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1. Blue Water Navy Veterans Closer to Receiving Benefits: With a unanimous 382-0 vote in the House on Monday, H.R. 299, the *Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017*, is closer than ever before to becoming law and finally providing Blue Water Navy veterans the benefits they have been denied for too long by VA's arbitrary and capricious regulations. The bill would also expand benefits to veterans exposed to Agent Orange while serving along the Korean DMZ and children born with spina bifida due to a parent's exposure during service in Thailand. It will also require VA to report on research being conducted on Gulf War Illness. The VFW calls on the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs to swiftly consider and pass this important legislation. [Read the bill text.](#)

2. Senate Holds Hearing on Wilkie Nomination: On Wednesday, DOD Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Robert Wilkie testified before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs as part of his confirmation process to be the next secretary of Veterans Affairs. Wilkie discussed his military background and how he plans to work for veterans by walking the post and improving customer service at VA. Committee members asked Wilkie about several VFW priorities, such as expanding benefits to Blue Water Navy veterans; improving access to care by implementing the VFW-supported VA MISSION Act which includes ensuring veterans of all eras are eligible for caregiver benefits; and his plans to address staffing shortages. Wilkie was also given the opportunity to clarify reports about his past statements regarding the confederate flag and other issues. [Watch the hearing](#), which starts at the 12:15 mark.

3. Financial Readiness: In anticipation of July's "Month of the Military Consumer," the DOD Office of Financial Readiness has released three informational videos explaining how to better plan for retirement. Each video is approximately four minutes long, and provides an overview of the new blended retirement system, the Thrift Savings Plan and pointers on how to become more financially literate. Additionally, service members and their families are highly encouraged to

meet with an accredited personal financial manager or financial counselor for free during the month of July at their local installation's Military and Family Support Center, or contact Military OneSource to schedule an appointment. [Learn more](#) about taking charge of your finances or [view the videos](#).

4. Kentuckian Receives Medal of Honor: On Tuesday, President Trump presented the Medal of Honor to the widow of Army 1st Lt. Garlin Murl Conner, a Kentucky farmer and World War II veteran, who on the morning of Jan. 24, 1945, ran alone toward an attacking battalion of German soldiers and Panzer tanks to direct American artillery fire. Conner, who died in 1998, enlisted in the Army in 1941 at the age of 21 and would go on to serve in 10 campaigns over 28 months on the front lines, to include Anzio, Italy, where he earned a battlefield commission. The Army credits him with four Silver Stars, a Bronze Star and three Purple Hearts. Few in his family or hometown knew about his wartime achievements because he never talked about it, and the campaign to get him the Medal of Honor didn't begin until a 1996 meeting with a former Army Green Beret from Wisconsin, Richard Chilton, who was conducting research on an uncle who died after the Anzio landing. Chilton is a life member of VFW Post 11279 in Twin Lakes. [Read more](#).

5. Employment Hearing: On Tuesday, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity held a hearing on veteran hiring and retention. The latest veteran unemployment number is 3.4%, which is lower than it has been in past years. However, unemployment numbers are sometimes cyclical and can be impacted by various factors that cause them to spike quickly. Major corporations, including Walmart, Dell, Starbucks and Prudential, along with Hiring Our Heroes, testified on how they attract and retain veteran hires and how those employees have strengthened their individual companies. The VFW is glad to see major industry leaders embracing veterans and their families in their hiring practices. [Watch the hearing](#).

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

-- **Army Sgt. James K. Park** was a member of Company I, 26th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division. On Nov. 23, 1944, Park was declared missing in action after being wounded while his unit was engaged in fierce fighting within the Hürtgen Forest in Germany. Soldiers from Park's company attempted to search for him, but were prevented from doing so due to sustained fighting in the area. On Nov. 24, 1945, his status was amended to deceased. Interment services are pending. [Read about Park](#).

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Walter F. Schleiter** 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 Schleiter](#).

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Daniel L. Guisinger** 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 Guisinger.](#)

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 yfwac@vfw.org.