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1. [Veterans could have Social Security disability benefits expedited](#). Veterans with a Department of Veterans Affairs disability compensation rating of 100 percent Permanent and Total will soon have their applications for Social Security disability benefits processed faster, the Social Security Administration announced Wednesday.
2. [Before Korean family reunions, fears of false hope](#). Roughly 500 South Koreans plan to take part in a program to reunite relatives in North Korea. More than 260 North Koreans are expected to take part. If these meetings take place, it will be a positive sign for inter-Korean relations and a tearful relief to families separated by the world's most heavily fortified border.
3. [Pentagon's contracts plummet in cruelest month](#). Poet T.S. Eliot called April the cruelest month. Defense contractors would pick January.
4. [After Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Brain-Injured Veterans Search for Solace](#). [Hyperlink to Article](#) **The Wall Street Journal:** Cpl. Bunce is one of 119 brain-injured veterans that the VA has placed in privately run group homes around the U.S., immersing them in therapies for movement, memory and speech, while gently exposing them to civilian life.
5. [Bill would improve health care for rural veterans](#). [Hyperlink to Article](#) **The Record-Courier:** Sen. Dean Heller, R-Nev., and Tom Udall, D-N.M., have introduced legislation designed to improve access to health care for veterans living in rural areas.
6. [SES shakeup: Reform or hissing contest?](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Federal News Radio:** Two members of Congress, Rep. Jeff Miller (R-Fla.) and Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) have introduced bills that would make it easier to fire members of the SES, starting at the Department of Veterans Affairs. The VA has one of the largest numbers of senior executives after the Defense Department and Homeland Security.
7. [Legislative panel stalls vets home bill](#). [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Grand Island Independent:** The Legislature's Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee rejected advancing LB935 for floor debate on Wednesday morning. The bill was meant as a way to undo the governor's July 2013 decision to move the Grand Island Veterans Home to Kearney.

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8. [Twin Cities pledge to end vet homelessness. **Hyperlink to Article Minnesota Daily:**](#) Minneapolis and St. Paul joined two other cities last month in a pact to eliminate veteran homelessness by 2015. Though some University of Minnesota experts say the initiative is encouraging, they're also skeptical of its feasibility and limited scope.
9. [Zion House: Avon Haven For Female Veterans Recovering From Trauma. **Hyperlink to Article WXXI-TV \(Audio\):**](#) Senator Kirsten Gillibrand was in Avon Tuesday visiting the residents of Zion House, one of the first transitional homes in the country for homeless female veterans.
10. [Richard Cowart: Returning soldiers deserve high level of care. **Hyperlink to Article The Tennessean:**](#) Middle Tennessee is fortunate to have outstanding Department of Veterans Affairs facilities in Nashville and Murfreesboro, but with more than 493,000 veterans living across Tennessee, significant resources will be needed not only from the VA, but also from private providers.
11. [American Legion PTSD survey gains ground. **Hyperlink to Article The Augusta Chronicle:**](#) The American Legion is urging veterans with traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder to participate in a voluntary online survey it has launched to gather information about the care and treatment received for the two conditions.
12. [American Legion seeking vets' input for PTSD, TBI survey. **Hyperlink to Article Army Times:**](#) The American Legion is seeking veterans with traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder to participate in an online survey to learn more about their injuries, treatment and care.
13. [Pasco jail opens unit for military veterans. **Hyperlink to Article The Miami Herald \(AP\):**](#) The Pasco County Jail now has a housing unit dedicated to military veterans. The unit which holds 32 inmates opened Tuesday. It will offer a range of services for veterans, including counseling, rehabilitation, job placement, life skills and outreach programs.
14. [Long-awaited Veterans Court ready to get underway in Blair. **Hyperlink to Article Altoona Mirror:**](#) After almost two years of planning, Blair County officials are ready to begin a Magisterial District Veterans Court that will give those who served the nation and now are in trouble with the law a chance to avoid having a criminal record and receive services at the Van Zandt VA Medical Center in Altoona.

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15. [VA Concedes Whistleblower's Allegations Were True, Including That It Ignored Veterans' Suicidal Tendencies.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **International Business Times:** A government whistleblower who suffered retaliation from his agency has been vindicated by a Department of Veterans Affairs admission that it failed to reach out to 2,000 veterans in a research study who said they had suicidal ideas, many of whom later committed suicide.

16. [Wounded veterans take their place on Paralympian team.](#) As members of the U.S. Army, Rico Roman and Jen Lee are part of America's first line of defense. As members of the U.S. Paralympics Sled Hockey team, Roman and Lee are the last line of defense.

17. [Tuscaloosa man pleads guilty to defrauding Veterans Affairs of nearly \\$43,000 over 5 years.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **AL.com:** A Tuscaloosa man pleaded guilty Tuesday to fraudulently receiving nearly \$43,000 from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs over five years.

18. [Woman sentenced to defrauding Dept. of Veteran Affairs.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **WVEC-TV:** A Richmond woman was sentenced Wednesday to twenty months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release, for defrauding the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

19. **VA / VSO-MSO Hearings as February 20, 2014:**
 - **February 20, 2014.** HVAC Health will be holding a field hearing in Camarillo, California.
 - **February 25, 2014.** House Veterans' Affairs Committee and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee will hold a hearing to receive a legislative presentation of the Disabled American Veterans.
 - **February 26, 2014.** HVAC, Subcommittee on Health will conduct an oversight hearing entitled, "VA Accountability: Assessing Actions Taken in Response to Subcommittee Oversight."
 - **February 27, 2014.** Hearing of the Economic Opportunity Subcommittee of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs (HVAC EO) entitled, "VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program: Further Performance and Workload Management Improvements Needed."
 - **March 5, 2014.** House Veterans' Affairs Committee and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee will hold a joint hearing to receive the legislative presentation of Veterans of Foreign Wars.

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- **March 6, 2014.** House Veterans' Affairs Committee and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will hold a joint hearing to receive the legislative presentations of Veterans Organizations: BVA, JWV, MOPH, AMVETS, TREA, MOAA, VVA, NGUAS and NASDVA.
- **March 12, 2014.** House Veterans' Affairs Committee and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will hold a joint hearing to receive the legislative presentations of Veterans Organizations: PVA, IAVA, GSW, WWP, FRA, AFSA, NCAO, AXPOW.
- **March 25, 2014.** SAC-MILCON-VA FY15 Budget Hearing.
- **March 26, 2014.** House Veterans' Affairs Committee and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee will hold a joint hearing to receive the legislative presentations of The American Legion.
- **March 27, 2014.** HAC-MILCON-VA FY15 Budget Hearing.

20. Today in History:

- [1792](#) – The [Postal Service Act](#), establishing the [United States Post Office Department](#), is signed by [President George Washington](#).
- [1810](#) – [Andreas Hofer](#), [Tirolean patriot](#) and leader of [rebellion](#) against [Napoleon's](#) forces, is [executed](#).
- [1813](#) – [Manuel Belgrano](#) defeats the [royalist](#) army of [Pío de Tristán](#) during the [Battle of Salta](#).
- [1835](#) – [Concepción, Chile](#) is destroyed by an [earthquake](#).
- [1846](#) – Polish insurgents lead an [uprising in Kraków](#) to incite a fight for national independence.
- [1864](#) – [American Civil War](#): [Battle of Olustee](#) occurs – the largest battle fought in [Florida](#) during the war.
- [1865](#) – End of the [Uruguayan War](#), with a peace agreement between President [Tomás Villalba](#) and rebel leader [Venancio Flores](#), setting the scene for the destructive [War of the Triple Alliance](#).
- [1873](#) – The [University of California](#) opens its first [medical school](#) in [San Francisco, California](#).
- [1901](#) – The legislature of [Hawaii Territory](#) convenes for the first time.
- [1931](#) – The [Congress of the United States](#) approves the construction of the [San Francisco – Oakland Bay Bridge](#) by the state of [California](#).
- [1933](#) – The Congress of the United States proposes the [Twenty-first Amendment to the United States Constitution](#) that will end [Prohibition in the United States](#).
- [1933](#) – [Adolf Hitler secretly meets](#) with German industrialists to arrange for financing of the [Nazi Party's](#) upcoming election campaign.
- [1935](#) – [Caroline Mikkelsen](#) becomes the first woman to set foot in [Antarctica](#).
- [1942](#) – Lieutenant [Edward O'Hare](#) becomes America's first [World War II flying ace](#).
- [1943](#) – American [movie studio](#) executives agree to allow the [Office of War Information](#) to [censor](#) movies.

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- 1943 – [The Saturday Evening Post](#) publishes the first of [Norman Rockwell's Four Freedoms](#) in support of [United States President Franklin Roosevelt's 1941 State of the Union address](#) theme of [Four Freedoms](#).
- 1944 – [World War II](#): The "[Big Week](#)" began with American bomber raids on [German aircraft](#) manufacturing centers.
- 1944 – World War II: The [United States](#) takes [Eniwetok](#) Island.
- 1952 – [Emmett Ashford](#) becomes the first [African-American umpire](#) in organized [baseball](#) by being authorized to be a substitute umpire in the Southwestern International League.
- 1956 – The [United States Merchant Marine Academy](#) becomes a permanent Service Academy
- 1959 – The [Avro Arrow](#) program to design and manufacture [supersonic jet fighters](#) in [Canada](#) is cancelled by the [Diefenbaker](#) government amid much political debate.
- 1962 – [Mercury program](#): While aboard [Friendship 7](#), [John Glenn](#) becomes the first American to orbit the [earth](#), making three orbits in 4 hours, 55 minutes.
- 1965 – [Ranger 8](#) crashes into the [moon](#) after a successful mission of photographing possible landing sites for the [Apollo program astronauts](#).
- 1971 – The United States [Emergency Broadcast System](#) is accidentally activated in an erroneous national alert.
- 1978 – The last [Order of Victory](#) is bestowed upon [Leonid Brezhnev](#).
- 1986 – The [Soviet Union](#) launches its [Mir](#) spacecraft. Remaining in orbit for 15 years, it is occupied for 10 of those years.
- 1987 – [Unabomber](#): In [Salt Lake City](#), a bomb explodes in a [computer](#) store.
- 1988 – The [Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast](#) votes to secede from [Azerbaijan](#) and join [Armenia](#), triggering the [Nagorno-Karabakh War](#).
- 1989 – An [IRA](#) bomb destroys a section of a [British Army](#) barracks in [Ternhill, England](#)
- 1991 – A gigantic statue of [Albania's](#) long-time leader, [Enver Hoxha](#), is brought down in the Albanian capital [Tirana](#), by mobs of angry protesters.
- 1998 – American figure skater [Tara Lipinski](#) becomes the youngest gold-medalist at the [Winter Olympics](#) in [Nagano, Japan](#).
- 2003 – During a [Great White concert](#) in [West Warwick, Rhode Island](#), a [pyrotechnics](#) display [sets the Station nightclub ablaze](#), killing 100 and injuring over 200 others.
- 2005 – [Spain](#) becomes the first country to vote in a [referendum on ratification](#) of the [proposed Constitution](#) of the [European Union](#), passing it by a substantial margin, but on a low turnout.
- 2006 – [United Liberal Democrats](#), [the three top political parties](#) was merged into [Grand National Party](#)
- 2009 – [Two Tamil Tigers aircraft packed with C4 explosives](#) en route to the national airforce headquarters are shot down by the Sri Lankan military before reaching their target, in a [kamikaze](#) style attack.
- 2010 – In Madeira Island, Portugal, heavy rain causes [floods and mudslides](#), resulting in at least 43 deaths, in the worst disaster in the [history of the archipelago](#).
- 2013 – The smallest [Extrasolar planet](#), [Kepler-37b](#) is discovered.