



**Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary
Department of Wisconsin
Legislative – March Bulletin**

Our nation has a long-standing obligation to provide for the needs of those who have sacrificed and are still sacrificing to protect the precious freedoms and liberties we all enjoy. We are in the home stretch of this Program Year with only five months to go. Stay focused! Our voices matter and we can make a difference. The best is yet to come in 2021. In this COVID world, we still managed to get things done recently in 2020-21:

MAJOR LEGISLATIVE VICTORIES IN 2021: National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2021 (H.R. 6395): Congress passed the override of President Trump's veto of the NDAA on the 11th hour on Dec. 31, 2020. It included the addition of the three presumptive diseases (bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism) due to exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (H.R. 7105): On Jan. 5, 2021, President Trump signed into law this comprehensive veterans' legislation. It is the culmination of more than two years of bipartisan work, with input from veteran service organizations, dozens of Senators and Members of the House and our two partners at the VA. It combines more than 34 separate bills to address veterans' needs across a wide range of benefits and services. The enactment of this veterans' legislation package satisfies a number of VFW resolutions and legislative priorities regarding women veterans' health care, disability assistance and memorial affairs and economic opportunity issues.

SBP-DIC Offset Phased Elimination: This VFW-supported legislative initiative is also known as the "Widow's Tax Elimination Act." This January 2021, began the first phase of the "Phase-Out of Reduction of Survivor Benefit Plan Survivor (SBP) Annuities" as directed by last year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2020. Surviving spouse SBP annuity payments issued by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service will be reduced (offset) by no more than two-thirds of the amount of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) issued by the Department of Veterans Affairs, rather than by the entire amount of DIC, even though eligible surviving spouses will continue to receive the full amount of DIC from the VA. In accordance to the law passed by Congress, the SBP-DIC offset will be fully eliminated on Jan. 1, 2023.

Matters of concern expressed in the Action Corps Weekly for Feb. 1 included:

This Wednesday, the **Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs** held a confirmation hearing to consider Denis R. McDonough for the position of Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The full Senate must vote on McDonough's nomination before he can be confirmed.

The **VA offers COVID-19** testing and vaccinations for caregivers participating in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC). Veterans and caregivers can sign up for updates and express their interest in receiving a vaccine, which will help VA with their vaccine supply.

VFW's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship" is open now: The scholarship is accepting applications through April 30 for the fall 2021 semester. Sport Clips and the VFW have teamed up for the past seven years to provide up to \$5,000 of assistance per semester, per family, for service members and veterans in the rank of E-5 and below.

VA COVID-19 Debt Relief: Service members, veterans, and family members who have incurred VA debt and have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic have options for relief. Available until October 2021, they include temporary hardship suspension, deference of credit bureau reporting and delayed referral of delinquent benefit overpayments to the Department of the Treasury. An additional option includes extended repayment plans.

The University of Alabama is seeking **women-veteran** participants in a **survey** about health care experiences. The results of the survey are intended to help assess the needs of women veterans.

MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one burial update and six new identifications for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from World War II. Returning home for burial with full military honors are: U.S. Navy Water Tender 1st Class Oliver K. Burger, 26; U.S. Navy Fireman 1st Class Wesley J. Brown, 25; U.S. Navy Fireman 1st Class Beoin H. Corzatt, 24; U.S. Navy Seaman 1st Class Gerald J. Bailey, 24; U.S. Navy Shipfitter 3rd Class Robert E. Bailey, 21; U.S. Navy Radioman 3rd Class Earl M. Ellis, 23. All were 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 attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen. Interment services are pending for the above. U.S. Navy Radioman 3rd Class Thomas E. Griffith, 20, of Dayton, Ohio, also assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, will be buried May 22, 2021, at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia.

For more details, see Action Corps Weekly for Feb. 1.

Barbara M. Piechocki

2020-2021 Department Legislative Chairman
(920) 487-2317 bpiech67@gmail.com

