



September 11, 2020

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1. VFW Remembers 9/11: Today marks the 19th anniversary of the terrorist attacks that changed America forever. The memories of that day are still vivid and raw in our nation's heart, but the heroism that emerged from the rubble of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in the air above a rural Pennsylvania field, should inspire Americans for generations to come. As we remember 9/11 and the nearly 3,000 innocent lives lost that terrible day, the VFW hopes all Americans pause and reflect on those we lost and those who continue to sacrifice in the defense of freedom.

2. VFW Testifies Before Congress: On Thursday, VFW National Legislative Service Director Pat Murray testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on the important subjects of mental health and veteran suicide. At the hearing Murray discussed treating this critical issue differently, "It's time we aggressively shift the focus on suicide prevention. We cannot keep trying the same solutions expecting different results." Many of the proposals discussed in the hearing are supported by the VFW, and could potentially help decrease the number of veterans who die by suicide. The VFW is confident Congress will pass these significant veteran bills and send them to the president's desk to become law. [Watch the hearing](#) or [Read the testimony](#).

3. 2021 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship Application is Open: The 2021 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship is now accepting applications! The program, which is in its seventh year, is for VFW members who attend an accredited institute of higher learning. Ten student veterans will be selected for the semester-long program that focuses on real policy issues faced by veterans, service members, and their families. The highlight of the program is participation in the VFW Legislative Conference, which in the past has included meetings at the White House and with senior officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs and Congress. Those selected also spend time with their VFW Department members on Capitol Hill pushing the VFW's legislative priorities. Alumni of the program have become more active in all levels of the VFW and have changed laws to improve care and benefits for veterans. [Learn more and apply for the fellowship](#).

4. Senate Hearing on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention: On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs conducted a hearing on VFW-supported [S. 785](#), the *Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019*. This legislation would support VA as it continues to improve veterans' mental health care and suicide prevention. Over \$174 million would be available through this bill, including grant programs to expand telehealth capabilities such as [Project ATLAS](#). [Watch the hearing](#).

5. Arlington National Cemetery Limited Reopening: Arlington National Cemetery has announced a limited reopening starting on Wednesday, Sept. 9 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., only for gravesite visitation. Face coverings will be mandatory and social distancing is expected. Other areas including President John F. Kennedy's gravesite, Memorial Amphitheater, and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier will remain closed at this time. [Learn more](#).

6. VA #FightFlu Initiative: VA has expanded the options eligible veterans have on where they can receive a seasonal no-cost flu shot. Veterans can now receive a standard-dose or high-dose flu shot at their local VA health care facility, in-network community retail pharmacy, or an urgent care location. If you are eligible, you only need to present a valid, government-issued ID at a covered location. [Learn more about eligibility and location options](#).

7. Unprecedented Poll Worker Shortage: Healthy elections require poll workers, the majority of whom are over the age of 60. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, election officials are reporting an unprecedented shortage. Without sufficient numbers of poll workers, it is possible that polling locations could have long lines, lack of staff to assist voters, and possible closures of polling locations. The VFW encourages any member, advocate, or supporter, who is healthy and willing, to consider becoming a poll worker for the general election in November. The [Stanford-MIT Healthy Election Project](#) has partnered with local organizations like Power the Polls, which helps to follow up with applicants, confirm their commitment, and assist them in completing the process. If you sign up through this [special VFW link](#), you will be contacted by Power the Polls, a partner organization, or your local election administrators.

8. The VFW Podcast Hits Airwaves Oct. 7: In an effort to provide our veterans, service members, and military families with current information on key veteran legislation, educational and financial assistance programs, national veterans services, critical initiatives from the VFW national commander-in-chief, and much more, the VFW is turning to the podcast world. We will chat with congressional leadership, Department of Veterans Affairs executives, Department of Defense senior officials, VFW leaders, and everyday veterans from around the globe about issues that matter most to you. Stay tuned as we prepare to launch the VFW Podcast the first Wednesday of October, November, and December. In 2021, the podcast will air two episodes each month, every first and third Wednesday.

9. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced two burial updates for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from WWII. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Frank L. Athon, Jr.**, 29, of Cincinnati, Ohio, was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force,

which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands, in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, while the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Athon died on the third day of battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Athon will be buried Nov. 21, 2020, in his hometown. [Read about Athon.](#)

-- **Navy Shipfitter 3rd Class Patrick L. Chess, 24**, of Yakima, Washington, 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 Chess. Chess will be buried Oct. 22, 2020, in his hometown. [Read about Chess.](#)

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