

Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary
Department of Wisconsin

Legislative Bulletin – August 2019

Greetings Auxiliary Members! I am Debbie Manthey and I am honored to be your Department Legislative Chairman for the 2019-2020 year.

One of the main objectives of the Legislative Program is to improve the lives of our Veterans, active-duty service members and their families through advocacy. VFW Auxiliary members play an important role in advocating for legislation and benefits by contacting legislators and expressing their views and concerns regarding issues such as health care, disability assistance, educational and employment assistance, suicide awareness and homelessness and by holding legislators accountable for honoring America's promises to our nation's Veterans.

Our National Legislative Ambassador is Mercie Woolfolk and her goals are:

- Know and promote the VFW Priority Goals – their purpose is to ensure an adequate VA system will be available for the millions of current and future Veterans, service members and families.
- Sign up for the VFW Action Corps Weekly – an excellent resource for pending and completed legislation for Veterans and a place to make your voice heard.
- Promote Community Legislative Education and Engagement

You will receive bulletins from me with your General Orders in August, October, Dec/Jan, and March with suggestions and activities you can use to promote these goals. I ask each of you to get involved in this year's Legislative Program and become active and effective advocates for our veterans, military and their families.

Legislative Updates

President Trump Signs Agent Orange Bill into Law (6/26/2019)

President Donald Trump signed the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act (H.R.299) into law. Last year, the House unanimously passed the bill only to have it stall in the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington D.C. ruled in favor of Agent Orange/Blue Water Navy veterans in *Procopio v Wilkie* court decision this past January. The Department of Justice declined to appeal the decision so the House and Senate passed this legislation unanimously. This court case argued on behalf of Blue Water Veterans saying that Navy veteran, Mr. Procopio, who never stepped foot on land in Vietnam, was exposed to Agent Orange during his military service off the coast of the Republic of Vietnam. Due to this exposure, he developed medical conditions consistent with other veterans who served on land and were exposed to Agent Orange and therefore be entitled to a presumptive category and be eligible for benefits. This legislation essentially codifies the Procopio decision into law.

The bill also covers veterans who served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone between Sept. 1, 1967, and Aug. 31, 1971, as well as children with spina bifida born to veterans who served in Thailand between January 1962 and May 1975.

Supreme Court Bars Gerrymandering Challenges (6/27/2019)

The Supreme Court ruled Thursday that federal judges have no power to stop politicians from drawing electoral districts to preserve or expand their party's power, a landmark ruling that dissenters said will empower an explosion of extreme partisan gerrymandering.

The [5-to-4 decision](#) was written by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and joined by the court's other conservatives. It capped decades of debate about whether federal courts have a role in policing partisan efforts to draw electoral districts in the same way the judiciary protects against racial discrimination.

"We conclude that partisan gerrymandering claims present political questions beyond the reach of the federal courts," Roberts wrote. "Federal judges have no license to reallocate political power between the two major political parties, with no plausible grant of authority in the Constitution, and no legal standards to limit and direct their decisions."

A panel of federal judges has since thrown out Wisconsin's gerrymandering case. Both parties employ gerrymandering to advance their interests, but Thursday's decision would appear to give the "green light" for elected officials to choose their voters as opposed to their voters choosing them.

"Giving Hope to Veterans and Families"
As we're
"Serving Veterans With Aloha"

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