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1. VFW Remains Staunch Advocate of Equality: The Veterans of Foreign Wars stands for equality, inclusivity and diversity. No matter race, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation, it is our duty as an organization to advocate for our employees, members, fellow veterans, service members and military families who may face systematic injustices. We owe this to every man and woman who dedicated their lives to selflessly defending our great nation, and in fact, every American who should reap the equal benefits of their service. As a nation, we should all be outraged and heartbroken over the tragic and senseless loss of human life. America must live up to its ideals and the fundamental truth that all human beings are created equal. The only way this can be accomplished is for our nation to continue its work to strive for the unity of all people with different backgrounds into a single nation of equal justice and equal opportunity. The VFW is proud to stand in this fight with our sisters and brothers.

2. HVAC Hearing to Review VA COVID-19 Response: On Thursday, members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a hearing entitled, "Assessing VA's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: 90 Days Later." Veterans Health Administration representatives Dr. Richard Stone, Ms. Deborah Kramer, and Dr. Larry Mole testified on VA's procedures for COVID-19 testing, telehealth, supply chain for PPEs, and VA's fourth mission. Dr. Mole stated VA's testing capacity is being underutilized due to a current limited supply of cotton swaps and testing media. [Watch the hearing.](#)

3. Memorial Services Have Resumed at VA National Cemeteries: On Tuesday, all but two VA national cemeteries resumed memorial services. Burials and visitations continued during the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the memorial services with military honors had been paused for over two months. These services have resumed with a set of measures in place to ensure the safety of all who attend, including limiting the number of individuals at the ceremonies, requiring face masks, practicing physical distancing, and asking sick individuals to stay home. Families who were unable to have these ceremonies since the start of the pandemic will have a VA representative reach out to them to reschedule. [Learn more.](#)

4. First African American U.S. Military Service Chief Confirmed: On Tuesday, the Senate confirmed General Charles Q. Brown Jr. as the first African American Air Force chief of staff. Gen. Brown was commissioned in 1984 as a distinguished graduate of the ROTC program at Texas Tech University. He has served in a variety of positions at the squadron and wing levels, including an assignment to the U.S. Air Force Weapons School as an F-16 Fighting Falcon instructor. His last assignments were the commander of Pacific Air Forces; Air Component commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, and executive director, Pacific Air Combat Operations Staff, Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. The confirmation makes Gen. Brown the second African American officer to sit on the Joint Chiefs of Staff since Chairman Gen. Colin Powell. Gen. Brown is one of only two African Americans among the 41 four-star general officers in the military. Last week, he [delivered a timely message](#) regarding his experiences as a African American airman. His leadership was praised by Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK) shortly after the vote, “Not only is Gen. Brown accomplished in his military career, but he is an inspiring leader -- brave, authentic, and unifying. I congratulate him on his historic promotion, and look forward to seeing his continued leadership in action.” [Read more.](#)

5. Washington Post to Host Toxic Exposure Event: On Tuesday, June 16 at 12 p.m. ET, the *Washington Post* will host a virtual event entitled, [Veterans Frontline Concerns](#), to discuss the harmful effects of burn pits and other toxic exposure incidents during military service. The event will feature a discussion with Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC), Rep. Raul Ruiz, M.D. (D-CA), and actor Jon Stewart on the legislative efforts to address toxic exposure. [Learn more](#) about the VFW’s proposed framework for providing VA disability benefits and treatment to veterans who were exposed to toxic substances during military service.

6. TRS Health Plan Reinstatement Request Period Extended: The Defense Health Agency has extended the period for TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) beneficiaries who lost coverage because of unpaid premiums to request reinstatement from three to five months. The extension is in recognition of the financial turmoil the COVID-19 pandemic has caused some members of the Reserves. Once qualifying members pay all delinquent and current premiums, they can request reinstatement back to the date their coverage terminated. This policy is in effect until 90 days following the end of the national health emergency. [Learn more.](#)

7. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced three new identifications 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 Cpl. Pete Conley, 19**, was a member of Company K, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 12, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Conley.](#)

-- **Navy Radioman 3rd Class Thomas E. Griffith, 20**, 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 Griffith. Interment services are pending. [Read about Griffith.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. Stanley L. DeWitt, 18**, was a member of Medical Detachment, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 6, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about DeWitt.](#)

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