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1. Blue Water Navy Act Now Law: The president signed the VFW-championed *Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019* into law Tuesday evening. It now restores VA benefits to thousands of Vietnam veterans who had their disability eligibility taken away in 2002 after arbitrary regulatory changes. For Korean DMZ veterans, it provides an earlier start date to encompass the timeframe when various defoliants were tested — from April 1, 1968, to Sept. 1, 1967. The new law expands benefits to children born with spina bifida due to a parent's exposure in Thailand, coverage that already exists for the children of Vietnam and Korean DMZ veterans, and it requires the VA to report on research being conducted on a broad range of conditions possibly related to service in Southwest Asia. "The VFW is proud to have helped lead the charge to return benefits to these deserving veterans and to expand existing benefits to dependent children," said VFW National Commander B.J. Lawrence. The VA has yet to update its webpages to reflect the new law, but veterans and their families can still learn more about VA benefits associated with [Agent Orange exposure](#), and about [spina bifida birth defects related to exposure](#). For assistance in filing claims, [find an accredited VFW service officer](#).

2. Women Veterans Taskforce Roundtable: VFW Department of Maryland Quartermaster Denise Perry attended a [Women Veterans Taskforce](#) roundtable this week to discuss how the VFW and other veterans organizations learn from and advocate for women veterans. Members of Congress asked representatives from veterans organizations what they believe is needed to ensure women veterans have their voice represented in the fight to improve veteran benefits. Perry discussed the need to ensure servicewomen know about the benefits that come with joining veteran service organizations such as the VFW. She discussed how the VFW provided the comradery she needed after leaving military service and the work the VFW does to improve care and service for women veterans. [Learn more about the VFW's advocacy efforts for women veterans](#).

3. Senate Passes the NDAA for FY 2020: Yesterday, the Senate passed S.1790, *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020* (NDAA) yesterday by an 86-8 vote. The bill provides \$750 billion in total spending, a 3.1 percent pay raise for our 2.15 million uniformed

service members, and reforms to the Military Housing Privatization Initiative to improve quality of life for military families. Ninety-three bipartisan amendments were also adopted which included an amendment allowing the families of the 1983 Marine Barracks bombing victims to access \$1.68 billion in Iranian funds currently held by Clearstream. Unfortunately, Sen. Doug Jones (D-Ala.) amendment to end the Widow's Tax was blocked by Senate leadership yesterday morning. [Read more.](#)

4. Legislation to Give Student Veterans Break Pay Introduced: This week Senators Stabenow (D-Mich.) and Roberts (R-Kan.) introduced the VFW supported S. 1946, *Student Veterans Housing Act* which would extend housing payments for student veterans during certain breaks between semesters. This proposed change would allow student veterans to focus on their educational goals by reducing the burden of housing costs. The VFW thanks Senators Stabenow (D-Mich.) and Roberts (R-Kan.) for their bipartisan efforts to enhance the lives of student veterans. [Read the Press Release.](#)

5. Plans for Third North Korean Summit Underway: On Wednesday, South Korean President Moon Jae-in stated that the U.S. is in early negotiations with North Korea over a proposed third bilateral summit to take place later this year. Moon, who has been acting as a mediator between the two countries, further stated that the U.S. had made a proposal for working-level talks with North Korea shortly following the Hanoi summit in February, and that he has been urging the North to return to the negotiating table. U.S. Special Envoy to North Korea Stephen Biegun arrived in Seoul on Thursday in order to meet with South Korean officials ahead of a proposed stopover by President Trump as he travels to Osaka, Japan, for the 2019 G20 Summit.

6. VA to Reduce Rates for Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance: VA will be reducing the monthly premium for Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) starting July 1, 2019. The monthly premium rates will fall from 7 cents per \$1,000 of insurance coverage to 6 cents per \$1,000 of insurance coverage. This will mean a decrease of \$4.00 per month for any service member who has elected the full \$400,000 of SGLI coverage. Service members who have elected Family SGLI coverage will see a monthly premium decrease in the range of 10 percent to 32 percent; the age of their spouse and amount of coverage effects their premiums. Reservists who do not receive pay due to a number of reasons, will start to be billed at the new rates in July 2019. [Learn more.](#)

7. Update Your Information on the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry: Service members and veterans who have already signed up for the registry should make sure that their contact information, phone number, address, and email are up-to-date. If you have not already signed up for the registry and you have served in one of the eligible areas, please [learn more about the registry.](#)

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

-- **Army Sgt. Vernon R. Judd** was a member of Company D, 89th Medium Tank Battalion, 25th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 28, 1950, when he was

captured by enemy forces in the vicinity of Ipsok, North Korea. According to reports, Judd died at Hofong Prisoner of War camp on Feb. 15, 1951. Interment services are pending. [Read about Judd.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Sgt. Howard F. Gotts** was a radio operator assigned to the 66th Bombardment Squadron, 44th Bombardment Group. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24D aircraft on which Gotts served, crashed during the largest bombing mission against the oil fields and refineries at Ploiesti, north of Bucharest, Romania. The Romanian government announced they had recovered and buried 216 Americans killed in the bombing raid, but could only identify 27 of the men at the time of the recovery. The remaining casualties were said to have been buried as Unknowns in the Hero Section of the Civilian and Military Cemetery of Bolovan, Ploiesti, Prahova, Romania. Interment services are pending. [Read about Gotts.](#)

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.

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