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**1. VA Secretary Nominee Update:** Rear Adm. (Dr.) Ronnie Jackson met one-on-one with VFW Executive Director Bob Wallace in the VFW Washington Office this week to discuss the challenges he will face at the Department of Veterans Affairs if confirmed by the Senate. The admiral is very passionate about his 23 years as a naval physician, especially about his tour in Iraq taking care of wounded Marines, and is honored to have an opportunity to continue serving. Wallace called the meeting positive, especially after noting that the admiral is against privatizing VA. His Senate confirmation hearing is scheduled to begin at 2:30 p.m., Wednesday, April 25, and will stream live online at [www.veterans.senate.gov](http://www.veterans.senate.gov).

**2. VFW Testifies in Support of Women Vets, Caregivers & Medical Marijuana Research:** On Tuesday, VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Kayda Keleher testified at a House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health hearing focused on women veterans, caregivers and medical marijuana research. Keleher offered the VFW's support for legislation to expand the number of peer-to-peer counselors for women veterans, provide better monitoring for quality assurance of sex-specific health care from community providers, increase caps for VA provider education debt reimbursements, better coordinate between states and VA for controlled substance monitoring, require VA to conduct research on the efficacy of medical marijuana research, and expand caregiver benefits to veterans of all eras. [View the hearing](#) or [read the testimony](#).

**3. Memo Warning of Bad Anthrax Vaccine Is Erroneous:** Earlier this week, an unauthorized draft memorandum began circulating online regarding soldiers who had received anthrax vaccinations at Ft. Drum and Ft. Campbell between 2001 and 2007. The memo stated that

soldiers who were given the vaccine at these two stations could potentially be eligible for 100% VA compensation due to “bad anthrax batches.” The Department of Defense, in consultation with the Defense Health Agency, released a statement clarifying that the information contained in the memorandum was “false and completely without merit,” and that a new memorandum with the correct information has been published. Questions about this memorandum may be directed to VFW Director of National Security & Foreign Affairs John Towles at [NSFA@vfw.org](mailto:NSFA@vfw.org).

**4. VFW-supported Bill to Expand Commissary Access Introduced:** Representatives Daniel Lipinski, D-Ill., and Walter Jones, R-N.C., introduced H.R. 5467, the *Purple Heart and Disabled Veterans Equal Access Act of 2018*, which is endorsed by the VFW and would allow veterans with a service-connected disability, Medal of Honor recipients, veterans formerly held as prisoners of war, and veteran caregivers to use commissaries and MWR programs. [Read the bill text.](#)

**5. VFW-supported Bill to Improve Transition Assistance Program:** This week Congressman Don Bacon, Neb., 2, introduced H.R. 5553 to improve DOD’s process to prepare service members transitioning to civilian life. The VFW-endorsed bill focuses on veteran homelessness, unemployment and suicide prevention for transitioning service members. The VFW has worked with VFW member Ryan Loya and VFW Auxiliary member Katherine Kostreva to advocate for this legislation. The VFW encourages grassroots efforts of veterans helping veterans as a way to continue serving after leaving military service. [Read the press release.](#)

**6. DHA MSO/VSO Working Group:** On Wednesday, the VFW participated in the monthly Defense Health Agency (DHA) MSO/VSO Working Group led by DHA Deputy Director Guy Kiyokawa. The meeting provided updates on service treatment record processing and modernization, TRICARE implementation, and upcoming changes to the TRICARE Retiree Dental Program which is set to end on Dec. 31, 2018. Also discussed was the importance of ensuring that beneficiaries who pay their premiums and fees by credit card have contacted their new regional contractor to ensure that their payment information is correct. Beneficiaries who fail to authorize or update their payment information with their new TRICARE contractor before May 31, 2018, will lose coverage and must wait a full year to re-enroll. As of March, there were still approximately 44,000 beneficiaries who have failed to update their payment information. If you are unsure of your current payment authorization status, please [contact your regional TRICARE contractor.](#)

**7. VA Nominations Advance in the Senate:** The Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs advanced two nominations to the full Senate on Wednesday. Receiving unanimous support from the committee were Dr. Paul R. Lawrence to serve as under secretary for benefits and Joseph L. Falvey Jr., to serve as a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

**8. VA to Host Nationwide Baby Shower:** Throughout the month of May, in celebration of Mother’s Day, VA will host baby showers at 60 different sites across the country. VA also plans to provide more than 2,400 veterans — who are new parents or expecting — with baskets that will include a diaper bag, new baby toiletries, hair brush and comb set, bib, layette, blanket and hat. VA is currently accepting donations for these baskets which cost \$50 each. Individuals and

groups who are interested will also be able to volunteer at the baby shower sites. [Learn more](#) about how to volunteer, donate or find baby shower locations.

**9. MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has announced identification and burial updates for 10 American service members who had been missing in action from WWII, Korea and Vietnam. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Air Force Reserve 1st Lt. David T. Dinan, III**, 25, of Nutley, N.J., whose identification was previously announced, was buried April 13 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. On March 19, 1969, Dinan, a member of the 34th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 288th Tactical Fighter Wing, was piloting an F-105 Thunderchief on a strike mission over northern Laos. During the second strafing pass, Dinan transmitted a distress message before the aircraft crashed. The forward air controller did observe Dinan's parachute enter the jungle. Search and rescue aircraft conducted an aerial search and located a parachute and confirmed the death of the pilot; however, they were unable to recover the body due to enemy fire. [Read about Dinan.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Milton M. Beed**, 30, of Meadow Grove, Neb., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried April 25 in Norfolk, Neb. Beed was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. The unit was supporting South Korean forces in the village of Hoengsong, an area known as the Central Corridor in South Korea, when Chinese forces launched a massive counteroffensive, forcing them to withdraw to Wonju. Beed could not be accounted for and was declared missing in action as of Feb. 12, 1951. [Read about Beed.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Lester R. Walker**, 19, of Ferriday, La., whose identification was previously announced, was buried April 18 in Downsville, La. Walker was assigned to Battery B, 82nd Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division. On Sept. 3, 1950, Walker was attached to Task Force Haynes in the vicinity of Changnyeong, South Korea, when he disappeared. Based on a lack of information concerning his status, the U.S. Army declared him deceased and his remains non-recoverable. [Read about Walker.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Leonard V. Purkapile**, 26, of Potosi, Wis., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried April 26 in Lancaster, Wis. Purkapile was a member of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division. In late November 1950, Purkapile's unit was engaged by Chinese forces in the vicinity of Unsan while withdrawing southeast to Yongbyon, North Korea. Purkapile could not be accounted for following the battle and was declared missing in action on Nov. 28, 1950. [Read about Purkapile.](#)

-- **Army Master Sgt. Finley J. Davis**, 39, of Pittsburgh, whose identification was previously announced, was buried April 19 in North Charleston, S.C. Davis was a member of Company D, 2nd Engineer Combat Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division. On Nov. 25, 1950, Chinese forces initiated an offensive along the 8th Army front, forcing all 8th Army units to withdraw on November 29. Davis' battalion, assigned to provide security for the division, was attacked again by the Chinese and Davis was reported missing in action as of Dec. 1, 1950. [Read about Davis.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Raymond Sinowitz**, 25, of Bronx, N.Y., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried April 23 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Sinowitz was a member of 454th Ordnance Company, 27th Bombardment Group, the Far East Air Force, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands on Dec. 8, 1941. After months of intense fighting, Corregidor fell and American forces surrendered on May 6, 1942. Sinowitz was one of the thousands of U.S. and Filipino service members taken prisoner and eventually moved to Cabanatuan POW camp. [Read about Sinowitz.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. John H. Walker** was a member of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division, when he was reported missing in action after his unit engaged in fierce fighting on Hill 207 near Schönthal, Germany in the Hürtgen Forest. With no evidence that Walker had been captured or survived combat, his status was changed to deceased on Nov. 25, 1945. Interment services are pending. [Read about Walker.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Vincent L. Politte** served as a gunner with the 345th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 98th Bombardment Group (Heavy), 9th Air Force. He was killed in the summer of 1943 while participating in a raid on the Ploesti Oil Refinery complex north of Bucharest, Romania, during Operation Tidal Wave. During the raid, Politte's B-24 Liberator aircraft was hit by machine gun fire and crashed. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. Interment services are pending. [Read about Politte.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Pfc. Clarence E. Drumheiser** was assigned to Company D, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force. On Nov. 19, 1943, Drumheiser's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll against stiff Japanese resistance. Drumheiser was killed on the third day of the battle, one of approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors killed in the intense fighting. Interment services are pending. [Read about Drumheiser.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Joe M. Kelley** was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Kelley was one of 429 crewmen killed in the attack. Interment services are pending. [Read about Kelley.](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, click here: <http://capwiz.com/vfw/mlm/signup.htm>.

As always, we want to hear your advocacy stories. To share your stories or photos with us, simply email them directly to [yfwac@vfw.org](mailto:yfwac@vfw.org).