



* We wish you a Happy Thanksgiving! *

November 25, 2024



House Passes Dole Act: *The Senator Elizabeth Dole 21st Century Veterans Healthcare and Benefits Improvement Act, [H.R. 8371](#)*, passed in the House with a bipartisan vote of 389-9. This [legislative package](#), known as the Dole Act, is being slated for a vote in the Senate. If signed into law, it would fund a range of enhancements vital to critical health care services for veterans and caregivers who need help now and cannot wait any longer. See how your member of Congress [voted](#).



VFW Speaks at Women Veteran Caucus Event on Transition: VFW National Legislative Deputy Director Kristina Keenan spoke at the final event of the Servicewomen and Women Veterans Caucus of the 118th Congress, led by Reps. Chrissy Houlahan, Jen Kiggans, Derrick Van Orden, and Brad Wenstrup, all of whom are veterans. The discussion centered around the unique challenges that women face when transitioning out of the military such as service-connected injuries that affect fertility, mental health effects of military sexual trauma, and barriers to accessing benefits due to child care constraints. Keenan explained that it is critical that all transitioning service members have access to a service officer to file their pre-discharge VA disability claims. "We know that veterans are vulnerable to suicide during the first year after separation from the military. We also know that veterans who use their VA benefits and health care have a lower risk of suicide. Eliminating the gap between service and access to VA is incredibly important and our service officers can facilitate that transition." She cited VFW-supported legislation — [H.R.3933](#), *TAP Promotion Act*, and [H.R.4157](#), *Not Just a Number Act* — that would improve the

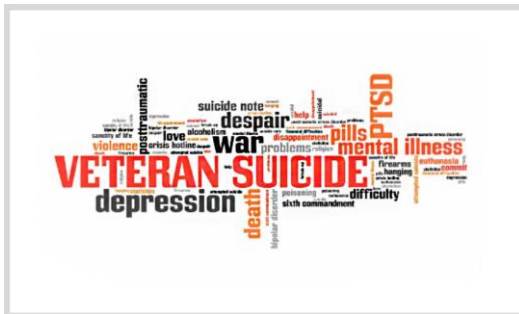
transition process and gather data regarding women veterans and suicide risks.



VFW Wants to Hear from You: There are only two weeks left to share your VA health care experiences by taking the VFW 2024 Health Care survey. Your feedback is vital to our advocacy efforts and to compile a report on this important topic. Help the VFW hold VA and Congress accountable by taking this short survey no matter where you receive care. [Take the survey.](#)



Holiday Overseas Mail Deadlines Approaching: The U.S. Postal Service is preparing for the holiday season as many families spend holidays apart due to military service. In order to ensure overseas packages are delivered before Dec. 25, it has provided the following deadlines: Dec. 9 for all Air/Army Post Office (APO), Fleet Post Office (FPO) and Diplomatic Post Office (DPO) addresses with AE zip codes using Priority Mail and First-Class Mail; and Dec. 16 for APO/FPO/DPO addresses using USPS Priority Mail Express. Actual delivery dates may vary. [Read more.](#)



Annual Report on Military Suicide: The Department of Defense has released its [Calendar Year 2023 Annual Report on Suicide in the Military](#) that provides data on suicide rates among service members and their dependents, along with details of ongoing prevention efforts. The report indicates a total force rate increase in 2023 of 9% in suicide deaths per 100,000 service members compared to 2022, primarily involving young, enlisted men and the use of firearms. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin launched a suicide prevention campaign in September 2023 that focuses on five key areas: fostering a supportive environment, improving mental health care, addressing stigma, revising training, and promoting lethal means safety. [Read more.](#)



Updated Procedures Facilitate Base Access: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DOD) have announced an improved base access process. Since Nov. 1, entering DOD installations became easier for veterans and their caregivers. In the words of VA Deputy Secretary Tanya Bradsher, “DOD installations provide numerous benefits and critical services to our nation’s Veterans, including health care. We are grateful for our partnership with DOD and the ability to implement these updates to make military installation access easier for Veterans and their caregivers.” This partnership also recently facilitated obtaining health care for some veterans in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, New York, Tennessee, and Virginia. [Read more](#) about DOD access requirements.



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced three identifications and six burial updates for service members who have been missing and unaccounted for from World War II.

Identifications:

- [World War II Army Pvt. 1st Class Gordon N. Larson](#)
- [World War II Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Yuen Hop](#)
- [World War II Army Private James S. Mitchell](#)

Updates:

- [World War II Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. William Scott](#), New Jersey
- [World War II Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Thomas V. Kelly Jr.](#), California
- [World War II Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Ralph L. Mourer](#), Michigan
- [World War II Army Cpl. Walter L. Clark](#), California
- [World War II Army Pvt. Herbert R. Worley](#), Hawaii

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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.