



December 6, 2019

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1. Remembering Our Fallen at Pearl Harbor: On the 78th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the VFW solemnly honors the 2,403 men and women who died in the devastating attack Dec. 7, 1941. VFW National Commander William “Doc” Schmitz, along with VFW Auxiliary National President Peggy Haake, will travel to Pearl Harbor Saturday to lay a wreath in remembrance of the 2,008 sailors, 109 Marines, 218 soldiers, and 68 civilians we tragically lost without warning and without a declaration of war. “December 7, 1941, remains one of the most-heartbreaking days in our history as a nation,” said Schmitz. “And while we suffered tragic loss that day, our nation stood in unity and quickly recovered. Today, I ask every American to pay their respects to these patriots, and their loved ones, for making the ultimate sacrifice. You will, and must, never be forgotten.”

2. VFW Leadership Visits White House: Yesterday, VFW National Commander William “Doc” Schmitz and VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence attended the White House Christmas Party and National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. Designed by First Lady Melania Trump, the [White House decorations](#) celebrate the courageous individuals who have shaped our country and kept the American spirit alive. President Donald J. Trump thanked veterans and services members in [his speech](#) before lighting the National Christmas Tree.

3. House Committee Passes the IMPROVE Well-Being for Veterans Act: On Thursday, the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee held a markup hearing to consider H.R. 3495, the *IMPROVE Well-Being for Veterans Act*. The bill passed the committee and can now be voted on by the full House of Representatives. H.R. 3495 creates a three-year pilot program that would offer grants to community providers who offer services that target factors that contribute to suicide such as financial stress, relationship, stress, readjustment and community integration issues, housing insecurity, and others. The goal is to reach the two-thirds of veterans who commit suicide and have not utilized VA prior to their suicides. [Watch the hearing.](#)

4. Citizenship for Children of Military Members and Civil Servants Act Passed: This Tuesday, the House passed H.R. 4803, *Citizenship for Children of Military Members and Civil Servants Act*. This bipartisan legislation was introduced by Representatives Doug Collins (R-Ga.) and Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.) to ensure that children of deployed military and government families benefit from provision of U.S. law that confers automatic U.S. citizenship and are not disadvantaged because their parents are serving our country abroad.

5. Senate Holds Hearing on Military Housing: This Tuesday, the Senate Committee on Armed Services held a hearing on "Government Accountability Office on Privatized Housing Findings to Include Responses from the Military Services on Ongoing Reports of Substandard Housing Conditions and Services." The Secretaries and Joint Chiefs testified on the progress being made to bring back the level of quality living our military families deserve. [Watch the hearing.](#)

6. House Holds Hearing on Military Housing: On Thursday, the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness held a hearing, "Privatized Housing: Are Conditions Improving for Our Military Families?" to discuss improving privatized military housing for our military families. The CEO's from the five largest privatized military housing companies gave their perspectives and plans for bringing family housing back to the level our military families deserve. The subcommittee has been conducting extensive oversight of the privatized military family housing program and expressed concerns over systemic failures with the military and provided graphic and disturbing testimony about lead and mold exposure, rodent infestations, rude and dismissive from military spouses. [Watch the hearing.](#)

7. National Wreaths Across America Day is December 14: To honor and remember veterans during the holiday season, the nonprofit organization, Wreaths Across America, organizes the annual event of laying Christmas wreaths on veteran's graves. The event is held every December, on the second or third Saturday of the month. This year's National Wreaths Across America Day takes place on Dec. 14. Wreaths Across America's annual escort to Arlington National Cemetery kicks off on Saturday, Dec. 7. National President of American Gold Star Mothers, Mona Gunn, will lead the caravan as this year's Grand Marshal. The escort will travel down the east coast, stopping at schools, memorials and other locations to REMEMBER, HONOR and TEACH. It will make stops in Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Washington D.C. The escort's final stop will be Arlington National Cemetery on the morning of Saturday, Dec. 14. [Learn more.](#)

8. Atlanta Area TRICARE Prime Beneficiaries Have a New Option: The Defense Health Agency (DHA) has partnered with Humana Military to offer TRICARE beneficiaries a new TRICARE Prime option through Kaiser Permanente. This new option is open to about 60,000 TRICARE beneficiaries in the counties surrounding Atlanta. One will need to select this new option by the Dec. 9, 2019, deadline for coverage to begin on Jan. 1, 2020. As an incentive to try the new program, TRICARE Prime enrollment fees will be waived for the first year. [Learn more.](#)

9. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced three new identifications, and four 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:

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Leo T. Keninger**, 20, 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 Keninger. Interment services are pending.

[Read about Keninger.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Orval A. Tranbarger**, 20, 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 Tranbarger. Interment services are pending.

[Read about Tranbarger.](#)

-- **Army Master Sgt. Harold F. Drews**, 21, was assigned to King Company, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. For several days, his unit was engaged in intense fighting with the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces near the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea. Drews went missing in action on Dec. 12, 1950. His remains could not be recovered. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Drews.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Riley Burchfield**, 22, of Cleveland, was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division. He was captured by enemy forces near Kunu-ri, North Korea on Nov. 26, 1950. He reportedly died while in custody of the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces at Prisoner of War Camp 5 in February 1951. Burchfield will be buried Jan. 10, 2020, in his hometown. [Read about Burchfield.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Steve Nagy**, 23, of Lorain, Ohio, was a member of the 407th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy,) 92nd Bombardment Group (Heavy,) 40th Combat Bombardment Wing, 1st Air Division, 8th Air Force. On Aug. 24, 1944, Nagy piloted a B-17G Flying Fortress aircraft, carrying nine crewmembers, which was struck by German anti-aircraft fire and crashed during a bombing raid over Merseburg, Germany. Four crewmembers survived and were captured by German forces, while five, including Nagy, were killed. Nagy will be buried in his hometown. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Nagy.](#)

-- **Navy Quartermaster 2nd Class Daryle E. Artley**, 21, of Maywood, Nebraska, 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 Artley. Artley will be buried May 15, 2020, in Vancouver, Washington. [Read about Artley.](#)

-- **Navy Chief Water Tender Frances D. Day**, 37, of Milburn, New Jersey, 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 Day. Day will be buried at the Punchbowl. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Day.](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, visit: <https://votervoicenet.org/VFW/register>.

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.

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