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### In This Issue:

- 1. VFW-Supported Bill to Protect Student Veterans Becomes Law**
- 2. House Committee Requests VA Create a MST Survivors Workgroup**
- 3. Complete the VFW's COVID-19 Health Survey**
- 4. VFW Kicks Off Annual Youth Scholarship Competitions**
- 5. Veterans Have Until May 5 to Add Dependents for Stimulus Payment**
- 6. May is Mental Health Awareness Month**
- 7. DPAA Cancels Meetings**
- 8. Have You Filled Out Your Census Form Yet?**
- 9. MIA Update**

**1. VFW-Supported Bill to Protect Student Veterans Becomes Law:** On Tuesday, the president signed into law H.R. 6322, the *Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020*. This bill will ensure student veterans who are engaged in work study programs can continue to receive their work payment checks, along with their housing payment allowance. This bill will also make sure student veterans whose schools are closing due to the COVID-19 crisis are not penalized any months of their GI Bill entitlements while this pandemic is still impacting the country. The VFW would like to thank Chairmen Takano and Moran, along with Ranking Members Roe and Tester for making sure that veterans are still being taken care of during this uncertain time.

**2. House Committee Requests VA Create a MST Survivors Workgroup:** This week, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs sent a bipartisan letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie calling on VA to establish a working group to support survivors of military sexual trauma (MST). The internal workgroup will execute a review of VA policies and procedures that impact MST survivors. The letter discusses improving the claims process to reduce re-traumatizing MST survivors; strengthen and share communication of best practices within VHA and VBA; questions why MST treatment for active duty service members is available only at Vet Centers and not at VHA facilities; support VHA and VBA MST coordinators; and provide sexual harassment and assault training for all VA employees. [Learn more.](#)

**3. Complete the VFW's COVID-19 Health Survey:** On March 13, 2020, President Donald Trump declared a national emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The VFW has developed a survey to evaluate your health care experiences, how your health care has changed since March 13, and your perceptions of your overall physical and mental health over the past 30 days. The VFW would like feedback on your experiences in order to inform our advocacy and compile a final report on this important topic. Help the VFW hold VA and Congress accountable

for fulfilling their mission to veterans by taking a short survey regarding your experiences during the COVID-19 health crisis. [Take the survey.](#)

**4. VFW Kicks Off Annual Youth Scholarship Competitions:** The VFW is now accepting entries for its 2020 - 2021 Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen youth scholarship competitions. Dedicated to encouraging a better understanding and appreciation of America, these competitions help foster patriotism among today's youth. The programs also promote friendly competition and reward success with more than \$3 million in scholarships. The Voice of Democracy audio-essay competition, with the theme "Is This the Country the Founders Envisioned?" is open to all students in grades 9-12. Each state winner competes for the top national scholarship prize of \$30,000. Students in grades 6-8 can compete in the Patriot's Pen competition by answering this year's theme, "What is Patriotism to Me?" Entrants vie for the top award of \$5,000. Entries, along with a completed entry form, must be submitted to a local participating VFW Post. The deadline for both contests is Oct. 31, 2020. Find your local [VFW Post](#), or [read more about the competitions.](#)

**5. Veterans Have Until May 5 to Add Dependents for Stimulus Payment:** On April 24, 2020, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) [announced on Twitter](#) that veterans who receive VA compensation and pension payments, who do not file taxes, and who have dependents, have until **May 5, 2020**, to add their dependent information to ensure their stimulus payment includes the \$500 per dependent pay. The IRS is urging this group of veterans to use the [non-filer tool](#) on the IRS website to update their dependent information. If a veteran in this group has already had the \$1,200 stimulus payment issued, they will no longer be eligible to use the non-filer tool. Their payment will be \$1,200 and, by law, the additional \$500 per eligible child would be paid in association with a return filing for tax year 2020.

**6. May is Mental Health Awareness Month:** The VFW calls on the community to reach out to veterans who may be experiencing mental health issues, especially during the COVID-19 health crisis. There are resources from VA, especially their [Make the Connection](#) campaign, where they provide resources for veterans and also for those who care about a veteran. VFW partner, [Give An Hour](#), provides free mental health counseling for veterans and their families. Give An Hour's [Campaign to Change Direction](#) has resources such as learning the Five Signs of Emotional Suffering, which empowers people to recognize signs of emotional suffering and guides them on how to reach out for help. When reaching out, discussion topics can include the status of their physical and mental well-being, reviewing the checklist of COVID-19 symptoms, asking about the state of their supplies, or a recommendation for a good book, TV show or movie. Remember to follow up in a day or two to keep that connection going.

**7. DPAA Cancels Meetings:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) has announced that the Family Member Update to be held May 15, 2020, in Chicago has been canceled. DPAA has also canceled the Vietnam War Annual Government Briefings which was set to be held with the National League of POW/MIA Families Annual Meeting on June 24-27, 2020, in Washington, D.C. If you have further questions, DPAA asks that you contact your service casualty officer. [Learn more.](#)

**8. Have You Filled Out Your Census Form Yet?** It's time to be counted in the census again. The results of the census will determine congressional representation, advise hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding, and be used to draw congressional and state legislative districts. The VFW encourages all Americans to take part in this year's census. [Learn more.](#)

**9. MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced six new identifications 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:

-- **Marine Corps Reserve Pvt. Howard E. Miller**, 22, was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th 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. Miller died on the third day of battle, Nov. 22, 1943. He was reported to have been buried in Row D of the East Division Cemetery, later renamed Cemetery 33. Interment services are pending. [Read about Miller.](#)

-- **Army Staff Sgt. Raymond C. Blanton**, 19, was assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 60th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division. His unit was engaged in battle with German forces near Germeter, Germany, in the Raffelsbrand Forest, when he was killed in action on Oct. 14, 1944. Blanton could not be recovered because of the on-going fighting. Interment services are pending. [Read about Blanton.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Glenn E. Collins**, 21, was a member of Heavy Mortar Company, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Collins.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Clarence W. Brotherton**, 20, of Gibson City, Illinois, was assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 60th Infantry Regiment, 9th Infantry Division. His unit was engaged in battle with German forces near Germeter, Germany, in the Raffelsbrand Forest, when he was killed in action on Oct. 14, 1944. Brotherton could not be recovered because of the on-going fighting. Interment services are pending. [Read about Brotherton.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Burl Mullins**, 23, was a member of Heavy Mortar Company, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 30, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Mullins.](#)

-- **Marine Corps Cpl. Raymond J. Tuhey**, 24, of Chicago, was a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, 6th 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. Tuhey died on the fourth day of battle, Nov. 23, 1943. Interment services are pending. [Read about Tuhey.](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, visit: <https://votervoice.net/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](mailto:vfwac@vfw.org).

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

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