



April 24, 2020

In This Issue:

- 1. VFW National Convention in Reno is Canceled**
- 2. VFW-Supported Bill to Protect Student Veterans Sent to Become Law**
- 3. VA Committee Urges VA to Postpone Elimination of 48-Hour Rule**
- 4. Executive in Charge of VHA Expresses Gratitude for VSOs**
- 5. No Copayments for COVID-19 Testing**
- 6. Eligible Alaska Native Veterans Can Receive Acres of Federal Land**
- 7. Mortgage Forbearance During the COVID-19 Pandemic**
- 8. Catastrophic Cap Credit for Some TRICARE Households**
- 9. MIA Update**

1. VFW National Convention in Reno is Canceled: On Monday, the VFW announced that the 121st VFW National Convention scheduled to be held in Reno, Nevada, this July, has been officially canceled. The decision comes as public-health concerns and social-distancing mandates are expected to span into the summer months. This year will mark the first in the organization's storied 121-year history where a national convention will not be held. The VFW Auxiliary has also canceled its convention. "We explored every effort to move forward with the convention in its current form, and the decision was not made lightly," explained VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz. "But, the fact is the health and well-being of our members, partners and supporters remains our priority, and we will not put them at risk."

2. VFW-Supported Bill to Protect Student Veterans Sent to Become Law: This week, the Senate passed H.R. 6322, the [*Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020*](#), which was previously passed by the House. If signed into law, the bill would ensure student veterans who are engaged in work study programs can continue to receive their work payment checks, along with their housing payment allowance. This bill would also make sure student veterans whose schools are closing due to the COVID-19 crisis are not penalized any months of their GI Bill entitlements while this pandemic is still impacting the country. The VFW would like to thank Chairmen Takano and Moran, along with Ranking Members Roe and Tester for making sure that in this uncertain time, veterans are still being taken care of. [Read the release.](#)

3. VA Committee Urges VA to Postpone Elimination of 48-Hour Rule: On Monday, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs (HVAC) sent a bipartisan letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie regarding VA's decision to repeal the 48-hour review policy. On April 24, VA intends to rescind a decades-long policy that allows accredited veteran service officers to review claims for accuracy prior to a veteran being notified of a ratings decision. In the letter, Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA) and Ranking Member David Roe (R-TN) requested information

from Secretary Wilkie regarding any alternatives to the 48-hour review policy VA has considered and whether service officers would be provided with access to draft decisions before they are finalized. The VFW thanks Chairman Takano and Ranking Member Roe for their support in preventing this dangerous change. [Read the letter.](#)

4. Executive in Charge of VHA Expresses Gratitude for VSOs: Dr. Richard Stone, Executive in Charge of the Veterans Health Administration sent out a video earlier this week expressing his gratitude for the Veteran Service Organization (VSOs). Throughout the world, VFW members are [#StillServing](#) our fellow veterans, and communities even during the COVID pandemic by holding blood drives, performing well-being checks, linking national mental health resources to those who may require their aid, and relaying critical updates and resources. [Listen to the message.](#)

5. No Copayments for COVID-19 Testing: Under the H.R. 6201, the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#), TRICARE will waive copays for approved COVID-19 testing that is ordered by a doctor. Beneficiaries are not responsible for copays for tests (and related provider services and supplies) furnished on or after the date of enactment. Claims that were filed with a copay will be reprocessed to remove the copayment or cost share. Beneficiaries who already paid a copay for now-covered tests can file for reimbursement by filing a [factual appeal](#). [Learn more about TRICARE and COVID-19.](#)

6. Eligible Alaska Native Veterans Can Receive Acres of Federal Land: Due to the [John D. Dingle, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act](#), the Alaska Native Veterans Program of 2019 will provide the opportunity for eligible Vietnam-era veterans or their heirs to select 2.5 to 160 acres of Federal land in Alaska. Eligible veterans cannot apply yet, but they can **act now** to ensure they receive applications later this year. [Learn more.](#)

7. Mortgage Forbearance During the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Department of Housing and Urban Development has partnered with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to produce a “What You Need to Know: Mortgage Forbearance” video to educate consumers who may have difficulty making on-time mortgage payments due to the national coronavirus emergency. [Learn more.](#)

8. Catastrophic Cap Credit for Some TRICARE Households: Since Jan. 1, 2018, enrollment fees for [TRICARE Prime](#), [TRICARE Select](#), and the [US Family Health Plan](#) (USFHP) haven’t been applied to the annual TRICARE family [catastrophic cap](#) for certain households. The Defense Health Agency is working to fix this issue. This issue only affects those TRICARE-eligible households who exceeded or came close to exceeding their catastrophic cap in 2018, 2019, and 2020. [Learn more.](#)

9. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced five new identifications for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:
-- **Army Sgt. Lloyd A. Alumbaugh**, 21, was a member of Ambulance Company, 7th Medical Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 28, 1950, when his

unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. [Read about Alumbaugh.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Charles E. Hiltibran**, 19, was a member of Headquarters Company, 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 near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. [Read about Hiltibran.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Louis N. Crosby**, 18, was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 1, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. [Read about Crosby.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Bill F. Hobbs**, 20, was a member of Heavy Mortar Company, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was killed in action on November 30, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. [Read about Hobbs.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Ralph S. Boughman**, 21, 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 near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. [Read about Boughman.](#)

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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