



June 19, 2020

**In This Issue:**

- 1. Take the VFW 2020 Voter Survey**
- 2. PREVENTS Roadmap Released**
- 3. VFW Participates in SVAC Roundtable on Toxic Exposure**
- 4. Washington Post Hosts Toxic Exposure Event**
- 5. VA to Host Virtual Women Veterans Event June 23**
- 6. TRICARE Dental Program Increasing Annual Maximum**
- 7. MIA Update**

**1. Take the VFW 2020 Voter Survey:** Today there are 2.1 million U.S. service members and 20 million veterans. Including spouses, surviving parents, and voting age children, this powerful voting bloc exceeds 100 million. With another federal election year upon us, the VFW believes it is important to survey our members and supporters to better understand your voting habits. The 10-question survey, which should take about two minutes to complete, will run through June 30, 2020. Your feedback is important to the VFW. [Take the survey.](#)

**2. PREVENTS Roadmap Released:** On Wednesday, VFW Washington Office Executive Director B.J. Lawrence attended the release of the President's Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide (PREVENTS), which is a nationwide plan for ending suicide. The PREVENTS Task Force calls for a number of steps to be taken, including a nationwide public health campaign to change the culture around suicide and mental health, launch a National Research Strategy for effective solutions for the prevention of suicide, and build partnerships among organizations to share best practices. [Learn more.](#)

**3. VFW Participates in SVAC Roundtable on Toxic Exposure:** On Wednesday, VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director Matthew Doyle participated in a roundtable hosted by the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. The purpose of the roundtable was to discuss a possible legislative solution to address toxic exposure during military service. Doyle stated, "The VFW affirms its support for a permanent framework to grant disability benefits to veterans who have developed health conditions as a result of their exposure... This framework would be evidence-based so that science would drive the granting of benefits, and benefits would not be granted without adequate science." The VFW thanks Chairman Jerry Moran (R-KS) and Ranking Member Jon Tester (D-MT) for hosting the roundtable, and for their efforts to expand veterans' disability benefits for toxic exposure. [Learn more.](#)

**4. Washington Post Hosts Toxic Exposure Event:** On Tuesday, the Washington Post hosted another segment in the series [Veterans Frontline Concerns](#) (scroll down for the June 16 segment) on the harmful effects of burn pits and other toxic exposure incidents during military service.

The event featured 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. At the event, Sen. Tillis stated, “We need an independent agency to really understand the nature of the exposures and then they can give us guidance on the population that was actually affected. But this is something that we should be talking about getting done in this Congress or the next Congress.” The VFW thanks Sen. Tillis and Rep. Ruiz for their efforts to expand VA benefits for veterans who have developed health conditions as a result of their exposure to toxic substances. [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.

**5. VA to Host Virtual Women Veterans Event June 23:** Next week, the VFW will join VA Acting Deputy Secretary Pam Powers who will host an event for women veterans on June 23 from 12:30-3:30 p.m. EST. VA Secretary Robert Wilkie will kick off the event to include presenters from all three VA administrations, as well as the Center for Women Veterans, and the Veterans Experience Office. The discussion will focus on how VA responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, address how VA has changed as a result of it, and the post-pandemic environment. [Learn more](#).

**6. TRICARE Dental Program Increasing Annual Maximum:** United Concordia, the TRICARE Dental Program contractor, announced it will be raising every enrollee’s annual maximum an additional \$300. For the contract year that runs from May 1, 2020, to April 30, 2021, the annual maximum will be \$1,800. The change is automatic. Enrollees do not need to take any action for this to apply. [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. Billie Joe Hash, 18**, of Corbin, Kentucky, was a member of Headquarters Battery, 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. Hash will be buried Aug. 29, 2020, in his hometown. [Read about Hash](#).

-- **Navy Radioman 3rd Class Irvin F. Rice, 22**, 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 Rice. Interment services are pending. [Read about Rice](#).

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Wesley E. Graham, 21**, 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 Graham. Interment services are pending. [Read about Graham](#).

[Click here to view this week’s edition.](#)

[Click here for past editions of the VFW Action Corps Weekly.](#)

[Click here to sign up new veterans' advocates.](#)

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](mailto:vfwac@vfw.org).