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## In This Issue:

- 1. VFW Testifies at DAMA Subcommittee Virtual Forum**
- 2. Veteran Bills Pass the House**
- 3. HVAC Chairman Concerned for Safety of VA Employees**
- 4. National Guard COVID-19 Pandemic Deployment Extended**
- 5. VA Expands Digital Capabilities of Veterans Legacy Memorial**
- 6. Red Cross Partner Amazon Giving \$5 Gift Cards for Blood Donation**
- 7. MIA Update**

**1. VFW Testifies at DAMA Subcommittee Virtual Forum:** On Wednesday, VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Matthew Doyle testified at a virtual forum hosted by the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs. The purpose of the forum was to discuss compensation and pension examinations and other issues facing veterans during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the forum, Doyle stated, "Numerous veterans have lost access to employer-sponsored health care during the crisis due to layoffs. Veteran unemployment is currently near 12 percent and rising. For this reason, the VFW recommends that VA temporarily expedite or 'flash' the adjudication of disability claims for veterans who are not yet eligible for VA health care and who have lost access to their private health care during the crisis." The VFW thanks Chairwoman Elaine Luria (D-VA) and Ranking Member Mike Bost (R-IL) for hosting the virtual forum, and for their efforts to protect veterans' disability benefits. [Watch the virtual forum.](#)

**2. Veteran Bills Pass the House:** This week, the House unanimously passed three veteran bills: H.R. 6168, [Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2020](#); S. 3414, [Major Medical Facility Authorization Act of 2020](#); and S. 3084, [to modify the limitation on pay for certain high-level employees and officers of VA](#). The VFW is grateful that veteran issues are not pushed to the back burner during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are encouraged to see our supporters in the House working in a bipartisan way to benefit veterans. [Read more.](#)

**3. HVAC Chairman Concerned for Safety of VA Employees:** House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA), along with the subcommittee chairs sent a letter to VA Secretary Robert Wilkie regarding telework policies and paid sick leave. Concerns over VA employees' safety and health came after several VA employees expressed they were unfairly denied paid sick leave while they quarantined and recovered from the virus. The letter also outlined a request for information on policies and implementation for both telework and paid leave. [Read more.](#)

**4. National Guard COVID-19 Pandemic Deployment Extended:** The Trump administration is extending the federal deployment of over 40,000 National Guard troops aiding COVID-19 pandemic relief efforts, reversing plans for an earlier cutoff following bipartisan backlash and pressure from top defense officials. The federal government will now keep funding Guard troops through mid-August. The administration was previously planning to terminate the deployment on June 24 — one day before thousands of Guard members would have qualified for key retirement and education benefits. [Read more.](#)

**5. VA Expands Digital Capabilities of Veterans Legacy Memorial:** The VA National Cemetery Administration has enhanced and expanded capabilities on the Veterans Legacy Memorial (VLM) website to allow for family, friends, and visitors to leave “tributes” or comments on a veteran’s memorial page. The VLM website is the nation’s first digital platform dedicated entirely to the preservation of the memory of the 3.7 million veterans interred in VA national cemeteries. “Online memorialization becomes more prominent these days, allowing people to remotely honor the service and sacrifice of our Veterans,” said VA Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Randy Reeves. “The increased capabilities of VLM are in place at a critical time to ensure “No Veteran Ever Dies” by telling their stories to a larger audience through an enhanced digital platform. In addition, VLM allows people to express their appreciation and gratitude for the dedicated service of our Nation’s heroes.” [Learn more about VLM.](#)

**6. Red Cross Partner Amazon Giving \$5 Gift Cards for Blood Donation:** The American Red Cross partner Amazon, is providing \$5 Amazon gift cards for anyone who donates blood, platelets, or AB Elite plasma from June 1 – 30, 2020. The Red Cross strongly urges healthy, eligible individuals who are feeling well to give blood or platelets to help maintain a sufficient blood supply for those battling COVID-19, other infections, and trauma victims. Please make an appointment to donate blood now by using the Red Cross Blood Donor app, visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org), or calling 1.800.RED.CROSS (1.800.733.2767).

**7. MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced three 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 Pfc. Charles D. Miller**, 19, was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, 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. Interment services are pending. [Read about Miller.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. Jesse D. Hill**, 20, was a member of Company C, 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 Hill.](#)

-- **U.S. Navy Metalsmith 1st Class Leonard F. Smith**, 29, 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 Smith. Interment services are pending. [Read about Smith.](#)

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).

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