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**In This Issue:**

- 1. VFW Applauds House Passage of VA Mission Act**
- 2. Armed Forces Day 2018**
- 3. Wilkie Nominated to be New VA Secretary**
- 4. VFW Participates in Express Scripts Quarterly Update**
- 5. Hearing on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program**
- 6. VA Signs Electronic Health Record Modernization Contract**
- 7. VFW-supported Legislation to Improve Burn Pit Registry**
- 8. Memorial Day Weekend Activities in Washington**
- 9. MIA Update**

**1. VFW Applauds House Passage of VA Mission Act:** On Thursday, the House passed the *VA MISSION ACT of 2018* in a 347-70 vote. The VFW thanks the members of Congress who put veterans first and voted in favor of this important bill, which is the result of bipartisan and bicameral work by members of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs to improve VA health care, fix ongoing issues with the current Choice Program, consolidate community care programs, expand caregiver benefits to pre-9/11 veterans and improve VA's infrastructure to better serve veterans. The bill must be passed by the Senate before funding for the current Choice Program runs out on May 31, 2018. "This bill honors the nation's commitment to our veterans to provide them with the care they have earned," said Keith Harman, national commander of the 1.7 million-member VFW and its Auxiliary. "It will help improve services throughout the VA health system while utilizing private sector resources when needed, striking the right balance to make sure we provide veterans with the best care possible." [See how your representative voted.](#) [Tell your senators to pass this important legislation.](#)

**2. Armed Forces Day 2018:** Tomorrow is Armed Forces Day, which was created in 1949 to honor those who wear the uniform of our nation. It is an opportunity to express our gratitude to selfless patriots who raise their right hands when most don't. In a Military Times editorial, VFW National Commander Keith Harman calls Armed Forces Day "a time for all Americans to reflect on the freedoms we have today, and to think about the brave service members who for centuries have provided our country with the very security which makes those freedoms possible." [Read more.](#)

**3. Wilkie Nominated to be New VA Secretary:** The president today announced his intention to nominate Robert Wilkie to become the new Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The son of an Army artillery officer, Wilkie has served in both the legislative and executive branches of government, and is a former Naval Reserve intelligence officer. He is currently an Air Force Reserve officer, as well as the under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness. He has been serving as the Acting VA Secretary since March 28. The VFW wishes him well through the confirmation process, and looks forward to working with him for the betterment of our nation's wounded, ill and injured veterans and their families. [Read his VA bio.](#)

**4. VFW Participates in Express Scripts Quarterly Update:** This week, VFW National Security and Foreign Affairs Director John Towles attended the quarterly Express Scripts MSO/VSO meeting in St. Louis. The meeting provided an in-depth look at one of three state of the art Express Scripts mail order pharmacy distribution centers, which fills more than 70 percent of all TRICARE mail order prescriptions. Attendees were also given a preview of some of the technologies Express Scripts is developing, such as an automated kiosk that will be able to fill routine prescriptions without the need for an in-person pharmacist, smartphone applications that track medication usage such as insulin and asthma medication, and an electronic health records interface that gives health care providers a more comprehensive view of the medications that they are prescribing to patients. Towles met with leadership from the Express Scripts government relations team to discuss pharmacy fee increases and future policy initiatives that will better serve TRICARE beneficiaries. [Find out more](#) about how Express Scripts serves the military community.

**5. Hearing on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program:** The House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a hearing this week to review the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program. Subcommittee Chairman Jodey Arrington has made military-to-civilian transition one of his main priorities for this year and recognizes the value of the VR&E program. Chairman Arrington stated, "The VR&E program should be the crown jewel of benefits provided to veterans. This program is a vital first step for disabled veterans to become financially independent which is a win-win." VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Patrick Murray submitted testimony urging Congress to properly fund the VR&E program to ensure VR&E counselors no longer have to case manage more than 125 veterans each. [Read the testimony](#) or [watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 1:35 mark.

**6. VA Signs Electronic Health Record Modernization Contract:** Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert Wilkie signed a \$10 billion contract on Thursday that will lead to veterans receiving better care from VA. With the goal of having a single record that can follow a person from their time in the military to being a veteran and patient at VA, the contract is one of the largest of its kind managed by the government. The 10-year contract would enable veterans to receive seamless care through the military, VA and community providers without the worry of transferring records to different locations or losing information. [Read VA's press release.](#)

**7. VFW-supported Legislation to Improve Burn Pit Registry:** Representatives Tulsi Gabbard and Brian Mast jointly introduced bipartisan legislation that would strengthen the Airborne

Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. H.R. 5671, the *Burn Pits Accountability Act*, would require the military to expand post-deployment physicals to include information on burn pits to which service members may have been exposed and would auto-enroll service members in the registry. This would be an important first step to increase data that could later be used by service members when submitting a VA claim for disability compensation and health care. Representative Gabbard is a member of VFW Post 2875 in Honolulu, and Representative Mast is a member of VFW Post 9610 in Lake Park, Fla. [Read the bill text.](#)

**8. Memorial Day Weekend Activities in Washington:** Visitors to our nation's capital have a host of Memorial Day weekend events and activities to consider attending, May 25-28. Up first is a VFW-supported and USAA-sponsored Poppy Wall display to be set up by the Korean War Veterans Memorial, May 25-27. The VFW will also have a benefits information tent set up, May 26-28, just east of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Saturday at 8 p.m. will be the dress rehearsal for Sunday's National Memorial Day Concert on the west lawn of the Capitol. Many consider this the time to go because of smaller crowds and closer lawn seating. [Rolling Thunder XXXI](#) begins at noon on Sunday and will travel from the Pentagon past the National Mall to West Potomac Park. The [National Memorial Day Concert](#) begins Sunday evening at 8 p.m. and will air on PBS stations nationwide. National Memorial Day ceremonies on Monday begin at the [National War II Memorial](#) at 9 a.m., at [Arlington National Cemetery](#) at 11 a.m., the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial](#) at 1 p.m., and the Korean War Veterans Memorial at 5 p.m. Also on Monday is the [National Memorial Day Parade](#), which begins at 2 p.m. along Constitution Avenue.

**9. MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has announced identification and burial updates for eight American service members who had been missing in action from WWII. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Clarence E. Allen**, 23, of Venice, Calif., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 23 in Arlington National Cemetery, near Washington, D.C. Allen was a member of the 395th Fighter Squadron, 368th Fighter Group, and was the pilot of a P-47 aircraft as the lead element in a dive-bombing mission near Aachen, Germany in mid-October 1944. The squadron engaged enemy aircraft in dogfights in the vicinity of Dusseldorf, but following the battle all aircraft except Allen's returned to the base. The squadron mission report indicated that a P-47 was seen crashing in the vicinity of the battle. [Read about Allen.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Sgt. Elden W. Grimm**, 26, of Menasha, Wis., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 26 in Neenah, Wis. Grimm was assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 18th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force. On Nov. 20, 1943, Grimm's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll against stiff Japanese resistance. Over several days of fighting, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed in the intense fighting. Grimm was killed on Nov. 25, 1943. [Read about Grimm.](#)

-- **Marine Corps 2nd Lt. Harvel L. Moore**, 25, of Chatham, La., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 26 in his hometown. Moore was assigned to Company E, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force. On Nov. 20, 1943, Moore's unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll against stiff Japanese resistance. Over several days of fighting, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed in the intense fighting. Moore was killed Nov. 22, 1943. [Read about Moore.](#)

-- **Navy Gunner's Mate 2nd Class William F. Hellstern**, 20, of Peoria, Ill., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 18 in Wheat Ridge, Colo. Hellstern

was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. [Read about Hellstern.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Willard H. Aldridge**, 20, of Sitka, Kan., whose identification was previously announced, will be buried May 26 in Ashland, Kan. Aldridge was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. [Read about Aldridge.](#)

-- **Navy Reserve Ensign Harold P. DeMoss** was a member of Fighting Squadron 100 (VF-100), piloting an F6F-3 Hellcat from Naval Air Station Barbers Point, Hawaii. On June 23, 1945, DeMoss was accompanied by two other squadron aircraft for a night division tactics training flight. Following the completion of their flight plan, the pilots circled the island. DeMoss climbed above the clouds and attempted to descend through them. His aircraft was not seen reemerging from the clouds and DeMoss was declared missing shortly thereafter. Interment services are pending. [Read about DeMoss.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. Melvin C. Anderson** was a member of Company C, 803rd Tank Destroyer Battalion, participating in intense fighting in the Hürtgen Forest. On Nov. 25, 1944, his company was deployed as direct-fire support of American infantrymen attacking the town of Grosshau. The M10 tank destroyer Anderson was commanding was knocked out in the fighting. He was killed during the battle, though his status was initially listed as missing in action. On Dec. 21, 1944, his status was amended to killed in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about Anderson.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class William V. Campbell** was stationed aboard the USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The battleship sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. Interment services are pending. [Read about Campbell.](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, click here: <http://capwiz.com/vfw/mlm/signup.htm>.

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](mailto:vfwac@vfw.org).