



January 10, 2020

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1. VFW, SVA Announce 2020 Student Veteran Fellowship Class: Ten Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) members and Student Veterans of America (SVA) leaders have been selected to participate in the 2020 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship. The Fellowship is a semester-long academic experience where students submit a policy proposal to address an issue related to student veteran success on campus and beyond, improving veteran’s health care and benefits, transitioning from military to civilian life, and challenges for service members and their families. The fellows participate in the VFW’s Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., where they have the opportunity to be paired with their VFW state delegation and accompany them on in-person meetings with their members of Congress to advocate for their policy proposal. The 10 student veterans of the 2020 class are:

- Tom Baker, Navy veteran, Arizona State University
- Katherine Cassell, Army retiree, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- Carl Chen, Air Force active-duty service member, Trident University International
- Clifton Clevenger, Army veteran, Wayland Baptist University
- Ashley Dent, Air Force veteran, New York Institute of Technology
- Sasha Georgiades, Navy veteran, Hawaii Pacific University
- Blake Hite, Navy veteran, Georgetown University
- Matthew Jenkins, Marine Corps veteran, University of South Florida
- Randy Purham, Army active-duty service member, American Public University
- Jack Ratliff, Army veteran, University of South Florida

“The VFW prides itself on working with our student veterans nationwide to help build tomorrow’s leaders,” said VFW National Commander William “Doc” Schmitz. The VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship Program continues the legacy of collaboration between the organizations.

[Learn more.](#)

2. Senator Moran Named SVAC Chairman: On Tuesday, Senate Republicans officially named Kansas Senator Jerry Moran as the new chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, putting him in line to be a pivotal figure in veteran policy in the months ahead. The move was anticipated for months, since former chairman Sen. Johnny Isakson, (R-Ga.), announced his retirement in late summer. Moran was considered the likely replacement, but no formal action was taken until after Isakson stepped down from his Senate seat at the end of December. "The VFW looks forward to working alongside Sen. Moran as we continue to fight for legislation that matters most to our veterans and their families," said VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz. [Read more.](#)

3. The VFW Bids Rep. Phil Roe, M.D. Well Wishes on His Retirement: Representative Phil Roe, M.D. will be retiring at the conclusion of the 116th Congress. "Congressman Roe has been a staunch supporter of our veterans, service members, military families, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars throughout his career as both a veteran and public servant," said VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz. "Today, we thank Congressman Roe and his wife, Clarinda, for their outstanding service to the state of Tennessee and our great nation. Without him, the MISSION Act, Forever GI Bill and other significant legislation may not have been achieved for our nation's heroes."

4. 'You've been selected for the military draft' Text Messages Are Fake: Don't fall for any text messages saying you've been selected for a military draft, U.S. Army Recruiting Command warned in an urgent news release Tuesday. Fraudulent texts were sent throughout the country this week informing individuals that they have been selected for a military draft, the command said. The phony messages come amid heightened tensions with Iran and after the emergency deployment of 3,500 paratroopers to Kuwait. "If you receive a text message informing you of your selection for the draft, please ignore it," said VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz. [Read more.](#)

5. VFW Attends the 2020 Student Veterans of America National Convention: This past weekend, the VFW attended the Student Veterans of America's National Convention in Los Angeles. VFW National Junior Vice Commander Fritz met with many of the students in attendance and spoke during a keynote address. VFW staff hosted and presented at a number of sessions on topics ranging from advocacy, fellowship, the role of veteran service organizations and empowering policy.

6. VFW Shares Women Veterans' Concerns with House: On Wednesday, VFW NVS Veterans Casework Consultant for Health, Meggan Thomas, participated in the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (HVAC) Women Veterans Task Force Roundtable. The roundtable was comprised of veteran organizations to include the VFW, and members of Congress. It was led by HVAC Subcommittee Chair Rep. Julia Brownley (D-Calif.), who also chairs the Task Force. The Task Force raises visibility on issues affecting women veterans and solicits input and solutions from VSOs. This meeting focused on health care, particularly the availability of and access to reproductive health services through VA. The VFW shared the need for parity in contraceptive benefits with other commercial and government-sponsored health care programs and plans, as well as the need for a more inclusive benefit for in-vitro fertilization (IVF). Currently, VA will cover limited IVF services for men and women, but only if donors

have their own sperm and eggs. With the prevalence of urino-genital injuries from the Global War on Terror, this option is not always available and the VFW believes that VA should consider all the factors that affect a veteran's need for IVF. The VFW also advocates that VA must cover the partners involved in IVF, not just services for the veterans eligible for VA care. The VFW also highlighted the need for coordination of services and ways to provide the best care possible to the growing number of women veterans eligible for VA care.

7. VA Now Processing Blue Water Navy Claims: On Jan. 1, VA began processing claims under the VFW-championed Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019. The act restores VA benefits to thousands of Blue Water Navy Vietnam veterans who had their disability benefits taken away in 2002 after arbitrary regulatory changes. It benefits veterans exposed to Agent Orange while serving along the Korean DMZ with an earlier start date to encompass the timeframe when various defoliants were tested — to Sept. 1, 1967, instead of April 1, 1968 — and expands benefits to children born with spina bifida due to a parent's exposure in Thailand, coverage that already exists for the children of Vietnam and Korean DMZ veterans. [Learn more](#). For assistance in filing claims, [contact a VFW Service Officer](#).

8. House Holds Hearing on Veteran Hunger: On Thursday, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a hearing on the issue of veterans facing food insecurity. Far too many veterans are food insecure and cannot utilize some of the assistance programs offered through different government agencies. At the hearing Chairman Mike Levin (D-Calif.) stated, "We set the highest expectations of our military to serve our country and we need to set equally high expectations of ourselves to serve them. We shouldn't be allowing a single veteran in need to go hungry, ever." The VFW is glad to see Congress is highlighting this important issue and hopes their attention will help bring an end to this veteran issue. If you, or veterans you know are facing this issue and need help combating food insecurity there are programs available to help. Learn more about the [VFW's Unmet Needs Program](#) and [USDA's Food Assistance Programs](#).

9. Twitter Chat – How to Find a Business Mentor: Did you know that small businesses that receive three or more hours of mentoring achieve higher revenues and increased business growth? Join the U.S. Small Business Administration (@SBAgov) for a Twitter chat on Jan. 21 at 3 p.m. EST on how to find a business mentor. Whether you're an established small business owner or just getting started, we'll be sharing tips and resources to help you succeed. Follow along with the hashtag #SBAchat.

10. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one new identification, 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 Gunnery Sgt. Arthur B. Summers, 27**, was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands, in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, while the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Summers was killed on the fourth day of the battle, Nov. 23, 1943.

His remains were reportedly buried in Cemetery 33. Interment services are pending. [Read about Summers.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Lloyd R. Timm, 19**, of Kellogg, Minnesota, was assigned to the battleship 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 sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Timm. From December 1941 to June 1944, Navy personnel recovered the remains of the deceased crew, which were subsequently interred in the Halawa and Nu'uano Cemeteries. Timm will be buried May 25, 2020, in Wabasha, Minnesota. [Read about Timm.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. William J. McGowan, 23**, of Benson, Minnesota, was a pilot, serving with the 391st Fighter Squadron, 366th Fighter Group, 9th U.S. Air Force. On June 6, 1944, he was killed when his P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft crashed while on a mission near the city of Saint-Lô, France. McGowan will be buried June 26, 2020, at the Normandy American Cemetery in France. [Read about McGowan.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Reserve 1st Lt. Justin G. Mills, 25**, of Galveston, Texas, was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small 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 Mills on the first day of battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Mills will be buried April 29, 2020, at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. [Read about Mills.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. John A. Shelemba, 19**, of Hamtramck, Michigan, was a member of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. Shelemba was reported missing in action while defending Taejon, South Korea on July 20, 1950. Shelemba will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Shelemba.](#)

-- **Army 1st Lt. Robert C. Styslinger, 28**, of Pittsburgh, served with Battery B, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported to have been killed in action Nov. 29, 1950, while fighting enemy forces near Hagaru-ri, Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. His remains could not be recovered. Styslinger will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Styslinger.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. Maximiano T. Lacsamana, 37**, of the Philippines, a veteran of the Philippine Scouts during World War II, was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 31st Regimental Combat Team, 7th Infantry Division. During the Korean War, his unit was engaged in intense fighting with the Chinese People's Volunteer Forces near Hagaru-ri, North Korea. He was reported missing in action Dec. 3, 1950. Following the war, his remains could not be recovered. Lacsamana will be buried in the spring of 2020 in the Philippines. The exact date and location have yet to be determined. [Read about Lacsamana.](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, visit: <https://votervoice.net/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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