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**In This Issue:**

**1. VFW on McCain’s New Fight**

**2. VFW National Convention Rolls into New Orleans**

**3. VFW Testifies in Support of New GI Bill Additions**

**4. House Democratic Round Table**

**5. DHA Working Group**

**6. Veterans Legislation Roundup**

**7. VFW-SVA Student Veteran Legislative Fellowship Opens Application Process**

**8. VA Renews Rural Veteran Transportation Program**

**9. MIA Update**

**1. VFW on McCain’s New Fight:** The VFW extends our support and prayers for the Senator, a member of VFW Post 7401 in Chandler, Ariz. [Read the VFW’s full statement here](http://capwiz.com/vfw/utr/1/GHCPBABUZNU/KMNPBABUZTI/11527672256).

**2. VFW National Convention Rolls into New Orleans:** After a 26-year absence, up to10,000 members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States and its Auxiliary are set to roll into New Orleans this weekend to elect new leadership and to approve resolutions that will guide the national organization’s advocacy efforts on Capitol Hill and its veteran and military support programs across the country. The 118th VFW National Convention begins Saturday at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center. A free two-day veterans walk-in claims clinic and health fair will be accessible to all veterans, service members and their families. Additionally, National Legislative Service will host a workshop on Sunday which will include a panel discussion with Congressional staff. [Read more here](http://capwiz.com/vfw/utr/1/GHCPBABUZNU/MHKCBABUZTJ/11527672256).

**3. VFW Testifies in Support of New GI Bill Additions**: On Monday VFW Associate Director Pat Murray testified before the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee on the largest addition to the GI Bill in almost 10 years. The changes will improve the benefit for hundreds of thousands of veterans now and in the future. “This bi-partisan effort is exactly how things in Washington should get done,” said Pat Murray. “We commend the Committee for continuing to show leadership and commitment toward veterans’ issues.” The main issues the VFW supports in this new legislation include giving full GI Bill eligibility to Purple Heart recipients, allowing access to the Yellow Ribbon Program for survivors and dependents of fallen service members, restoring benefits to Reservists activated without them, and restoration of lost GI Bill eligibility for students affected by school closures. [Watch the hearing or read the testimony](http://capwiz.com/vfw/utr/1/GHCPBABUZNU/CKHOBABUZTK/11527672256).

**4. House Democratic Round Table**: On Tuesday the VFW took part in a round table discussion with Democratic House leadership on VA’s Choice Program and GI Bill additions. Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and Rep. Tim Walz hosted the discussion that was attended by numerous other interest groups that all held a stake in the future of the two programs. The VFW strongly supports the additions to the GI Bill as it would enhance the great program for hundreds of thousands of veterans. We also support the need for an immediate fix for the funding needed for VA’s Choice program. It is currently set to run out of funding much sooner than originally intended and Congress needs to step up and correct the funding issue. The VFW expects Congress to make sure these great programs are properly funded to ensure our commitment to veterans is fulfilled far into the future.

**5. DHA Working Group:** On Wednesday, the VFW participated in the monthly Defense Health Agency (DHA) MSO/VSO Working Group meeting led by DHA Deputy Director, Rear Adm. Colin Chinn. The meeting included an update on the rollout of DOD’s new electronic health record, MHS Genesis, which is expected to be fully implemented by 2022; [a new transparency website](http://capwiz.com/vfw/utr/1/GHCPBABUZNU/LVNYBABUZTL/11527672256), which allows users to compare military treatment facilities in their area; development of a demonstration project which would allow beneficiaries, specifically children, with a life-threatening illness to obtain hospice and curative care simultaneously; an update on the implementation of the FY 17 National Defense Authorization Act reforms; and changes to TRICARE’s pharmacy auto-refill policy, which will require beneficiaries to opt-in to the auto-refill program annually for each medication starting Sept. 1, 2017. [Read more about the pharmacy policy change](http://capwiz.com/vfw/utr/1/GHCPBABUZNU/JUQOBABUZTM/11527672256).

**6. Veterans Legislation Roundup:** the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Veterans’ Affairs met on July 19 to pass 11 pieces of legislation out of the committee, including the *Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017*, otherwise known as the “*Forever G.I. Bill.*” Also approved during the session was H.R. 95, the *Veterans’ Access to Child Care Act*, making the VA’s pilot program for child care a permanent program at VA for veterans who are receiving regular mental health services and other intensive health care services from VA; H.R. 918, the *Veteran Urgent Access to Mental Health Care Act*, which requires the VA to provide an initial mental health assessment, as well as follow on care, to former service members who received an OTH discharge, but only if they are combat veterans or victims of military sexual trauma and have applied for a character of service determination; and H.R.1690, the *Department of Veterans Affairs Bonus Transparency Act*, which would require the VA to submit an annual report to the pertinent congressional committees regarding performance awards provided to regional office directors, medical center directors, service network directors, and senior executive staff. The VA would also be required to provide the amount of each bonus awarded, the job title of each recipient, and the location of employment. These bill are expected to be considered for a full vote by the U.S. House as early as next week.

**7. VFW-SVA Student Veteran Legislative Fellowship Opens Application Process:** On Wednesday, the application process for the 2018 class of legislative fellows opened for the fourth year. The program, for VFW members who attend school on a campus with an approved SVA chapter, selects 10 student veteransfor a semester-long program. Focusing on real policy issues faced by veterans, the military and their families, the capstone of the program is participation in the 2018 VFW’s National Legislative Conference. [Find out more information on the program and apply here](http://capwiz.com/vfw/utr/1/GHCPBABUZNU/GZTEBABUZTN/11527672256).

**8. VA Renews Rural Veteran Transportation Program:** The grant program supporting rural transportation options for veterans going to medical appointments has been reapproved. Currently, 11 states have a total of 104 counties where the population is seven people per square mile or less and the VFW is involved in this program for four of the states affected. Veterans who live in approved counties can contact the veterans’ service organization or state agency involved to receive transportation to VA medical facilities and VA authorized facilities. [See if you live in one of the participating counties](http://capwiz.com/vfw/utr/1/GHCPBABUZNU/FMDIBABUZTO/11527672256).

**9. MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of the remains of five Americans who had been missing in action from WWII, Korea and Vietnam. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Air Force Capt. Robert E. Holton**, 27, of Butte, Mont., will be buried July 22 in his hometown. Holton was an F-4D pilot assigned to the 497th Tactical Fighter Squadron. On Jan. 29, 1969, Holton flew an armed reconnaissance mission over southern Laos. The flight lead cleared Holton to engage a target, and ordnance was seen impacting the ground. Aircrews reported seeing a large fireball on the ground in the vicinity of the target immediately thereafter. No radio transmissions were received, and no parachutes were seen. Efforts to make contact with the crew continued until the remaining planes were forced to leave the area due to low fuel. Holton was subsequently declared missing in action. [Read about Holton](http://capwiz.com/vfw/utr/1/GHCPBABUZNU/ADSCBABUZTP/11527672256).

**-- Army Pfc. Charles C. Follese**, 20, of Minn., will be buried July 25 in his hometown. Follese was a member of Company K, 3rd Battalion, 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment. On Nov. 29, 1950, Follese was part of a patrol sent to recover casualties near Hajoyang-ni, North Korea, when his patrol was ambushed. Follese could not be accounted for after the ambush and was declared killed in action on Nov. 30, 1950. [Read about Follese](http://capwiz.com/vfw/utr/1/GHCPBABUZNU/MMIDBABUZTQ/11527672256).

**-- Marine Reserve Cpl. Raymond C. Snapp** was assigned to Company F, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division. Snapp’s unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll on Nov. 20, 1943, against stiff Japanese resistance. Snapp was killed on the first day of the battle. Interment services are pending. [Read about Snapp](http://capwiz.com/vfw/utr/1/GHCPBABUZNU/OTHXBABUZTR/11527672256).

**-- Marine Cpl. Anthony G. Guerriero** was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, 2nd Marine Division. Guerriero’s unit landed on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll on Nov. 20, 1943, against stiff Japanese resistance. Guerriero was killed Nov. 21, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Guerriero](http://capwiz.com/vfw/utr/1/GHCPBABUZNU/EWFCBABUZTS/11527672256). [http://www.dpaa.mil/News-Stories/Recent-News-Stories/Article/1247465/marine-killed-during-world-war-ii-accounted-for-guerriero/](http://capwiz.com/vfw/utr/1/GHCPBABUZNU/FDPHBABUZTT/11527672256)

**-- Air Force Maj. James B. White** was assigned to the 357thTactical Fighter Squadron. On Nov. 24, 1969, contact with White’s F-105D was lost after a single pass attacking enemy troops in Laos. On November 28, wreckage thought to be from White’s aircraft was spotted by an Air America helicopter. A Laotian ground team searched the area and found only small pieces of wreckage. White was subsequently declared missing in action. Interment services are pending. [Read about White](http://capwiz.com/vfw/utr/1/GHCPBABUZNU/MZIJBABUZTU/11527672256).