



November 25, 2020

This week's issue is being delivered early in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday!

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1. Mental Health Bill for Transitioning Service Members: Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Joni Ernst (R-IA) introduced VFW-supported S. 4900, the *Daniel J. Harvey Jr. and Adam Lambert Improving Servicemember Transition to Reduce Veteran Suicide Act*. This important legislation would create a pilot program to incorporate mental health counseling into the Transition Assistance Program. This new training would inform separating service members of the resources available at VA health facilities to help them meet the challenges of transition from military to civilian life. This proposal was generated by a 2019 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellow and shows the importance of grass roots advocacy. The VFW thanks Sens. Brown, Blumenthal, and Ernst for introducing this important legislation and for their efforts to improve the mental health of veterans. [Learn more.](#)

2. Holiday Overseas Mail Deadlines Approaching: The [U.S. Postal Service](#) is preparing for more gifts to be mailed this year than usual as the COVID-19 pandemic forces many families to spend holidays apart. In order to ensure overseas packages are delivered before Dec. 25, USPS has provided the following guidance: Dec. 9 for Air/Army Post Office, Fleet Post Office and Diplomatic Post Office addresses in the 093 ZIP Code using Priority Mail and First-Class Mail; Dec. 11 for all other APO/FPO/DPO ZIP Codes, send by Dec. 11 using Priority Mail and First-Class Mail; and Dec. 18 for APO/FPO/DPO addresses other than the 093 Zip Code using USPS Priority Mail Express. The Postal Service has also created a "[military care kit](#)," which consists of the items most often requested by military families and it is free.

3. TRICARE Open Season: TRICARE [Open Season](#) is currently open through Dec. 14, 2020. This is the time when beneficiaries can enroll in or change their health care coverage. Any changes will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2021. This year it is important to note that TRICARE Select Group A retirees will be required to pay an enrollment fee beginning on Jan. 1, 2021. Beneficiaries must set up an allotment with their regional contractors for the enrollment fee to begin on Jan. 1, 2021. Individuals who do not set up their allotment by the deadline will be unenrolled due to nonpayment. [Learn more.](#)

4. The Armed Services Blood Program: The Armed Services Blood Program (ASBP) is calling on all veterans with access to military installations to donate blood. The ASBP provides blood to active duty service members, veterans, and their families. Donations can be made at 20 locations across the nation all of which are located on military installations. [Learn more.](#)

5. Need Help with Your VA Claim?: The claims process can be confusing and one that you should not try to navigate alone. The VFW's National Veterans Service is a nationwide network of VA accredited service officers and pre-discharge representatives who are experts in dealing with the VA and the key to your success. As skilled professionals, we assist in filing for disability compensation, rehabilitation and education programs, pension and death benefits, and employment and training programs. This is a service the VFW is proud to offer free of charge to anyone seeking assistance with the claims process. [Find a VFW Service Officer in your area.](#) Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many VFW service offices remain in a telework capacity, but the VFW's network of service officers have the capability to continue assisting our veterans safely without face-to-face contact.

6. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced no new identifications or burial updates for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for.

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