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1. Hal Roesch II Named VFW's New National Commander: Hal Roesch II, of Hampton, Virginia, was installed as the Veterans of Foreign Wars' 112th national commander today during a change of command ceremony at the VFW National Headquarters. Roesch assumes command of the oldest combat veterans service organization boasting more than 1.5 million members, including its Auxiliary. "I stand before you, humbled, elated and ready to selflessly serve the 1.5 million members and its Auxiliary as we continue the tradition of serving America's veterans, service members and families worldwide," said Roesch. Roesch is a 20-year U.S. Air Force retiree serving from 1982 to 2002. He earned his VFW eligibility during his combat service in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and overseas service as part of Southern Watch. Roesch said the VFW is preparing to build a *20/20 Vision For Veterans* and it begins with re-educating and reintroducing the organization to its communities and local and national leaders. He also reinforced the organization's commitment to inclusivity stating, "Our doors are open to ALL eligible veterans, and today I stand here before you and personally invite all eligible veterans to join our organization." [Read more.](#)

2. Senate Approves Adding Agent Orange Presumptives in Defense Bill: On Wednesday, the Senate approved a VFW-supported amendment to [S. 4049](#), the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021* (NDAA), to add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and parkinsonism to the list of presumptive conditions associated with exposure to Agent Orange. The scientific community maintains that sufficient evidence exists to link these three conditions. The amendment was introduced by Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT) and was approved by a vote of 94 – 6. A vote on the Senate NDAA is expected to occur within the next few days. The VFW thanks Sen. Tester for his efforts to expand veteran's disability benefits, and urges the conference committee to keep this provision in the final version of the NDAA. [Learn more.](#)

3. Multiple Veteran Bills Sent to President: This week, the House and Senate passed multiple bills supporting veterans. VFW-supported bills [H.R. 3535](#), the *G.I. Bill Work Study Improvement Act of 2019*, [H.R. 3504](#), the *Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019*, and [S. 3637](#), to amend the *Servicemembers Civil Relief Act* and provide additional legal protections for service members impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. These three pieces of legislation now head to the White House. The VFW asks the president to swiftly sign these bills into law. Veterans, service members, and their families will greatly benefit from this bipartisan, bicameral work done by Congress.

4. House Defense Bill Contains Mare Island Cemetery Provision: On Tuesday, the House passed [H.R. 6395](#), the *William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021* (NDAA). The House version of the NDAA includes a VFW-supported provision introduced by Rep. Mike Thompson (D-CA) to transfer control of Mare Island Naval Cemetery from the city of Vallejo, California, to VA. Vallejo assumed responsibility for Mare Island in 1996, and has shamefully permitted it to fall into disrepair. The VFW strongly supports the transfer of Mare Island to VA to ensure it is properly maintained in perpetuity. After the Senate passes its version of the NDAA, a conference committee comprised of members from both chambers will reconcile any differences before the final legislation is sent to the president for approval.

5. House Holds Hybrid Hearing: This week, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a pending legislation hearing to consider 20 bills. At this hearing many veterans issues were discussed including proposals for which the VFW has resolutions. Recognition for early Vietnam veterans, transfer of authority of the Mare Island Naval Cemetery, VA dental care, and expanded maternity care for veterans, were just some of the VFW-supported bills discussed. [Read the VFW's statement for the record](#) or [watch the hearing](#).

6. VFW Participates in Senate Roundtable: On Wednesday, VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Tammy Barlet and VFW National Veterans Service Veterans Casework Consultant Meggan Thomas participated in a roundtable discussion hosted by the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee. The purpose was to discuss possible legislative solutions to address veteran equality and barriers to VA benefits and health care for women, minority, American Indian, and Alaska Native veterans. Thomas stated that VA communications must be culturally sensitive and inclusive to the needs of minority veterans. The VFW thanks the committee for hosting the roundtable, and for their efforts to address veteran equality and ways VA can improve both services to minorities. [Read more](#).

7. House Holds Hearing on Sexual Harassment: On Wednesday, members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee and Women Veterans Task Force conducted a hearing on ending sexual harassment in VA. Representatives from VA's human resources department, women's health services, and health administration, along with VA Acting Deputy Secretary Pamela Powers responded to questions regarding the findings of the June 2020 Government Accountability Office report, *Sexual Harassment: Inconsistent and Incomplete Policies and Information Hinder VA's Efforts to Protect Employees*. Powers stated that VA needs to address harassment behavior and plans to add bystander training. Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA) referenced documentation of VA harassment

that dates back 30 years and urged VA to ask for funding if that will assist in rectifying this issue. [Watch the hearing](#) or [read more](#).

8. Overseas Absentee Voter Registration Deadline: Uniformed services members, their families, and overseas citizens can find information about absentee voter registration on the Federal Voting Assistance Program website. The deadline to [request a ballot](#) for the November 2020 General Election is Aug. 1.

9. VA Benefits Webcast: Next Thursday, at 2 p.m. (EDT) Under Secretary for Benefits Paul R. Lawrence, Ph.D., Education Service Executive Director Charmain Bogue, and Medical Disability Exam Program Integration Office Executive Director David McLenachen will participate in a webcast. The discussion will touch on VA's Veterans Benefits Administration's performance in the third quarter of fiscal year 2020, education updates, and Compensation and Pension exams. [Register for the webcast](#).

10. 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:

-- **Army Pfc. Glenn E. Collins**, 21, of Tucson, Arizona, was a member of Heavy Mortar 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. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Collins will be buried in his hometown at a date yet to be decided by the family. [Read about Collins](#).

-- **Marine Corps Pfc. John P. Langan**, 18, was a member of Company C, 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. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, while the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Langan died on the third day of battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Langan](#).

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