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In This Issue:

1. Senate Passes Defense Bill
2. House Holds Markup on VFW-Supported Legislation
3. House Holds Hearing on Veterans Homes Handling of COVID-19
4. ABLE Accounts Allow Tax Benefit for Disabled Veterans
5. MIA Update

1. Senate Passes Defense Bill: The Senate passed [S. 4049](#), the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021* (NDAA). This legislation includes a VFW-supported provision to add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and parkinsonism to the list of presumptive conditions associated with exposure to Agent Orange. The scientific community concurs that sufficient evidence exists to link these three conditions. The VFW urges the House and Senate to keep this provision in the final version of the NDAA.

2. House Holds Markup on VFW-Supported Legislation: On Thursday, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a markup hearing on 12 pieces of legislation. The VFW-supported bills considered at the hearing include [H.R. 5487](#), the *Veterans Cemetery Grants Improvement Act*, [H.R. 5639](#), the *Chuck Osier Burial Benefits Act*, and [H.R. 7795](#), *To amend title 38, United States Code, to improve the ability of veterans to access and submit disability benefit questionnaire forms of the Department of Veterans Affairs*. The committee voted to approve all 12 bills which will be considered by the entire House. [Watch the hearing](#).

3. House Holds Hearing on Veterans Homes Handling of COVID-19: On Wednesday, members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee and Women Veterans Task Force conducted a hearing on the oversight of state veterans homes during the COVID-19 pandemic. VA carries out annual inspections, offers guidance, and makes federal payments to 148 state veterans homes. These are nursing homes, domiciliary care, or adult day care facilities owned and operated by state governments. About two-thirds of the state veterans homes are also inspected by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Representatives from Holyoke Soldiers' Home Coalition, National Association of State Veterans Homes, and the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) discussed the three state veterans homes hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. Veterans Health Administration Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Clinical Services Dr. Teresa Boyd explained the timeline to address the recommendations in the July 2020 GAO report, [VA Needs to Continue to Strengthen Its Oversight of Quality of State Veterans Homes](#). [Watch the hearing](#).

4. ABLÉ Accounts Allow Tax Benefit for Disabled Veterans: As the result of the *Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act of 2014*, states are allowed to create a tax-advantaged savings program for eligible people with disabilities. 529A ABLE accounts can help designated beneficiaries pay for qualified disability expenses with the distributions being tax-free. In honoring the more than 4.7 million veterans with service-connected disabilities, the Internal Revenue Service encourages veterans to check the tax benefits of [ABLE accounts](#).

5. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced no new identifications or burial updates for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for.

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