



January 9, 2023



VFW 2023 Priority Goals: The 118th Congress is now in session. Although there were significant legislative victories for veterans in 2022, there is still work to be done. The [VFW 2023 Priority Goals](#) include Budget; Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs; Education, Employment, and Transition Assistance; Health Care; Military Quality of Life; and National Security, Foreign Affairs, and POW/MIA. The VFW will continue to work diligently to ensure members of the newly seated Congress improve care and benefits for veterans, service members, and their families.



VFW, SVA Announce 2023 Student Veteran Fellowship Class: Five Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) members and Student Veterans of America (SVA) leaders have been selected to participate in the 2023 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship. The fellowship is a semester-long academic experience for which students each submit a policy proposal to address an issue related to student veteran success on campus and beyond, improving veterans' health care and benefits, transitioning from military to civilian life, or the challenges of service members and their families. The fellows will attend the VFW Legislative Conference, during which they will participate with their VFW Department delegations in congressional meetings to advocate for their specific policy proposals.

- The five student veterans of the 2023 class are:
- Chet Bennetts, Marine Corps veteran, Kansas State University
 - Meghan Fitzgerald, Army veteran, University of Denver
 - Harry Phillips, Army veteran, Tulane University

-- Jordan Quinones, Army veteran, Arizona State University

-- Gregory Sanchez, Navy veteran, University of California – Riverside



FY 2023 NDAA Signed into Law: On Dec. 23, 2022, the president signed the *James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023* into law. Notable provisions in the bill include a 4.6 percent pay raise for troops, broad improvements to personnel and family support policies and programs, expanded Basic Needs Allowance eligibility, and further Uniform Code of Military Justice reforms that aim to ensure crimes like sexual assault and sexual harassment are fairly investigated. Also included in this year's NDAA were the *Don Young Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2022*, codification of the DOD SkillBridge Program, and VFW-supported provisions that improve Vet Centers and authorize a Survivor Benefit Plan open enrollment period for select retirees. [Read the NDAA.](#)



Omnibus Package Passes with Veteran Provisions: Before its adjournment, the 117th Congress passed a government funding omnibus package that includes appropriations bills for fiscal year 2023, and nine VFW-supported provisions that would affect veterans. Some of the included bills were the *Veterans Auto and Education Improvement Act of 2022*, *Veterans Benefits Improvement Act of 2021*, and the *Improving Access to the VA Home Loan Benefit Act of 2022*. The provisions will protect and safeguard many benefits earned by our veterans, process benefits and payments to survivors faster, extend education program flexibilities, and provide dignified care and support for survivors of military sexual trauma.



New TRICARE Contracts Awarded: The Defense Health Agency announced the awarding of its T-5 TRICARE Managed Care Support contracts to Humana Government Business (East Region) and TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corporation (West Region). Contracts will go into effect in 2024, at which point the following six states will move from the East Region to the West Region: Arkansas, Illinois, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wisconsin.

Roughly 1.5 million beneficiaries will be affected by this change, but no action is required at this time.

[Read more.](#)



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced six burial updates and one new identification for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from World War II and Korea. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Navy Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Lorentz E. Hultgren, 23**, of Tacoma, Washington, 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 Hultgren. He will be buried in Honolulu, Hawaii, on January 9, 2023. [Read about Hultgren.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class David J. Riley, 25**, of Juda, Wisconsin, 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 Riley. He will be buried in his hometown on May 27, 2023. [Read about Riley.](#)

-- **Navy Fire Controlman 2nd Class Donald R. McCloud, 21**, of Monaville, West Virginia, 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 McCloud. He will be buried in Dingess, West Virginia, on June 24, 2023. [Read about McCloud.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Tech Sgt. Ralph E. Richardson, 21**, of Columbia, South Carolina, was assigned to the 329th Bombardment Squadron, 93rd Bombardment Group, 9th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft on which Richardson was serving as radio operator crashed as a result of anti-aircraft fire during Operation Tidal Wave. His remains could not be identified following the war. He will be buried in his

hometown on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Richardson.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Roy C. Harms, 26**, of Grafton, Wisconsin, was assigned to the 329th Bombardment Squadron, 93rd Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft Harms was piloting crashed as a result of anti-aircraft fire during Operation Tidal Wave. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. He will be buried in his hometown on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Harms.](#)

-- **Navy Gunner's Mate 3rd Class Herman Schmidt, 28**, of Sheridan, Wyoming, 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 Schmidt. He will be buried in Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Schmidt.](#)

-- **Navy Fire Controlman 3rd Class William F. Gusie, 19**, 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 Gusie. Interment services are pending. [Read about Gusie.](#)

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

[Click here for past editions of the VFW Action Corps Weekly.](#)

[Click here to sign up new veterans' advocates.](#)

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.