



July 10, 2020

In This Issue:

- 1. Legislation Introduced to Preserve 48-Hour Claims Review**
- 2. House Holds Hearing on VA Character of Discharge Determinations**
- 3. VA Reinstates In-Person Services at 100 Hospitals**
- 4. Military Sexual Harassment and Assault Survivors Share Experiences**
- 5. COVID-19 Antibody Testing Available with Blood Donations**
- 6. MIA Update**

1. Legislation Introduced to Preserve 48-Hour Claims Review: Reps. Colin Allred (D-TX) and Jim Hagedorn (R-MN) introduced VFW-supported [H.R. 7443](#), the *Veterans Claims Transparency Act*. This important legislation would reinstate VA's former policy of permitting veterans service officers to review claims decisions within the 48-hours preceding promulgation to ensure all claims were properly evaluated and are error-free prior to a veteran receiving notification of a rating decision. The VFW thanks Reps. Allred and Hagedorn for introducing this important legislation, which would rightfully reinstate the 48-hour review policy. [Read more.](#)

2. House Holds Hearing on VA Character of Discharge Determinations: On Wednesday, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held a hearing on VA's character of discharge determination process. In order to receive benefits from VA, the character of a veteran's discharge from military service must be under other than dishonorable conditions. For veterans who receive an other-than-honorable discharge, VA should examine the character of the veteran's discharge to determine benefits eligibility. [Watch the hearing.](#)

3. VA Reinstates In-Person Services at 100+ Hospitals: VA announced more than 100 VA medical facilities have reinstated at least one in-person service within their direct health care delivery system after certain services were temporarily on hold or reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. VA leadership reviews and considers many factors daily, including community infection rates, to determine when it is safe for a facility to expand services. Changes have been made to VA spaces to help people maintain at least six feet of distance as well as requiring everyone who enters a VA facility to wear a cloth face covering. "We will continue to provide a safe environment for both veterans and employees," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. [Read more.](#)

4. Military Sexual Harassment and Assault Survivors Share Experiences: In the wake of the confirmed death of Army Spc. Vanessa Guillén, the #IamVanessaGuillen hashtag on social media has empowered service women and women veterans to share their experiences of military

sexual harassment and assault. Also shared are similar themes of frustration with the chain of command and a deeply-rooted culture. Martina Chesonis, an officer in the Air Force Reserve said, “You know if it’s not you, it’s one of your peers who has experienced it.” Almost 90 lawmakers called for an investigation into Guillén’s disappearance and death by the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General. [Read more](#).

5. COVID-19 Antibody Testing Available with Blood Donations: For a limited time, the American Red Cross will provide free COVID-19 antibody testing for all blood, platelet, and plasma donations. The antibody test is intended to determine whether your immune system has responded to the COVID-19 infection, not to diagnose illness. The Red Cross strongly urges healthy, eligible individuals who are feeling well to give blood to help maintain a sufficient supply for those battling COVID-19, other infections, and trauma victims. Please schedule an appointment by using the Red Cross Blood Donor app, visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](#), or calling 1.800.RED.CROSS (1.800.733.2767).

6. 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 Air Forces 2nd Lt. William H. Melville**, 20, was a pilot assigned to the 36th Fighter Squadron, 8th Fighter Group. On Oct. 28, 1943, he was piloting a P-39Q Airacobra fighter on a combat mission over the island of New Guinea, Australian Territory of Papua (current day Papua New Guinea), when his aircraft and two others disappeared after encountering severe weather. Search and recovery efforts in the days following were unable to find any of the aircraft.

Interment services are pending. [Read about Melville](#).

-- **Army Cpl. Richard L. Henderson, Jr.**, 18, 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. Interment services are pending. [Read about Henderson](#).

-- **Army Cpl. Francis J. Rochon**, 21, was a member of Company C, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Sept. 1, 1950, near Changnyeong, South Korea. The Army officially declared Rochon deceased on Dec. 31, 1953, and declared his remains non-recoverable Jan. 16, 1956. Rochon will be buried July 25, 2020, in Foxboro, Wisconsin. [Read about Rochon](#).

[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.

