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1. VFW-Supported Bills Clear House: Today, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to pass the VFW-supported [H.R. 840, *Veterans' Access to Child Care Act*](#). Sponsored by Congresswoman Brownley, the bill would expand a successful child-care pilot program, which has helped tens of thousands of veterans complete their VA mental health care appointments. "Access to child care should not be a barrier for veterans who need care to cope with their mental health conditions," said VFW Executive Director Bob Wallace. "The Senate must pass this bill immediately to show they are also serious about improving access to care for veterans and eliminating veteran suicide." On Thursday, the House also passed [H.R. 450, the *Preventing Crimes Against Veterans Act of 2019*](#), which would punish with up to five years imprisonment whoever defrauds veterans of their earned benefits. Stay tuned to the Action Corps Weekly for updates on these important bills.

2. DPAA Annual Awards Ceremony: VFW National Security and Foreign Affairs Director John Towles attended the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's annual awards ceremony yesterday at their headquarters in Arlington, Va. The ceremony, which was simulcast with their Hawaii offices, gave DPAA Director Kelly McKeague the opportunity to thank the men and women of the organization for their dedication and hard work throughout the past 12 months. The VFW entered into an agreement with DPAA last fall to recognize their eight annual awardees with plaques, letters of appreciation from VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence, and a restaurant or Amazon gift card. Assisting Towles was Stan Fernandez, National Council Member from the VFW Department of Hawaii, who was at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam to present the awards to the six Hawaii-based recipients. The eight 2018 awardees are:

- Field Grade Officer of the Year – Air Force Maj. Stanley Y. Wong
- Company Grade Officer of the Year – Air Force Capt. Cassandra L. Hill
- Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year – Army Sgt. 1st Class David J. Marshall
- Noncommissioned Officer of the Year - Navy Hospital Corpsman First Class Dennis J. Anderson
- Junior Service Member of the Year – Army Cpl. Shelby C. Sullenger
- Civilian of the Year Category I - Frank Coutee Jr.
- Civilian of the Year Category II - Roger T. Coe
- Civilian of the Year Category III - Andrew B. Speelhoffer

3. House Appropriations Hearing on Quality of Life in the Military: On Thursday, the House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies held a hearing on quality of life in the military. The hearing focused on accountability and oversight measures each breach of service has been taking to improve the quality of life for service members. The three main areas of focuses are infrastructure – privatized base housing, family-based programs, and childcare. Chairwoman Wasserman Schultz expressed serious concern over conditions at privatized housing throughout the military, citing that families living on Ft. Bragg signed a petition demanding improvements to their on-base homes. Rep. Will Hurd and Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Ronald L. Green voiced frustration over Marine Corps families still displaced after Hurricane Florence. [Watch the hearing](#). If you are affected by military housing or other quality of life issues, [please let us know](#).

4. Senate Appropriations Hearing on Electronic Health Care Record Modernization: On Tuesday, the Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies held a hearing on the implementation of VA's electronic health record modernization (EHRM) efforts. The hearing focused on how the VA plans to stay on track during the estimated 10-year transition to the EHRM. Members of the subcommittee expressed concerns over VA's lack of transparency with Congress over the projected \$16.1 billion it will spend for the EHRM. [Watch the hearing](#), which starts at the 16-minute mark.

5. Tax Refund for Service in Sinai Peninsula: According to an article in Military Times, if you were one of more than 2,000 troops who served in the Sinai Peninsula going back to June 9, 2015, you may be due a tax refund. The tax reform signed into law in December 2017 designated service in the Sinai Peninsula as being eligible for a combat zone tax exemption. The law also applied it retroactively, so those who received imminent danger pay or hostile fire pay while serving in the Sinai qualify for the refund. Imminent danger and/or hostile pay are also eligibility qualifiers for VFW membership. To get refunds for the two years before the law was enacted and implemented, you must file an amended tax return. Taxpayers generally have up to three years to file an amended return, so those service members who served in the Sinai in 2015 — and who filed their 2015 taxes in 2016 — would still be eligible to file an amended return, but it has to be done this year. [Read more here](#).

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

-- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Lynn W. Hadfield** a member of the 642nd Bombardment Squadron, 409th Bombardment Group, 9th Bombardment Division, 9th Air Force. On March 21, 1945, Hadfield was piloting an A-26B when his aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire and went missing during a combat mission from Couvron, France. Hadfield, and his two crewmen, Sgt. Vernon Hamilton and Sgt. John Kalasich, had been participating in the interdiction campaign to obstruct German troop movements in preparation for the Allied crossing of the Rhine River on March 23, 1945. Interment services are pending. [Read about Hadfield](#).

-- **Army Pfc. Clifford M. Mills** was a member of the 319th Glider Field Artillery Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division, which participated in Operation Market Garden, the invasion of the German-occupied Netherlands. On Sept. 18, 1944, Mills was reported missing in action in the vicinity of Wyler and Zylflich, Germany. Interment services are pending. [Read about Mills](#).

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pvt. Ted Hall** 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 Hall. Interment services are pending. [Read about Hall.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Pvt. Waldean Black** 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 Black. Interment services are pending. [Read about Black.](#)

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.