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1. VFW-SVA 2019 Legislative Fellowship Class: The VFW and Student Veterans of America (SVA) announced the names of 10 VFW members and student veteran leaders who will comprise the fifth VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship class. Announced during the 11th annual SVA National Conference, the program continues efforts by both organizations to train grassroots advocates. The semester-long program includes policy research and six days in Washington, D.C., for the VFW's Legislative Conference.

The 10 selected fellows for 2019 are:

- Chad Baer, Army veteran, University of Pennsylvania
- Tammy Barlet, Coast Guard veteran, George Washington University
- Matthew Deller, Army veteran, The American University of Paris
- Christopher Lamy, Air Force veteran, Louisiana State University
- Alcides Lugo, Army veteran, Auburn University
- Angela Peacock, Army veteran, Washington University - St. Louis
- Chanel Powell, Army veteran, University at Buffalo
- Lobsang Salaka, Army veteran, Northeastern University
- Amy Sleath, Army veteran, Minnesota State University Moorhead
- Tom Wike, Marine veteran, Ohio State University

Learn more about the [VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship](#).

2. VFW 2019 Priority Goals: This week marked the beginning of the 116th Congress. The VFW looks forward to working with the new and returning members of Congress to improve care and benefits for veterans, service members, and their families. Read the VFW's [2019 Priority Goals](#). [Find your legislators](#).

3. Veterans in 116th Congress: A total of 96 military veterans were sworn in yesterday as members of the 116th Congress. According to an Army Times article, 19 are serving in the Senate and 77 in the House, for an overall veteran percentage of 17.9 percent. Four decades ago the percentage of military veterans in Congress exceeded 70 percent. Of the 96 veterans, only 44 are eligible for VFW membership, with 28 currently being members in good standing. Other demographics:

- 48 served in the military after the year 2000;
- 30 are Democrats and 66 are Republicans;
- 19 are first-time lawmakers; and
- 7 are women

[Read the Army Times article here.](#)

4. 2019 Military Pay Rates Released: On Jan. 1, DOD released the monthly basic pay rates for 2019. The 2.6 percent raise is the largest since the 3.4 percent increase in 2010, and 0.3 percent larger than last year's raise. In terms of direct impacts on service members, junior officers and senior enlisted can expect to see about \$1,300 more a year, junior enlisted can expect to see about \$670 more a year, and senior officers with more than 12 years of service will receive approximately \$2,300 more per year. The increase is based on a yearly federal calculation that is designed to keep military pay rates on par with private sector wages; however, the VFW has long advocated for a more realistic calculation. Download the [2019 pay charts](#).

5. MIA Update: This week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced six new identifications. Returning home with full military honors are:

-- **Army Cpl. John G. Krebs** was a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, and engaged in combat operations against the North Korean People's Army south of Chonui, South Korea, when he was declared missing in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about Krebs.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. James C. Williams** was a member of Medical Company, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, when he was killed in action near Taejon, South Korea. Fellow soldiers returned Williams' remains to the collection point. After his death, the 34th Infantry Regiment's Medical Company was ordered to withdraw, and his remains were left behind. Interment services are pending. [Read about Williams.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Burleigh E. Curtis** was a member of the 377th Fighter Squadron, 362nd Fighter Group. On June 13, 1944, the P-47D that Curtis was piloting crashed during a dive-bomb attack near Briouze, France. Interment services are pending. [Read about Curtis.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. William F. Delaney** was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, when his battalion launched a massive firing demonstration against a large pocket of German defenders near the town of Grosshau, in the Hürtgen Forest in Germany. During the battle, an enemy artillery shell struck Delaney's foxhole, and he died before he could be medically evacuated. Due to ongoing combat operations, his remains were not recovered at that time. Interment services are pending. [Read about Delaney.](#)

-- **Navy Machinist's Mate 1st Class George Hanson** 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 capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Hanson. Interment services are pending. [Read about Hanson.](#)

-- **Navy Steward 2nd Class Felicismo Florese** 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 capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Florese. Interment services are pending. [Read about Florese.](#)

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.