



July 20, 2018

**In This Issue:**

- 1. VFW National Convention Returns to Kansas City**
- 2. Apply Now for VFW-SVA 2019 Legislative Fellowship**
- 3. Is the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act Working?**
- 4. VFW Attends Congressional Roundtable on Burn Pit Exposure**
- 5. DOD Changes Rules for Transferring GI Bill Benefits**
- 6. VA Launches VEText Appointment System**
- 7. VA Seeks WWII Veterans Exposed to Mustard Gas**
- 8. House Passes Veterans Medical Leave Bill**
- 9. New VA Partnership Increases Access to Clinical Trials**
- 10. Native American Veterans Memorial**
- 11. MIA Update**

**1. VFW National Convention Returns to Kansas City:** President Donald Trump will be joining more than 10,000 members of the VFW and its Auxiliary as they bring the 119th VFW National Convention to the Kansas City Convention Center this Saturday through July 25. The business sessions are closed to the public, but a free, two-day weekend veterans walk-in claims clinic and four-day health fair are accessible to all veterans, service members and their families. All are also welcome to attend an update on federal benefits and services for veterans on July 22, at 9:30 a.m., where VA and Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service leadership will discuss changes to veterans' health care and benefits. We also invite everyone to attend an update on VFW legislative priority goals on July 22, at 11:00 a.m. The VFW will also host a women veterans information fair on July 24, at 2 p.m. [View all the details on the 119th VFW National Convention.](#)

**2. Apply Now for VFW-SVA 2019 Legislative Fellowship:** The application process for the 2019 class of legislative fellows is now open. The program selects 10 VFW members who attend schools with an approved Student Veterans of America chapter for a semester-long program focused on advocacy on policy issues faced by veterans, the military and their families. The capstone of the program is participation in the 2019 VFW's Legislative Conference. [Find out more information on the program or apply.](#)

**3. Is the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act Working?:** In response to a nationwide crisis in access to care, which engulfed the entire VA, the VFW-championed *Department of Veterans Affairs Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act of 2017* was signed in to law. This important law was intended to ensure VA employees who endanger the lives of veterans are held quickly accountable and to protect whistleblowers who expose fraud,

waste, and abuse within VA. The VFW needs your help to better inform Congress and VA about the situation on the ground at VA facilities around the country. Please take the [VFW Accountability and Whistleblower Survey](#).

**4. VFW Attends Congressional Roundtable on Burn Pit Exposure:** On Wednesday, VFW National Legislative Service Director Carlos Fuentes participated in a roundtable discussion with House Committee on Veterans' Affairs members to discuss the importance of researching the impact burn pits exposure has on the health of service members and veterans who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Fuentes urged Congress and VA to ensure existing toxic exposure research is disseminated to all VA health care professionals and compensation and pension examiners, which would help ensure veterans receive the health care and benefits they deserve. VA announced it is in the process of improving the registry and partnering with the National Academy of Medicine to review existing research to evaluate the association between adverse health care outcomes and exposure to burn pits. [View more information on Airborne Hazards](#). [Sign up for the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry](#).

**5. DOD Changes Rules for Transferring GI Bill Benefits:** Last week, DOD announced it will limit transferability of GI Bill benefits to service members with less than 16 years of service. This change is meant to re-define the benefit as a reenlistment tool as it was originally designed to be when the Post-9/11 GI Bill was signed into law. The new policy regarding transfers will go into effect in one year, so impacted service members still have time to decide whether to transfer their benefits to their dependents. The amount of eligibility that is transferred to each dependent can be changed until the benefit is fully expended, so the VFW recommends service members who are unsure of how they would like to utilize their GI Bill benefits to transfer one month of eligibility to their dependents now to ensure they fully utilize their benefit. [Read more about the recent changes](#).

**6. VA Launches VEText Appointment System:** VA has launched VEText, a text messaging system that reminds veterans of upcoming health care appointments and allows them to confirm or cancel via phone. There are currently 138 VA facilities using the automated system. Veterans who have previously used the VA health care system with a cell phone number listed in their electronic health records are automatically enrolled in VEText. [Learn more about VEText](#).

**7. VA Seeks WWII Veterans Exposed to Mustard Gas:** VA is reviewing previously denied claims from World War II veterans who participated in full-body testing for mustard gas or lewisite in the 1940s. VA has contacted identifiable World War II veterans with a previously-denied claim for exposure to mustard gas or lewisite to readjudicate those claims. World War II veterans who were previously denied benefits for mustard gas or lewisite exposure and have not been contacted by VA, should [contact a VFW-accredited Service Officer](#) or call VA at 800-827-1000 to request that their claim be reviewed. Read about [benefits related to exposure to mustard gas or lewisite](#).

**8. House Passes Veterans Medical Leave Bill:** On Monday, the House passed the VFW-supported S. 899, which was introduced by Senator Hirono and would ensure veterans who work for VA are not required to take unpaid leave when attending medical appointments for service-

connected conditions. The bill awaits Senate passage because of minor technical changes. The VFW calls on the Senate to swiftly considered and pass this important bill.

**9. New VA Partnership Increases Access to Clinical Trials:** The National Cancer Institute (NCI) and VA have partnered to increase access to clinical trials and new treatment options for VA patients with cancer. Twelve sites will be launched at different VA locations. Those sites include Atlanta, Ga., Bronx, N.Y., Charleston, S.C., Denver, Colo., Durham, N.C., Hines, Ill., Long Beach, Calif., Minneapolis, Minn., Palo Alto, Calif., Portland, Ore., San Antonio, Texas, and West Haven, Conn. Best practices will also be established by NCI and VA for clinical trials and precision-medicine therapies to assure patients who often have less access to treatments and clinical trials receive increased access. Learn more about [access to clinical trial](#).

**10. Native American Veterans Memorial:** Late last month the Smithsonian announced the winning design for the planned Native American Veterans Memorial will be awarded to Vietnam veteran Harvey Pratt, of Guthrie, Okla.. Mr. Pratt, who is of Cheyenne and Arapaho descent, served with the Marine Corps during Vietnam and stated that he hopes that his design will serve as a place for people to gather, instead of just a sculpture. The memorial will be installed on the National Mall adjacent to the National Museum of the American Indian, is scheduled to open in late 2020 and will pay tribute to the hundreds of thousands of Native Americans who have served our country throughout history in all of our military services. Find out more about the [Native American Veterans Memorial](#).

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

-- **Army Pfc. Walter W. Green**, 18, of Zanesville, Ohio, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried July 20 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Green was a member of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. In November 1950, his unit was involved in combat actions against the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces in the vicinity of Unsan, North Korea. Green was reported missing in action as of Nov. 2, 1950 when he could not be accounted for by his unit. [Read about Green](#).

-- **Army Staff Sgt. David Rosenkrantz**, 28, of Los Angeles, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried in June 20 in Riverside, Calif. Rosenkrantz was assigned to Company H, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division. In September 1944, his unit participated in Operation Market Garden, a ploy by Allied planners to break German defensive lines on the western front by capturing a highway route through the Netherlands. On Sep. 28, 1944, Rosenkrantz' platoon occupied Heuvelhof, a farm located south of the town of Grosbeek, when German tanks and infantry attacked. The paratroopers hid among sparse trees and buildings. Rosenkrantz was killed by enemy gunfire when he rose from his position. Due to the proximity of the enemy, his remains could not be recovered at the time. [Read about Rosenkrantz](#).

-- **Navy Electrician's Mate 3rd Class George H. Gibson**, 20, of Winchester, Kan., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried July 21 in Inglewood, Calif. Gibson 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 capsized. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429

crewmembers. [Read about Gibson.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Francisco Ramos-Rivera** was a member of Company H, 2nd Battalion, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, engaged in combat operations against North Korean forces near Taegon, South Korea. As U.S. forces regrouped after their evacuation, Ramos-Rivera could not be accounted-for and was declared missing in action on July 20, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ramos-Rivera.](#)

-- **Army Master Sgt. Leonard K. Chinn** was a member of Company D, 2nd Engineer Combat Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, when his unit was fighting off persistent Chinese attacks in North Korea. Chinn was reportedly captured by enemy forces on Dec. 1, 1950, and was held at several temporary prisoner of war camps before being marched northwest to POW Camp 5 Complex, North Korea. Interment services are pending. [Read about Chinn.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Delbert J. Holliday** was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 7th Cavalry Division, participating in combat actions against the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces in the vicinity of North Pyongan Province, North Korea. Holliday was killed in action on Nov. 30, 1950 and was reportedly buried in the United Nations Military Cemetery in Pyongyang. As the United Nations' situation with North Korea worsened, circumstances forced the cemetery in Pyongyang to close on Dec. 3, 1950, and buried remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Holliday.](#)

**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).**