



July 17, 2020

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1. VFW to Host #StillServing Celebration: Next week, the VFW will present its first-ever #StillServing Celebration. The celebration will kick off Monday, July 20, 2020, at 10:00 a.m. (CDT). Go to vfw.org/StillServingCelebration, and follow the VFW's Facebook page facebook.com/VFWFans with notifications turned on. While registration is not required, all are encouraged to complete the [RSVP form](#) and indicate if they would like their name posted in the welcome gallery. "When we launched the #StillServing campaign it was to bring attention to the unexpected ways veterans continue to serve their country after they leave active military," said VFW National Commander William "Doc" Schmitz. "The onset of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 multiplied the inspiring stories of veterans' continued dedication to giving of themselves, now to their local communities. It represents the heart of VFW." The VFW encourages all veterans to share stories by going to vfw.org/StillServing. In addition, family or friends are asked to use #StillServing in social media posts to honor a veteran in their lives who believes the spirit of service transcends military life. On Friday, July 24, the virtual event will culminate in the installation of incoming VFW National Commander Hal Roesch, via livestream on the VFW's Facebook page at 10:00 a.m. (CDT).

2. VFW Testifies at House Subcommittee Hearing: On Thursday, VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director Matthew Doyle testified at a hearing hosted by the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs. The bills discussed covered issues regarding burial benefits, life insurance, and reinstatement of the 48-hour rule. At the hearing, Doyle stated, "We cannot stress enough how important 48-hour review is for the timely and accurate delivery of veterans' benefits. It became so ingrained in the disability claims process, both paper-based and digital, that it is difficult to imagine what the future of veterans claims will look like without it. Accordingly, we strongly urge the passage of H.R. 7443, to reinstate 48-hour review." [Watch the hearing.](#) [Read the testimony.](#)

3. Congress Urges VA to Implement GAO Recommendations: On Wednesday, a [bipartisan bicameral letter](#) lead by House Committee on Veteran's Affairs Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA) supported the recommendations by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, [Sexual Harassment: Inconsistent and Incomplete Policies and Information Hinder VA's](#)

[Efforts to Protect Employees](#). Between mid-2014 and mid-2016, 18 – 27% of VA employees were victims of sexual harassment. The GAO report found that VA lacks mandated reporting and oversight of sexual harassment complaints, fails to adhere to Equal Employment Opportunity guidance, and is insufficient in maintaining policies and training VA employees to recognize and address sexual harassment.

4. White House & VA Launch REACH: The White House and VA launched the REACH national public health campaign, which is a call to action to engage the nation in preventing suicide. The goal of REACH, which was established by the [President’s Roadmap to Empower Veterans and End a National Tragedy of Suicide \(PREVENTS\)](#), is to change the conversation about suicide. “The REACH campaign will inspire and educate all Americans — encouraging them to share their own struggles and to reach out to those who are hurting. It will engage our Veterans to help lead the way as we change how we think about, talk about and address suicide,” said PREVENTS Executive Director Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen. [Learn more](#).

5. VA Offers Debt Relief to Veterans Through 2020: VA announced its commitment to extend debt relief through the end of 2020 to veterans adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. VA is suspending all actions on veteran debts under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department. This includes the suspension of collection action or extending repayment terms on pre-existing VA debts, whichever the veteran prefers. For benefit debts, veterans should contact the VA Debt Management Center at 1.800.827.0648. For health care debts, veterans should contact the Health Resource Center at 1.866.400.1238 or <https://www.pay.gov>.

6. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one new identification 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:

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. John E. Gillen**, 20, of Champaign, Illinois, was a member of Company D, 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. Gillen died on the third day of battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Gillen will be buried Aug. 12, 2020, in his hometown. [Read about Gillen](#).

-- **Air Force 1st Lt. Alva R. Krogman**, 25, was a pilot assigned to the 504th Tactical Air Support Group, 7th Air Force, on temporary duty with the 23rd Tactical Air Support Squadron operating out of Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand. On Jan. 17, 1967, he was flying an O1-F Birdog aircraft as part of a flight of two planes conducting a visual reconnaissance mission in Savannakhet Province, Laos. Krogman’s aircraft was hit by enemy fire in the left wing and went down. He was never recovered and was declared killed in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about Krogman](#).

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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.