



May 4, 2018

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1. VFW Rallies Support for VA MISSION Act of 2018: Yesterday, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Phil Roe, M.D., introduced H.R. 5674, the *VA MISSION Act of 2018*, which is the culmination of hard work by members of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs to consolidate and improve VA's Choice Program, improve VA's ability to hire high-quality health care professionals, expand caregiver benefits to pre-9/11 veterans, and establish a process to evaluate and improve VA buildings to better serve veterans. "VFW members around the country have made it clear that the VA health care system must be improved, not dismantled," said Keith Harman, national commander of the 1.7 million-member Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. and its Auxiliary. "This agreement strikes a balance between improving access to VA doctors and leveraging the capabilities of the private sector when VA is unable to meet veterans' health care needs." The VFW calls on its members and supporters to [contact their members of Congress](#) and urge them to cosponsor and swiftly pass this important legislation. Read a [summary of the bill](#) or the [bill text](#).

2. VFW-supported Bill to Revamp TAP Program: This week, Chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity Jodey Arrington introduced a bill that would revamp the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) by requiring service members to choose a track that would better prepare them for civilian life. The current curriculum sends all service members through the same training regardless of their future plans. With this change, troops would be able to choose classes that best prepare them for either education, entrepreneurship or technical training. VA benefits briefings and general employment preparation would still be included in the week-long course. Chairman Arrington is passionate about stemming unemployment, homelessness and suicide prevention among veterans, and he sees a positive transition as the first step in eliminating those problems. The VFW applauds his passion to help veterans, and will continue to work with him and his staff to ensure this bill becomes law. [Read the bill text](#).

3. Congress Hosts Panel Discussion on Women Veterans: VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Kayda Keleher participated in a panel discussion with the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, alongside other VSOs, VA, congressional staff and researchers working to improve the quality of life for women veterans. The panel, which was moderated by Maj. Gen. (Ret.) Dee McWilliams, president of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, discussed issues faced by women veterans regarding health care, benefits, transition from military service and social stigmas. [Learn more](#) about what the VFW is doing for women veterans.

4. V-E Day Commemoration: Visitors to Washington, D.C., next week are invited to the National World War II Memorial on Tuesday, May 8, for an 11 a.m. ceremony to mark the 73rd anniversary of the end of WWII in Europe. As part of the commemoration, WWII veterans will place wreaths at the memorial's Freedom Wall in remembrance of the more than 400,000 Americans and 60 million people killed worldwide during the deadliest military conflict in human history. Street and handicap parking are extremely limited, and the two closest Metro stations (Smithsonian and Federal Triangle) are about a half-mile away, but taxis are plentiful. [Read more information or RSVP.](#)

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

-- **Marine Corps Reserve 1st Sgt. David H. Quinn**, 24, of Temple, N.H., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 5 in his hometown. Quinn was assigned to Company C, 2nd Amphibian Tractor Battalion (C-2d Amp Tr Bn), 2nd Marine Division. On Nov. 20, 1943, Quinn's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll against stiff Japanese resistance. Quinn was killed on the second day of the battle, one of approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors killed in the intense fighting. [Read about Quinn.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Cpl Raymond A. Barker**, 22, of Evanston, Ill., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 5 in Delavan, Wis. Barker was assigned to Company C, 2nd Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division. On Nov. 20, 1943, Barker's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll against stiff Japanese resistance. Barker was killed on the first day of the battle, one of approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors killed in the intense fighting. [Read about Barker.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Pfc. Harold V. Thomas**, 21, of Columbus, Ohio, whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 7 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Thomas was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division. Thomas's unit was one of those tasked with securing the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll. Encountering fierce resistance by the Japanese, almost 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and another 1,000 were wounded in the battle. Thomas was killed on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. [Read about Thomas.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Billy R. Ball**, 20, of Matthews, Mo., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 4 in St. Louis. Ball was a member of Headquarters Detachment Philippines Department, 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. Ball was one of the thousands of U.S. and Filipino service members taken prisoner and eventually moved to Cabanatuan POW camp. More than 2,500 POWs perished in this camp

during the remaining years of the war. According to prisoner records, Ball died on Sept. 28, 1942, and was buried along with fellow prisoners in the local Cabanatuan camp cemetery. [Read about Ball.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Terrell J. Fuller** was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, supporting Republic of Korea Army attacks against units of the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces in an area known as the Central Corridor in South Korea. After enduring sustained enemy attacks, the American units withdrew to Wonju, South Korea. It was during this withdrawal that Fuller was reported missing as of Feb. 12, 1951. Interment services are pending. [Read about Fuller.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Rufus L. Ketchum** was a member of Medical Detachment, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 31st Regimental Combat Team, 7th Infantry Division. In late November 1950, his unit was assembled with South Korean soldiers in the 31st Regimental Combat Team (RCT) on the east side of the Chosin River, North Korea, when his unit was attacked by Chinese forces. Ketchum was among more than 1,000 members of the RCT killed or captured in enemy territory and was declared missing on Dec. 6, 1950. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ketchum.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Oscar E. Sappington** was a member of 3rd Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 309th Infantry Regiment, 78th Infantry Division. On Jan. 10, 1945, the 309th Infantry launched a number of attacks in the Hürtgen Forest of Germany. At some point during the two days of action, Sappington stepped on a landmine. Though he was mortally wounded, no soldiers from his unit could reach him during the vicious fighting to render aid or confirm his death. He was reported missing in action as of Jan. 11, 1945. Interment services are pending. [Read about Sappington.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Kenneth D. Farris** was assigned to Company B, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division. On Nov. 28, 1944, Farris was wounded by artillery and left the front line for the battalion aid station. His regiment remained in combat for several more days, reaching the outskirts of Gey, Germany, before being pulled off the front line. When officers took an accounting of the surviving Company B soldiers, Farris could not be found. Interment services are pending. [Read about Farris.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Pfc. William F. Cavin** was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force. On Nov. 19, 1943, Cavin's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll against stiff Japanese resistance. Cavin was killed on the first day of the battle, one of approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors killed in the intense fighting. Interment services are pending. [Read about Cavin.](#)

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 vfwac@vfw.org.