September 27, 2021

VFW Testifies Before House: VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director Tammy Barlet testified before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs regarding innovation research and expanded public health efforts for veteran suicide prevention. Barlet spoke about multiple VFW programs and outreach opportunities to engage our membership and communities in suicide prevention awareness including Give an Hour's Campaign to Change Direction, Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations (ATLAS), Green Alert system, #StillServing campaign, health surveys, VFW Unmet Needs, and donations from VFW Posts for suicide prevention innovation. "Veteran suicide prevention awareness is not just a VA, congressional, or veteran organization issue, it is an everyone issue," Barlet said. Watch the hearing or read the testimony.

House Holds Hearing on Pending Legislation: This week the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a hearing on proposed legislation to improve many veteran benefits. Two of the bills discussed originated from VFW/SVA Fellowship proposals including improvements to the VA Work-Study program and stipends for child care. Non-traditional students are the majority of student veterans, and they have different needs from traditional students such as employment and family obligations. Improving success in education for student veterans is one of the VFW's long-standing resolutions and we are glad to see support from Congress to help make these improvements. Read VFW testimony.

New VA Directive Provides Benefits to LGBT+ Veterans: On the 10th anniversary of the repeal of the policy known as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," VA announced a new directive to provide full benefits to veterans unfairly discharged under this policy. It is estimated that more than 14,000 service members were given other than honorable discharges, preventing them from applying for VA benefits like VR&E, home loan guaranty, compensation & pension, health care, homeless program and/or burial benefits. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Takano responded to this announcement by saying, "With today's announcement, VA is sending a clear message that LGBTQ+ veterans' service matters and that VA acknowledges the long lasting effects that the draconian Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy had." Read more.

House Passes Automatic COLA Increase: The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs passed VFW-supported S.189, the *Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2021*. This bill would ensure that whenever there is a cost-of-living increase in benefits for Social Security recipients, VA would increase by the same percentage the amounts payable for veterans' disability compensation, additional compensation for dependents, clothing allowance for certain disabled veterans, and dependency and indemnity compensation for surviving spouses and children. This legislation, which was passed by the Senate in July, now heads to the president for signature.

MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced four burial updates and two new identifications for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from World War II and Korea. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:
-- **Army 1st Lt. James E. Wright, 25,** of Parkton, North Carolina, was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 11th Infantry Regiment, 5th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Sept. 11, 1944, after a fighting withdrawal at the Moselle River near Dornot, France. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Wright will be buried on Oct. 12, 2021, in Lumber Bridge, North Carolina. Read about Wright.

-- **Army Pvt. Donald A. Fabrize, 17,** of Chayuga, New York, was assigned to Company B, 2nd Battalion, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He was reported killed in action on July 16, 1950, after a fighting withdrawal along the Kum River in South Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Fabrize will be buried in May 2022 at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. Read about Fabrize.

-- **Army 1st Lt. Anthony R. Mazzulla, 26,** of Bronx, New York, was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, after a fighting withdrawal near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Mazzulla will be buried in Cranston, Rhode Island. The date has yet to be determined. Read about Mazzulla.

-- **Army Sgt. Stanley L. DeWitt,** of Royal City, Indiana, was assigned to Medical Detachment, 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. DeWitt will be buried in his hometown. The date has yet to be determined. Read about DeWitt.

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Buford H. Dyer, 19,** 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 Dyer. Interment services are pending. Read about Dyer.

-- **Navy Fireman 2nd Class Benjiman C. Terhune, 19,** of Watervliet, Michigan, 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 Terhune. Interment services are pending. Read about Terhune.

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