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1. Blue Water Navy Legal Battle Ends: The VFW is saluting a decision by the Justice Department to not contest [Procopio v. Wilkie](#), which now paves the way for the return of veterans disability benefits to some 90,000 so-called Blue Water Navy veterans. “This is a huge victory for tens of thousands of deserving veterans who were arbitrarily stripped of their earned benefits,” said VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence. “Now we need the Senate to quickly pass H.R. 299, the *Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019*, to ensure the Department of Veterans Affairs can never again interpret the intent of law differently.” said Lawrence. “Now we can focus on getting H.R. 299 passed into law to protect VA benefits for Blue Water Navy veterans and expand much needed benefits for veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange in Thailand and the Korean DMZ, as well as continue research on Gulf War illnesses.” If you need help filing a VA claim for a presumptive condition VFW Service Officers stand ready to assist you. [Find your state’s VFW Service Officer.](#) [Contact your senator.](#)

2. VFW Testifies on the Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Program: This week, VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director Pat Murray testified before the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity regarding the Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (Voc Rehab) program. This vital employment program helps veterans with service-connected disabilities retrain so they can stay in the workforce. Voc Rehab is a win-win, as it gives the veteran better financial stability and also improves our nation’s economy. While this program is important, there are upgrades and changes needed. At the hearing, Murray urged Congress to eliminate the 12-year delimiting date. Doing so would enable veterans to use this program at any point in their lives. [Watch the hearing](#) or [read the testimony](#).

3. VA Implements New Health Care Programs: This week, VA began the implementation of two key aspects of the VFW-supported VA MISSION Act. Starting this week, veterans will have the opportunity to visit a [network of urgent care and walk-in clinics](#) throughout the country. [Certain veterans](#) will be given three free urgent care visits per year, but all veterans would pay \$30 per additional visit — regardless of priority group or service-connection. VA has also replaced the Veterans Choice Program with the new [Veterans Community Care Program](#). The

new program includes six eligibility criteria, which provide veterans the option to use community care (private-sector doctors and other federal health care facilities) when VA is unable to provide needed services, if it is in the veteran's best medical interest, if veterans live in a state without a full-service VA medical center, if VA is unable to meet quality or access standards, and others. [Learn more about the new changes](#). If you are facing issues obtaining care through the new programs [contact the VFW](#).

4. NDAA Markup Includes VFW Priorities: This week, the six subcommittees of the House Committee on Armed Services conducted their markup of H.R. 2500, the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020* (NDAA). The legislation includes a number of VFW-supported provisions that improve the quality of life for our service members and military families — including extensive reforms to the Military Housing Privatization Initiative to address recent and egregious problems with the health and safety of private on-base housing across the country. These policies and programs will reengage the chain of command, increase oversight on military installations, and hold housing companies accountable to military families. The VFW is pleased the legislation would also direct DOD to review the service records of World War I minority service members who were appropriately recognized for their valorous service, but denied the highest service medal because of racial bias. Additionally, H.R. 2500 would increase the amount DOD would reimburse military spouses to earn new job certifications and licenses for military spouses who frequently move to different states that may not accept the licenses or certifications earned in the state where the couple previously lived. The bill would also approve the Pentagon's total end strength request, which would increase active-duty troop levels by 6,215 and reserve troop levels by 1,507 over fiscal year 2019. The full committee is expected to consider the bill on June 12, 2019. Stay tuned to the Action Corps Weekly for updates on this important bill.

5. June 6 Marks the 75th Anniversary of the Allied Invasion of Normandy: On June 6, 1944, the largest air, land, and sea military operation ever commenced. Over 156,000 service men accompanied by over 5,000 ships and 11,000 airplanes landed along the 50-mile stretch of beach at Normandy. The United States of America suffered nearly 10,000 casualties and 4,000 confirmed deaths that day. Yet the resolve of those men was so strong that they were able to breach the German's fortress against all odds and turn the tide of World War II. [The VFW and its Auxiliary will always be thankful for the bravery and valor exhibited that day.](#)

6. Combined Forces Command Relocation: On Monday, South Korean Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo and Acting U.S. Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan signed a formal agreement to move the headquarters of Combined Forces Command (CFC) from the Seoul metropolitan area to Camp Humphreys, about 70 km south. Recently, many elements have relocated to Camp Humphreys, including U.S. Forces Korea, United Nations Command and the Eighth U.S. Army. Originally, the CFC headquarters was to transition from Yongsan into the Korean Defense Ministry compound by 2022. However, U.S. Gen. Robert Abrams, who was sworn in as CFC commander in November 2018, called for a reconsideration of this plan due to efficiency and fiscal concerns. [Read more.](#)

7. Take the Student Veterans Life Cycle Survey: In partnership with Student Veterans of America, the VFW would like feedback from past and present student veterans to gauge and improve veteran success on campus and post-graduation employment. [Take the survey.](#)

8. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has announced the identifications of eight American servicemen who had been missing and unaccounted for from Korea and WWII. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Army Pvt. Edward M. Morrison** was a member of 1st Platoon, Company B, 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. His unit was holding a defensive position north of P'yongt'aek, South Korea, when he was killed by small arms fire on July 6, 1950. Morrison was the first casualty of his company during its second engagement in the war. Interment services are pending. [Read about Morrison.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. William S. Smith** was a member of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, when he was reported missing in action after an enemy assault on his unit's position along the Naktong River, near Yongsan, South Korea. Interment services are pending. [Read about Smith.](#)

-- **Army Master Sgt. James G. Cates** was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 3, 1950, following combat actions against enemy forces in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Interment services are pending. [Read about Cates.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Hulett A. Thompson** was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 5307th Combat Unit (Provisional), also referred to as Task Force Galahad, or Merrill's Marauders, in the China-Burma-India region. On June 30, 1944, Thompson's unit fought in the siege of Myitkyina, Burma. He was reportedly killed in action and his remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Thompson.](#)

-- **Navy Gunner's Mate 2nd Class Harold L. Dick** was stationed aboard the USS Colorado, which was moored approximately 3,200 yards from the shore of Tinian Island. Early in the morning, the USS Colorado came under attack by a concealed Japanese shore battery. From the attack, four crewmen were declared missing in action, and 39 personnel were killed, including Dick. Interment services are pending. [Read about Dick.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Tech. Sgt. Charles G. Ruble** was a member of the 99th Troup Carrier Squadron, 441st Troup Carrier Group, serving as an aerial engineer aboard a C-47A aircraft. On Sept. 17, 1944, his aircraft was carrying a crew of five and transporting 10 paratroopers, approaching a drop-zone near Groesbeek, Netherlands. The plane was seen taking direct anti-aircraft fire to the wing. The paratroopers successfully exited the plane; however, only three crewmembers survived. The remaining two, including Ruble, could not be accounted for. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ruble.](#)

-- **Navy Signalman 3rd Class William J. Shanahan** was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmembers, including Shanahan. Interment services are pending. [Read about Shanahan.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Ralph H. Keil** was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmembers, including Keil. Interment services are pending. [Read about Keil.](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, visit: <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.

To view this week's and previous editions, visit: <http://www.vfw.org/actioncorpsweekly>.