



Federal Update for July 8 - 12, 2013



SBA Vet Issues Update

It is still a few steps away from reality, but the Department of Defense (DoD) may adopt a business contract award program based upon the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) existing "Vets First Contracting Program." This program puts qualified service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSBs) and veteran-owned small businesses (VOSBs) first in line for the award of appropriate VA contracts.

A significant step toward that end was taken when the U.S. House of Representatives approved a measure that, if also passed by the Senate and enacted, would order DoD to study the impact of adopting such a veteran-centric policy. The measure is an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), or Pentagon budget, introduced by Rep. Michael Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and passed unanimously by the House on 14 JUN. It directs the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the administrator of the Small Business Administration and Secretary of Veterans Affairs, to issue a report on the "impacts of Department of Defense contracting with (VOSBs and SDVOSBs) on veteran entrepreneurship and veteran unemployment."

Included in the mandated DoD report would also be "a description of the effect that increased economic opportunity for veterans has on issues such as veteran suicide and veteran homelessness." The amendment sets a deadline of 180 days from its enactment for the issuance of the report. The American Legion was instrumental in the formulation of the amendment, with Legion Small Business Task Force Chairman Bill Jenkins taking part in the actual writing of the measure. Jenkins is vice president of Skyline Unlimited, a Virginia-based SDVOSB that offers a variety of supportive services to veterans. He expressed delight at news of the amendment's passage, saying, "This is a great bill, a no-brainer and long overdue for our veteran business community." Jenkins and the Legion's National Economic

Commission staff are now appealing to members of the Senate to follow suit and pass a similar amendment. Another NDAA amendment offered by Rep. Fitzpatrick — that also won unanimous House passage — would require the services to continue offering tuition assistance to active-duty servicemembers at least through the end of fiscal year 2014. Earlier this year, such educational support had been threatened by sequestration. [Source: American Legion Leg Up 17 Jun 2013 ++]

Flag Legislation Update

For the ninth time in his career, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) proposed a flag-protection amendment in the Senate on 13 JUN. Hatch introduced Senate Joint Resolution 17, proposing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would give Congress the authority to protect the U.S. flag from physical desecration. On 22 JUN 1989, the U.S. Supreme Court decided in *Texas v. Johnson* that the state's flag-protection law violated the First Amendment; a year later, it declared the same was true for federal law. "This amendment is often misunderstood," said James E. Koutz, national commander of The American Legion. "It does not protect the U.S. flag. It merely returns to Congress the power to pass legislation that would protect the flag, a power that was taken away from them by the Supreme Court in 1989. It is time to correct this mistake – now." Hatch echoed Koutz's clarification in his own remarks, saying that even if the amendment was ratified, it "would not prohibit flag desecration. It would merely give Congress authority to do so."

If passed by Congress, the amendment would have to be ratified by three-fourths of the country's state governments before it became the Constitution's 28th amendment. The House version of the flag-amendment proposal, H.J. Res. 47, was introduced 22 MAY by Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL) and Rep. Daniel Lipinski (D-IL). "On this Flag Day, tens of millions of Americans will be inspired by the sight and beauty of the U.S. flag," Bachus said. "It is an appropriate time for Congress to begin to take steps to honor and protect the most recognized symbol of freedom and democracy in the world." Lipinski said that while the protection of the U.S. flag is "a responsibility for all Americans," he cherished First Amendment rights but firmly believed that "purposeful flag desecration is an offensive act that cannot and should not be tolerated." As a congressman representing a district with more than 30,000 veterans, Lipinski said he has "worked alongside too many

veterans – and attended far too many memorial ceremonies for soldiers killed in action – to ever think otherwise."

Rep. Nick Rahall (D-WV), a co-sponsor of the resolution, said America's patriots have fought and died to defend the U.S. flag for more than two centuries, "and this amendment makes clear that the American people, through their elected lawmakers, have the constitutional authority to protect their flag from desecration." Hatch noted that while voting Americans have the ultimate authority to change the Constitution's rules for government, "Congress should not deprive the American people of the opportunity to express their will on this important issue. The American people want that opportunity. All 50 state legislatures have indicated their support for a constitutional amendment to allow the protection of the flag. At a time when many issues divide us, the flag to which we pledge allegiance ought to be one thing that unites us." The proposed amendment is a single sentence: "The Congress shall have power to prohibit the physical desecration of the flag of the United States." Sen. Hatch's resolution has 21 original co-sponsors. [Source: American Legion Leg Up 17 Jun 2013 ++]

Flag Etiquette: The following guidelines are provided based on the Federal Flag Code and current law:

Displaying the American flag:

- Traditional guidelines call for displaying the flag in public only from sunrise to sunset. However, the flag may be displayed at all times if it's illuminated during darkness.
- It should not be displayed during rain, snow and wind storms unless it is an all-weather flag.
- It should be displayed often, but especially on national and state holidays and special occasions.
- The flag should be displayed on or near the main building of public institutions, schools during school days and polling places on election days.
- It should be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously.
- When carried in procession with other flags, the American flag should be either on the marching right (the flag's right) or to the front and center of the flag line. Salutes should be rendered when it is six paces from the viewer and held it until the flag has passed six paces beyond.

- When displayed on a float in a parade, the flag should be hung from a staff or suspended so it falls free; it should not be draped over a vehicle. Salutes should be rendered when it is six paces from the viewer and held it until the flag has passed six paces beyond.
- When displayed with another flag against a wall from crossed staffs, the American flag should be on its own right (left to a person facing the wall) and its staff should be in front of the other flag's staff.
- In a group of flags displayed from staffs, the American flag should be at the center and the highest point.
- When the flag is displayed other than from a staff it should be displayed flat, or suspended so that its folds fall free.
- When displayed over a street, place the union so it faces north or east, depending upon the direction of the street.
- When the flag is displayed from a staff projecting from a building, the union of the flag should be placed at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half staff.
- When suspended from a rope extending from the building on a pole, the flag should be hoisted out, union first from the building.
- When flags of states, cities or organizations are flown on the same staff, the American flag must be at the top.
- When other flags are flown from adjacent staffs, the American flag should be hoisted first and lowered last. It must be on the right of other flags and no other flag should stand higher than it.
- Flags of other nations should be flown from separate staffs. International custom dictates that flags of different nations be displayed at the same height in peacetime and be approximately the same size.
- When displayed flat against the wall on a speaker's platform, the flag should be above and behind the speaker with the union on the left side as the audience looks at it (again, the flag's right).
- When the flag hangs from a staff in a church or public place, it should appear to the audience on the left, the speaker's right. Any other flags displayed should be placed on the opposite side of the speaker.
- The flag may cover a casket, but should not cover a statue or monument for unveiling. On a casket, the union should be at the deceased person's head and heart, over the left shoulder. But the flag should be removed before the casket is lowered into the grave and should never touch the ground.

- Whenever the flag is displayed at half-staff, it should be first raised to the top. Lowering from half-staff is preceded by first raising it momentarily to the top.
- The flag should never be draped or drawn back in folds. Draped red, white and blue bunting should be used for decoration, with the blue at the top and red at the bottom.
- The flag may be flown at half-staff to honor a newly deceased federal or state government official by order of the president or the governor, respectively.
- On Memorial Day, the flag should be displayed at half-staff until noon.

Out of respect for the American flag, never:

- Dip it for any person or thing, even though state flags, regimental colors and other flags may be dipped as a mark of honor.
- Display it with the union down, except as a signal of distress.
- Let the flag touch anything beneath it: ground, floor, water, merchandise.
- Carry it horizontally, but always aloft.
- Fasten or display it in a way that will permit it to be damaged or soiled.
- Place anything on the flag, including letters, insignia, or designs of any kind.
- Use it for holding anything.
- Use it as wearing apparel, bedding or drapery.
- Use the flag for advertising or promotion purposes or print it on paper napkins, boxes or anything else intended for temporary use and discarded.
- The flag should not be used on a costume or athletic uniform. However, a flag patch may be attached to the uniform of patriotic organizations, military personnel, police officers and firefighters.

Disposal - When the flag is worn out or otherwise no longer a fitting emblem for display, it should be retired (i.e. destroyed) in a dignified way, preferably by burning. Most VFW and American Legion Posts will accept flags for proper disposal. When burning a dignified manner would be:

- Fold the flag in its customary manner.
- Ensure the fire is fairly large and of sufficient intensity to ensure complete burning of the flag.
- Place the flag on the fire.

- Those present should come to attention, salute the flag, recite the Pledge of Allegiance and have a brief period of silent reflection.
- After the flag is completely consumed, the fire should then be safely extinguished and the ashes buried.

Out of respect for the American flag, those in its presence should:

- During the hoisting or lowering of the flag or when it passes in parade or review, Americans should stand at attention facing the flag and place their right hand over the heart.
- Uniformed military members render the military salute.
- Un-uniformed servicemembers, military retirees, and veterans should render a hand salute during the hoisting, lowering, or passing of the U.S. flag.
- Men not in uniform should remove any headdress and hold it with their right hand at their left shoulder, the hand resting over the heart.
- Those who are not U.S. citizens should stand at attention.
- Small flags carried by individuals, such as those carried by civilian spectators at a parade, are not saluted.
- It is improper to salute with any object in the right hand or with a cigarette, cigar, or pipe in the mouth. [Source: Federal Flag Code & <http://usmilitary.about.com> Jun 2013 ++]

Gulf War Syndrome Update

One of the greatest tolls on a veteran with Gulf War Illness is the crippling but mysterious fatigue that can strike unpredictably and is exacerbated after physical exercise. It is often at the root of the condition, which is described by the Department of Veterans Affairs as a “chronic multisymptom disease.” Patients also commonly report joint and muscle pain, irritable bowel syndrome and respiratory disorders. Researchers at Georgetown University Medical Center, who frequently heard complaints about fatigue, suspected the symptom might be related to dysfunction in the central nervous system. But making such a determination has not been easy; though cases of Gulf War Illness are now 20 years old, the science of the disease has not evolved as rapidly as one might expect given that it affects an estimated 250,000 veterans who deployed to the Gulf War. Scientists still don’t understand why or how patients become ill. So the researchers at Georgetown designed a study to test how the brains of sick

veterans responded to exercise, the results of which were published Friday in PLOS ONE and can be reviewed at <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0063903>).

What they discovered surprised the team, said lead researcher Rakib Rayhan. They subjected 10 healthy controls and 28 veterans with Gulf War Illness to a series of exercise and memory challenges, measuring the blood flow to their brains before and after physical exertion with a functional magnetic resonance imaging scan. First, they found that veterans had distinct responses to the exercise challenges, which were two bicycle stress tests. One group of 10 subjects had abnormally rapid heartbeats — a clinical condition known as orthostatic tachycardia — while the remaining veterans experienced a significant increase in pain sensitivity. Meanwhile, the control group exhibited none of these differences. In both subgroups, the evidence suggested dysfunction in the central nervous system. Something was amiss in the way the veterans' bodies handled physical exertion, but the researchers didn't know why. The functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans, though, held important clues. For the group with rapid heartbeats, imaging showed atrophy of the brain stem, which regulates heart rate. And in the subjects with increased soreness and discomfort, the researchers saw grey matter atrophy in adjacent regions of the brain associated with pain perception.

Before the exercise, the veterans' brains in both groups showed increased activity while trying to complete a memory test as compared to the controls. Rayhan described this as a kind of compensation. "The brain is realizing there's damage somewhere and something else takes over," he said, likening the extra activity to a crutch. Yet after exercise, the difference was shocking. When veterans in the group with increased pain took the test, their brains appeared blank, and both groups lost the compensatory activity. "You're taking the crutch away from them by doing this exercise," said Rayhan, adding that it might explain why veterans with Gulf War Illness feel cognitively exhausted and generally fatigued after physical exertion. Rayhan is careful to note that the study isn't a "linchpin" for the science of Gulf War Illness. One of the study's limitations is its inability to demonstrate whether the brain atrophy is a result of a decades-old injury or exposure to wartime hazards like nerve agents, oil fires or pesticides. It may, for example, be the brain's response to chronic pain. Yet, Rayhan hopes that both VA

and civilian physicians take his team's research into consideration when treating a veteran with Gulf War Illness. Another recent study by Rayhan and his collaborators found that changes in the brain may be linked to the disease. These initial results are promising to veterans, many of whom have complained for years that doctors attribute their disease to war-related stress or a psychological disorder, and prescribe medication or treatments that don't alleviate their symptoms. [Source: Forbes | Rebecca Ruiz | 14 Jun 2013 ++]

GI Bill Update

The federal government is testing, and plans to soon implement, a broad new complaint reporting system designed to root out the "bad apples" among education institutions that serve troops and veterans, a Defense Department official told Congress. Frederick Vollrath, assistant secretary of defense for readiness and force management, said the automated system, scheduled to start 1 SEP, will coordinate information and efforts across the Defense, Veterans Affairs, Education and Justice departments, as well as the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. This will help federal officials more easily figure out which schools create the most problems for student veterans, Vollrath said. "Putting them all together ... will give us a better picture of what's going on," he told the Senate Appropriations Committee's defense panel 12 JUN. "We will share problems. We will also go back to the institution, and make sure that we can follow up with the student."

The new system is part of a wide-ranging government response to charges that some for-profit schools take advantage of military and veteran students, scooping up their federal education benefits while providing little in return. Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL), who has sharply criticized for-profit schools, led the hearing, pressing Vollrath to do more and expressing concern about the large number of students on tuition assistance attending for-profit schools. "What I worry about is someone ... who signs up for a worthless school, something where the diploma, if it ever happens, doesn't take you anywhere," Durbin said. "We haven't done our military any favors if that happens."

Representatives of for-profit schools strongly objected to Durbin's characterizations, saying that while there have been some bad actors, most for-profits serve students well. Military students have been flocking to such schools,

they added, because they have more quickly and thoroughly adopted the flexible types of classes that active-duty troops need. Vollrath echoed that sentiment, saying “for-profit schools were among the first to emphasize online education, a model that best fits the needs of our highly mobile service members.”

While the hearing brought out sharp disagreements on some issues, there was consensus on the importance of maintaining tuition assistance. Some services attempted to suspend TA earlier this year, citing budget shortfalls, but a loud outcry and quick action from veterans groups led Congress to mandate that the program continue as before.

In addition to developing the complaint reporting system, officials also have required schools to sign a memorandum of understanding to participate in tuition assistance. That memorandum requires schools to disclose certain information to military students. A revised version of that document, expected to contain more strict rules, is in development, but DoD would not say when it will be released. Jim Sweizer, vice president for military programs at for-profit American Military University — the country’s top destination for students using tuition assistance — praised DoD’s efforts. Initiatives like the complaint reporting system will help differentiate his school from the kind that give the business a bad name, Sweizer said. “It’s long overdue. We fully support weeding out the bad players in the sector, because we get caught up in this frenzy,” he said. [Source: ArmyTimes | George Altman | 14 Jun 2013 ++]

GI Bill Update 2

Bipartisan legislation that would force public colleges and universities to charge only in-state tuition rates to troops and veterans — if they want to keep receiving GI Bill payments — is facing strong opposition from schools that could see revenues drop under the proposal. Two competing proposals are pending before Congress: the GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act, which would make schools reduce tuition charges; and the Veterans Education Equity Act, which would increase GI Bill tuition payments for nonresident students. The House Veterans’ Affairs Committee approved the GI Bill Tuition Fairness Act on 8 MAY, but the Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee has yet to decide which, if any, measure to approve. Veterans’ groups favor charging in-state tuition to all veterans, as well as for spouses and children using transferred GI Bill benefits.

Ryan Gallucci of Veterans of Foreign Wars said the purpose of the GI Bill is “to offer a free, public education and modest living stipend to eligible veterans, allowing them to treat college as a full-time job without worrying about financial stability.” That is not the case for about 20 percent of student veterans attending public colleges and universities because the Post-9/11 GI Bill covers only in-state tuition rates, leaving nonresident veterans to cover the difference out of pocket. “This oversight forces veterans to either drop out or find other ways to pay for college through financial aid programs, full-time employment or amassing student loan debt even when they make a good faith effort to legally reside in a state and attend a public school,” Gallucci said. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in a statement provided to the Senate, estimates the difference between average in-state and nonresident tuition is \$8,655 a year. But that difference would represent a drop in revenue for schools if they are forced to charge the lower rates.

Practical problems were also raised by the association because in most states, tuition rates and rules can be changed only by state legislatures. “We do not think it is realistic to expect 40 states to substantially amend their state tuition laws prior to August 1, 2014,” the association statement says, referring to the effective date of the change in the Senate bill. Robert Norton of the Military Officers Association of America said he hopes Congress does not take too long to decide what to do about in-state tuition rates. “This legislation comes at a critical time when more service members than average will be leaving active service due to the drawdown of our forces and the withdrawal from Afghanistan,” he said. Norton said it is also important to clarify in the bill that spouses and children are covered because many of them enroll in public college but are not state residents. The Veterans Affairs Department is not taking sides, but it recognizes problems could arise. “VA cannot predict what reductions in offerings by educational institutions would result from this requirement,” Curtis Coy, VA’s deputy undersecretary for economic opportunity, said of the bill that would force states to lower tuition rates for nonresident veterans. “In-state tuition rules are set by individual states and are undoubtedly driven by overall fiscal factors and other policy,” Coy said. “While VA is sympathetic to the issue of rising tuition costs, it is difficult to endorse the proposed legislation until we know more about the impact.” He expressed equal concern about the alternative, under which VA would cover full tuition and fees for all student veterans, including the higher nonresident rates that are currently not paid. “VA cannot support the proposed

legislation,” Coy said, warning it would make GI Bill benefits more complicated for both schools and veterans to understand. “VA continues to receive complaints from participants regarding confusion about exactly how much they will receive in tuition and fees under the program. This bill would exacerbate that problem,” he said. [Source: American Legion Leg Up 17 Jun 2013 ++]

DoD Sexual Abuse Update

On 12 JUN, in an open session of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), an amendment was passed that would establish a new, automatic review process for cases of military sexual assault (MSA). The measure, supported by Committee Chair Sen. Carl Levin (D-MI), would also prevent commanding officers from overturning verdicts of guilty, and would establish retaliation in such cases as a crime. Levin’s amendment, which passed committee by a 17-9 vote, replaced a proposal supported by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY). Her measure would have taken away the authority of commanding officers to prosecute any major criminal case, including MSA. The amendment is included in the proposed National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2014. The SASC approved the \$625 billion spending package on 13 JUN, clearing the bill for a full Senate vote. That same day, the House of Representatives passed by voice vote an amendment to its proposed version of the NDAA (H.R.1960) that would establish a mandatory two-year prison sentence for any servicemember convicted of rape or sexual assault. Other provisions included in H.R.1960 are the removal of commanding officers’ authority to overturn verdicts of guilty in MSA cases, and a requirement that servicemembers found guilty of rape or sexual assault be either dismissed from the military or receive dishonorable discharges.

In the SASC’s open session last week, Gillibrand defended her proposal to take commanding officers completely out of the legal process when it came to MSA cases. "To reverse this crisis, I do not believe it will be enough if we do not seize the opportunity and embrace the kind of systemic reform that will truly increase accountability and objectivity – and trust in the military justice system – by having trained, legal military professionals handle the serious crimes from the beginning," she said. Sen. Levin, whose Amendment 183 was adopted by the SASC, said his measure would address the problem of retaliation in MSA cases by making it a crime "and establishing an expectation that commander will be held accountable for failure to establish a climate in which victims can report such

offenses without fear of retaliation." Earlier this year, the Pentagon reported that about 26,000 servicemembers suffered MSA last year, but only 3,374 individuals reported the crimes. "We have a problem with a culture that has taken inadequate steps to correct this situation," Levin said. "The members of this committee have worked to come up with a strong response to these problems. Surely most of us, on both sides of the aisle, have made important contributions to this legislative initiative."

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

- The DPMO announced 26 JUN that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Vietnam War, has been accounted for and will be buried with full military honors along with two of his crew members. Army Spc. 5 John L. Burgess, 21, of Sutton Bay, Mich., was the crew chief of a UH-1H Iroquois helicopter that crashed in Binh Phuoc Province, South Vietnam. Also killed in the crash were 1st Lt. Leslie F. Douglas Jr., of Verona, Miss.; 1st Lt. Richard Dyer, of Central Falls, R.I.; and Sgt. 1st Class Juan Colon-Diaz, of Comerio, Puerto Rico. Another crew member, Pfc. John Goosman, survived the crash and was rescued. Remains representing Dyer, Colon-Diaz, and

Burgess, will be buried as a group in a single casket, on July 2, at Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. On June 30, 1970, while on a command and control mission, the helicopter was struck by enemy fire, causing it to crash. Shortly thereafter, friendly forces recovered remains of Douglas, Colon-Diaz, and Dyer. The three men were individually identified and buried with full military honors. At that time, no remains were attributed to Burgess. From 1992 to 2012, more than a dozen joint U.S./Socialist Republic of Vietnam (S.R.V.) teams investigated the case, in Binh Phuoc Province, recovering human remains, personal effects, military equipment, and aircraft wreckage associated with this loss. Burgess was accounted for using forensic and circumstantial evidence.

Korea

- The DPMO announced 20 JUN that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, missing in action from the Korean War, have been identified and will be returned to his family for burial with full military honors. Army Cpl. Marvin E. Omans, 20, of Clinton, Mo., will be buried June 24, in Little Rock, Ark. In late November 1950, Omans and elements of the 31st Regimental Combat Team (RCT) were deployed along the east side of the Chosin Reservoir near P'ungnyuri Inlet, in North Korea, when the unit was attacked by overwhelming enemy forces. On Dec. 1, 1950, remnants of the 31st RCT, known historically as Task Force Faith, began a fighting withdrawal to a more defensible position near Hagaru-ri, south of the reservoir. On Dec. 3, 1950, enemy forces attacked a defensive perimeter established by the 31st RCT. It was during this attack that Omans was reported missing. Between 1991 and 1994, North Korea gave the United States 208 boxes believed to contain the remains of 200-400 U.S. service members. North Korean documents, turned over with some of the boxes, indicated that some of the human remains were recovered from the area where Omans was last seen. In the identification of Oman's remains, scientists from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL) used circumstantial evidence, compiled by DPMO and JPAC researchers, and forensic identification tools, such as mitochondrial DNA-which matched Omans' sister and nephew. Using modern technology, identifications continue to be made from remains that were previously turned over by North Korean officials.

World War II

- The Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO) announced 14 JUN that the remains of a U.S. serviceman, who was lost during World War II, have been identified and are being returned for burial with full military honors. Army Staff Sgt. James M. McKain, of Philadelphia, Pa., will be buried on June 20, in Arlington National Cemetery near Washington, D.C. On May 7, 1944, McKain was aboard 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 McKain, 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, an official from the Papua New Guinea Forest Department reported finding a wartime aircraft in the mountains northwest of the city of Lae. In October 1973, a team from the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) responded to the report and visited the site, where they found aircraft wreckage that corresponded to a U.S. military B-24D. The RAAF recovered possible human remains, which were transferred to the U.S. Army Mortuary in Tachikawa, Japan. Given the limited technology at the time, the remains could not be individually identified. In 1974, the remains of the crew were buried as a group at Arlington National Cemetery. In April 2008, a Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (JPAC) team investigated and surveyed the crash site. The team recovered additional remains and aircraft wreckage, including a radio call sign data plate that matched the crew's B-24D. 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 McKain's niece, grand-niece, and grand-nephew.

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

Veteran Hearing/Mark-up Schedule

Following is the current schedule of recent and future Congressional hearings and markups pertaining to the veteran community. Congressional hearings are the principal formal method by which committees collect and analyze information in the early stages of legislative policymaking. Hearings usually include oral testimony from witnesses, and questioning of the witnesses by members of

Congress. When a U.S. congressional committee meets to put a legislative bill into final form it is referred to as a mark-up. Veterans are encouraged to contact members of these committees prior to the event listed and provide input on what they want their legislator to do at the event.

- **July 9, 2013.** The House Veterans Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Health intends to hold a legislative hearing on health related bills. 10:00 A.M.; 334 Cannon

Tentative Bill List:

- Draft Bill XXX-- “Veterans Choice-Long Term Care” Certified Adult Foster Home (Miller(FL)
- H.R. 1612-- To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to convey a parcel of land in Tuskegee, Alabama, to Tuskegee University, and for other purposes (Rogers (AL)
- H.R. 2065-- Safe Housing for Homeless Veterans Act (McKinley (WV)
- H.R. 1143-- Tinnitus Research and Treatment Act of 2013 (Michaud (ME)
- H.R. 1702-- Veterans Transportation Service Act (Barber (AZ)

- **July 10, 2013.** The House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs will hold a joint hearing with the House Committee on Armed Services entitled, “DOD and VA Collaboration to assist Service Members Returning to Civilian Life.” 10:00 A.M.; 2118 Rayburn [Source: Veterans Corner w/Michael Isam 28 Jun 2013 ++]

Veteran Legislation as of 27 JUN 2013

For a listing of Congressional bills of interest to the veteran community introduced in the 113th Congress refer to this Bulletin’s “**House & Senate Veteran Legislation**” attachment. Support of these bills through cosponsorship by other legislators is critical if they are ever going to move through the legislative process for a floor vote to become law. A good indication of that likelihood is the number of cosponsors who have signed onto the bill. Any number of members may cosponsor a bill in the House or Senate. At <http://thomas.loc.gov> you can review a copy of each bill’s content, determine its current status, the committee it has been assigned to, and if your legislator is a sponsor or cosponsor of it. To determine what bills, amendments your representative has sponsored,

cosponsored, or dropped sponsorship on refer to <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d111/sponlst.html>.

Grassroots lobbying is the most effective way to let your Congressional representatives know your wants and dislikes. Members of Congress are the most receptive and open to suggestions from their constituents. The key to increasing cosponsorship support on veteran related bills and subsequent passage into law is letting legislators know of veterans' feelings on issues. You can reach their Washington office via the Capital Operator direct at (866) 272-6622, (800) 828-0498, or (866) 340-9281 to express your views. Otherwise, you can locate your legislator's phone number, mailing address, or email/website to communicate with a message or letter of your own making at <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d111/sponlst.html>. Refer to http://www.thecapitol.net/FAQ/cong_schedule.html for dates that you can access them on their home turf.

FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF VETERAN RELATED LEGISLATION INTRODUCED IN THE HOUSE AND SENATE SINCE THE LAST BULLETIN WAS PUBLISHED:

- H.R.2327: Veterans Economic Opportunity Administration Act of 2013. A Bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish in the Department of Veterans Affairs a Veterans Economic Opportunity Administration, and for other purposes.
- H.R.2341: Veterans Pension Protection Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to consider the resources of individuals applying for pension that were recently disposed of by the individuals for less than fair market value when determining the eligibility of such individuals for such pension, and for other purposes.
- H.R.2344: TBI Treatment Act. A bill to direct the Secretary of Defense to carry out a pilot program for investigational treatment of members of the Armed Forces for traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder.
- H.R.2358: Preference for Local Veteran Contractors Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to give preference to local contractors, and for other purposes.
- H.R.2366: World War I American Veterans Centennial Commemorative Coin Act. A bill to require the Secretary of the Treasury to mint coins in commemoration of the centennial of World War I.

- H.R.2382: Prioritizing Urgent Claims for Veterans Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a priority for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in processing certain claims for compensation.
- H.R.2412: Veterans Health Access Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to consider the best interest of the veteran when determining whether the veteran should
- H.R.2423: Disabled Veterans' Access to Medical Exams Improvement Act. A bill to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into contracts with private physicians to conduct medical disability examinations.
- H.R.2485: Helping Homeless Veterans Act of 2013. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to extend programs assisting homeless veterans and other veterans with special needs, and for other purposes.
- H.R.2519: A bill to direct the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide assistance for individuals affected by exposure to Agent Orange, and for other purposes.
- H.R.2527: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide veterans with counseling and treatment for sexual trauma that occurred during inactive duty training.
- H.R.2528: A bill to establish a task force in the Department of Veterans Affairs to assess the retention and training of claims processors.
- S.1148: Veterans Benefits Claims Faster Filing Act. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide notice of average times for processing claims, and for other purposes.
- S.1155: Rural Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act. A bill to provide for advance appropriations for certain information technology accounts of the Department of Veterans Affairs, to include mental health professionals in training programs of the Department, and for other purposes.
- S.1165: Access to Appropriate Immunizations for Veterans Act of 2013. A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for certain requirements relating to the immunization of veterans, and for other purposes.
- S.1174: A bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 65th Infantry Regiment, known as the Borinqueneers.

- S.1197: National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014. An original bill to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2014 for military activities of the Department of Defense, for military construction, and for defense activities of the Department of Energy, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes.
- S.1211: A bill to amend title 38, United States Code, to prohibit the use of the phrases GI Bill and Post-9/11 GI Bill to give a false impression of approval or endorsement by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- S.1216: A bill to improve and increase the availability of on-job training and apprenticeship programs carried out by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

[Source: <http://www.loc.gov> & <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills> Jun 2013 ++]