



February 14, 2020

Happy Valentine's Day!

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1. VFW Commander Visits Tampa VA: On Thursday, VFW National Commander William “Doc” Schmitz visited the [James A. Haley VA Hospital](#) to continue the important conversation about the significance of traumatic brain injury in our military. He met with several top medical professionals and observed hands-on treatment measures that our veterans and active duty Special Operators intensely experience at the facility. “VFW applauds the Tampa VA’s Polytrauma unit, during this visit I witnessed a remarkable level of professionalism and care provided to American’s veterans,” Schmitz said. His goal is to request more funding, research and personnel from Congress during his special joint hearing dedicated to this “hidden wound.”

2. VFW Attends Bill Signing Ceremony: On Tuesday, the VFW attended the White House’s official [signing ceremony](#) for the *Supporting Veterans in STEM Careers Act*. On hand for the signing was VFW’s Executive Director B.J. Lawrence. The VFW-supported proposal assists military veterans pursuing careers in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematical fields. STEM degrees are the 2nd most sought after degree field for student veterans, and high proficiency in STEM fields is important for our nation’s prosperity. “We thank the president for signing this important bill which will enable America’s veterans to succeed after military service,” stated Lawrence. [Read the bill.](#)

3. VFW Testifies on Veterans’ Data Privacy: On Wednesday, VFW Associate Director for Health Policy Ramsey Sulayman [testified](#) before the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Technology Modernization. The hearing, which was attended by the chairman and ranking member of the full committee, focused on the data privacy for users of VA services, including how data is collected by apps and VA partners. The committee focused on the security of the

integrated electronic health record, record sharing, and data collection and permissions from apps VA offers to veterans for use on smartphones. Sulayman stressed the need for VA to make “data security and privacy a foundational priority.” [Watch the hearing.](#)

4. VFW Participates in Military Housing Roundtable: On Wednesday, VFW National Legislative Service Associate Directors Kyle Kalman and Matt Doyle attended the Military Family Advisory Network roundtable with numerous VSOs, MSOs, DOD officials, and members of Congress to discuss the issues affecting military housing. The discussion focused on best practices of how to implement the new housing provisions in the *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020*, medical research studies, and how we can bring each organization's resources together to address the military housing crisis.

5. VA Doctors Using Artificial Intelligence to Diagnose Cancer: A team of researchers at the [James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital](#) in Tampa, Florida, is revolutionizing the way cancer is documented by enlisting the help of a computer to diagnose the disease in one of the largest patient populations in the nation: veterans. Sophisticated artificial intelligence is capable of drastically altering how cancer is diagnosed and treated by learning to distinguish imagery of tissue containing cancerous cells from pictures of healthy tissue, a [recent study](#) in the *Federal Practitioner* journal claims. “If this helps save one veteran’s life, this could be a major breakthrough for thousands of veterans and patients dealing with cancer diagnoses across the country,” said VFW Director of Communications & Public Affairs Terrence Hayes. [Read more.](#)

6. National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission Discusses GWOT Memorial: On Tuesday, VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Matt Doyle attended a meeting to discuss the placement of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) Memorial. At the meeting, the National Capitol Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) discussed VFW-supported H.R. 5046, the *Global War on Terrorism Memorial Location Act*. This important legislation would authorize the GWOT Memorial to be placed within the Reserve, an area in Washington, D.C., that encompasses the National Mall and the Tidal Basin. Under the *Commemorative Works Act*, only Congress may authorize the placement of a memorial within the Reserve. The NCMAC considered whether the GWOT Memorial should be placed at any of the sites specified in the *Global War on Terrorism Memorial Location Act* and the potential impact of placing additional monuments and memorials within the Reserve. Learn more about [H.R. 5046](#). Learn more about [future memorials in Washington, D.C.](#)

7. Congress Approves VA Dental Pilot Program: On Tuesday, the Senate passed [H. J. Res. 80](#), which would provide congressional approval of the VA Innovation Center’s programs to expand access to dental care through pro bono services at community dental clinics. This legislation was previously passed by the House so the project is now authorized to begin. [Learn more.](#)

8. House VA Committee Examines Community Care Provider Networks: On Wednesday, a joint hearing of the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittees on Health and Oversight and Investigations held a hearing on the status of Community Care Network program provider networks. Attention was paid to the backlog of claims. 2.5 million claims out of 3.8 million are

older than 30 days but VA testified that this will be remedied by the end of the fiscal year in September. [Watch the hearing.](#)

9. TRICARE Users Receive More Health Options in New Pilot: The latest TRICARE pilot program meant to provide better care and reduce costs has come to Atlanta, Georgia, as TRICARE partners with Kaiser Permanente. Nearly 1,760 [TRICARE](#) beneficiaries signed up during open enrollment last year for the health care pilot that will be available for three years. TRICARE officials are testing partnerships like this so they can move to a value-based system instead of volume-based reimbursements. In this pilot, beneficiaries have access to more health programs such as no-cost telephone health coaching, special rates on gym memberships, and discounts on acupuncture, chiropractic, and massage therapy. [Read more.](#)

10. Participate in the Veterans History Project: The Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress American Folklife Center collects and preserves oral histories, memoirs, and collections of original historical documents from United States military veterans from World War I to the present. The VFW encourages veterans to participate in The Veterans History Project, because it's important for future generations to understand and be able to study the experiences of veterans since WWI. Learn how [to participate.](#)

11. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced three new identifications, and four burial update for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from WWII and the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **U.S. Army Pfc. James W. White**, 21, was a member of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), also known as Merrill's Marauders. After taking the airfield in Myitkyina, Burma, from the Japanese on May 17, 1944, White's battalion was tasked with holding the airfield and taking part in the siege of Myitkyina. White was reported to have been killed during fighting on July 2, 1944. Interment services are pending. [Read about White.](#)

-- **U.S. Army Pvt. James J. Cansler**, 21, was assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 8th Infantry Division. His unit was engaged in battle with German forces near Vossenack, Germany, in the Hürtgen Forest, when he was reported as missing in action. A year later, Army officials had received no evidence he had been captured or otherwise survived combat, and so released a presumptive finding of death. Interment services are pending. [Read about Cansler.](#)

-- **U.S. Navy Chief Fire Controlman Daniel F. Harris**, 40, was 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 USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Harris. Interment services are pending. [Read about Harris.](#)

-- **U.S. Navy Seaman 1st Class Edward Wasielewski**, 21, of Detroit, was 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 USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Wasielewski. Interment for Wasielewski will be Feb. 21, 2020, in San Diego. [Read about Wasielewski.](#)

-- **U.S. Navy Fire Controlman 1st Class Robert L. Corn**, 24, of Baker City, Oregon, was 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 USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in Corn's death and the deaths of 429 crewmen. Corn will be buried May 1, 2020, in Honolulu, Hawaii. [Read about Corn.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Raymond Warren**, 21, of Silverdale, Kansas, was a member of Company K, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands, in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, while the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Warren died between the first and second day of battle, Nov. 20-21, 1943. Warren will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Warren.](#)

-- **U.S. Marine Corps Cpl. Thomas H. Cooper**, 22, of Chattanooga, Tennessee, was a member of Company A, 2nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands, in an attempt to secure the island. Over several days of intense fighting at Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, while the Japanese were virtually annihilated. Cooper died on the first day of the battle, Nov. 20, 1943. Cooper will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Cooper.](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, visit: <https://votervoicenet.org/VFW/register>.

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.

[Click here to view this week's edition.](#)

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