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**1. House Passes Legislation to Expand the Veterans Legacy Program:** On Wednesday, the House passed VFW-supported H.R. 2385, which would permit VA to establish a grant program to conduct cemetery research and produce educational materials for the [Veterans Legacy Program](#) (VLP). Under the current program, the VLP awards contracts to universities, colleges, and institutions to develop educational programs to teach students and others about the veterans interred in the National Veterans Cemeteries in their communities. Transitioning to a grant-based program would broaden the reach of the VLP beyond large universities to smaller groups that wish to engage with VA in memorializing veterans. The VFW applauds all the members of the House who showed their support for this important program that promotes civic engagement and fosters respect for service and sacrifice. Now it is time for the Senate to do the same and send it to the president's desk. Learn more about the [Veterans Legacy Program](#).

**2. Veteran Bills Advanced for House Vote:** This week, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs advanced six bipartisan pieces of legislation to the full House for a vote. The six bills covered a wide range of veteran benefits and protections to include improvements for homeless veterans, student veterans, veteran-owned small businesses, and improved reporting transparency within VA. These six bills are just some of the important work the Veterans' Affairs Committee has worked on this session, and they have shown a commitment to work for veterans in a bipartisan manner. Now, the bills will be up for a vote by the full House of Representatives in the coming weeks. [Read the bills](#).

**3. VFW Visits Defense Health Agency:** On Wednesday, VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence and VFW Director, National Security and Foreign Affairs, Robert Jackson met with Lt. General Ronald J. Place, Director, Defense Health Agency. They discussed electronic health record modernization and interoperability and TRICARE. Modernizing the Military Health System electronic health record and establishing seamless medical data sharing between the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the private sector will improve care and treatment for our military service members and veterans.

**4. VA Observes Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October:** October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The VFW and VA encourage women veterans to take advantage of the valuable resources for breast cancer education and early detection. VA has adopted the American Cancer Society's [breast cancer screening guidelines](#), which suggests women get yearly mammograms as early as age 40. Veteran patients can sign into [My HealtheVet](#) and send a secure message to your health care team. [Learn more.](#)

**5. Defense Health Agency Realignment of TRICARE:** Since October 2018, The Defense Health Agency (DHA) has been undergoing a realignment of the TRICARE system and new medical retirement changes. DHA began integrating all military treatment facilities (MTFs) under their command. This integration will also combine TRICARE and Operational Medicine into one single medical command called the Military Healthcare System (MHS). By October 2021, DHA will have direct authority over all MTFs and will give local medical leaders the authority to effectively move funds and people in order to responsibly coordinate patient-centered care. [Learn more.](#)

**6. TRICARE Open Season (Update):** TRICARE Open Season will run from Nov. 11 to Dec. 9. It is important to note that new retirees have only one year to enroll for TRICARE Prime. If they forget to enroll in TRICARE Prime, individuals are no longer going to be automatically enrolled into TRICARE Select and will have to wait for the next Open Season enrollment period. If an individual is already enrolled they can change their TRICARE coverage, if eligible. If you want to stay in your current TRICARE plan, you do not need to do anything. [Learn more.](#)

**7. Holiday Overseas Mail Deadlines Approaching:** Military and U.S. Postal Service officials have issued suggested mailing deadlines for holiday packages and letters to military locations overseas in time for Christmas. To get them there in time for Hanukkah, which starts on Dec. 22 this year, subtract 3 days from the deadlines. According to Military Times, the deadlines for various methods of shipping are the same for most APO/FPO/DPO (diplomatic post office) zip codes, with the exception of some mail going to APO/FPO/DPO Zip Code 093, which covers overseas contingency areas. The Postal Service has also created a "military care kit," which consists of the items most often requested by military families and it is free. [Learn more](#) about mailing deadlines.

**8. MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced two new identifications, and six burial updates for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from WWII and the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Marine Corps Pfc. Quentin W. McCall**, 22, of Union Church, Miss., was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force. McCall landed on the island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed, including McCall on the fourth day of the battle, Nov. 23, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about McCall.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Earl F. Ferguson**, 26, of Minneapolis, Minn., was a pilot assigned to the 329th Bombardment Squadron, 93rd Bombardment Group (Heavy), 8th Air Force.

Ferguson was the co-pilot of a B-24 aircraft on Aug. 1, 1943, when it crashed as a result of enemy anti-aircraft fire during Operation Tidal Wave, the largest bombing mission against the oil fields and refineries at Ploiesti, north of Bucharest, Romania. His remains were not identified following the war. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ferguson.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Hubert P. Hall**, 20, of Floyd County, Ky., whose identification was initially announced in August, will be buried in the spring of 2020 at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, in Honolulu. 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 USS Oklahoma was hit multiple times which caused it to capsize quickly and caused the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Hall. [Read about Hall.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. Billy J. Maxwell**, 19, of Hogansville, Ga., whose identification was initially announced in August, will be buried Nov. 9, in his hometown. Maxwell was a member of Heavy Mortar Company, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 30, 1950, when his unit engaged against enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. His remains could not be recovered following the battle. [Read about Maxwell.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Donald E. Mangan**, 26, of Elkton, S.D., whose identification was initially announced in August, will be buried Oct. 22 in Gig Harbor, Wash. Mangan was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 112th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Sept. 17, 1944, after his unit was attacked by enemy forces near Wettlingen, Germany. His remains could not be recovered after the attack. [Read about Mangan.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Robert L. Bray**, 18, of Chillicothe, Ohio, whose identification was initially announced in June, will be buried Nov. 6 in Bainbridge, Ohio. Bray was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Regiment. He was reported missing in action on July 20, 1950, when he could not be accounted for following his unit fighting in a defensive action against enemy forces near Taejon, South Korea. The Army declared him deceased on Dec. 31, 1953. [Read about Bray.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Ysabel A. Ortiz**, 19, of El Monte, Calif., whose identification was initially announced in August, will be buried Oct. 28 in Riverside, Calif. Ortiz was a member of Battery D, 15th Anti-aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, when enemy forces attacked his unit near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. His remains could not be recovered following the attack. [Read about Ortiz.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. David A. Feriend**, 23, of Fife Lake, Mich., whose identification was initially announced in August, was buried Oct. 13 in Kingsley, Mich. Feriend was a member of Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 6, 1950, in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. [Read about Feriend.](#)

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](mailto:vfwac@vfw.org).

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