart Recipients first in all VA Medical Centers, only to find out this may have been the case in only a few VA Medical Centers and Robert Wilkie has plans in the works to make it system wide.

More and more we're seeing Veterans being defrauded of their well earned benefits, and all the scenarios are just a bit different so it's difficult to name all the ways this is happening, so our advice is as the saying goes "if it sounds too good to be true" then it is and **DO NOT DO IT.**

Or if someone is attempting to extort money from you to help you get benefits, again, please **DON'T DO IT!**

Like we have been doing for a very long time now, further down in this news letter there are a few calls to action. Please click on the appropriate links and send off the pre-written letters, and other bills that aren't listed as a take action, but need attention, please make the calls to your Senators and

Congressmen and make your voices heard!

The harder we push, the better the chances are of getting them passed. Our recommendation is to call weekly, and do it on Fridays from Noon to Five PM Eastern Standard Time. And it doesn't have to be just Veterans, it can be and we do ask that friends of Veterans, Veteran friendly Civilians make the calls too, we need all the help we can get!

As announced over month ago that we've officially closed all our Face Book Pages and are now officially on [MEWE.COM](http://MEWE.COM) for everything. So if you're interested in following us on any of the various pages, all the links further down in the newsletter will take you there.

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

Respectfully,

Jim Davis

Founder

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



# **VETERANS ADVOCACY GROUP SEEKS COURT REVIEW OF NEW VA APPEALS PROGRAM**

Slidell, Louisiana based Military-Veterans Advocacy (MVA) has filed suit in the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit against Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert L. Wilkie, seeking judicial review of the new VA appeals system that went into effect Tuesday February 19.

MVA Executive Director, Commander John B Wells, USN (ret) has been a frequent critic of the new system. MVA testified against the plan in Congress and filed comments with the Secretary last October after a proposed rule was published in the federal register.

"This plan was written by the VA, for the VA and designed to make it easier for the VA to deny appeals," Wells said. "It contains a number of bait and switch pitfalls for the unwary veteran designed to limit their ability to appeal an initial denial."

Unlike other federal adjudications systems, veterans are prohibited by law from paying an attorney during the initial claim process. Wells noted that "the original claim process is where the

record is constructed and filed. This new procedure limits the ability to submit additional evidence at the appellate stage. It also stripes the veteran of their right to ask the VA for assistance in obtaining records once the appeal is lodged."

Although the new plan is supported by many Veterans Service organizations, Wells has always harbored significant reservations. "It will probably reduce the backlog by speeding up the process," Wells said. "But it will deprive the veteran of a fair hearing. It will also limit an attorney handling the appeal from reconstructing or supplementing the record."

Last month, MVA won a landmark case in the same court restoring the presumption of herbicide exposure to tens of thousands of veterans who served in the bays, harbors and territorial sea of Vietnam.

A copy of the lawsuit can be found [here](#).

Commander Wells is in Washington DC the week of February 25 and is available for interviews.



## TWENTY TWO SOLDIERS

By Brian Crandall

Twenty two soldiers died today  
Their mind overwhelmed with fear  
Flagged casket lowered into the ground  
While loved ones shed a tear

[www.LoveOurVets.org](http://www.LoveOurVets.org)

Twenty two soldiers died today  
Their thoughts filled with despair  
I wish they'd found another way  
I wish they knew how much we care

Twenty two soldiers died today  
Keep fighting, yes they tried  
Too many souls are lost this way  
Each one a victim – of Suicide

Please help spread awareness that there is help and hope.  
Love Our Vets - PTSD Family Support



## 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 **2,148** hits per day, and downloads average **1,660** per day with a total **4,761,206** visitors as of Friday.

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

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

- Documents Library with over **16,925** documents on-line (Updated: 02/11/19)
- 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: 10/30/18) (37 Added)
- News (Articles On-Line: **8,247**)
- Polls
- Web Links, more than **4,701**, Added 16 New Links (Updated: 02/20/19)

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



## **Court: Retirees Can Be Court- Martialed for Crimes Committed After Service**

The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the Defense Department's authority to prosecute retired service members for crimes they commit, even after retirement. The court on Tuesday chose not to hear the case of a retired Marine who was court-martialed for a sexual assault he committed three months after leaving the service in August 2015. By not accepting the case, *Larrabee v. the United States*, the court upheld the status quo: that military retirees are subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The law stipulates that "retired members of a regular component of the armed forces who are entitled to pay" and "members of the Fleet Marine Corps Reserve" are subject to court-martial jurisdiction. The reasoning, the government argues, is that retirement is simply a change of military status and retired personnel are subject to recall should the need arise. Read more about the case [here](#).



**Our story Blue Water Navy on Full Measure**

Full Measure is doing a story on BWN this Sunday,  
Link below provided by the Producer.

It is scheduled to air this weekend.

Here is where to watch on TV...it also streams  
online and the story is then posted to our website.

<http://fullmeasure.news/about#where-to-watch>

Thanks to all of you for your help with it!

Daniel Steinberger  
Producer, Full Measure  
<http://fullmeasure.news/>

Source: Susie Belanger



## ~Veterans-For-Change Made Social Media Change from Face Book to MEWE~

We had been on Face Book for many years and have moved to [MEWE.com](http://MEWE.com) for a number of reasons.

IMAGINE A SOCIAL NETWORK WITH ALL THE FEATURES YOU LOVE AND NONE OF THE BS.

Where you are the customer to serve and not data to sell.

Where you share your real life and celebrate, not censor, diversity.

We know most people don't like change, however, this new Social Media Site, MEWE.COM has no advertisers, truly respects privacy and protects your security far better than Face Book ever could. They also have a fantastic customer service group who actually does respond to your messages, suggestions, ideas and more!

We hope you will join us on this new site.

**VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE**

[www.mewe.com/join/veterans-for-change](http://www.mewe.com/join/veterans-for-change)

**HOMELESS HEROES PROGRAM OF  
VETERANS-FOR-CHANGE**

[www.mewe.com/join/homelessheroesprogramofveterans-for-change](http://www.mewe.com/join/homelessheroesprogramofveterans-for-change)

**AMVETS GROUP**

[www.mewe.com/join/amvetsgroup](http://www.mewe.com/join/amvetsgroup)

**VETERANS SOCIAL GROUP**

[www.mewe.com/join/veteranssocialgroup](http://www.mewe.com/join/veteranssocialgroup)

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

[www.mewe.com/join/usavetsupportinggodallwhoserveandserve](http://www.mewe.com/join/usavetsupportinggodallwhoserveandserve)

**AMERICANS FOR SOVEREIGNTY**

[www.mewe.com/join/americansforsovereignty](http://www.mewe.com/join/americansforsovereignty)



## **H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act**

On January 8, 2019, Representative Gus Bilirakis (FL) introduced H.R. 303, the Retired Pay Restoration Act.

This bill would extend concurrent receipt authority to longevity retirees with service-connected disabilities rated less than 50 percent disabling.

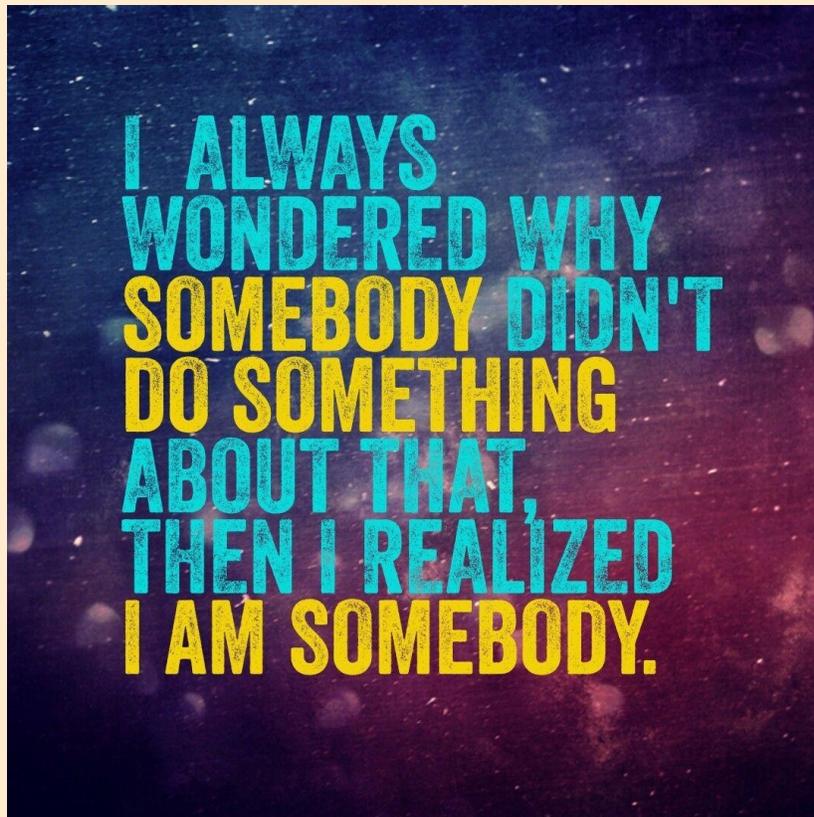
Under current law disabled veterans with longevity retirement from active military service who are also in receipt of a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability determination of 50 percent or higher may retain both military retirement pay and their compensation.

DAV strongly supports H.R. 303 as it would end the unfair policy of forcing many military longevity retirees to forfeit some of their retired pay in order to receive equal amounts of disability compensation from the VA. This legislation is in accord with DAV Resolution No. 104 and would eliminate concurrent receipt for all longevity retirees.

Please use the prepared electronic letter or draft your own to urge your Representative to support and cosponsor H.R. 303. As always, we appreciate your support for DAV and your grassroots activism

in participating in DAV CAN. Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.

## Take Action



**New VA Claims and Appeals  
Process Now in Effect**

A new Department of Veterans Affairs claims and appeals process took effect Feb. 19. Veterans who appeal VA claims have three decision review options: a high-level review, a supplemental claim or an appeal to the board of Veterans' Appeals. VA officials aim to complete supplemental claims and higher-level reviews in an average of 125 days, and decisions appealed to the Board in an average of 365 days, they said in a release. Under the previous process, decisions typically took three to seven years. Read more about the new claims process options [here](#).



## **March's Featured Song**

**JACK**

By

LT Bobby Ross

**LT Bobby Ross - Voice Of America**

**Previous Featured Songs**



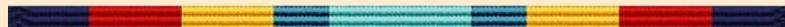
**AGENT ORANGE TOWN HALL  
MEETING SCHEDULE**

March 23, 2019  
Portland, Oregon  
Contact: Steve Carr  
503-558-2970  
[vva392@outlook.com](mailto:vva392@outlook.com)

April 13, 2019  
Waverly, Iowa  
Contact: Lyman and Cindy Campbell 319-230-4375  
Maynard Kaderlik 507-581-6402

April 26 - 27, 2019  
Deadwood, South Dakota  
Contact: Jack Dean 605-393-0444  
Martin Anderson 605-645-0055  
Maynard Kaderlik 507-581-6402

Source: Paul Sutton



## **Army, Air Force Leaders Begin Crackdown on Private Housing Problems**

Top Air Force officials have called for a "100 percent" review of existing housing conditions, officials said, while the Army is stepping up inspections of base housing and holding town halls for soldiers and families living in more than 87,000 homes on its posts. According to a release, Army Secretary Mark Esper, Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley and Sergeant Major of the Army Dan Dailey met with the heads of seven companies this month to discuss how to solve problems, including peeling paint and mold, faulty wiring, rodent and bug infestations and more. Air Force commanders have been ordered to walk through housing and request feedback from airmen about any other housing health and safety issues they've experienced by March 1. Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson also directed the Air Force Inspector General to review the base housing complaints process and the Air Force system for responding to complaints. Read more about the Army crackdown [here](#) and about the Air Force review on [AF.mil](#).





## **CGI is Hiring Veterans Nationwide: Search Jobs Now**

CGI has a deep appreciation for the sacrifices made by military veterans and their families. We also value veterans' experience, leadership, dedication and above-and-beyond work ethic. For these reasons, we're committed to supporting veterans through various hiring and charitable initiatives to tap into their talents for the benefit of our clients and to improve the quality of their lives as they transition from the military. [View jobs now.](#)



# Everything You Need to Know about Filing Medical Claims

Did you visit your doctor recently? If you visited a TRICARE network provider, in most cases, your provider will file a claim for you after the visit. In some cases, you may have to pay for health care services upfront and file your own claim to get money back. It's important to know when you need to file a claim and how to do so.

Read the [full article here](#).



## CONTACT YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS!

To Call your Representative:

202-225-2305

To Call your Senators:

202-224-3841 or 202-224-3553

To call Different Members of Congress:

202-224-3121

TOLL FREE: 866-272-6622

**PLEASE... STOP Making Excuses!**

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



## New Rules for VA Loan Refinances

In a move designed to protect veterans from unscrupulous lenders, the [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) is announcing changes to cash-out refinance loans. The new rules block most veterans from getting a VA cash-out refinance loan until either 210 days after their first loan payment or after they've made six monthly payments, whichever takes longer; require lenders to give veterans documents that explain all the details of the refinanced loan, so borrowers have a complete picture of what they're paying and saving over time; require any new fees associated with the refinanced loan to be paid off within 36 months; and require all refinanced loans to have an interest rate at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  of 1 percent lower than the original loan. Read more about the new regulations [here](#).



## **Purple Heart vets will get disability claims moved quicker**

Leo Shane III

WASHINGTON — Veterans who earned a Purple Heart during their military service will now have their veterans disability claims moved ahead of other requests, Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie announced on Tuesday.

“Those who hold the Purple Heart, the recognition of wounds taken in battle, will now receive priority consideration when it comes to claims,” he told members of the House Appropriations Committee. The new policy will go into effect on April 1.

The move follows existing department rules which give priority classification to Purple Heart veterans who request medical appointments at VA hospitals. Those veterans are also exempt from all co-payments for their medical care.

But the move raised concerns among some advocates who noted that many serious wounds of war like post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injury aren't often recognized with the military medal.

The Military Order of the Purple Heart estimates more than 35,000 Iraq War veterans and more than 22,000 Afghanistan War veterans have received the medal, one of the best known military honors in the country. It's the oldest U.S. military decoration, first presented as the Badge of Military Merit by Gen. George Washington during the American Revolution.

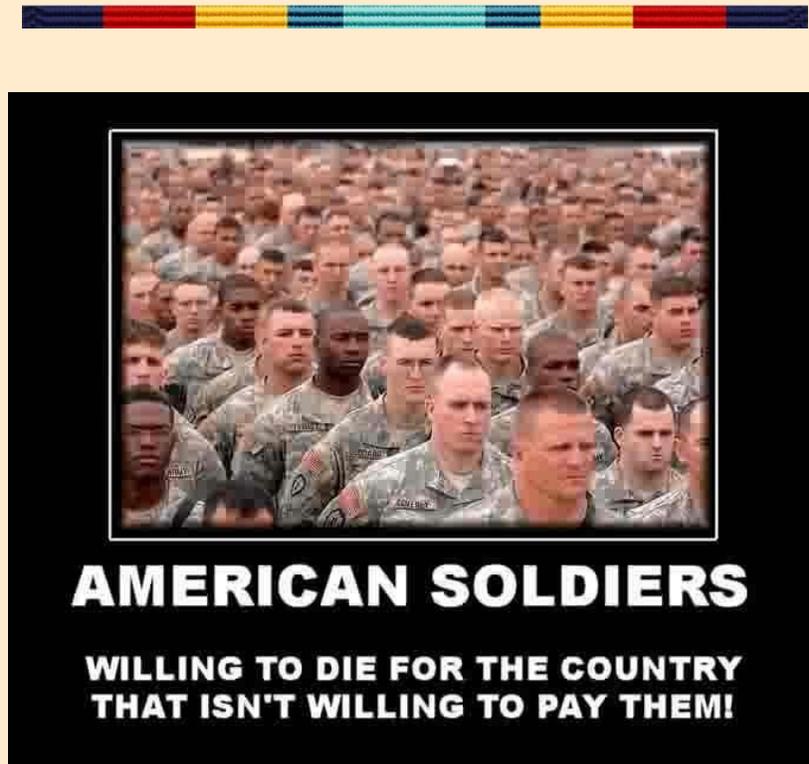
Just how much of an impact the benefits change will have on VA case processing is unclear.

As of last week, the department's caseload of initial benefits claims include more than 83,000 that have been pending for more than 125 days, the department's target for rendering a decision. That figure has been largely stable for the last three years, after spiking above 600,000 in early 2013.

The policy change won't affect supplemental claims or veterans' appeals.

Wilkie, the son of a combat-wounded soldier who served in the Vietnam War, has spoken frequently in the past on the need to care for those injured veterans. He is likely to face additional questions about the policy change when he testifies before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on

Wednesday afternoon.



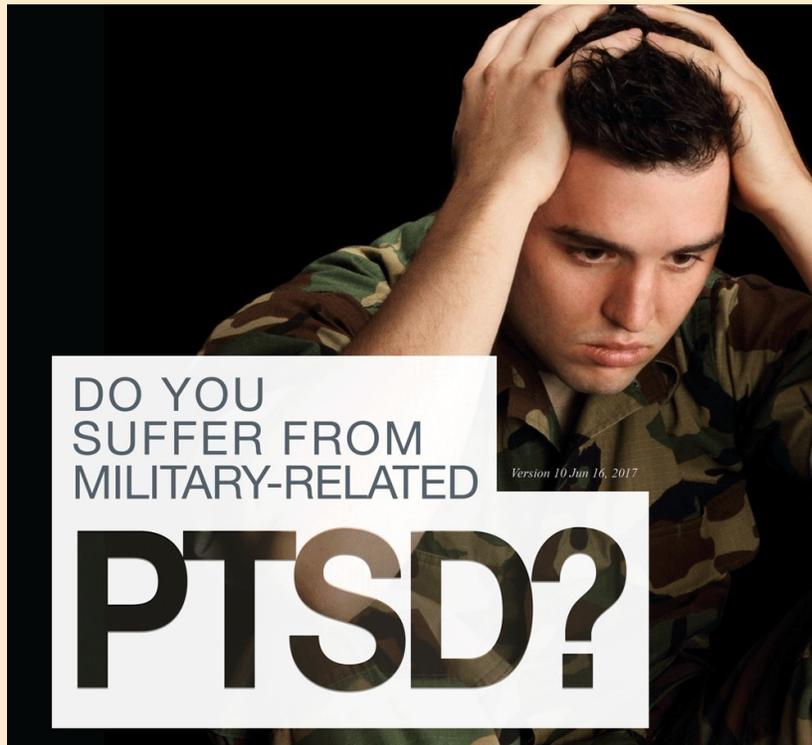
## **Eliminate Your Out of Pocket Costs with a Tricare Supplement**

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

## **Navy Updates Medical Waiver Process**

A new medical waiver policy instituted in the wake of the death of Senior Chief Petty Officer Shannon Kent allows for appeals to the recommendations process and permits a second medical waiver review. Should a second medical waiver review be requested, a Navy medical professional will look at a candidate's ability to enlist or commission, even though a disqualifying condition may exist, as outlined in the "Medical Standards for Appointment, Enlistment, or Induction into the Military Services." Read more about Kent's death [here](#).



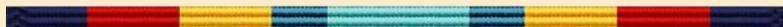


**Veterans Crisis Line:  
1-800-273-8255 & Press 1  
Ntl Call Center for Homeless Vets  
1-877-424-3838**



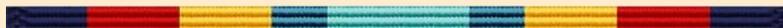
## **2019 VA Loan Limits Increased to up to \$484k Financing**

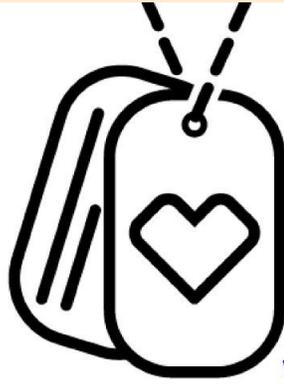
Your VA loan benefit is now worth up to \$484k financing. Take advantage of this great benefit and lock in a low rate for as little as \$0 down. [Use your VA loan benefit today.](#)



## Troops Receive New Travel Guidance for Mexico

The United States Army North Force Protection Division has issued new guidelines for U.S. military travel to Mexico. All active-duty, reserve, Guard and Defense Department civilians and contractors are required to follow the guidance and to be aware of the new directive. According to a release, all of the above personnel traveling to Mexico need to notify their local counterintelligence representatives of exactly where and when they plan to travel in the country. All personnel must have a valid U.S. passport and avoid any states in Mexico on the DoD's restricted list, even in transit. When on official State Department business on behalf of themselves or a family member, individuals must limit travel to daytime with no overnight stays in restricted states. This travel also requires chain-of-command approval by an O-6 or civilian equivalent. Individuals must also have a communication plan for any intended travel. [Read more at AF.mil.](#)





**Our values  
match yours.**



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



## **Air Force Releases Deploy-or-Out Policy Guidelines**

The U.S. Air Force has issued new guidelines for active-duty, reserve and National Guard airmen who are considered non-deployable, and officials will immediately begin flagging those who have been unable to deploy for 12 consecutive months for separation consideration.

In a memorandum signed Feb. 19, the service said airmen who have been non-deployable for more than a year "will be notified by their chain of command and evaluated for retention either through referral to the Disability Evaluation System or consideration for administrative separation." Non-deployable airmen who hit the 12-month mark will be flagged for evaluation on a case-by-case basis. The policy, known as DoD Instruction 1332.45 "Retention Determinations for Non-deployable Service Members," took effect Oct. 1. Read more about the guidelines [here](#).



## **Please Submit a Comment to Oppose Co-Payments for Disabled Veterans**

VA recently proposed a regulation to establish a new Urgent Care (Walk-in) health benefit as part of

implementing the VA MISSION Act. While we strongly support an Urgent Care (Walk-in) benefit (DAV Resolution No. 075) for enrolled veterans, we strongly oppose VA's proposal to charge service-connected disabled veterans a copayment of \$30 per urgent care visit, beginning with the 4th visit in any calendar year.

Our unwavering position (DAV Resolution No. 276) is that veterans have earned free medical care - without copayments - for the care of wounds, injuries and illnesses related to their military service. While the MISSION Act allows VA to impose copayments, it does not mandate copayments on service-connected veterans, and we believe VA would be wrong to do so.

The [proposed regulation](#) is now open for public comment, but it has a shortened comment period that will end this coming Monday, March 4, 2019.

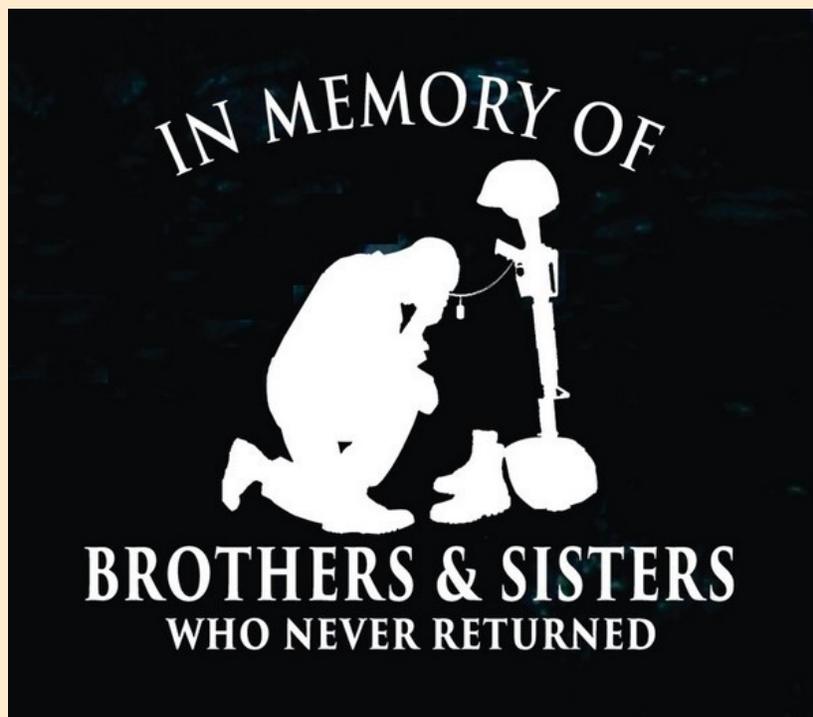
If you agree that disabled veterans should never be charged copayments for care related to their military service, please join us in [submitting a public comment](#) on this proposed regulation.

You can submit your comments to this webpage:  
[www.regulations.gov/comment?D=VA-2019-VHA-](http://www.regulations.gov/comment?D=VA-2019-VHA-)

0003-0001

In your own words, briefly indicate that you oppose copayments for disabled veterans and then explain why and how copayments would negatively affect you, your loved ones or friends.

Thank you for taking the time to join us in opposing copayments on service-connected veterans for the new VA Urgent Care benefit.





## **H.R. 444, Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act of 2019**

On January 10, 2019, Representative Julia Brown (CA) introduced H.R. 444, the Reduce Unemployment for Veterans of All Ages Act of 2019.

Currently, veterans with service-connected disabilities or other employment handicaps are able to receive career development services through VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program up to 12 years after they separate from military service. H.R. 444 would remove the limiting 12-year-period for eligibility.

In agreement with DAV Resolution No. 310, we support this legislation to eliminate the 12-year-period of eligibility. By removing the limited eligibility period, H.R. 444 will provide veterans the flexibility to receive the support they have earned and deserve throughout their lifetime and thus help reduce unemployment for service-connected

veterans.

Please use the prepared electronic letter or draft your own to urge your Member of Congress to support and cosponsor H.R. 444.

Standing up for veterans is vital and we thank you for your advocacy. Your actions help make DAV a highly influential and effective organization in Washington. Thank you for all you do for America's veterans and their families.

## **Take Action**



## **Military Romance Scams: Are You a Target?**

Are you dating or talking online to someone who says they are a military member? Have they asked you for funds or documents? You might be looking for true love, but chances are good that you are the victim of one of the thousands of military romance scams conducted every day. Scammers use a variety of words or phrases to hook their victims, including saying they are on a "peacekeeping" mission, saying they are looking for an honest woman or noting that their parents, wife or husband is deceased. They also ask for money for a variety of reasons. Avoid scams by practicing good internet habits such as scrutinizing communication and never sending money to someone you don't know in person. [Find more tips for knowing if you've been scammed and avoiding romance scammers.](#)





We will always be our  
Brothers Keeper!



## **AF Secretary Proposes Military Family Tenant Bill of Rights**

The military services plan to work with Congress to give troops more say in rental agreements with private companies that manage on-base housing, potentially allowing them to withhold rent or break leases if their homes are in poor or unsanitary condition. Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson and Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein said their service, along with the Army and Navy, supports a tenant bill of rights that would provide troops with protection, as well as more power in handling housing problems. Wilson said the Air Force also is considering working to renegotiate its contracts with the housing companies. Read more about military housing scrutiny [here](#).



## **New Restaurants Are Coming to Army, Air Force Bases in 2019**

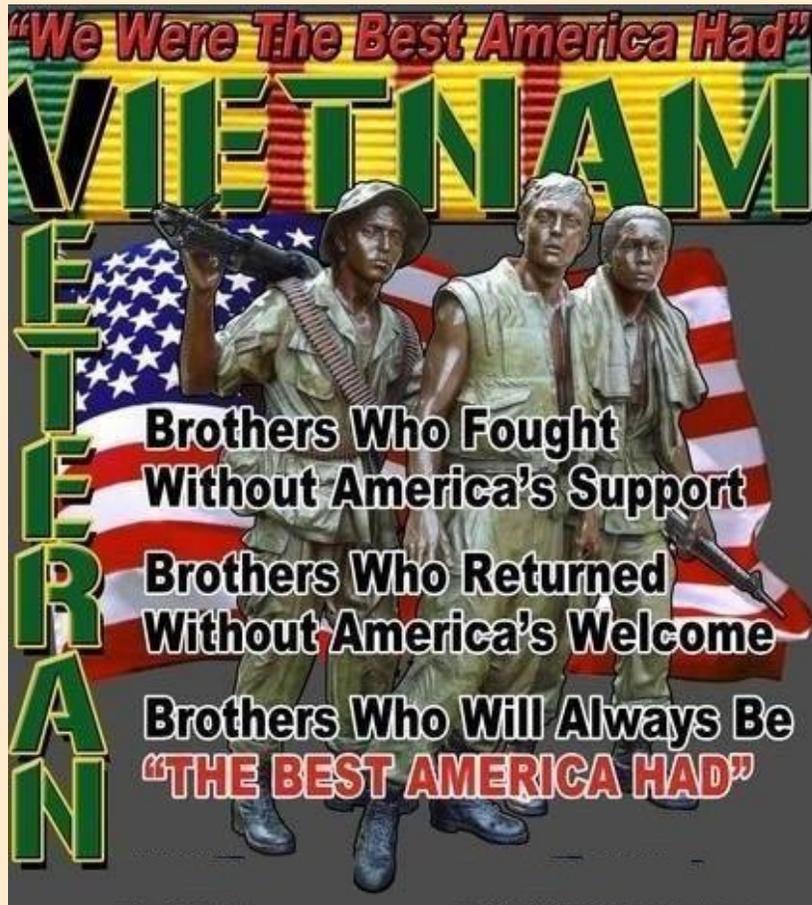
Panda Express and Muscle Maker Grill are among the new restaurants coming to Air Force and Army bases this year, officials with the Army and Air Force Exchange (AAFES) told Military.com.

Chinese fast-food restaurant Panda Express will open this year at Fort Meade, Maryland; Fort Benning and Fort Stewart, Georgia; and Travis Air Force Base, California, AAFES officials said.

Healthy menu-focused Muscle Maker Grill will open additional locations at Benning; Joint Base Andrews, Maryland; and, according to the company's website, Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

Qdoba, which opened on several bases last year, including Fort Knox, Kentucky; Fort Lee, Virginia; and Fort Stewart, Georgia, will add more military locations. Read more [here](#).





## Links to Other Stories

You can help VFC by reading articles posted and **commenting** at the bottom and **rate** the articles. If you don't have an account, sign up today, it's **FREE**. Your comments and rankings tell us what type of information you want most.

1. [Applications opening soon for 2019 National Veterans Golden Age Games](#)

2. 'Blue water' Vietnam Veterans may finally be able to seek help with Agent Orange side effects
3. Department of Veterans Affairs Official Sentenced to 11 Years in Prison for \$2 Million Bribery Scheme Involving Program for Disabled Military Veterans
4. Exclusive: Air Force to push Congress for military housing tenant bill of rights
5. Indiana Veterans agency bill that aims to reform grant program passes House, moves on to Senate
6. Local leaders push to end Veteran homelessness across St. Louis City, County
7. Medical Marijuana and Its Use Focus of March Meeting Set by Parkinson's Foundation
8. New Veterans affairs director says 'there will be changes'
9. NSU researchers investigate potential "Gulf War Illness"
10. Registration opens for 2019 National Veterans Wheelchair Games
11. Study shows drug commonly prescribed to Veterans could be making suicidal thoughts worse
12. Supreme Court: Retirees Can Be Court-Martialed for Crimes Committed After Service
13. VA announces mortality data collaboration with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
14. VA Approves Fewer Male Veterans' Claims for

## PTSD Related to Sexual Trauma

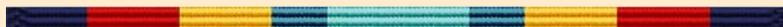
15. VA exceeds 1 million video telehealth visits in FY2018
16. VA launches collaborative training initiative to improve customer service for Veteran claims and appeals
17. VA providing better care for the elderly Veteran
18. VA publishes interim final rule on cash-out home loans to further protect Veterans
19. VA reports staff vacancies nearing 49,000 across the country
20. VA seeks training providers to ready Veterans for high-tech careers
21. VA's 'Better Starts Today' campaign challenges Veterans to ditch smokeless tobacco
22. Veteran Behind Federal Emergency Care Law Change Remains Without Refund From VA
23. Widow brings awareness to military burn pit exposure
24. With women in combat roles, a federal court rules male-only draft unconstitutional

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



**VA, Tech Company Partnership Aims to Prevent Suicide**

A partnership between the Department of Veterans Affairs and four technology companies — CaringBridge, IBM, Objective Zero Foundation and RallyPoint — aims to promote social connectedness and prevent veteran suicide. The partnerships help the VA with its national suicide prevention strategy, which includes an effort to use "technology to help service members and veterans get the care they need whenever and wherever they need it," according to a release. CaringBridge is a nonprofit that allows users to build their own websites and fundraisers with a focus on health; IBM is working with the VA to develop a new suicide prevention app called GRIT; Objective Zero Foundation is a nonprofit with a mobile app that gives better access to mental health resources; and RallyPoint is a military and veteran-only social networking site. [Learn more about the VA's suicide prevention resources](#), and visit [here](#) for more suicide prevention guides and resources.





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**Office of Naval Research Program  
Officer Honored for Hearing Work  
with Sailors**

Hearing loss and tinnitus are among the most common disability claims submitted to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Kurt Yankaskas has been working on hearing loss prevention and was recognized last week when he received the 2019 Safe-in-Sound Excellence in Hearing Loss Prevention Award. His work focuses on effectiveness of communication because hearing and understanding verbal commands are critical to safety. Many types of machinery and work spaces in the Navy can reach decibels outside of safety regulations for prolonged periods of time. This extended exposure to high-level noise can kill sensory hair cells found in the inner ear's cochlea, damage other essential auditory nerves and alter brain circuits necessary for hearing and speech understanding, which can cause permanent hearing loss.



**Your actions**  
**could save a life.**

Showing you care can make a big difference to someone in crisis.

VeteransCrisisLine.net

 **Veterans  
Crisis Line**  
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

The advertisement features two men standing side-by-side. The man on the left is older, wearing glasses and a light blue button-down shirt. The man on the right is younger, wearing a dark sweater over a collared shirt, with his arm around the older man's shoulder. The background is white. The text is in blue and black. The logo includes a blue star and red dots.



## Marine Named NCO of the Year

A member of the Marine Corps Mounted Color Guard has been named the 2018 noncommissioned officer of the year for Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, California. Sgt. Emily Rowe, a stableman with the ceremonial unit assigned to the base, received the honor Jan. 29, according to a release. A flight equipment technician by training, Rowe had previously been named NCO of the Quarter twice last year. She became a stableman due to her longtime experience with horses, serving in the only remaining mounted color guard in the Marine Corps, visiting 10 states and supporting more than 100 events during her time with the unit. The Mounted Color Guard has performed in events including the Tournament of Roses Parade, the Mardi Gras parade, and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Read more at [Marines.mil](http://Marines.mil).





## **VFW to Deliver Veterans' Voices to Congress**

More than 500 VFW and VFW Auxiliary members are arriving in the nation's capital this weekend to urge their respective members of Congress to continue improving the programs and services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Highlighting the annual legislative conference will be VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence's testimony Wednesday at 10 a.m. before a special joint hearing of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs in room G-50 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building. Topping his list of VFW legislative priorities is passage of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, a call for full congressional oversight over the implementation of the VA Mission Act of 2018 and the combined VA and Defense Department electronic health record initiative. Other priorities include improving burn pits research and accountability, eliminating the so-called "Widow's Tax," allowing military retirees to receive full retirement pay and disability pay without offset, and expanding and improving VA health care and research programs. Read the [VFW's full list of 2019 Priority Goals](#).



**Office of Inspector General**

1. Actions Needed to Determine the Required Size and Readiness of Operational Medical and Dental Forces
2. Greater Focus on Credentialing Needed to Prevent Disqualified Providers from Delivering Patient Care
3. Progress and Challenges in DHS's Management of Its Chemical Facility Security Program
4. Review of the Fiscal Year 2017 Entry/Exit Overstay Report
5. U.S. Government Accountability Office

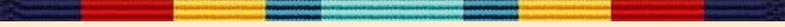


## **Watch Legislative Conference Highlights Online**

The VFW will again livestream this year's conference. Visit [www.vfw.org/VFWDC2019](http://www.vfw.org/VFWDC2019) on Monday at 6 p.m. EST to watch the Voice of Democracy Parade of Winners, and on Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. EST to watch the VFW national commander's congressional testimony. Look for #VFWDC2019 on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), and be sure to visit [www.vfw.org/VFWDC2019](http://www.vfw.org/VFWDC2019) for all the latest legislative conference updates beginning Sunday.



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## **VA Announces Expedited Claims for Purple Heart Veterans at Oversight Hearing**

On Tuesday, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie and Veterans Health Administration Executive in Charge Dr. Richard Stone testified before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies on the current improvements to VA customer service, MISSION Act implementation, business transformation, and VA/DOD collaboration. Secretary Wilkie announced that effective in April, VA will provide priority disability benefits claims processing for the initial claims from discharged combat veterans who have been awarded the Purple Heart Medal. Wilkie also said that the state of VA is getting stronger, but there is still an enormous amount of work that needs to be done with veterans' homelessness, opioid safety & reduction efforts, and women's health. Read the [testimony](#) or [watch](#) the hearing.



1. [AurobindoPharma USA, Inc. Initiates a Voluntary Nationwide Consumer Level Recall Expansion of 38 Lots of Amlodipine Valsartan Tablets USP and Valsartan Tablets, USP due to the detection of](#)

NDEA (N-Nitrosodiethylamine) Impurity.

2. B&G Foods Voluntarily Recalls a Limited Number of Jars of Victoria® Marinara Sauce Due to Possible Undeclared Cashew

3. Camber Pharmaceuticals, Inc. Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Losartan Potassium Tablets, USP, 25 mg, 50 mg and 100 mg Due to the Detection of Trace Amounts of N-Nitroso N-Methyl 4-amino butyric acid (NMBA) Impurity found in the Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API)

4. Caution When Using Robotically-Assisted Surgical Devices in Women's Health including Mastectomy and Other Cancer-Related Surgeries: FDA Safety Communication

5. Drug Recalls

6. FDA adds Boxed Warning for increased risk of death with gout medicine Uloric (febuxostat)

7. FDA Warns of Higher Risk for Death With Gout Drug Febuxostat (Uloric)

8. FDA Warns Thermography Should Not Be Used in Place of Mammography to Detect, Diagnose, or Screen for Breast Cancer: FDA Safety Communication

9. Golean Detox USA Issues Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Golean DETOX Capsules Due to Presence of Undeclared Sibutramine and Phenolphthalein

10. ICU Medical Issues a Voluntary Nationwide Recall of Certain Lots of ChemoLock™ and ChemoClave® Vial Spikes Due to the Potential for Burr Particulate
11. ICU Medical Recalls ChemoLock Vial Spike (20mm) Due to Risk of Detached Plastic Particles
12. Joy Gourmet Foods LLC Issues Allergy Alert on Undeclared Sulfites
13. Macleods Pharmaceuticals Limited Issues Voluntary Nationwide Consumer Level Recall of One Lot (BLM 715A) of Losartan Potassium/Hydrochlorothiazide Combination Tablets 100mg/25mg Due to detection of NDEA (N-Nitrosodiethylamine) Impurity
14. Meijer Recalls Mint Meijer Brand Ultimate Chocolate Mint Chip Cookies Due to an Undeclared Soy Allergen
15. Physio-Control Recalls LIFEPAK15 Monitor/Defibrillator Due to Risk of Device "Lockup" (Freezing)
16. Southern Specialties Voluntarily Recalls Bagged Green Beans and Butternut Squash Distributed in Southeast because of Possible Health Risk
17. Uloric (febuxostat): Boxed Warning Added - Due to Increased Risk of Death with Gout Medicine
18. UTZ Quality Foods Issues Allergy Alert on

Undeclared Milk in Bachman 10 Ounce Twist  
19. Xeljanz, Xeljanz XR (tofacitinib): Safety  
Communication - Safety Trial Finds Increased Risk  
of Blood Clots in the Lungs and Death with Higher  
Dose in Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients



## **Secretary Wilkie Testifies Before House Committee**

On Wednesday the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held its first hearing of this Congress to address the future of VA. The name of the hearing was "VA 2030: A Vision for the Future of VA" because Chairman Takano is seeking to look ahead to make improvements within VA over the next decade. At the hearing, VA Secretary Wilkie spoke about the improvements VA has made since his tenure began and how proud he is of his workforce. The topics discussed at the hearing included homelessness, Blue Water Navy veterans, VA infrastructure, women veterans, and many others. The VFW applauds Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Roe for looking for innovative ways to continue to improve VA and seek to avoid future pitfalls. [Watch the hearing.](#)



## **SURVIVAL IS FUN**

### **Congressional Hearing on Access to VA for Women Veterans**

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies held a hearing on Thursday regarding women veterans' access to VA. Those who testified included Chief Consultant VA Women's Health Services Dr. Patricia Hayes and VA National Mental Health Director for Family Services, Women's Mental Health and Military Sexual Trauma Dr.

Susan McCutcheon. VA focused on the rapid increase of 500,000 women who use VA and how it is enhancing its services. VA has worked to expand gender-specific training, advocacy and program managers, and increased access in rural communities. VA stated the top problem it repeatedly encounters is the ability to maintain providers with gender-specific expertise. Further details were given on gender-specific primary care, gynecology, maternity care, infertility and adoption reimbursement services, mental health services, military sexual trauma services, and child care. VA also discussed efforts to expand the Women Veteran Call Center and mammogram sites, and to improve their quality of care while eliminating barriers. Dr. Hayes concluded her testimony with, “VA continues to make significant strides in enhancing the language, practice, and culture of the Department to be more inclusive of women veterans. These gains would not have been possible without consistent congressional commitment in the form of both attention and financial resources. It is critical that we continue to move forward with the current momentum and preserve the gains made thus far.” [Read the testimony](#) or [watch the hearing](#).



## **Most Honorable**

This is one of the most touching and honorable stories I have ever seen... It definitely is a must watch!!! Nice to see Stephen Spielberg behind this. Inspiring and emotional all the way!

WORTH EVERY SECOND IT TAKES TO WATCH.

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/7tyT4glkvBs>

Source: Michael Isam

# Tax & Credit Information



1. [9 Reasons Why Budgets Fail and Ways to Overcome Them](#)
2. [Do You Have a Debt Problem?](#)
3. [Here are five facts about the new Form 1040](#)
4. [Here's what taxpayers should do to protect private data](#)
5. [Interest rates remain the same for the second quarter of 2019](#)
6. [IRS urges businesses to e-file cash transaction reports; It's fast, easy and free](#)
7. [Tax Time Guide: Most people affected by major tax reform changes; Special publication, other online resources can help](#)
8. [There are six new schedules some taxpayers will file with the new Form 1040](#)



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## **MIA Update**

This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced 12 new identifications. Returning home with full military honors are:

### **Navy Reserve Journalist 3rd Class Raul A.**

**Guerra** was a passenger on board an E-1B Tracer, en route from Chu Lai Air Base to the aircraft carrier USS Oriskany. On Oct. 8, 1967, radar contact with the aircraft was lost, and adverse weather hampered subsequent search efforts. Wreckage was spotted along a mountainside approximately 11 miles northwest of Da Nang. Because of the location and presence of hostile forces, ground recovery could not be conducted. Guerra, as well as the four other service members on board, were declared killed in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about Guerra.](#)

**Army Cpl. Benjamin W. Scott** Company M, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. In July 1950, his unit was engaged in combat actions against the North Korean forces in the vicinity of Choch'iwon, South Korea. Scott was declared missing in action on July 12, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Scott.](#)

**Army Capt. Rufus J. Hyman** was an infantry officer with Company A, 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. In July 1950, his unit was engaged in combat actions against the North Korean forces in the vicinity of Kwonbin-ni, South Korea. Hyman was declared missing in action on July 30, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Hyman.](#)

**Army Pfc. James C. Williams** Medical Company, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, when he was killed in action near Taejon, South Korea. On July 20, 1950, eye witnesses stated that Williams was killed while trying to transport patients from the Taejon Air Strip. Despite multiple attempts to recover Williams' remains, he was declared non-recoverable on Jan. 16, 1956. Interment services are pending. [Read about Williams.](#)

**Army Cpl. Stephen P. Nemec** was a member of

Company A, 1st Battalion 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. In late 1950 his unit was engaged in heavy fighting against the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces at Turtle Head's Bend, near the village of Unsan, North Korea. Nemecc was killed in action on Nov. 2, 1950, and was buried at United Nation's Military Cemetery (UNMC) Pyongyang. Interment services are pending. [Read about Nemecc.](#)

**Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Carl M. Shaffer** was a member of the 38th Bombardment Squadron, 30th Bombardment Group, stationed at Hawkins Field, Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, Gilbert Islands, when the B-24J bomber aircraft he was aboard crashed into Tarawa lagoon shortly after takeoff. Shaffer and the nine other servicemen aboard the aircraft were killed. Interment services are pending. [Read about Shaffer.](#)

**Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Burleigh E. Curtis** was a member of the 377th Fighter Squadron, 362nd Fighter Group, piloting a P-47D aircraft on a dive-bomb attack near Briouze, France, when his plane crashed. Witnesses reported that he was not seen bailing out of the aircraft prior to the crash. Interment services are pending. [Read about Curtis.](#)

**Navy Reserve Seaman 2nd Class Ira N. Slaton** was stationed aboard the USS Colorado, which was moored approximately 3,200 yards from the shore of Tinian Island, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Early in the morning, the USS Colorado came under attack by a concealed Japanese shore battery. From the attack, four crewmen were declared missing in action, and 39 personnel were killed, including Slaton. Interment services are pending. [Read about Slaton.](#)

**Army Pfc. Clifford M. Mills** was a member of the 319th Glider Field Artillery Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division, which participated in Operation Market Garden, the invasion of the German-occupied Netherlands. On Sept. 18, 1944, Mills was reported missing in action in the vicinity of Wyler and Zyfflich, Germany. Interment services are pending. [Read about Mills.](#)

**Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Walter B. Stone** was a pilot in the 350th Fighter Squadron, 353rd Fighter Group, VIII U.S. Fighter Command. On Oct. 22, 1943, Stone was killed when his P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft crashed in northern France during a bomber escort mission. Because France was enemy-occupied territory at the time of the crash,

search and recovery operations were not possible. Interment services are pending. [Read about Stone.](#)

**Navy Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Archie T. Miles**

was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Miles. Interment services are pending.

[Read about Miles.](#)

**Navy Seaman 2nd Class David B. Edmonston**

was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Edmonston. Interment services are pending. [Read about Edmonston.](#)



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