



**Federal Update
for
April 8 - 12, 2013**



***Klobuchar Statement on Defense Department
Recommending Legislation to Help Support Victims
of Sexual Assault in the Military***

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar today made the following statement after Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel announced the Defense Department is recommending legislation that would help support victims of sexual assault in the military. The proposed changes would amend “convening authority” provisions in the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) law that allow senior officers to change the findings of a court-martial for serious offenses like sexual assault and would require convening authorities to explain in writing their changes to court-martial sentences.

“No brave American in uniform out on the front lines serving our country who is the victim of sexual assault should have to fight to pursue justice,” Klobuchar said. “Secretary Hagel’s action today is an important first step, but there is more to be done to build a more fair and transparent military judicial system. I will continue to work to ensure that victims get the support they need and deserve.”

Last month Klobuchar introduced bipartisan legislation to help fight sexual assault in the military. The Military Sexual Assault Prevention Act of 2013 would prevent sexual offenders from serving in the military, improve tracking and review of sexual assault claims in the military, and help ensure victims can get the justice they deserve.

In recent years there has been an increase in reports of sexual assaults in the military. According to the Department of Defense, there were 3,192 official reports of sexual assaults in the military in 2011. Because most incidents are not reported to a military authority, the Pentagon estimates this number represents only 13 to 14 percent of total assaults – making the total estimated number of

sexual assaults in the military over 19,000 in 2011. A recent study found that 53% of homeless female veterans had experienced sexual trauma while in the military.

Research has shown that sexual trauma not only hurts the victims, but can also take a toll on their fellow service members by severely undermining unit cohesion, morale, and overall force effectiveness.

Care and Benefits for Veterans Strengthened by \$153 Billion VA Budget

WASHINGTON – Continuing the transformation of the Department of Veterans Affairs into a 21st century organization, the President has proposed a \$152.7 billion budget, a 10.2 percent increase over Fiscal Year 2013, that will support VA's goals to expand access to health care and other benefits, eliminate the disability claims backlog, and end homelessness among Veterans. The budget includes \$66.5 billion in discretionary spending, largely for healthcare, and \$86.1 billion for mandatory programs – mostly disability compensation and pensions for Veterans.

“This budget will have a positive impact on the lives of Veterans, their families and survivors for generations to come,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “The President believes in Veterans and their families and believes in providing them the care and benefits they’ve earned and deserve.”

The \$66.5 billion total in discretionary spending includes approximately \$3.1 billion in collections from health insurers and Veteran copayments in addition to the \$63.5 billion in discretionary funding announced last week.

“VA’s commitment to Veterans spans generations,” Shinseki added. “From the men and women of ‘the greatest generation’ to the Veterans who have returned from Iraq and those returning from Afghanistan, VA will make sure our benefits are useful and accessible.”

VA operates the largest integrated health care system in the country with nearly 9 million enrollees; the eighth largest life insurance program; monthly disability pay, pensions and survivors payments to more than 4 million people; education

assistance to 1 million students; mortgage guarantees to 1.5 million homeowners; and the largest cemetery system in the nation.

Here are highlights from the President's 2014 budget request for VA:

Health Care

With a medical care budget of \$54.6 billion, VA is positioned to provide care to 6.5 million Veterans in the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. The patient total includes 675,000 people whose military service began after Sept. 11, 2001.

Major spending categories within the health care budget are:

- \$6.9 billion for mental health;
- \$4.1 billion for health care for Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn;
- \$2.5 billion for prosthetics;
- \$601 million for spinal cord injuries;
- \$246 million for traumatic brain injuries;
- \$230 million for readjustment counseling; and
- \$7.6 billion for long-term care.

Expanding Access

The President's proposed budget would ensure that care and other benefits are available to Veterans when and where they need them. Among the programs that will expand access under the proposed budget are:

- \$460 million in home telehealth funding, which helps patients monitor chronic health care problems through innovative uses of the telephone, a 4.4 percent increase over the current year;
- \$422 million for women-specific medical care, an increase of nearly 14 percent over the present level;
- \$799 million for the activation of new and enhanced health care facilities;
- \$16 million for the construction of three new national cemeteries; and
- \$8.8 million for "VetSuccess on Campus" at 84 facilities, a program that helps Veterans transition to college life.

Eliminating Claims Backlog

The President's proposed budget provides for full implementation of VA's robust Transformation Plan -- a series of people, process and technology initiatives -- in FY14. This plan will systematically reduce the backlog and reach Shinseki's 2015 goal - to eliminate the claims backlog and process all claims within 125 days with 98 percent accuracy.

Major transformation initiatives in the budget proposal invest \$291 million to bring leading-edge technology to the claims backlog, including:

- \$136 million for Veterans Claims Intake Program (VCIP); and
- \$155 million for the next generation of the electronic claims processing system Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS).

Eliminating Veterans Homelessness

A major strategic goal for the Department is to end homelessness among Veterans in 2015. The budget request targets \$1.4 billion for programs to prevent or reduce homelessness, which includes:

- \$300 million for Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) to promote housing stability;
- \$278 million for the HUD-VASH program wherein VA provides case management services for at-risk Veterans and their families and HUD provides permanent housing through its Housing Choice Voucher program; and
- \$250 million in grant and per diem payments that support temporary housing provided by community-based organizations.

Veterans Job Corps

Too many Veterans take off their uniforms only to join the ranks of the unemployed. In March, 2013, about 783,000 Veterans were unemployed, a figure that includes 207,000 unemployed Post-9/11 Veterans. This budget proposes a Veterans Job Corps, focused on investing in Veterans' skills and experience, putting tens of thousands of Veterans into civilian jobs. Budget features of this initiative include:

- \$1 billion in mandatory funds to help unemployed Veterans;
- A target of putting 20,000 Veterans to work within the next five years in conservation, law enforcement and infrastructure jobs on public lands;

- Developing back-to-work programs for Veterans with other federal agencies, including the departments of the Interior and Agriculture, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the Army Corps of Engineers; and
- Supporting job-producing projects with contracts and grants with non-federal organizations, such as states, nonprofits and private businesses.

Other Services for Veterans

Other features of the administration's FY 2014 budget request for the department are:

- \$250 million to administer the VA-run system of national cemeteries;
- \$3.7 billion for information technology; and
- \$1.2 billion in construction, cemetery grants and extended care grants.

Costs of Wars Project

A study released on 14 MAR said the U.S. war in Iraq has cost \$1.7 trillion with an additional \$490 billion in benefits owed to war veterans, expenses that could grow to more than \$6 trillion over the next four decades counting interest. The war has killed at least 134,000 Iraqi civilians and may have contributed to the deaths of as many as four times that number, according to the Costs of War Project by the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. When security forces, insurgents, journalists and humanitarian workers were included, the war's death toll rose to an estimated 176,000 to 189,000, the study said. The report, the work of about 30 academics and experts, was published in advance of the 10th anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq on March 19, 2003. It was also an update of a 2011 report the Watson Institute produced ahead of the 10th anniversary of the September 11 attacks that assessed the cost in dollars and lives from the resulting wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq.

The 2011 study said the combined cost of the wars was at least \$3.7 trillion, based on actual expenditures from the U.S. Treasury and future commitments, such as the medical and disability claims of U.S. war veterans. That estimate climbed to nearly \$4 trillion in the update. The estimated death toll from the three wars, previously at 224,000 to 258,000, increased to a range of 272,000 to 329,000 two years later. Excluded were indirect deaths caused by the mass exodus of doctors and a devastated infrastructure, for example, while the costs left out trillions of

dollars in interest the United States could pay over the next 40 years. The interest on expenses for the Iraq war could amount to about \$4 trillion during that period, the report said. The report also examined the burden on U.S. veterans and their families, showing a deep social cost as well as an increase in spending on veterans. The 2011 study found U.S. medical and disability claims for veterans after a decade of war totaled \$33 billion. Two years later, that number had risen to \$134.7 billion.

The report concluded the United States gained little from the war while Iraq was traumatized by it. The war reinvigorated radical Islamist militants in the region, set back women's rights, and weakened an already precarious healthcare system, the report said. Meanwhile, the \$212 billion reconstruction effort was largely a failure with most of that money spent on security or lost to waste and fraud, it said. Former President George W. Bush's administration cited its belief that Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's government held weapons of mass destruction to justify the decision to go to war. U.S. and allied forces later found that such stockpiles did not exist. Supporters of the war argued that intelligence available at the time concluded Iraq held the banned weapons and noted that even some countries that opposed the invasion agreed with the assessment. "Action needed to be taken," said Steven Bucci, the military assistant to former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in the run-up to the war and today a senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative Washington-based think-tank.

Bucci, who was unconnected to the Watson study, agreed with its observation that the forecasts for the cost and duration of the war proved to be a tiny fraction of the real costs. "If we had had the foresight to see how long it would last and even if it would have cost half the lives, we would not have gone in," Bucci said. "Just the time alone would have been enough to stop us. Everyone thought it would be short." Bucci said the toppling of Saddam and the results of an unforeseen conflict between U.S.-led forces and al Qaeda militants drawn to Iraq were positive outcomes of the war. "It was really in Iraq that 'al Qaeda central' died," Bucci said. "They got waxed." Costs of War has released its findings online, at <http://www.costsofwar.org> to spur public discussion about the Iraq war. In summary the report noted:

- More than 70 percent of those who died of direct war violence in Iraq have been civilians — an estimated 134,000. This number does not account for

indirect deaths due to increased vulnerability to disease or injury as a result of war-degraded conditions. That number is estimated to be several times higher.

- The Iraq War will ultimately cost U.S. taxpayers at least \$2.2 trillion. Because the Iraq war appropriations were funded by borrowing, cumulative interest through 2053 could amount to more than \$3.9 trillion.
- The \$2.2 trillion figure includes care for veterans who were injured in the war in Iraq, which will cost the United States almost \$500 billion through 2053.
- The total of U.S. service members killed in Iraq is 4,488. At least 3,400 U.S. contractors have died as well, a number often under-reported.
- Terrorism in Iraq increased dramatically as a result of the invasion and tactics and fighters were exported to Syria and other neighboring countries.
- Iraq's health care infrastructure remains devastated from sanctions and war. More than half of Iraq's medical doctors left the country during the 2000s, and tens of thousands of Iraqi patients are forced to seek health care outside the country.
- The \$60 billion spent on reconstruction for Iraq has not gone to rebuilding infrastructure such as roads, health care, and water treatment systems, but primarily to the military and police. The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction has found massive fraud, waste, and abuse of reconstruction funds. [Source: Reuters | Daniel Trotta | 14 Mar 2013 ++]

Gulf War Syndrome Update

When she returned from the Persian Gulf War in 1991, Air Force nurse Denise Nichols experienced sudden aches, fatigue and cognitive problems, but she had no idea what was causing them. They grew worse: Even helping her daughter with multiplication tables became difficult, she says, and eventually she had to quit her job. Nichols wasn't alone. About a third of Gulf War veterans — possibly as many as 250,000 Americans — returned with similar symptoms. Now an imaging study has found that these veterans have what appear to be unique structural changes in the wiring of their brains. This fits with the scientific consensus that Gulf War Syndrome, or GWS, is a physical condition rather than a psychosomatic one and should be treated with painkilling drugs instead of counseling.

Military authorities in various countries consistently denied in the past that there was a physical basis to GWS. Although the Department of Veterans Affairs now accepts that the disorder is physical, the issue has been mired in controversy. Steven Coughlin, a former senior epidemiologist at Veterans Affairs, testified this month before a congressional panel that the VA had suppressed and manipulated research data so as to suggest that the disorder was psychosomatic. Coughlin told the panel: "If the studies produce results that do not support the [VA's] unwritten policy, they do not release them. . . . On the rare occasions when embarrassing study results are released, data are manipulated to make them unintelligible. . . . Anything that supports the position that Gulf War illness is a neurological condition is unlikely to ever be published." In response, the VA said that the organization has a "long history of conducting world-class research studies that meet accepted and rigorous scientific standards." They also note that "all allegations of malfeasance are taken seriously and are investigated fully."

Whatever the cause of GWS, it is certainly not psychological, says Bernard Rosof of Huntington Hospital in New York, although no single cause is known. Suggested causes include exposure to low levels of sarin gas when chemical munitions were destroyed, and a drug called pyridostigmine bromide, which soldiers were given to protect them from sarin. It's vital to find an objective test that will allow physicians to make a diagnosis, says James Baraniuk, an associate professor at MedStar Georgetown University Medical Center and one of the co-authors of the new imaging study. To that end, Baraniuk and Georgetown colleague Rakib Rayhan examined 31 veterans with GWS, including Nichols. They scanned their brains using a technique called diffusion tensor imaging, which highlights the bundles of nerves, or white matter, connecting brain regions. They compared these to scans of 20 veterans who were not deployed in the Gulf. The images indicate that in GWS, these nerve bundles break down and may have trouble forming connections, a phenomenon that has not been associated with any other illness. This suggests that the brain circuitry, rather than any specific brain area, is disrupted in people with the condition. Veterans with the worst symptoms tended to have the most pronounced abnormalities in their white matter. The damaged areas tended to be in fibers that connect pain-registering nerves to higher brain centers responsible for interpreting pain. Another affected area was the ventral attention network, which allows people to break their concentration to respond to a stimulus. This fits with the affected veterans' tendency to be easily distracted and to have trouble with memory formation.

Because the number of people studied was small, it is not yet possible to draw a clear distinction between an affected brain and a normal brain, Baraniuk says. He next wants to look at similar scans of people with chronic fatigue syndrome or fibromyalgia, both of which share some symptoms with GWS. "It's a very important paper," says Robert Haley of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, not least because it helps establish GWS as a treatable, physiological problem. But he says the team will have to examine dissected brain tissue from deceased veterans to better understand what the scans show. The findings still do not pinpoint a specific cause or mechanism for the disorder. However, this type of scan might help physicians distinguish people with the syndrome from others with similar symptoms. This could ensure that they receive long-term pain management rather than psychotherapy. That's good news for such people as Denise Nichols, who believes that the VA has avoided addressing the problems people like her have experienced. "We need help. Our bright hope is these researchers," she said. "We will continue to learn and examine ways to improve treatment, process claims and better care for these Veterans," the VA said in a statement. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Sara Reardon | 27 Mar 2013 ++]

Distinguished Warfare Medal Update

Critics of the new Distinguished Warfare Medal have a new objection to the honor: Military officials broke more than 100 years of tradition by creating it without getting support from lawmakers first. Doug Sterner, a military honors expert and archivist for the Hall of Valor awards database, said the Defense Department went against protocol by not consulting with Congress before establishing a new award. Fourteen of the top 16 military medals by order of precedence — including the Medal of Honor, Silver Star and Bronze Star — all received Congressional approval prior to being established. The other two medals, the Defense Distinguished Service Medal and Defense Superior Service Medal, were created through a presidential executive order. The new Distinguished Service Medal followed neither of those paths. "It's almost as if they tried to slip this one in the back door," Sterner said. "For a department that has been so quick to cite tradition on how they award medals, they went against it here."

On 12 MAR, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel announced plans for a 30-day review of the new medal following intense criticism from veterans groups and members

of Congress, mostly over its ranking above the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. More than two dozen senators have petitioned the Pentagon to lower the medal in the order of precedence, and 65 representatives have backed legislation to force military leaders to make that change. The new award, announced last month, was created to honor “extraordinary actions” of drone pilots and other troops performing heroic deeds far away from combat zones. Until this week, military leaders had insisted they would not be bullied into changing the ranking of the honor by outside groups, and questioned whether lawmakers were expanding their traditional authority by meddling in military medals. But Sterner said the decision to exclude Congress actually broke tradition. Defense officials dismissed that argument. Department spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Nate Christensen said federal code provides the defense secretary with “authority, direction, and control over the Department of Defense,” which includes the ability to create new awards. “Although a number of military medals have been authorized by Congress or the President, others have been established by the Secretary of Defense or the secretaries of the military departments,” he said. “For example, the Secretary of Defense established the Joint Service Commendation Medal and Joint Service Achievement Medal.”

But both of those rank well below combat awards like the Bronze Star with V and Purple Heart, Sterner said. “Given the importance of this, you’d think they’d want to consult with Congress.” Lawmakers praised Hagel’s decision to review the medal, but also added that it won’t slow their efforts to pass new legislation mandating its ranking be lowered. Joe Kasper, spokesman for Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., said he still intends to pass the rule as part of the department’s annual defense authorization bill. “If this was an attempt to put members of Congress on ice, it’s not going to work,” he said. “The congressman is going to push to get this in the statute, regardless the result of the review.” On Tuesday, Pentagon spokesman George Little said Hagel was confident the new award (created by his predecessor, Leon Panetta) was carefully and thoroughly analyzed within the Department of Defense. Hagel ordered the review, he said, to calm some of the criticism from outside groups. A final decision on the matter is expected by 12 APR. Debate on the annual authorization bills should begin around the same date. [Source: Stars & Stripes | Leo Shane | 13 MR 2013 ++]

GI Bill Update

As part of its ongoing transformation from paper-based to electronic claims processing, the Department of Veterans Affairs has continued to improve the automated payment of benefits for Veterans participating in the Post-9/11 GI Bill education program. As a result, VA is now providing benefit payments to currently enrolled students in an average of six days – cutting by more than half the processing time experienced during the spring enrollment period last year. This enhancement to VA's automated processing system, called the Long Term Solution (LTS), uses approximately 80 business rules to support end-to-end automation of Post-9/11 GI Bill claims, ensuring accurate payments without the need for manual handling. During the month of February, 46% of incoming documents (over 115,000) for enrolled students were fully automated, and an additional 33% were partially automated. For enrolled students starting a new semester of classes, processing is taking an average of six days to complete. For new students using the benefit for the first time, the average time to establish their eligibility under the Post-9/11 GI Bill is around 24 days. "We are happy to report that our newest technology has substantially reduced the amount of time it takes to process Veterans' education claims," said Under Secretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. "It's a good example of VBA's transformation that is delivering better service to the fast-growing number of Post 9/11 GI Bill participants." The rules-based processing approach LTS uses is also being built into VA's technology for VA's paperless disability claims processing—the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS). Over the past three and 1/2 years, VA has provided \$27 billion in Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits to approximately 938,000 Veterans, Servicemembers, and their families, and to the universities, colleges, and trade schools they attend. For more information on VA education benefits go to <http://www.gibill.va.gov/>. [Source: VA News Release 13 Mar 2013 ++]

POW/MIA Update

"Keeping the Promise", "Fulfill their Trust" and "No one left behind" are several of many mottos that refer to the efforts of the Department of Defense to recover those who became missing while serving our nation. The number of Americans who remain missing from conflicts in this century are: World War II (73,000+), Korean War (7,900+), Cold War (126), Vietnam War (1,655), 1991 Gulf War (0), and OEF/OIF (6). Over 600 Defense Department men and women -- both military

and civilian -- work in organizations around the world as part of DoD's personnel recovery and personnel accounting communities. They are all dedicated to the single mission of finding and bringing our missing personnel home. For a listing of all personnel accounted for since 2007 refer to http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/accounted_for.

For additional information on the Defense Department's mission to account for missing Americans, visit the Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) web site at <http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo> or call (703) 699-1420. The remains of the following MIA/POW's have been recovered, identified, and scheduled for burial since the publication of the last RAO Bulletin:

Vietnam

- None

Korea

- None

World War II

- The DPMO announced 28 MAR that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Korean War, were recently identified and are being returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army 1st Lt. John E. Terpning, of Mount Prospect, Ill., will be buried on April 3, in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington D.C. On May 7, 1944, Terpning was a pilot of a B-24D Liberator that departed Nadzab, New Guinea on a bombing mission. Due to mechanical troubles, the B-24D was delayed in departing the airbase and was unable to join the formation after takeoff. Neither the aircraft nor the nine other crewmen aboard the plane were seen after takeoff. In 1946, the War Department declared all ten men to be presumed dead. In 1973, a Papua New Guinea Forest Department official reported a wartime aircraft in the mountains northeast of the city of Lae. In October 1973, a team of Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) responded to the report and visited the site, where they found aircraft wreckage that corresponded to that of a B-24D. At that time the RAAF recovered possible human remains, which were transferred to the U.S. Army Mortuary in Tachikawa, Japan; however, given the limited technology at the time, no human remains were individually identified. In 1974, the remains were buried as a group at Arlington National Cemetery. In April 2008, a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) team was sent to

investigate and survey the crash site. The team recovered aircraft wreckage, including a radio call sign data plate that matched the aircraft, from a B-24D and additional remains. To identify the remains, scientists from JPAC and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory used circumstantial evidence and forensic identification tools such as dental comparisons and mitochondrial DNA, which matched Terpning's brother.

[Source: http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/news/news_releases Mar 2013 ++]

Sequestration Update

Congress will force military officials to reinstate tuition assistance funding to all services except the Coast Guard for the rest of the fiscal year after troops and veterans protested the end of the education benefit. On 20 MAR, the Senate included the tuition assistance rules as part of their plan to fund federal programs through September. The following day, the House agreed with the proposal, and the president is expected to sign it into law in coming days. Congress had until 27 MAR to pass a new budget bill or risk a government shutdown. But the tuition assistance provision was a surprise for supporters of the education benefit, since partisan infighting seemed to shelve the idea earlier in the week. Over the last few weeks, officials from the Marine Corps, Army, Air Force and Coast Guard stopped new enrollments to their respective tuition assistance programs. Each had previously provided \$250 per semester credit hour and up to \$4,500 a year to servicemembers pursuing college degrees. The new measure does not restore tuition assistance programs for the Coast Guard, since funding for that benefit comes from the Department of Homeland Security.

Service officials blamed sequestration — \$85 billion in mandatory agency spending cuts this year, half coming from the military — for the sudden funding change. But veterans advocates and lawmakers lamented the change as short-sighted and potentially devastating to student servicemembers midway through a degree program. Sen. Jim Inhofe (R-OK), one of the sponsors of the measure, said on the Senate floor that numerous troops he has spoken with were dismayed over service officials' decision to end the education benefit. He also questioned whether the move was more politics than financial need, adding that plenty of less important programs could cover the funding cuts. Under the amendment, military officials could cut tuition assistance programs for the remainder of the fiscal year, but only by the amount mandated under sequestration — about 8

percent. It would effectively undo the services' plans to zero out the program and use the savings elsewhere. Roughly 300,000 servicemembers used the military tuition assistance programs last year. The 8 percent funding cut will likely lower the number of applicants eligible for the program this year. But the congressional mandate will still allow tens of thousands of troops to continue their classes without finding new ways to pay for tuition.

Sen. Kay Hagan (D-NC), another amendment sponsor, said after the Senate vote that the tuition assistance program was the wrong place for military leaders to find savings. "We cannot balance our budget on the backs of servicemembers," she said. "The brave men and women who serve in uniform have never given up on our country, and today the Senate signaled that we won't give up on them." The Veterans of Foreign Wars, whose members logged more than 12,000 calls and emails to lawmakers in support of the program, praised the move. Ryan Gallucci, deputy legislative director for the group, said the education benefit was too valuable to lose. "As a former soldier who used tuition assistance, I'm happy to see that Congress agrees that the program is a win-win for the military," he said. "It not only develops better leaders but boosts troop morale." [Source: Stars & Stripes | Leo Shane | 21 Mar 2013 ++]

Legislation of Interest Update

S.492: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require States to recognize the military experience of veterans when issuing licenses and credentials to veterans, and for other purposes. This bill would require the Director of Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to coordinate with federal agencies and departments to hire 10,000 veterans to fill existing vacancies, utilizing the Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) authority over the next five years.

Sponsor: Senator Richard Burr (R-NC)

S.495: Careers for Veterans Act of 2013 - A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require Federal agencies to hire veterans, to require States to recognize the military experience of veterans when issuing licenses and credentials to veterans, and for other purposes Sponsor: Senator Richard Burr (R-NC)

S.522: Wounded Warrior Workforce Enhancement Act - A bill that would fund grants for universities to develop masters programs in orthotics and prosthetics.

Sponsor: Senator Richard J. Durbin (D-IL)

S.514: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide additional educational assistance under Post-9/11 Educational Assistance to veterans pursuing a degree in science, technology, engineering, math, or an area that leads to employment in a high-demand occupation, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH)

S.515: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend the Yellow Ribbon G.I. Education Enhancement Program to cover recipients of Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry scholarship, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH)

S.543: A bill to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to reorganize the Veterans Integrated Service Networks of the Veterans Health Administration, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Senator Richard Burr (R-NC)

H.R.975: To amend title 10, United States Code, to extend the duration of the Physical Disability Board of Review and to the expand the authority of such Board to review of the separation of members of the Armed Forces on the basis of a mental condition not amounting to disability, including separation on the basis of a personality or adjustment disorder. Sponsor: Representative Tim Walz (D-MN)

H.R.1132: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense to jointly ensure that the Vet Centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs have access to the Defense Personnel Record Image Retrieval system and the Veterans Affairs/Department of Defense Identity Repository system. Sponsor: Representative Jeff Denham (R-CA)

H.R.1134: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a grant program and pilot program designed to improve the delivery of health care to veterans residing in rural areas, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Representative Pete Gallego (D-TX)

H.R.1171: To amend title 40, United States Code, to improve veterans service organizations access to Federal surplus personal property. Sponsor: Representative Dan J. Benishek (R-MI)

H.R.1223: To amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to ensure that relocation of a servicemember to serve on active duty away from the servicemember's principal residence does not prevent the servicemember from refinancing a mortgage on that principal residence. Sponsor: Rep. Duncan D. Hunter (R-CA)

H.R.1251: To authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to make grants with minority serving institutions for the purpose of establishing verified delivery systems to address social and academic problems facing veterans enrolled at such institutions, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Gloria Negrete McLeod (D-CA-35)

H.R.1284: To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for coverage under the beneficiary travel program of the Department of Veterans Affairs of certain disabled veterans for travel for certain special disabilities rehabilitation, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Julia Brownley (D-CA-26)

H.R.1288: To direct the Secretary of Homeland Security to accept additional documentation when considering the application for veterans status of an individual who performed service as a coastwise merchant seaman during World War II, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. G.K. Butterfield, Jr. (D-NC-01)

H.R.1305: To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide clarification regarding eligibility for services under the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program. Sponsor: Rep. Brad Wenstrup (R-OH-02)

H.R.1316: To amend title 38, United States Code, to specify the responsibilities of the Directors and Assistant Directors of Veterans' Employment and Training. Sponsor: Rep. Bill H. Flores (R-TX-17)

H.R.1333: To amend title 38, United States Code, to grant family of members of the uniformed services temporary annual leave during the deployment of such members, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Matthew A. Cartwright (D-PA-17)

H.R.1344: To amend title 49, United States Code, to direct the Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security (Transportation Security Administration) to provide expedited air passenger screening to severely injured or disabled members of the

Armed Forces and severely injured or disabled veterans, and for other purposes.
Sponsor: Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI-02)

H.R.1357: To amend the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 to improve the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program by providing assistance under such program for certain training programs that are considered less than full-time. Sponsor: Rep. Bill Johnson (R-OH-06)

H.R.1372: To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a registry of certain veterans who were stationed at or underwent training at Canadian Forces Base Gagetown, New Brunswick, Canada, and for other purposes. Sponsor: Rep. Michael H. Michaud (D-ME-02)

H.R.1400: To amend title 38, United States Code, to clarify that children of certain veterans are eligible for the Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry scholarship.
Sponsor: Rep. C.W. Bill Young (R-FL-13)
[Source: TREA News for the Enlisted Mar 2013 ++]