

VFW 1st District of California



DISPATCH



@vfwmighty1st



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**District 1 Commander
Myles Fry**

Greeting Comrades and Auxiliary,

I would like to start off by thanking everyone for the kind words and letters for our grandmother who passed this month. It truly means that the VFW and the Auxiliary is more of a family rather than an organization and how much everyone means to us.

The first District Meeting was a huge success! We were only missing a few posts. Let's keep up the momentum throughout the year. Thank you Post 1513 for hosting the meeting and making sure we were fed before the meeting! I would like to see as many Post Commanders and members at the Council of Administration Meeting on October 5, at 1000 at Post 2111 in Chula Vista. Hopefully many of the questions about the current state of the Department will be answered at the C of A.

There continues to be correspondence bypassing District to National and Department regarding Post and Canteen issues. They do not have all of the facts and are passing it back down to us as a resolution. This is not happening so much in the Mighty 1st District so please continue contacting the District Leadership Team and keep up the good work! Hope to see as many members as possible at the Miramar Air Show 27-29 September. I look forward to seeing everyone during our Post Visits!

In Comradeship,

**Myles Fry
Commander, Mighty 1st District**



**District 1 President
Grace Leyva**

Hello Brothers & Sisters of the Mighty 1st District.

We had our first District Meeting at Sable 2275. I would like to thank Susan MacDonald for being there early to make sure everything that we needed was available to us. The Program Chairman did an excellent job promoting and answering questions for their program and passing out the program paperwork to each Auxiliary President.

All 22 Auxiliaries have their Bonds before the deadline.

Please make sure that your 199N and 990N are filed electronically with the IRS and a copy sent to the Department office. If you need help please contact our District Treasurer Alicia Ketcham to set up an appointment so that she can walk you through it.

We are doing great in Membership. The District is currently at 89.78%. Thank you to all the Auxiliaries for your hard work.

The 2nd School of Instructions will be held on September 7th at 10:00 am at Post 3788 LCDR Arnold E. Betcher. I encourage everyone to attend.

The District POW/MIA Ceremony will be held on September 21st at 9:30 am at Post 1512 Encanto. I will try and attend most POW/MIA Ceremonies held after 5:00 pm.

Thank you for all you do.

Respectfully
Grace Leyva, District 1 President







SPREAD OUR WINGS TO PROTECT OUR VETERANS





September 2019



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Sports Clips Help-a-Hero-500 	3 ALL SCHOOLS OPEN WATCH FOR KIDS 	4 ANNUAL POST INSPECTIONS STARTING! DOES YOUR POST HAVE IT TOGETHER? 	5  ARE YOU BIDDING ALL YOU CAN TO RECEIVE NEW VFW MEMBERSHIP SIGN UP NOW! 2000-07	6 COMMANDER IN CHIEF HOMECOMING ALBANY, N.Y.	7 2019 RETIREE EXPO MCB CAMP PENDLETON, CA Times 9:30am AUXILIARY SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION POST 3786 10AM COMMANDER IN CHIEF HOMECOMING ALBANY, N.Y.
8 COMMANDER IN CHIEF HOMECOMING ALBANY, N.Y.	9 	10 GOING FOR ALL-AMERICA IS YOUR POST ADJUTANT REPORTING ON ALL-AMERICAN DASHBOARD.	11 FLAG HALF STAFF SUNRISE TO SUNSET 	12	13	14 POW/MIA MEMORIAL PROGRAM POST 3787 MISSION VALLEY 2 PM POST 9327 BLOOD DRIVE 10 AM to 3 PM
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 1st District-1512 POW/MIA Ceremony Post 1812 @ AM 
22	23 FALL STARTS! THE POWER OF A STORY 5 PM Veteran Suicide CAL STATE SAN MARCOS 	24	25  ARE YOU BIDDING ALL YOU CAN TO RECEIVE NEW VFW MEMBERSHIP SIGN UP NOW! 2000-07	26	27 VFW 2nd Annual MCAS Miramar Air Sshow Tent	28 VFW 2nd Annual MCAS Miramar Air Sshow Tent 
29 VFW 2nd Annual MCAS Miramar Air Sshow Tent	30 END OF 1st QUARTER 30 DAYS UNTIL AUDIT DUE AT DEPARTMENT	 VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.  18-19 ALL AMERICAN 1ST DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA 2019-2020 YEAR				

Days to Fly the U.S. Flag

Entries marked with # are also California state holidays

# January 1 – New Year’s Day	August 4 – Coast Guard Day (Coast Guard only)
# January, 3 rd Monday – Martin Luther King Jr’s Birthday	August 19 – National Aviation Day (Army only)
January 20 – Inauguration Day (every 4 th year)	# September, 1 st Monday – Labor Day
# February, 3 rd Monday – President’s Day	September 2 – V-J (Victory in Japan) Day
February 12 – Lincoln’s Birthday	September 9 – California State Birthday (Date of admission in 1850)
February 22 – Washington’s Birthday	September 11 – Patriot Day
(Date varies) Easter Sunday	September 17 – Constitution Day
# March 31 – Cesar Chavez Day (California only)	September, 3 rd Friday – POW/MIA Recognition Day
April 6 – Army Day (Army only)	September, Last Sunday – Gold Star Mother’s Day (Army only)
April 13 – Thomas Jefferson’s Birthday (Army only)	October, 2 nd Monday – Columbus Day
April 14 – Pan American Day	October, Sunday on or before October 9 – National Firefighters’ Memorial Day
May 1 – Loyalty Day/Law Day (Army only)	October, 2 nd Monday – Columbus Day
May 8 – V-E (Victory in Europe) Day	October 27 – Navy Day (Navy and Marine Corps only)
May, 2 nd Sunday – Mother’s Day	November 10 – Marine Corps Birthday (Marine Corps Only)
May, 3 rd Saturday – Armed Forces Day	November, Tuesday after first Monday – Presidential Election Day
May 15 – Peace Officers Memorial Day (Half-staff unless falling on Armed Forces Day)	# November 11 – Veterans Day
May 22 – National Maritime Day (Army & Navy only)	# November, 4 th Thursday - Thanksgiving Day
# May, Last Monday – Memorial Day (Half-mast until noon, then raise)	# November, Day after Thanksgiving
June, 3 rd Sunday – Father’s Day	December 7 – Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
June 14 – Flag Day	December 17 – Pan American Aviation Day (Embassies in Latin America)
# July 4 – Independence Day	# December 25 – Christmas Day
July 27 – Korean War Veterans Armistice Day	Other days as proclaimed by the President

Drawn from relevant service regulations and other Internet sources by Richard Vannoy, LT, USN, Ret., VFW Post 3788. Comments/corrections to:

editor@vfwcadist1.org

REPORTS FROM DISTRICT OFFICERS

Auxiliary September Dates to Remember:

MON 09/02/19	Labor Day	
TUE 09/10/19	Official Visit (Inspection) Aux 3783, PFC Archie G. McArthur	6:00 pm
TUE 09/10/19	Official Visit Aux 2082 Michael A.Monsoor	6:00 pm
WED 09/11/19	Patriot Day	
WED 09/11/19	Official Visit Aux 5867, Carter Smith	5:30 pm
THU 09/12/19	Official Visit Aux 2111, Cmdr. Jack E.Carlton	5:30 pm
SAT 09/14/19	POW/MIA Post 3787 Mission Valley	2:00 pm
TUE 09/17/19	Official Visit Aux 3787, Mission Valley	5:30 pm
SAT 09/21/19	District POW/MIA Program, Post 1512	9:30 am
TUE 09/24/19	District Auxiliary Membership Meeting	TBD
SUN 09/29/19	Gold Star Mothers and Families Day	

1st District School of Instruction Dates and Location

Commanders, Captains, Quartermasters, Paymaster, Adjutants and Comrades

ALL STATE REQUIREMENT School of Instruction.

The policy of Commander, Quartermaster, and AT LEAST one Trustee attending School of Instruction remains. District may hold as many Schools of Instruction they feel is necessary to get the training out to the posts, **but for All-State purposes, posts must complete this requirement no later than December 31, 2019.**

1. **Monday, August 26, 2019 COMPLETED**
2. **Sunday, September 15, 2019 10:300 -13:00 (10:30 AM to 1 PM)**
[Post 5867](#) Carter-Smith 12650 Lindo Lane, Lakeside, CA. 92040 (619) 443-0556
3. **Sunday, October 27, 2019 12:00 - 15:00 (Noon to 3PM)**
[Post 1924](#) Charles E. Swisher 1175 Old Stage Road, Fallbrook, CA. 92028
(760) 728-8784

Commanders: Remember that all three, you, Quartermaster and a Trustee are required to attend for credit. If you have any questions, you can contact PDC Doug Scholl doug.scholl.vfw3783@gmail.com (619) 890-6876 or any 1st District Line Officer or the Adjutant/Quartermaster.

Upcoming PCC Dinner - Meeting

PCC members mark your calendar right now for Monday, October 21, 2019. Members when you receive the postcard, call and make reservations. The next PCC Dinner and Meeting will take place at Mission Valley Post 3787 on Monday, October 21, 2019, Social hour is 6 PM, and dinner is at 6:30 PM. Dinner is free to members. One paying guest may attend the dinner. The menu is Pork Chops with Renate's Peanut Butter Cookies and Ice Cream for dessert. PCC Officers for 2019-2020 will be sworn in at the meeting. Membership in the PCC is open to anyone who has completed a tour as a Commander/Captain of any VFW organization, Post/Ship, District, Department or National.

The PCC reimburses the sponsoring Post for the dinners served members and guests at \$12.00 per. PCC Members, please coordinate with your Post Commanders/Captains and managers to prepare an offer to submit for the PCC next Dinner and Meeting location.

PCC dues expire December 31, 2019. You can renew by sending your payment to Club Secretary at 75 Connoley Circle Chula Vista CA 91911 or at the upcoming meeting. Yearly dues are \$15.00.

Jerry Koehmlein

REPORTS FROM DISTRICT OFFICERS

Department Chairman

As of 8/8/2019, the Department Roster was updated. District Sr Vice Paula Jansen will be the Department Community and Youth Activities Chairman. Youth activities to include Scouting and JROTC. The new program guide is forthcoming.

Veterans Home, Chula Vista

Word has it that Veterans Home is looking for a volunteer barber to help them out for a couple of weeks (two) while they look to hire a new barber. Tony Stewart has floated the opportunity to a few out there directly, but no takers. If you know of anyone who might like to use their talents to support Veterans, direct message, Tony Stewart. Can be reached on 1st District Facebook or maybe at 1-888-444-1415, ext. 4 or [Us4Warriors](#) website

Some Deadline Dates

VOICE OF DEMOCRACY / PATRIOT'S PEN PROGRAM

Student Entry to the Post, October 31, 2019. Post Deadline for Post Winner to District Chairman: November 15, 2019

TEACHERS AWARD

Entry Deadline to the Post: October 31, 2019. Post Deadline to submit to District: November 15, 2019

LAW ENFORCEMENT, FIREFIGHTER, EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN

Deadline for submission to Post Chairmen is November 1, 2019. Deadline for submission to District Chairman by Post Chairmen is November 15, 2019.

Chairmen are listed on the District website and in the District roster book. Entry forms are available on District website www.vfwcadist1.org

Chief of Staff Report

Comrades,

District members, I would like to assist you with any questions that you may have this year regarding the VFW Rituals and By-Laws. Each month my intent is to cover items of interest, training and concern to the VFW. This article, my third installment, is for ALL members.

This month the topic is **"What order does a Post meeting follow"**? I have seen that most Posts follow a general theme while conducting a meeting but there actually is a proper format. Ultimately it is the Post Commander's meeting and the manual is a "guide" but for consistency alone, it's best to follow the prescribed order.

Refer to the VFW Podium Edition in the "VFW RITUAL" (white section) to find the "ORDER OF BUSINESS". This is the proper format. You will need to order your new Podium Edition's since they are now available after the July National Convention in Orlando. Remember also that you rap twice for stand up, once for sit down.

Should the Post opt not to use the National By-Laws, you must create your own. And the Post By-Laws **MUST** be approved by the National Organization before they can be adopted. Follow your Commanders Manual should you decide to do so. Remember too that the National By-Laws supersede all things VFW.

Yours in Comradeship,

PDC Douglas Carrington, District 1 Chief of Staff
slainte1861@att.net

San Diego County Veteran of the Year

The 1st District did it last year, let's have a repeat and do it again this year.

San Diego County 2019-2020 Veteran of the Year

Selection of your Veteran is to be determined by your corporation/organization or agency. For consideration as the 2019-2020 San Diego County Veteran of the Year, your nomination package must be for a Veteran honorably discharged from U.S. Military, a resident or employed in San Diego County, and received by October 1, 2019, SUBMITTED ON-LINE by downloading the form here:

<https://www.sdveteranoftheyear.com/san-diego-county-2017-2018-veteran-of-the-year-voy/>The Luncheon takes place on Nov 1. Sign up here: <https://www.sdveteranoftheyear.com/events/>

Jerry Koehmlein



REPORTS FROM DISTRICT OFFICERS

District Chaplain Report

Hello to comrades, sisters and brothers:
We are winding down on summer and school either will be or already has started in session for our students. Please remember to keep an eye on the veterans, their families, the elderly and pets as the heat can be brutal if they have no water, no shade and no safe place to keep cool.

This month the following cards were submitted (end of July and all August):

7/26/2019: District 9 Chief of Staff/Secretary Iris Vogt had open heart surgery and will have a few weeks recuperating in rehab. Prayers of healing are going out to for a speedy recovery from the auxiliary family. Get Well Cards can be sent to:
Iris Vogt, 751 South 1st St, Kerman, CA 93630

7/26/2019: Auxiliary #7792 (Winton, No., Calif.) member Virginia M. Cloak has gone to her heavenly home on 7/16/2019.

Cards can be sent to:
Cloak Family, P.O. Box 1404, Winton, CA 95388.

7/30/19: PDP Shirley Calvert fell and broke part of her shoulder. She is having surgery as of July 30.

Cards can be sent to:
PDP Shirley Calvert, 121 Forest Hills Dr., Tracy, CA 95376.

7/31/19: Dist. 10 Auxiliary President Linda Rambeau suffered heart attack and was released from the hospital. She is recovering at home.

Cards can be sent to:
Dist. 10 Aux President Linda Rambeau
1953 Chardonnay Dr., Oakley, CA 94561

8/3/19: From Auxiliary #10049 sister Eileen Falconer is wished a speedy recovery from her recent knee surgery.

Cards can be sent to
4212 E. Los Angeles Ave #4766
Simi Valley, CA 93063.

8/3/19: Auxiliary #8327-13 Charter Member, Beatrice Whittiker passed away on July 29, 2019 at the age of 100. Cards can be sent to:

The family of Beatrice Whittiker
15926 Shell St.
Delhi, CA 95315

(Continued, right column)

District Chaplain Report (Cont.)

8/3/19: Auxiliary 1774 (late notices) Bella Rhodes and Rebecca Miranda. No cards to be sent, all celebrations of life and services have been previously conducted.

8/5/19: Department Treasurer/Secretary Marilyn Peck recovering from surgery. Cards to be sent to:
VFW Department of California Auxiliary
9136 Elk Grove Blvd., Suite 101
Elk Grove, CA 95624

8/18/19: Dist. 1 Commander Myles Fry (also commander at John Finn Post 2080) – his grandmother passed away earlier in the week. Her services were held August 24.

Card sent to his home address in Campo CA.
8/19/19: Courtesy get well card to Karren Richards, Dist. 3 president for Aux – in hospital, card sent to her home address in Jurupa Valley CA.

VFW Foundation Community Support Grant

VFW community service projects are significant and shouldn't be held back by budgetary limitations. To help VFW Posts and Auxiliaries succeed in serving their communities, the official 501(c)(3) charity of the VFW was founded. It established the VFW Foundation Post/VFW Auxiliary Community Support Grant to help Posts with the funding for their local community service projects. Available to any VFW Post or Auxiliary, a VFW Foundation Post/VFW Auxiliary Community Support Grant will provide up to \$1,000 for performing essential and needed qualifying outreach projects in your community! An easy and streamlined application process, Posts and Auxiliaries can expect to receive a decision within thirty (30) days of the application submission.

The application period for the 2019-20 fiscal year will start Sept. 2, 2019. Please check back for more information closer to the next application period.

For four years, our Post, 1512, has been successful and was a recipient of \$1,000.00 Grant each of those years. Your Post can ask for less, and it has nothing to lose. The application is not that difficult to fill out. Any questions I will be glad to answer.

Jerry P. Koehmlein
E-mail jerryrk@cox.net

REPORTS FROM DISTRICT OFFICERS

Veterans and Family Support Report

Hello Everyone.

Welcome to 2019-2020 reporting year for Veterans and Family Support. If you are not aware, reporting for this year started as of May 2019, and there has been much to report since that time. We had Memorial Day, Independence Day with parades and functions going on all over the County and Stand Down, just to name a few. The summer is still with us and even though we are gearing up for the fall activities and back to school there is much we can do for our Veterans. Remember:

*"The Veterans and Family Support Program offers guidance to our Veterans and their family in many ways. Our Veterans either were drafted or enlisted in the Military. That means their family was also drafted or enlisted. Even though family members may not have had boots on the ground, they were, and are there with our Veterans every day and many of us can relate. These programs are not only for our Veterans, but for their family members. Those family members that support our Veterans sometime need support. It may be through additional education on how to help their Veteran cope with PTSD, TBI, MST or help care for their wounded Veteran now that they are at home. A family member may need emotional help and/or time for themselves. It is time to give more of our time. Our Veterans and their family members need to know we are here to **Support our Heroes** by working with your Auxiliary, Post and/or through Community Service Groups. Can we make this happen?.."*

One of the projects your Auxiliary can participate in and promote fairly easily is the MAP Program. Don't have enough money to totally fund that festival for the troops at your post home? Here is a good way to get that help and then do something special for them. Do you have Military Housing in your area? See if maybe you can host a big Bar-B-Q and invite all the families in that area. Patriots Day is coming up fast! So is Veterans Day.

Military Assistance Program (MAP) Finds Ways to Connect with Troops

MAP helps VFW and Auxiliary members give more to their local military units. It helps forge and nurture bonds with those units by providing financial assistance for Posts, Districts and Departments to sponsor morale-boosting send-offs, homecomings and casual get togethers. Posts and Auxiliaries participating in Adopt-A-Unit and Family Readiness Groups events can also receive assistance. **MAP** keeps care packages circulating by covering postage costs. For guidelines to apply for **MAP** funds, contact the VFW Veterans and Military Services office at 816-968-1102.

Looking forward to hearing from you soon. Please report your activities promptly while the memory is fresh and send them by email (acegranny70@gmail.com) or snail mail. Be sure you send a copy to Department Chairman Onita Billings at Onita.billings@gmail.com. I want to know not just the basics but when you send the report tell me about what you did to publicize it, what was it all about and if possible please include some pictures. See you soon as we...

Spread Our Wings to Protect Veterans.

Christine Edwards, District Chairman.

NEWS: VFW AND MILITARY

Military Overseas Voting Increased in 2018 Election

In 2018, 53 percent of the ballots sent to military and overseas voters were successfully counted - compared to only 33 percent in 2006. This is according to the Federal Voting Assistance Program's examining post-election research from the 2018 General Election.

Military members stationed away from their voting residence face more difficulties compared to local voters because the ability to receive and submit absentee ballots on time remains a problem.

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) of 1986 requires states to allow active-duty military members, their eligible family members and overseas citizens to vote absentee in federal elections. The FRA-supported Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE) amended and improved UOCAVA in 2009 by providing greater protections, such as requiring states to send absentee ballots to UOCAVA voters at least 45 days before federal elections. They also must provide an electronic option for sending ballots to voters.

"FVAP data from elections in the years 2000 to 2005 show that 30 percent of military members didn't vote because their absentee ballot didn't arrive or arrived late," FVAP Director David Beirne said. "A decade after the MOVE Act, that figure has been reduced by nearly half."

Use of electronic options for sending and receiving materials between voters and election offices has rapidly increased in recent elections. In 2018, election offices reported transmitting 57 percent of military and overseas ballots by email. In contrast, in 2014, only 36 percent of these ballots were transmitted via email.

The FVAP State of the Military Voter data will be released, after each federal election year. The findings are based upon post-election surveys and studies of voter file data.

For additional information, visit FVAP.gov, e-mail vote@fvap.gov or call 1-800-438-VOTE (8683).



Marine Corps Veteran Takes Home Gold at Wheelchair Games

Spinal cord fracture doesn't stop this warrior from competing in extreme sports.

Marine Veteran Tim Conner competed in powerlifting during the 39th Annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Louisville, Kentucky, earning gold. Conner works with his health care providers and recreational therapists at the [Lake City VA Medical Center \(VAMC\)](#) year-round, setting goals in preparation of the [National Veterans Wheelchair Games](#). A T9 spinal cord fracture during a motocross accident several years ago derailed Conner. He has not let his being paralyzed stop him from competing in extreme sports. During this year's games, he participated in powerlifting, team relay, javelin, shot put, slalom, super G, Spartan obstacle racing and wheelchair distance racing. Veterans with the fastest scores in slalom advance to take part in super G, an extreme obstacle racing sport. Conner took home gold medals in both slalom and super G for the past two years and has plans to continue to rechallenge himself next year.

From the Editor,

This is the first time since I volunteered to be your editor that I have not been in a rush. I wanted to pass on a few things to you.

1. I now have a District Email Address. Please address all correspondence concerning Dispatch articles to:

editor@vfwcadist1.org

1. Almost all of the informational articles about VFW, medical, military or legislative news comes from Jerry Koehmlein, so if you appreciate this information, thank him next time you see him.
2. I wound up with two documents from FRA that are too big for the newsletter, but too valuable to not pass on. The first is fifteen pages of "Fun things to do in San Diego in September 2019", with everything from Padres info to an International Dragon Boat Race. The second is five pages of sporting events in San Diego this month starting with a Hawaiian Plumeria Festival and ending with a list of dog-friendly breweries. I'll pass these on separately after I send this issue to you.

Serving those who serve our veterans, Richard Vannoy II

NEWS: VFW AND MILITARY

Senate Confirms Gilday as CNO

The Senate recently confirmed Vice Adm. Michael Gilday as the next Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) by a unanimous vote. Gilday, the current director of the joint staff, was also promoted to a four-star admiral with the confirmation. His confirmation hearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee was completed approximately 24 hours before the final vote in the Senate and less than a month after his nomination to the post.

Gilday, who has previously served as the head of U.S. Fleet Cyber Command and 10th Fleet commander, was nominated for the top Navy job after the sudden retirement of Adm. Bill Moran.

Moving? Update DEERS for Uninterrupted TRICARE Coverage

The Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) wants to remind beneficiaries that if they change their location, be sure to update their information in the DEERS. Being able to use TRICARE depends on keeping DEERS up to date. DEERS is a database of active duty and retired service members, their family members and others who are eligible for TRICARE. TRICARE eligibility shows up in DEERS based on the sponsor's status. Keeping your DEERS record up to date is the key to getting timely and effective TRICARE benefits.

FRA members should make sure that DEERS has correct, address, duty status, telephone numbers, and email addresses. This is especially true after a permanent change of station, or PCS, moves and anytime you experience a Qualifying Life Event (QLE). A QLE can include getting married or divorced, giving birth or retiring.

Also, check out what you need to do if you are moving. Remember, DEERS needs the beneficiaries Social Security number (SSN) and the SSN of each covered family members must be included in DEERS for TRICARE coverage to be accurate.

Changing beneficiaries contact information in DEERS is easy and there are several options. Beneficiaries can make changes online, by telephone, fax, mail or in person at the nearest ID card office. You can find an office near you using the [RAPID Sites Locator](#).

To add or remove family members, you must visit a local ID card office. To update contact information, choose one of these options: Online: Log in to MilConnect at <https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/>

Telephone: 1-800-538-9552 (TTY/TDD: 1-866-363-2883) or fax updates to 1-800-336-4416

Mail: Send updates to:
Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office
Attention: COA
400 Gigling Road
Seaside, CA 93955-6771

Only sponsors can add a family member in DEERS. Family members age 18 and older may update their own contact information.

Find more information on how to update DEERS information on the [TRICARE website](#).

President Orders Loan Forgiveness for Some Disabled Veterans

President Donald Trump recently issued a presidential memorandum requiring the Department of Education to eliminate the federal student loan debt of 100 percent permanently disabled veterans. "The debt of these disabled veterans will be entirely erased. It will be gone. They will sleep well tonight," said President Trump. Veterans who are 100 percent disabled are currently eligible to have their federal student loan debt entirely expunged, but government officials have struggled to get all eligible veterans to take advantage of the program. Essentially the memorandum is an effort to make loan forgiveness automatic, putting the impetus of clearing the debt on federal agencies instead of veterans.

Unemployment for Veterans Increases

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the unemployment rate for veterans increased for a second consecutive month in July but still remained below the overall national unemployment rate.

The veteran unemployment rate increased from 3.3 percent to 3.4 percent in July. That rate had been below three percent for four consecutive months before the June estimates. Among veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan war era, the unemployment rate in July was 3.6 percent, down slightly from 3.7 percent in June. The national unemployment rate remained unchanged from June at 3.7 percent.

The 3.4 percent jobless rate for veterans amounts to about 316,000 former military members looking for work last month. That number was as high as 500,000 just three years ago and topped the one million mark in 2011.

Happy Birthday Coast Guard

August 4, 2019 marks the 229th birthday of the U.S. Coast Guard. It was originally called the Revenue Cutter Service and was part of the U.S. Treasury Department. The name "Coast Guard" was established in 1915 and in 1967 was moved to the Department of Transportation. On February 25, 2003, it became part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).



NEWS: MEDICAL

Professional Medical Organizations Express Concern About Cuts to Military Medical Staff

Recently, a group of 17 professional medical organizations has dispatched a joint letter to key legislators that expresses their concern regarding the Administration's proposed cuts (18,000) to military medical staff that is provided in the Senate version of the Defense Authorization bill (S.1790). The letter cautions that these cuts will reduce military medical readiness and will be detrimental to the more than 9 million TRICARE beneficiaries, including 2 million children, who receive care through the Military Health System (MHS). Proposals to reduce the number of uniformed military health care provider billets threaten access to primary and specialty health care services for service members and their families. Reductions in billets will also reduce the number of military-trained uniformed providers that are needed to deliver essential health services to active duty members, their families, and retirees who live near the impacted installations.

The letter notes that Section 716 from the House version of the FY2020 NDAA bill prohibits the Defense Departments from realigning or reducing military medical end strength until analyses are conducted on potential manpower realignments and the availability of health care services in the local area. The letter urges legislators to include this language in the final conference report. A copy of the letter is available [on the website](#).

The FRA is also concerned that such drastic cuts could impact access and quality of care for retirees, active duty members, and their families. In addition, these proposed cuts could impact combat casualty care capabilities. Members are encouraged to use the [Action Center](#) to weigh in on this and two other issues by using the campaign located at top of the list, "Ask Senators to support House NDAA Provisions."

FRA Supports Arthritis Research at DoD

Due to the rigorous and physically demanding requirements of military service, veterans are more likely to develop arthritis than civilians. That is why FRA recently signed onto a letter with other VSO/MSO organizations urging Congress to designate an arthritis research program at the Department of Defense (DoD) within the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) and appropriate \$20 million for FY2020. The current budget for CDMRP does not specifically identify arthritis as an area of concern.

Arthritis encompasses more than 100 diseases, including mechanical (or degenerative) and inflammatory ones. This research will focus on prevention in order to head off years of therapy, medication, and potential surgeries and to lower cost within the VA. Arthritis is a major cause of medical discharge from the military and severely impacts military readiness and retention. Enlisted service members have the highest rates of arthritis. A dedicated budget for arthritis research would help establish a sustainable focus on arthritis since it is such a high-impact disease in the military population.

Disabled Veterans May Get Refund

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Inspector General recently issued a report claiming that more than 53,000 disabled veterans may be owed refunds totaling approximately \$189 million in home loan fees they were incorrectly charged by the VA. Auditors found it "troubling" that senior Veterans Benefits Administration officials were aware in October 2014 that thousands of exempt veterans were owed refunds, but didn't take adequate action to issue refunds. The auditors estimated that nearly 73,000 exempt veterans were incorrectly charged an estimated \$286 million in funding fees for their VA home loans from 2012 through 2017. During that period, the VA issued about \$97 million in refunds to 19,700 of the veterans -- leaving an estimated 53,200 who may be eligible for refunds. Based on a sample of 200 home loans made from 2012-2017, auditors found overcharges that averaged \$4,483.

Generally, veterans and service members are required to pay a VA funding fee when they apply for a VA home loan, to defray the VA's cost for administering the loan. However, veterans are exempt from paying a funding fee if they're entitled to receive VA disability compensation. VA funding fees range from 0.5 percent to 3.3 percent of the loan amount. The VA guarantees the loans, which are made through lenders such as banks and credit unions.

The VA Loan Guaranty Service has developed a plan to identify these exempt veterans and to issue the refunds. One issue identified by the Inspector General, and being reviewed by the VA, is how to credit borrowers who, after their loan has closed, were awarded disability compensation with retroactive effective dates, which would have made them eligible for the waiver at the time the loan was given.

In their response to the VA IG, Loan Guaranty Service officials cited other competing priorities: unprecedented growth in the VA home loan program from 2012 through 2017, with parallel increases in phone call volume, requests for VA certificates of eligibility, and appraisals. In 2014, the VA estimated it would take 12 employees devoted full time for one year to complete the refunds. More recent data indicates it would take at least 30 full-time employees more than a year to complete the process, according to the VA.

Veterans who think they may be eligible for a refund should call (877) 827-3702 to request a refund.



NEWS: MEDICAL

VA Updating Schedule of Rating Disabilities (VASRD)

The Department of Veterans (VA) is updating its Schedule of Rating Disabilities (VASRD) to align with current medical knowledge. The most recent portion of the disability schedule to be updated is the section covering infectious diseases, immune disorders, and nutritional deficiencies.

The federal regulation for the disability rating criteria is being rewritten to update medical terms and to more accurately reflect the changes that medicine and treatment have undergone since the original code was written in 1945.

This most recent update pertains to the VA's rating schedule that covers different diseases and sections of the human body. The new rating schedule for infectious diseases, immune disorders, and nutritional deficiencies join updates for dental and oral conditions; conditions related to the endocrine system; gynecological conditions and disorders of the breast; diseases of the eye; skin conditions; and the hematologic and lymphatic systems. Any claims in these three areas that were pending on Aug. 11, 2019, will be considered under both the new and old rating schedules with the more favorable rating result going to the veteran. All claims that were filed on or after Aug. 11, 2019, will be rated on the new standards.

The VA uses the collection of federal regulations to determine exactly what is considered a disability related to military service and to compute any disability compensation payments.

DHA will Manage DoD Healthcare

Effective Oct. 1, 2019, the Department of Defense will begin consolidating military hospitals and clinics under a single agency. The Army, Navy and Air Force will begin a two-year transition to shift administration and management of their medical facilities to the Defense Health Agency (DHA) by October 2021.

"For the first time in our modern military's history, a single agency, the DHA, will be responsible for all the health care the Department of Defense delivers to our 9.5 million beneficiaries," Bono said.

"Whether you receive your care at an on-base facility or through our TRICARE civilian networks, DHA will oversee your care. This consolidation will drive higher levels of readiness for operational and medical forces and integrate health care services to standardize practices across the entire Department, which means patients will have a consistent, high-quality health care experience, no matter where they receive their care."

This change was mandated in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2017 that included sweeping changes to military healthcare. Congress, among other changes, wanted a single agency to be responsible for the administration and management of all military hospitals and clinics. DHA will be responsible for health care delivery and business operations across the Military Health System including budgets, information technology, health care administration and management, administrative policies and procedures, and military medical construction.

The FRA will monitor the consolidation process to ensure that access and quality of care will not be reduced for beneficiaries.

Pentagon Taskforce to Examine Toxic Exposure on Bases

The newly confirmed Secretary of Defense has set up a special task force to review the military's obligation in cleaning up contamination from cancer-linked "forever chemicals." "The Department is committed to taking a strong and proactive stance to address the effects arising out of any releases of these substances from all defense activities including the National Guard and Reserves. We must approach the problem in an aggressive and holistic way, ensuring a coordinated DoD-wide approach to the issue," Esper wrote in a memo establishing the taskforce. A class of chemicals abbreviated as PFAS is used in non-stick products ranging from Teflon pans to raincoats, but the heavy use of PFAS-laden firefighting foam by the military has contributed to water contamination across the country. PFAS's persistence in the environment has earned it the "forever chemical" nickname.

"We must approach the problem in an aggressive and holistic way, ensuring a coordinated DOD-wide approach to the issue," Esper stated.

There are at least 400 military sites with PFAS contamination, and the chemical has often spread to the water supply of nearby communities. The cost for cleanup is estimated at \$2 billion.

The PFAS task force would be responsible for devising cleanup standards, finding alternative firefighting foam without PFAS, and addressing Public/Congress perceptions of DoD's efforts. Esper gave the task force six months to report back.

NEWS: MEDICAL

DoD to Begin the Next Major Phase of Military Hospital Consolidation



Lt. Col. Juli Fung-Hayes (center), a U.S. Army Reserve emergency medicine physician with the 2nd Medical Brigade, leads a medic team from the 396th Combat Support Hospital, headquartered at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington, through a trauma and critical care scenario in a field hospital during a promotional photoshoot for Army Reserve marketing and recruiting at Fort Hunter Liggett, California, July 18, 2018. (U.S. Army Reserve photo by Master Sgt. Michel Sauret)

The Department of Defense is preparing for the next major step in consolidating military hospitals and clinics under a single agency, one of the largest organizational changes within the U.S. military in decades.

On Oct. 1, the Army, Navy and Air Force begin the final two years of a multi-year transition to shift administration and management of their medical facilities to the Defense Health Agency by October 2021, changes that are "transformational and far-reaching," said Vice Admiral Raquel Bono, the DHA Director.

"For the first time in our modern military's history, a single agency, the DHA, will be responsible for all the health care the Department of Defense delivers to our 9.5 million beneficiaries," Bono said. "Whether you receive your care at an on-base facility or through our TRICARE civilian networks, DHA will oversee your care. This consolidation will drive higher levels of readiness for operational and medical forces and integrate health care services to standardize practices across the entire Department, which means patients will have a consistent, high-quality health care experience, no matter where they receive their care."

The primary driver for this change is the National Defense Authorization Act of 2017. Congress mandated that a single agency will be responsible for the administration and management of all military hospitals and clinics to sustain and improve operational medical force readiness and the medical readiness of military members, improve beneficiaries' access to care and experience of care, improve health outcomes, and eliminate redundancies in medical costs and overhead across three separate Service-run systems. DHA will be responsible for health care delivery and business operations across the Military Health System including budgets, information technology, health care administration and management, administrative policies and procedures, and military medical construction.

Bono said that even though congressional directives mandate this change, "it's the right thing to do."

What will happen at the U.S. Naval Hospital (Balboa) and the clinics? How will effect those who use these facilities? To read the whole story go to

<https://health.mil/News/Articles/2019/08/26/DoD-to-begin-next-major-phase-of-military-hospital-consolidation>



NEWS: MEDICAL

TRICARE Coverage After Gaining or Losing Other Health Insurance

If you have any health insurance other than TRICARE, it's called "other health insurance" or simply "OHI." An example of OHI is having employer-sponsored coverage in addition to TRICARE. If you're on active duty, you can't use OHI. TRICARE is your only coverage. And TRICARE supplemental insurance isn't OHI.

If you recently [gained or lost OHI](#), you've experienced a [TRICARE Qualifying Life Event \(QLE\)](#). This means that you have 90 days after you gain or lose other health insurance to close health insurance you have in addition to TRICARE, such as Medicare or an employer-sponsored health insurance. TRICARE supplements don't qualify as "other health insurance." to change your TRICARE health plan. You need to take action and understand how your plans will work together in the future. Here are some tips regarding what comes next.

Tell TRICARE When You Gain Other Health Insurance

Tell your [TRICARE contractors](#), doctors, and pharmacies if you have [other health insurance](#). This includes medical insurance, prescription drug insurance, dental insurance, and vision insurance. This will help them coordinate your benefits for payment by both the OHI and TRICARE, as well as prevent claim delays or denials.

You can report your OHI through the following:

Online: Fill out and submit your [TRICARE contractor's other health insurance form](#), or enter the information in [milConnect](#).

By phone: Call your applicable [TRICARE contractor](#).

In person: Go to your [military hospital or clinic](#), or a [uniformed services ID card office](#).

Coordinating Your Benefits

Once obtained, OHI becomes your primary insurance. Therefore, if you have health coverage through an employer, association, private insurer, or school (for students), your OHI is always your primary insurance and pays any claims before TRICARE does. OHI must process the claim before TRICARE can consider the charges. A [TRICARE-authorized network](#) or [TRICARE-authorized non-network](#) provider must provide [TRICARE-covered health care services](#).

Most providers and pharmacies will file your claim with TRICARE. If they don't, you can submit the amount remaining to your TRICARE contractor. Be sure you follow the rules of your OHI. If your OHI doesn't pay on your claim because you didn't follow their rules, TRICARE may not pay on your claim. If TRICARE receives your claim before your OHI processes it, TRICARE will deny it.

Medicare and TRICARE

TRICARE pays after Medicare and your OHI for TRICARE-covered health care services. As outlined in the [TRICARE For Life Handbook](#), how Medicare coordinates with OHI "depends on whether or not the OHI is based on current employment." But in either case, TFL pays last. You can also learn about how [Medicare works with OHI](#) on the Medicare website.

Using Other Health Insurance with Prescription Drug Coverage

When you have OHI with pharmacy benefits, your OHI pays first and TRICARE pays second. The [TRICARE Pharmacy Overview](#) states that you "can save money by using a pharmacy that is also in-network with your other health insurance if you have it." Tell Express Scripts, Inc. you have OHI by completing the [TRICARE Other Health Insurance Form](#).

If you have OHI prescription coverage, you can't use [TRICARE Pharmacy Home Delivery](#) unless the TRICARE pharmacy contractor can coordinate benefits with your OHI plan and either: 1) the drug isn't covered by your OHI, or 2) you have met the OHI benefit cap. Visit [Using Other Insurance](#) and check out the [TRICARE Pharmacy Handbook](#) for more information on how to coordinate OHI with pharmacy benefits and file claims.

Losing Other Health Insurance

If you [lose other health insurance](#), TRICARE becomes your primary payer. Inform the applicable TRICARE contractors and your health care provider and pharmacy of loss of OHI. If you don't share the loss of OHI, then you risk the chance of TRICARE denying your claim.

Whether you [lose or gain OHI](#), don't wait to report it to your [TRICARE contractor](#).

Visit [Qualifying Life Events](#) to learn more about this QLE and other QLEs that you may experience in the future. Doing this will help you make the most of your benefit and take command of your health care.

NEWS: MEDICAL

Ditch the Ticks this Summer: Protect Your Family from Lyme Disease

Do you know where ticks are most likely to be and how to protect yourself? Summer days means more time spent outdoors. And being outside, especially in warmer weather, comes with an increased risk of encountering a tick and getting a tick-borne disease like Lyme disease. If you or a family member get a tick bite and Lyme disease symptoms are present, TRICARE covers testing and treatment of the disease.

Lyme disease is transmitted to people through the bite of infected black-legged ticks. About 30,000 cases of Lyme disease are reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) each year, according to the CDC. Lyme disease is most common in the U.S. Most infections occur in the Northeast, mid-Atlantic, and upper Midwest, with pockets of reduced risk along the west coast. You can also find Lyme disease in “forested areas of Asia, north-western, central, and eastern Europe,” says the World Health Organization.

You and your family can take several steps to help reduce exposure to ticks and possible Lyme disease:

- Protect yourself from ticks: A little protection goes a long way. Wear a hat, long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and socks when outdoors, especially in grassy, brushy, and wooded areas as these are the most common places for ticks to live.
- Use insect repellent: Use an Environmental Protection Agency-registered insect repellent. Follow product label instructions for safe use.
- Avoid contact with ticks: When hiking, walk in the center of trails and avoid wooded and brushy areas with high grass and leaf litter.
- After being outdoors, check yourself for ticks immediately: If you spend the day outside in a wooded area or in your own backyard, check your clothing and body for ticks. Key parts of the body to check include under the arms, inside the belly button, back of the knees, and in and around the hair.
- Shower soon after being outdoors: Showering may help wash off unattached ticks, and it’s an excellent chance to do a tick check. According to the CDC, “Showering within two hours of coming indoors has shown to reduce your risk of getting Lyme disease and may be effective in reducing the risk of other tick-borne diseases.”
- Learn the signs and symptoms of Lyme disease: The CDC recommends you seek medical attention if you observe any Lyme disease symptoms, and have noticed a tick bite, live in an area known for Lyme disease, or have recently traveled to an area where the disease occurs.

Lyme disease is treatable. Diagnosis requires a positive blood test. Your TRICARE benefit covers this test if ordered by a TRICARE-authorized provider. An authorized provider is any individual, institution/organization, or supplier that is licensed by a state, accredited by the national organization, or meets other standards of the medical community and is certified to provide benefits under TRICARE. There are two types of TRICARE-authorized providers: Network and Non-Network. If diagnosed early, your doctor may treat Lyme disease with a standard round of antibiotics covered by your benefit when medically necessary. To be medically necessary means it is appropriate, reasonable, and adequate for your condition. If Lyme disease is untreated, you may need more intensive courses of medication in the future.

Jerry P. Koehmlein

Start the School Year Right With Healthy Teeth

The school year is just around the corner. Make sure to send your child back to school with a healthy smile. According to the [American Dental Association](#) (ADA), “dental disease alone causes children to miss more than 51 million school hours each year.” Before the new school year, it’s a good idea to check your calendar to see if your child is due for a dental cleaning or exam.

As described in the [TRICARE Dental Program Handbook](#), the [TRICARE Dental Program](#) (TDP) covers two routine cleanings and two fluoride treatments during a 12-month period for children age 1 and older. Learn more about your covered services under TDP in the handbook. If you need to find a TDP dentist, use the [Find a Dentist](#) tool on the TDP website.

If you’re going to take your child to see the dentist, [ADA offers these tips](#) to help your child have a successful dental visit:

Encourage Good Dental Habits at Home: The best checkup is a cavity-free checkup. You can help make this happen by encouraging your kids to brush twice a day for two minutes and floss once a day.

Choose the Right Time: Schedule your children’s dental visit at a time that works well with their schedule and not when they’ll be distracted or tired.

Feed Your Child Before the Visit: A hungry child isn’t a happy patient. Feed your child a light, healthy snack before the dental visit. Still, have him or she thoroughly brush and remove all food residue before the checkup.

Stay Calm: If your child gets in the dental chair and panics, stay calm and try to provide comfort. Work with the dental team to get the checkup accomplished in hopes the next time will go more smoothly.

Your children may also need other services before school begins. Learn what rules or limits TRICARE may have on services like [school physicals](#), [vaccinations](#), and [eye exams](#).

NEWS: MEDICAL

DO YOU NEED A SERVICE DOG?

Are you or someone you know a veteran in need of a service dog? Paws'itive Teams is currently interviewing potential partners for a fully-trained service dog ready to start a career. They are looking for veterans with mobility-related injuries seeking a service dog.

Matching the personality and skills of a dog with those of the potential partner is extremely important and Paws'itive Teams feel this dog would work well for an active individual with good dog handling skills.

In addition to performing to numerous tasks which save energy for a human partner (picking up dropped items, opening difficult doors, help with undressing, etc.), this dog is also trained to bring the telephone in an emergency, conduct counter transactions, and place items in a basket.

QUALIFIED APPLICANTS:

- Live in San Diego County and have no plans of moving for at least one year.
- Have a mobility-limiting disability (i.e. spinal cord injury). Paws'itive Teams does not train dogs to assist with seizures, developmental disabilities, autism, depression, diabetes, hearing or vision loss.
- Willing to commit to a 4-month transition training period, working three times weekly in the PT training center, student's home, and in public settings with a Paws'itive Teams certified instructor.
- Agree to maintain high-quality care of the dog after placement, including veterinary expenses, food, exercise, grooming.

HOW TO APPLY:

The first step for a qualified applicant would be to complete the short online pre-application form at

<https://www.pawsteams.org/pawsitive-teams-service-dogs/pawsitive-teams-pre-application-process>

Questions? Contact Paws'itive Teams at (858) 558-7297 or by email at paws@pawsteams.org.

New Smoke-Free Policy at VA Health Care Facilities

It is going to be harder come 1 Oct. 2019, to lite up at a VA facility. A lot of veterans who use the VA facilities are smokers. This June, the VA officially announced a new smoke-free policy for veterans, visitors, volunteers, contractors, and vendors at all VA health care facilities starting Oct. 1, 2019. It did not include its employees.

The VA's Smoke-Free Policy Will now Include Employees. This Wednesday, the VA announced that they were able to work with union officials and will be extending the smoking ban to staff as well, but not until January 2020. The smoke-free ban includes cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and e-cigarettes. If your a veteran smoker and use the VA, the VA Health Administration has several programs available to help veterans quit smoking.



NEWS: MEDICAL

Prevent Mosquito-Borne Illness in the U.S. and Overseas

Did you know that they're more than 3,000 species of mosquitoes worldwide? Most cause nothing more than an itch. But three species bear most of the responsibility for the spread of certain serious diseases. Reduce your risk of getting these diseases by taking steps to prevent mosquito bites.

The following serious diseases are mosquito-borne:

Malaria. In 2017, the World Health Organization estimates there were 219 million cases of malaria worldwide. More than 90% of those cases are in Africa. If you're traveling to Africa, talk to your doctor about medications to prevent malaria. If symptoms arise, a doctor can diagnose malaria with a blood test.

Yellow fever. Tropical or subtropical areas of South America or Africa are common for yellow fever. If you plan to travel to these areas, you should consider getting vaccinated. There's also an ongoing yellow fever outbreak in Brazil. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that if you haven't received the yellow fever vaccine, postpone your travel to Brazil. TRICARE covers yellow fever vaccine other vaccines required for overseas travel for active duty family members who are traveling with their sponsor on official travel or permanent change of station orders.

Zika. The CDC warns that the Zika virus presents an additional risk for pregnant women. While it doesn't usually require hospitalization, consider delaying travel to areas where the virus is active if you're pregnant. This includes parts of South America, Central America, and the Caribbean. Check the world map of areas with risk of Zika for the latest information.

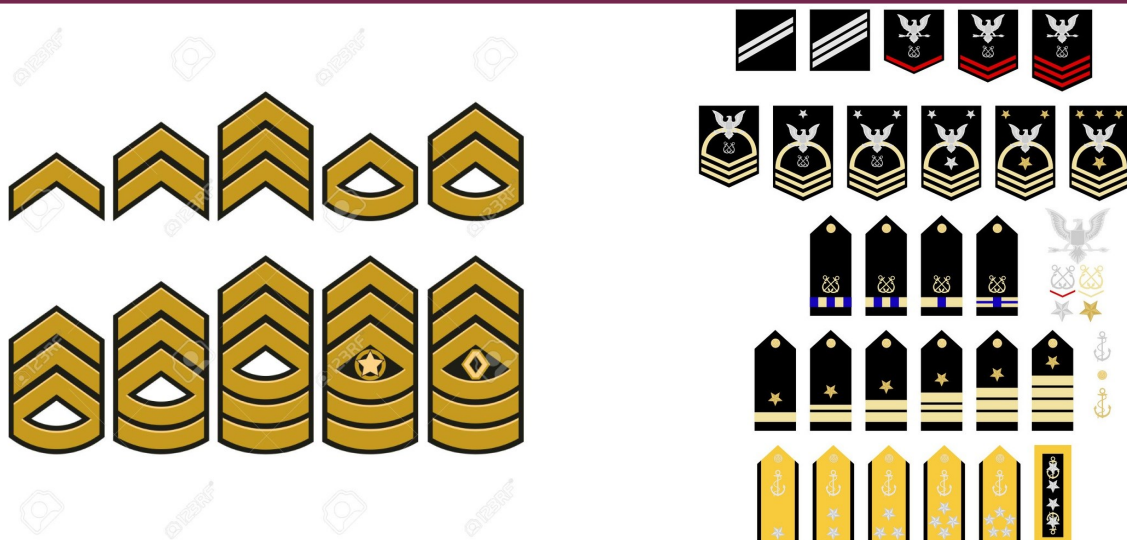
West Nile virus. The leading cause of mosquito-borne disease in the U.S. is West Nile virus, according to the CDC. You'll find cases of West Nile virus during mosquito season, which starts in the summer and continues through the fall.

Mosquitoes can spread dangerous diseases no matter where you are. Here are some ways that you can prevent mosquito bites and reduce your chances of getting sick:

- Wear long sleeves and pants when exploring outdoors, especially at night.
- Use an insect repellent that's registered with the Environmental Protection Agency. Be sure to follow the product label instructions and reapply as directed.
- Sleep in an air-conditioned or well-screened room.

Take command of your health this summer and stay alert in the fight against mosquito-borne diseases. To learn more about how to prevent bug bites, check out Bug Week from the Military Health System. And find out what your TRICARE benefit covers.

Jerry P. Koehmlein



NEWS: LEGISLATION; STATE & NATIONAL

Senators Push for Elimination of Widows Tax

Senators Doug Jones (Ala.) and Susan Collins (Maine) recently sent a bipartisan letter - co-signed by 64 of their Senate colleagues - to the chairmen and ranking members of both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees calling on them to ensure the House-passed provisions to repeal the SBP/DIC offset (Military Widow's Tax) remains in the final version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA-HR 2500-S. 1790). Senators Jones and Collins were unsuccessful in their efforts in June to amend the Senate NDAA. However, the House NDAA includes this FRA-supported provision. The final bill is currently being negotiated between the House and the Senate. The final bill will be voted on by both chambers and if approved will go to the President to be signed into law or vetoed.

If signed into law, this legislation will repeal the unfair law that prevents as many as 67,000 surviving military spouses nationwide from receiving their full Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs survivor benefits. Currently, military widows and widowers who qualify for the VA's Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) are forced to take a dollar-for-dollar offset from the Survivors Benefits Plan (SBP) benefit, even though retirees elected to pay into the program.

Legislation to repeal the Military Widow's Tax has been repeatedly introduced in the Senate and House over the past 18 years, but this is the first time this provision has been included a bill that has passed either chamber of Congress.

FRA members can weigh in on this issue through the FRA Action Center located on the FRA website. This issue is listed in the campaign at the top of the page entitled: "Ask Senators to Support House NDAA Provisions."

SVAC Chairman Announces He Will Resign from Senate

Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman, Senator Johnny Isakson has announced that he will step down from serving as Georgia's senior Senator on Dec. 31, 2019. He served in the Georgia National Guard (1966-1972). He was re-elected to the Senate in 2016. He announced in June 2015 he had Parkinson's disease and insisted it would not impact his ability to serve as Senator that included serving as Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee.

He was elected state representative in 1976 after losing two years earlier. He ran unsuccessfully for Governor of Georgia in 1990 and was elected to the state senate in 1992. In 1996 he lost a Republican primary race for U.S. Senate. He was elected to Congress in a special election when Newt Gingrich resigned from Congress in 1999. In 2004 he was elected to the U.S. Senate when the incumbent Senator retired.

VA Secretary Wilkie Orders 'Stay' on Blue Water Veteran Disability Benefits Cases Until 2020

Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie has ordered a stay on Blue Water Navy Vietnam veterans' claims until Jan. 1, 2020, according to a document obtained by Connecting Vets, effectively stalling the benefits many veterans thought they had finally gained with the passage of a recent bill.

The memorandum is dated July 1 addressed to the VA undersecretary for benefits and the chairman of the VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals appears to be signed by Wilkie. See memo below.

In the memo, Wilkie says the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act, recently signed into law by President Donald Trump, "authorizes me to stay certain pending claims for benefits that may be affected by that Act until implementation of the statutory amendments Congress directed to go into effect on Jan. 1, 2020. I exercise that authority."

The Veterans Benefits Administration and Board of Veterans' Appeals "are ordered to stay decisions regarding claims for disability compensation that are based on service in the off-shore waters" of Vietnam beginning Jan. 9, 1962 and ending May 7, 1975, the memo reads.

The VBA and board also "are ordered to stay decisions regarding claims for disability compensation that are based on service in or near the Korean Demilitarized Zone" beginning Sept. 1, 1967 and ending Aug. 31, 1971 as well as claims for benefits for spina bifida from children of veterans allegedly exposed to toxic herbicides such as Agent Orange while serving in Thailand from Jan. 9, 1962 to May 7, 1975.

"The stays shall remain in effect until Jan. 1, 2020," per Wilkie's memo.

The VA said Blue Water veterans are "encouraged" to submit their claims for conditions related to Agent Orange. Veterans 85 and older, or "with life-threatening illnesses" will have "priority in claims processing," VA said. But those claims will not be decided until 2020, according to Wilkie's order.



NEWS: LEGISLATION; STATE & NATIONAL

Senate Approves Budget Agreement

As predicted in last week's NewsBytes the Senate passed (67-28) the two-year budget deal (H.R.3877) that in effect repeals the Budget Control Act spending caps, known as sequestration. The bill now goes to President Trump and he is expected to sign it into law. The FRA opposes sequestration because it poses a threat to national security and would substantially impact service member pay and benefits.

These automatic cuts require that 50 percent come from Defense, even though Defense makes up only 16 percent of the entire federal budget. The budget deal will clear the way for appropriations (spending) bills for FY2020 and FY2021. Specifically, the bill provides \$738 billion in defense spending for FY2020. That is less than requested by the administration (\$750 billion) and more than the House Democrats wanted to spend (\$733 billion). In addition, the agreement suspends the debt ceiling for two-years. The suspension will allow the federal government to borrow and spend without having to worry about being limited by the debt ceiling.

CNO Nominee Hearing

The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) held a hearing for Vice Adm. Mike Gilday to become the next Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). The position requires Senate approval. SASC Chairman, Senator Inhofe expressed his concerns over the Navy's ability to maintain the current navy fleet let alone grow it to 350 ships.

Vice Adm. Gilday said military housing is a priority for the Navy because it impacts readiness and sailors cannot focus on the mission if he/she is worried about housing conditions for their family.

Other topics included the constant delays and cost of the aircraft carrier USS FORD, threats from China and Russia, the arctic, and working with the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Gilday stated that his priorities include sustaining readiness and modernizing. Vice Adm. Gilday is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and holds Masters Degrees from the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and the National War College. He has served on teams that have been recognized with numerous awards and is the recipient of the Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal (four awards), Legion of Merit (three awards), Bronze Star, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with Combat "V" and the Combat Action Ribbon. He is expected to be confirmed.

FRA Wants Fiscal Support for AOBWN Implementation

The FRA, along with several other organizations, have dispatched a letter to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (Ky.), Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer (N.Y.), Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (Calif.), and House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy (Calif.) to request adequate funding to ensure a smooth implementation of disability benefits for Blue Water Navy Veterans.

The letter states that the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) cannot effectively implement the new law if they are not provided adequate funding.

According to the Aug. 1, 2018, testimony of VA Under Secretary for Benefits Dr. Paul Lawrence, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates the cost of extending benefits to blue-water veterans will be \$5.7 billion. The VA also anticipates an additional \$1 billion is necessary to cover increased health care expenditures, operating expenses and information technology support for the VBA. In a Sept. 7, 2018, letter from VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, the VA further estimates it will require 803 new employees to manage these claims.

The VA predicts there will be thousands of more claims than the number estimated by the Congressional Budget Office.

The FRA-endorsed letter urges Congress to appropriate suitable resources for the complete and immediate implementation of the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act. Congress will need to assist the VA to ensure this vulnerable group receives in a timely manner the health care and benefits they have been denied for decades.



UPCOMING EVENTS



VFW 2nd Annual MCAS Miramar Air Show Tent



**Friday - Sunday
Sept 27-28-29**

**2 shifts per day are needed---
Morning and Afternoon
(Blue Angels- be prepared to
pass out poppies with the mass
exit of the crowd)**

**POC TO CALL TODAY
VFW Poway 7907
PPC Bill Morrison
858-254-7900**

FOR INFO: WWW.WEBSITE.COM OR 303-555-1234

LOCAL & REGIONAL EVENTS



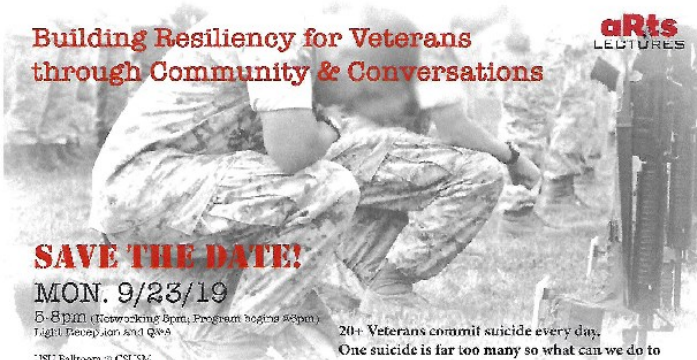
SEPTEMBER 21ST, 2019

- **Who:** All VFW posts, VFW Auxiliaries and American Legion posts in San Diego County are invited to participate.
- **What:** Santee VFW's first annual Chili Cook Off!
- **When:** Saturday, September 21st from 12:00pm – 5:00pm. Set up will begin at 8:00am.
- **Where:** VFW Post 9327, 8516 N Magnolia Ave in Santee.
- **Why:** To foster camaraderie among D1 posts through teamwork and competition and fundraise for VFW Post 9327.
- **How:** \$50 buy in. The first 8 posts to enter will be participants, with potential for 2 additional teams. Contact Post Commander Jose Marrero at (619) 208-1953 for more information.



UPCOMING EVENTS

THE POWER OF A STORY



Building Resiliency for Veterans through Community & Conversations


SAVE THE DATE!
MON. 9/23/19
 5-8 PM (Networking Open, Program begins 5:30pm)
 14011 Poway Road, San Diego, CA 92120

NSC Ballroom @ CSUSDC
 Tickets go on sale 8/26/2019
www.cansm.edu

CSUSDC Students FREE (Online Ticket Reservations Required)
 Veterans: \$100 (Online Ticket Reservations Required)
 Community: \$75
 Faculty/Staff/Alumni: \$5

Hosts/Sponsors:
 County of San Diego and Supervisor Jim Desmond
 Veteran Crisis Outreach (VCO)
 California State University San Marcos (CSUSM)




aRts LECTURES

20+ Veterans commit suicide every day. One suicide is far too many so what can we do to stop this?

San Diego County Supervisor Jim Desmond, Cal State San Marcos, and Veteran Crisis Outreach invite you to join us to hear solutions from Veterans themselves!

The Power of a Story brings healing and hope to our military personnel, our Veterans and their family members. This forum will provide opportunities for Veterans to share their stories of trauma and post traumatic growth, providing attendees with insight and understanding for our Veterans.

We send our warriors to fight for us, now we need to fight for them.

Intended Audience:
 College students, faculty, staff & administrators
 Community members, Military and Veterans supporters
 Professionals in fields such as mental health, public health, counseling, medical fields, legal, education, social work, sociology, psychology, nursing, law enforcement, emergency services, justice representatives, political organizations, and other attendees who will hear first hand from Veterans and learn more about their traumatic experiences and barriers.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS, 355 S. TWIN OAKS VALLEY RD, SAN MARCOS



SADDLES IN SERVICE
 In partnership with the Old Goats Association and
 The Kids Who Care
 Present

Heroes | Horses | Hollywood

Join us for an exclusive "Red Carpet" fundraising event at Storm Son's Ranch
 First time showing of Saddles In Service's segment in the Hollywood Documentary "Wounded Heroes" and a chance to meet the Heroes featured

LIMITED TICKET SALES (150 TOTAL)
\$100 per person
\$750 for a table that seats 8

SEPTEMBER 14, 2019
4 - 9 PM
6476 Japatul Highlands Rd, Alpine, CA 91901
(Tickets include BBQ dinner, beer & wine, live music & dancing, and a commemorative gift)

All proceeds benefit the Saddles In Service's program which offers a challenging & educational horsemanship experience that promotes wellness & healing for our Heroes & rescued Horses.

*Make checks payable to
 Saddles In Service
 PO Box 692, Descanso, CA 91916
 (Please include name, address and email with payment)

Thank you to our Sponsors















Saddles In Service is a Non-profit 501c3: EIN number 82-2410075

SATURDAY 7 SEPTEMBER 2019
 2019 RETIREE EXPO
 MCB CAMP PENDLETON, CA
 Time: 8:30am - 1:00pm

Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton is proud to roll out the red carpet to honor our military Retirees at the 2019 Retiree Expo! We appreciate and honor you! There will be various organizations at the event to cater to the unique needs of our Retirees:

- Defense Finance & Accounting Service
- Military Officers Association of America
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Health Net Federal Services (TRICARE)...and many others!

You can register for this event on Eventbrite at
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2019-retiree-expo-tickets-56943426321>.

We look forward to your attendance!

2019 Retiree Expo - 7 September 2019
 8:30am - 1:00pm - Doors open at 7:30am
 Pacific Views Event Center, Bldg 202850
 MCB Camp Pendleton, CA





POW/MIA MEMORIAL PROGRAM



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH AT 2:00 PM

MISSION VALLEY VFW POST 3787

4370 TWAIN AVENUE SAN DIEGO, CA 92120

POW GUEST SPEAKER (TO BE ANNOUNCED)
 PROVIDING POW EXPERIENCES, POW CEREMONY, . MISSING MAN TABLE, BAG PIPES & REFRESHMENTS

DON'T MISS THIS INSPIRATIONAL PROGRAM

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL CDR MIKE (619) 583-6288
 OR KATHIE O'KOLOSKI (AUX PRESIDENT)