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**1. Independent Budget Releases a Critical Issue Update:** On Thursday, The Independent Budget (IB) co-authors — the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), DAV (Disabled American Veterans), and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), issued [“\*The Independent Budget Veterans Agenda for the 116th Congress: Critical Issue Update.\*”](#) This follow-up to its [2019](#) report evaluates VA’s progress on 26 key recommendations the IB made last year to help ensure the *VA MISSION Act of 2018* is wholly and effectively implemented. Please note that the introduction explains the status ratings used, and in many cases, individual sections contain supplemental recommendations about how the VA or Congress can help to achieve the goal. [Read more.](#)

**2. New Research on Challenges Faced by Minority Veterans:** On Thursday, VFW National Legislative Service Director Carlos Fuentes participated in a panel discussion with VA officials and other advocates to discuss the findings of a recent Center for a New American Security report entitled [“\*New York State Minority Veteran Needs Assessment.\*”](#) which evaluates challenges faced by women, LGBT, and racial and ethnic minority veterans across life domains. The report includes recommendations on how veterans service organizations — like the VFW — VA, and researchers can address health, housing stability, financial stability, and social functioning differences between minority veterans and their non-minority peers. [Learn more.](#)

**3. Some Military Treatment Facilities to Stop Serving Retirees and Military Families:** On Wednesday, the Pentagon released a list of military treatment facilities and clinics that will no longer provide care to military retirees and active-duty families as part of a shift in focus to supporting active-duty readiness. The report lays out the process through which officials selected the locations slated for changes that could impact 200,000 retirees and active-duty family members. Of those, about 80,000 are active-duty family members, while the remaining 120,000 are retirees and their families. [Read the report.](#)

**4. Legislation Introduced to Study Cancer Among Fighter Pilots:** Last Wednesday, Representative Elaine Luria (D-Va.) and Representative Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.) introduced H.R. 5858, the *Military Pilots Cancer Incidence Study Act*. This important legislation would require DOD to enter into an agreement with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine to study and report on the incidence of cancer diagnosis and mortality among military pilots compared with other service members. In a press release, Representative Luria stated, “I am introducing the Military Pilot Cancer Incidence Study Act, so DOD and the VA understand the scope of the problem, identify service-connected illnesses, and address them appropriately. We owe it to these brave service members to know what health risks they assume and ensure we screen and treat early, so they live longer and healthier lives.” The VFW thanks Rep. Luria and Rep. Kinzinger for introducing this legislation and for their efforts to expand health care and disability benefits for veterans. [Read more.](#)

**5. New Research Project Honors the History and Legacy of Black Soldiers in WWII:** Ten years ago, in the Netherlands, a research effort was started that compiled the oral histories of Dutch people who survived World War II. Through this project, researchers learned about the hundreds of black American soldiers who were tasked with burying nearly 20,000 soldiers killed in action in the middle of winter. These soldiers labored in 12-hour shifts for months, burying their fellow yet segregated soldiers in makeshift, wartime cemeteries, and conducting makeshift services. These wartime cemeteries would become the Netherlands American Cemetery at Margraten. From this research The Black Liberators Project was born. [Read more.](#)

**6. Do You Know of an Endangered Historic American Battlefield?:** The American Battlefield Trust is writing a report on the “most threatened battlefields on American soil.” The Trust is [accepting nominations](#) from the public on possible battlefield sites that are endangered by development and natural disasters, so that they may be included in their upcoming report. The nominations are due by March 1, 2020. [Learn more.](#)

**7. VA Discussion on Prostate Cancer Treatment Scheduled Feb. 24:** Please join prostate cancer expert, Dr. Bruce Montgomery, as he speaks about VA's Precision Oncology Program for Cancer of the Prostate on Feb. 24 at 1 p.m. EST. VA has launched a precision oncology initiative to give veterans with prostate cancer access to the latest, cutting-edge treatments. Using genetic testing, doctors aim to select treatments that are customized for individual veterans, helping them to live longer, better-quality lives. Dr. Montgomery will speak in-person at VA headquarters in Washington, D.C. If you are not able to attend in-person, the lecture will be broadcast online. [Register here.](#)

**8. TRICARE for Life Webinar Scheduled Feb. 27:** Do you have questions about TRICARE For Life (TFL)? Not sure if you're eligible for TFL, or how TFL coverage works? Join the webinar on Feb. 27, from 1-2 p.m. EST to get your TFL questions answered. TFL is Medicare-wraparound coverage for TRICARE beneficiaries who have Medicare Part A and Part B. This webinar will take an in-depth look at TFL, from eligibility to how to get care. [Register here.](#)

**9. MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced two new identifications, and two burial updates for service members who have been missing and

unaccounted-for from WWII and the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **U.S. Navy Steward's Mate 2nd Class Jesus F. Garcia**, 21, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Garcia. Interment services are pending. [Read about Garcia.](#)

-- **U.S. Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Ernest L. Roth**, 20, was assigned as a pilot with the 359th Bombardment Squadron, 303rd Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force in Europe. On May 19, 1944, he was piloting a B-17G bomber while on a bombing run over Berlin when the plane was hit by flak and crashed. Six of the 10 crewmembers, including Roth, were killed in the crash. They were recovered by German forces and reportedly buried in the Döberitz cemetery. Interment services are pending. [Read about Roth.](#)

-- **U.S. Navy Seaman 1st Class Lyal J. Savage**, 19, of Dexter, New York, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft, on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Savage. He will be buried June 27, 2020, in his hometown. [Read about Savage.](#)

-- **U.S. Navy Fire Controlman 1st Class Robert L. Corn**, 24, of Baker City, Oregon, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft, on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Corn. He will be buried May 1, 2020, in Honolulu, Hawaii. [Read about Corn.](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, visit: <https://votervoice.net/VFW/register>.

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

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