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1. COVID-19-Related Extensions for Claims Deadlines: On Monday, VA announced, in a policy memorandum, that veterans impacted by COVID-19 are eligible for extensions for deadlines related to claims and appeals. The memorandum states extensions can be requested by a veteran or the veteran's service officer and will be granted for the perfection of claims after an intent to file, appeals and higher-level review, the submission of additional evidence, and attendance at a hearing or a compensation and pension (C&P) examination. "While the VFW appreciates the intent, VA must suspend all claims and appeals deadlines until after this national emergency ends," said VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Matthew Doyle. "The process VA has established does not guarantee an extension will be granted." The VFW continues to urge our members to maintain communication with their service officers. Please keep your service officer informed if you are unable to attend a compensation and pension (C&P) exam, and please contact the C&P examiner to reschedule your appointment. [Find a VFW-accredited Service Officer near you.](#)

2. VA to Rescind Decades-Long Claims Review Policy: On Tuesday, VA announced, in a memorandum, that it will rescind its policy of permitting accredited service officers to review claim decisions within 48-hours prior to formal promulgation of ratings. VA stated that this policy change is due to a lawsuit it faces from an attorney who was denied access to the 48-hour review process. Unlike veteran service officers (VSOs), attorneys are not permitted to review claims decisions within the 48-hours preceding promulgation. VA also stated that 48-hour review policy is no longer necessary due to the efficient system of filing and appealing claims made possible by the Appeals Modernization Act. During the 48-hour review period, VSOs inspect claims for accuracy to ensure that all claims were properly evaluated and are free from error prior to a veteran receiving notification of a ratings decision. The VFW strongly opposes this policy change as this decision will invariably cause harm to veterans who file claims for disability benefits.

3. Beware of COVID-19 Testing Scams Targeting TRICARE Beneficiaries: The VFW wants its members and supporters to be careful of scams that target TRICARE beneficiaries regarding coronavirus testing. If you receive a call from someone offering to send you a COVID-19 testing kit, you could be the target of a scam. COVID-19 testing isn't available for everyone. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), your medical provider is the only one who can determine if you need testing. So be sure to talk to your doctor if you're experiencing symptoms. The people involved in the COVID-19 testing kit scam are looking to steal personal information from you. This could be your Social Security number, credit card, or bank account numbers. "If someone you are unfamiliar with requests your personally identifiable information, immediately hang up and call your medical provider or TRICARE," said VFW Director of Communications Terrence Hayes. "Don't give these perpetrators an opportunity to steal your ID." [Read more.](#)

4. Senators Seek Funding for Veterans Using FMP: Last week, Senate offices sent a letter to Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie requesting that he use funds from the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Emergency Response (CARES) Act* to cover the costs of COVID-19 testing and treatment for veterans eligible for the VA's Foreign Medical Program (FMP) with the assumption that COVID-19 could aggravate all service-connected disabilities. [Read more.](#)

5. VA Caregiver Tip Sheet During Pandemic: VA released a tip sheet on "Caregiver Support Program Information for Caregivers During COVID-19." During this time of social distancing, the tip sheet provides reminders of how to prepare: create a back-up plan, protect yourself, protect others, monitor yourself and the veteran for symptoms, and be aware of the additional caregiver support program resources. Remain connected with family, friends, clergy, and other caregivers through the phone, text message, video chat, or email. Maintain self-care and remember to refuel throughout the day, it can help prevent caregiver burnout. [Learn more.](#)

6. VFW Posts #StillServing During COVID-19 Pandemic: The VFW knows our Posts are #StillServing their communities during this uncertain time. The VFW has highlighted the work [VFW Post 3701](#) in Lakeview, Michigan, has been doing; making and packaging over 450 face masks for their local hospital and they are also going to run a blood drive with the Red Cross. [Let us know how you and your Post are #StillServing.](#)

7. Navigating Child Care Changes During COVID-19: DOD has received many questions regarding childcare for military families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Top issues of concern are access to free assistance when child development centers are closed or open only to mission-essential personnel, as well as concern about spouses of deployed service members who themselves become sick with COVID-19 and are no longer able to care for their children. To address these concerns, the team at Military Community and Family Policy published a new article on Military OneSource. [Read the article.](#)

8. DOD Financial Readiness During COVID-19 Pandemic: The DOD Financial Readiness Program website now has a COVID-19 landing page with financial resources. They are planning to continually update this page with content and additional resource links. To the extent possible, they are linking to the primary source so any updates to individual pages are captured and the page does not become stale. [Learn more.](#)

9. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced two new identifications, and one burial update 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:

-- **Army Pvt. Wayne M. Evans**, 21, was a member of Battery G, 59th Coast Artillery Regiment, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands in December 1942. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan peninsula on April 9, 1942, and of Corregidor Island on May 6, 1942. Evans was captured and died as a prison of war. Interment services are pending. [Read about Evans.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Sgt. Donald D. Stoddard**, 22, was a member of Company B, 1st 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. Stoddard died on the third day of battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Stoddard.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Ralph L. Cale**, 19, of Covington, Virginia, was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces in the vicinity of the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. His remains could not be recovered following the attack and he was not reported as a prisoner of war. Cale will be buried Aug. 14, 2020, at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. [Read about Cale.](#)

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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