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To view this week's edition, visit: [www.vfw.org/actioncorpsweekly](http://www.vfw.org/actioncorpsweekly).

**1. VFW Storms the Hill to #AxeWidowsTax:** On Tuesday, the VFW joined veteran and survivor organizations, surviving spouses, and dependents to storm Capitol Hill to urge lawmakers to end the disgraceful Widow's Tax. More than 65,000 surviving military spouses and dependents are unjustly penalized because their loved ones made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. America must honor military survivors, NOT tax them! Stand with the VFW and [call on Congress to #AxeWidowsTax](#). Watch the [Senate press conference](#) or the [House press conference](#).

**2. VFW Attends Army Leadership Roundtable:** On Thursday, VFW Director of National Security and Foreign Affairs John Towles joined the incoming Chief of Army Public Affairs Brigadier General Amy Hannah and other senior Army officials to discuss the department's budget priorities for FY 2020. They discussed how to improve benefits and care for our nation's service members and their families, updates regarding privatized housing, retention and accessions, and the recently released Department of Defense [Sexual Assault report](#). Additional topics of discussion included the need for a robust and strategically driven FY 2020 budget, an update on the ["21 cities" recruiting campaign](#), and an overview of current Army operations occurring worldwide, including an update regarding the recent troop buildup on the [U.S./Mexico border](#).

**3. Congress Advances Legislation to Fix the KiddieTax:** This week, the Senate and the House both passed legislation to end the Kiddie Tax. The Senate passed S. 1370, the [Gold Star Family Tax Relief Act](#). The House passed H.R. 1994, the *Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement Act of 2019*, which includes a [fix for the Kiddie Tax](#). On Wednesday the VFW participated in a press conference to urge immediate congressional action to fix the unintended consequence of the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017*, which doubled the taxes for military

surviving children who receive their parent's retirement pay. [Watch the press conference](#). We ask you to [take action](#) with the VFW and our supporters to end this injustice!

**4. House Passes Nine Veteran Bills:** This week the U.S. House of Representatives passed nine VFW supported veteran bills with an overwhelming voice vote. Five of the nine bills focused on the veteran suicide crisis, and others tackle transition, access to VA care, and cost of living increases. The passage of these nine bills on to the Senate come right before our nation pauses to observe Memorial Day. The VFW applauds all the members of the House who showed their support for veterans and their families by overwhelmingly passing these bipartisan bills. Now it is time for the Senate to do the same and send them to the president's desk. [Learn more](#)

**5. House Armed Services Hearing on Military Suicide:** On Tuesday, the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel and House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health held a joint hearing on Military and Veteran Suicide. Ranking member Trent Kelly (R-MS) expressed that with approximately 20 veterans who die by suicide each day, "we must take decisive action to disrupt the status quo and reverse this epidemic." This summer, DOD will be releasing its first annual suicide report to address military suicides and has started leveraging scientific evidence and learned practices to generate an effective initiative to help service members and their families. [Watch the hearing](#).

**6. Senate Debates Legislation on Suicide Prevention and Women Veterans:** On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a hearing to discuss the VFW-supported [Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019](#), which would create and expand initiatives to ensure veterans have access to high-quality mental health care, such as Project ATLAS which enables veterans to receive VA health care at VFW posts around the country. The VFW-supported [Deborah Sampson Act](#), which would improve care and services for women veterans was also considered. Other bills discussed would improve how VA collects debt, expand vet center eligibility to guard and reserve service members, and extend the Highly Rural Veterans Transportation Program. [Read the VFW's Testimony](#) or [watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 12:23 mark.

**7. Trump Picks Barrett to Lead Air Force:** The president this week nominated former U.S. Ambassador to Finland Barbara Barrett as the next Secretary of the Air Force. Barrett, who was also chairwoman of Aerospace Corporation, is an instrument-rated pilot who in 2009 became certified for space travel after training at the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Center in Star City, Russia, and in Kazakhstan. Upon Senate confirmation, Barrett will succeed outgoing Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson, who steps down next week to become the new president of the University of Texas at El Paso.

**8. Disabled Veterans Eligible for Free National Park Lifetime Passes:** The VA announced this week that service-connected disabled veterans are now eligible to receive free lifetime access passes to more than 400 National Parks and 2,000 recreation sites across the country. The pass admits disabled veterans and any passengers in their noncommercial vehicle at per-vehicle fee areas, or admits the disabled veteran plus three additional adults where per-person fees are charged. In addition to free entry at participating parks, the pass includes discounts on expanded

amenity fees, such as camping, swimming, boat launching and guided tours. The pass is free if applied for in-person; if by mail the cost is \$10. [Learn more here.](#)

**9. 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 24-27. Up first is a VFW-supported and USAA-sponsored Poppy Wall, a 133-foot-long display of 645,000 poppies set up between the Korean War Veterans Memorial and the Lincoln Memorial today and tomorrow from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., and on Sunday from 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.

- A [VFW benefits information tent](#) will be set up on the National Mall just east of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Saturday and Sunday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Monday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

- Saturday at 8 p.m. will be a full dress rehearsal for Sunday's National Memorial Day Concert on the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol. Many consider this the time to go because of smaller crowds and closer lawn seating.

- [Rolling Thunder XXXII](#) begins at noon, 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. on the west lawn of the U.S. Capitol. It 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 starts at 2 p.m. traveling west along Constitution Avenue from 7th to 17th Streets, NW.

**10. MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency has announced the identifications of three American servicemen who had been missing and unaccounted for from Korea and WWII. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **U.S. Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. William J. McGowan** was a pilot, serving with the 391st Fighter Squadron, 366th Fighter Group, 9th U.S. Air Force. On June 6, 1944, he was killed when his P-47 Thunderbolt aircraft crashed while on a mission near the city of Saint-Lô, France. Interment services are pending. [Read about McGowan.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Roger L. Woods** was a member of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, during the Korean War. On July 29, 1950, he was reported missing in action from the vicinity of Kochang, South Korea, following an engagement with enemy forces. Interment services are pending. [Read about Woods.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Billy J. Butler** was a member of Company C, 2nd Engineer Combat Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division, engaged in combat operations against the enemy near Kujang, North Korea. On Nov. 28, 1950, his unit's defensive positions were attacked and he was captured by the Chinese People's Volunteer Force. Interment services are pending. [Read about Butler](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, visit: <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).

To view this week's and previous editions, visit: <http://www.vfw.org/actioncorpsweekly>.

