

From: [Wayne Gatewood, Jr](#)
To: [Wayne Gatewood, Jr](#)
Subject: VA News for Wednesday, February 26, 2014
Date: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 5:43:52 PM
Attachments: [RBI - Announcement Press Release \(February 2014\).pdf](#)

Happy Wednesday good people. Hope you and yours are well.

For Today - Especially for my fellow small business owners. *"Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must outrun the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning in Africa, a lion wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the slowest gazelle or it will starve. It doesn't matter whether you're a lion or a gazelle - when the sun comes up, you'd better be running."*

DOD Contracts Awarded for Wednesday, February 26, 2014.

<http://www.defense.gov/contracts/contract.aspx?contractid=5231>

DOD Contracts Awarded for Tuesday, February 25, 2014.

<http://www.defense.gov/contracts/contract.aspx?contractid=5230>

Reserve Officers Association (ROA) SmartBrief for Wednesday, February 26, 2014.

<http://www2.smartbrief.com/servlet/encodeServlet?issueid=8C2E9536-6F1C-4C05-A202-0F81DDB5A8EF&sid=22cbe9eb-3ef0-4eca-8105-ef9f466dc32d>

Reserve Officers Association (ROA) SmartBrief for Tuesday, February 25, 2014.

<http://www2.smartbrief.com/servlet/encodeServlet?issueid=D46DFE76-1F44-4D94-8B51-171BDD14BD11&sid=22cbe9eb-3ef0-4eca-8105-ef9f466dc32d>

AFCEA Department of Homeland Security Small Business Partnership Symposium with Matchmaking.

Monday, March 10, 2014, Ronald Reagan Bldg., Washington, DC. To register, go to this Link:

<http://www.afcea.org/events/homeland/14/matchmaking.asp>

California Disabled Veteran Business Alliance (CADVBE) Weekly Newsletter.

<http://track.namastelight.com/v/443/9eb9a2696ee6bbea193de08efa1475b4b33dfad1903dcf53>

The RMOA Business Association (RMOA) Announces Graduation of the Pilot Class of the

RMOA Business Institute (RBI) New Veteran-owned Business Owners. Seven-Student class Includes 3 VOSB, 2 SDVOSB, and 2 Woman-owned businesses. *Please see attached pdf!*

Set-Aside Alert - Meet DOI's Small Business Director Mark Teskey at Policy Maker's Luncheon on March

18, 2014. <http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?ca=611f6fee-93cf-490f-b1e7-3cd32ddd542f&c=c0438ac0-31f4-11e3-a841-d4ae529a8575&ch=c1218eb0-31f4-11e3-a957-d4ae529a8575> All small businesses are invited to attend!

Source If you've recently been assigned to the Individual Ready Reserves (IRR), your Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) coverage will end 120 days after your assignment date. The IRR is generally composed of former active duty or reserve... military personnel who receive no pay and are not obligated to drill, conduct annual training, or participate in any military activities (except for periodic Muster activities) until ordered by Presidential Authority. The good news is you can get similar coverage through Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI). But you must apply within 1 year and 120 days from the date you were assigned to the IRR. If you apply for VGLI within the first 240 days of your IRR assignment, then you can get VGLI without providing proof of good health—even if you have a serious injury or medical condition. For more information and to apply:

<http://www.benefits.va.gov/INSURANCE/apply-for-VGLI.asp>

Small and Emerging Contractors Advisory Forum (SECAF) - Executive Briefing - Insights and Opportunity - The CIO Transformation at HUD. March 13, 2014.

http://www.secaf.org//calendar_day.asp?event=44&date=3/13/2014

18 Veterans to Compete in 2014 Winter Paralympic Games: On March 7, 74 athletes will represent the United States at the Paralympic Games in Sochi—18 of them are military Veterans and Servicemembers. “The first time that I sat in a mono-ski I found so much freedom. The ability to ski ... [Read More →](#)

Prayers and blessings for you and your loved ones and for our dear Troops and their loved ones everywhere.

Sincerely.....Wayne

From: Kevin Secor, VA VSO Liaison

Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 11:35 AM

Subj: Champions of Change: Women Veterans (*Input Due on Friday, February 28, at Midnight*)

Good morning,

This March, the White House Office of Public Engagement will host a Champions of Change event for women Veteran industry leaders, to highlight their incredible contributions to our nation’s business, public and community service sectors.

Women serve in every branch of the military, representing 14.5 percent of today’s active duty military and nearly 18 percent of National Guard and Reserve forces. By 2020, the Department of Veterans Affairs estimates women Veterans will constitute more than 12 percent of the Veteran population.

Officially, women were permitted to service in the military in 1901. Their service introduced America to a new era of military service and subsequently, women Veterans. For generations now, women Veterans have been honorably serving in the military, and we know their service and success continue when they take off the uniform.

As the nation celebrates Women’s History Month, it is important to salute women Veterans for their accomplishments and contributions to society. They have broken barriers and capitalized on the many leadership opportunities afforded by military service. We know that women Veterans are models of character, courage and commitment who continue to blaze trails and open doors.

We are asking for your help to identify women Veterans who may be “Champions of Change.”

For example, a champion may be a woman Veteran who is:

- Serving as subject matter expert within her industry
- Actively mentoring to enable others’ success
- A successful entrepreneur and/or businesswoman
- Leading a program to improve the well-being of fellow Veterans
- A leader in government
- Demonstrating success with public/private partnering

Click on the link below to submit your nomination **by midnight on Friday, February 28th**

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/02/24/champions-change-women-veteran-leaders>

VA HQ Veterans News for Wednesday, February 26, 2014. From Kevin Secor, VA VSO Liaison.

1. **DOD Takes Holistic View of Slowing Military Compensation Growth.**
2. **Dempsey Seeks Feedback From Force on Budget Proposals.**
3. **Hagel’s Budget to reshape forces meets with strong opposition.**
4. **Work: Continued Fiscal Uncertainty Creates Cascading Effects.**
5. **Obama Announces New DOD-led Manufacturing Institutes.**
6. **Disabled veterans group rallies for full VA advance funding.**
7. **Vets benefits bill clears initial Senate hurdle.**
8. **Sprawling VA reform bill moving through Senate with Murray jobs, fertility measures.**
9. **Broad veterans’ benefits debated in U.S. Senate.**
10. **Will partisanship derail veterans benefit bill?**

11. **Veterans healthcare bill advances in U.S. Senate.**
12. **Holding the VA accountable.**
13. **Study: Post-Vietnam Troops Exposed to Agent Orange.**
14. **Working together to take care of our service men, women and turning vets.**
15. **ABC News Launches Veterans Series "Coming Home: America's Promise".**
16. **Veterans' Medical Records Destroyed To Eliminate Backlog Requests.**
17. **Veterans Affairs is the most efficient government agency.**
18. **Veterans Affairs 'Falsifying Reported Wait-Times'.**
19. **Standing with our veterans in Veterans Court.**
20. **Veterans Getting Hooked on Prescription Drugs.**
21. **Project aims to help vets relax.**
22. **Getting help essential in PTSD.**
23. **Formation of local Iraq, Afghanistan veterans group could spur awareness.**
24. **Sleep Apnea May Contribute to Diabetes Complications.**
25. **How the VA is leading the way on LGBT patient care.**
26. **I-Team Troubleshooter: Loophole on veteran's parental rights costs taxpayers.**
27. **Can a Remarried Surviving Spouse Keep Tricare?**
28. **Bow-wow: Vets get free pet health insurance.**
29. **VA / VSO-MSO Hearings as February 26, 2014:**
30. **Today in History:**

1. **DOD Takes Holistic View of Slowing Military Compensation Growth.** The Defense Department can no longer put off slowing the growth of military personnel costs, and the fiscal year 2015 budget request DOD is recommending to the president begins that process, defense leaders said here today. Saying they are ready to take on the hard task of curbing ...
2. **Dempsey Seeks Feedback From Force on Budget Proposals.** Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey wants feedback from service members on the fiscal year 2015 defense budget request that he and Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel outlined to reporters at the Pentagon yesterday. In an interview in his Pentagon office posted on Facebook, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked service members to contact ...
3. **Hagel's Budget to reshape forces meets with strong opposition.** Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel fired the first shot Monday. The return fire has been intense. In a preview of the Obama administration's 2015 defense budget request, Hagel proposed ...
4. **Work: Continued Fiscal Uncertainty Creates Cascading Effects.** Continued fiscal uncertainty has the potential to create cascading effects across all elements of the Defense Department's enterprise, President Barack Obama's nominee to take the Pentagon's No. 2 post said today. "Having a stable fiscal picture will ...
5. **Obama Announces New DOD-led Manufacturing Institutes.** President Barack Obama today announced two new manufacturing innovation institutes led by the Defense Department and supported by a \$140 million federal commitment combined with more than \$320 million in private-sector commitments. A consortium of businesses and universities ...
6. **Disabled veterans group rallies for full VA advance funding.** [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Army Times:** Despite a budget detente on Capitol Hill, veterans advocates are worried about what another government shutdown could do to Veterans Affairs Department benefits checks and assistance programs.
7. **Vets benefits bill clears initial Senate hurdle.** A sprawling Democratic bill expanding health, education and other benefits for veterans easily cleared an early Senate hurdle on Tuesday. But the election-year measure still faces an uncertain fate as Republicans

battle to make it smaller and find ways to pay for it.

- 8. [Sprawling VA reform bill moving through Senate with Murray jobs, fertility measures.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **News Tribune:** Washington Democratic Sen. Patty Murray is getting behind a sprawling bill that would prod the Department of Veterans Affairs to offer more education benefits, fertility resources and sex assault treatment programs.**
- 9. [Broad veterans' benefits debated in U.S. Senate.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Portland Press Herald:** The Senate on Tuesday began debating a broad veterans' benefits bill that would expand health care and education services for former military personnel but that some Republicans warned could overburden programs already struggling to meet demand.**
- 10. [Will partisanship derail veterans benefit bill?](#) [Hyperlink to Above Article](#) **CBSNews.com:** The Senate is preparing to tackle a major veterans bill this week, a process that will test whether the chamber is still stuck in a feud over a rules change last fall [that reduced the power of the Republican minority.](#)**
- 11. [Veterans healthcare bill advances in U.S. Senate.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Reuters.com:** An expansion of healthcare and education programs for veterans of the wars in [Iraq](#) and [Afghanistan](#) cleared its first procedural hurdle on Tuesday, as Democrats in the U.S. Senate attempted to win passage of the legislation this week.**
- 12. [Holding the VA accountable.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **The Tampa Tribune:** Although the problem is complicated, the answer is simple. No more money for a bloated, broken system, and no new obstacles that will reduce access to care even further. Instead, we must focus on outcomes and encourage accountability.**
- 13. [Study: Post-Vietnam Troops Exposed to Agent Orange.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Military.com:** A new study found that airmen who flew and maintained the C-123 Provider long after the planes were used to spray Agent Orange over Vietnam were exposed to dangerous levels of the dioxin that remained in the aircraft.**
- 14. [Working together to take care of our service men, women and turning vets.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **The Hill:** Out of their conversation that night came the 21st Century Health Care for Heroes Act, a bill to construct a streamlined and easily accessible electronic health-records system for military service members and veterans.**
- 15. [ABC News Launches Veterans Series "Coming Home: America's Promise".](#) [Hyperlink to Video](#) **ABCNews.com (Video):** ABC News will produce and present a series of reports, "Coming Home: America's Promise," that will investigate the most important issues facing veterans returning from battle**
- 16. [Veterans' Medical Records Destroyed To Eliminate Backlog Requests.](#) [Hyperlink to Video](#) **Fox News Channel, The Kelly File (Video):** In this 5:43 segment Trace Gallagher reports on the destruction of patient records at the Greater Los Angeles VA and Megyn Kelly interviews Pete Hegseth, who offers feedback on the Backlog.**
- 17. [Veterans Affairs is the most efficient government agency.](#) [Hyperlink to Video](#) **The Daily Caller (Video):** In this 1:03 video, the hosts use sarcasm to criticize the destruction of documents related to Veteran exam requests that were creating a Backlog at the Greater Los Angeles VA.**
- 18. [Veterans Affairs 'Falsifying Reported Wait-Times'.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **National Review:** Here's the**

thing: when one subordinates healthcare to government, one inevitably gets all of the usual government games.

19. [Standing with our veterans in Veterans Court.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **The Tampa Tribune:**

Hillsborough County recently initiated an effort known as Veterans Court. This is a unique effort to make honorably discharged veterans, many who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, who run afoul of the law for nonviolent misdemeanors aware of the numerous available U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs programs.

20. [Veterans Getting Hooked on Prescription Drugs.](#) [Hyperlink to Video](#) **ABCNews.com (Video): In this 4:53 video, the correspondent reports on the growing number of Veterans addicted to prescription drugs provided by VA and interviews Dr. Gavin West, VA Special Assistant of Clinical Operations, on the VHA Opioid Safety Initiative.**

21. [Project aims to help vets relax.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Democrat and Chronicle: Miller, 36, formed a group called the Armed Forces Relaxation Project. She and other LMTs have given stress-reducing massages to hundreds of veterans, often at events like Veterans Day gatherings and places like the Veterans Outreach Center.**

22. [Getting help essential in PTSD.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Arizona Daily Sun: Post-traumatic stress disorder is an anxiety disorder brought on by a traumatic event. According to the National Center for PTSD, symptoms can last a lifetime and include re-experiencing the trauma, avoiding distressing situations, negative changes in beliefs and feelings, and hyperarousal. Those symptoms can take a heavy toll on a person suffering from PTSD.**

23. [Formation of local Iraq, Afghanistan veterans group could spur awareness.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Waco Tribune-Herald: Medical professionals may be the best ones to sort out whether post-traumatic stress disorder should lose the word “disorder” to reduce the stigma associated with it, but former President George W. Bush — who raised the idea last week at the George W. Bush Institute in Dallas — deserves credit for keeping a focus squarely on veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars who face that and yet other challenges.**

24. [Sleep Apnea May Contribute to Diabetes Complications.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **WebProNews.com: Last summer, the Department of Veterans Affairs was tasked with a strange goal. The VA Advisory Committee on Disability Compensation asked the VA to find ways to address the epidemic that was claims being filed for those veterans suffering from sleep apnea.**

25. [How the VA is leading the way on LGBT patient care.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **The Week: What is less known, however, is that the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), a branch of the Department of Veterans Affairs, is also at the vanguard of providing inclusive patient care for LGBT veterans and their families.**

26. [I-Team Troubleshooter: Loophole on veteran’s parental rights costs taxpayers.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **WTVD-TV (Video): After a lot of inquiries, we've just learned the VA is proposing new regulations that would close that loophole and stop veterans from getting disability funds for a child that's been adopted of out their family.**

27. **[Can a Remarried Surviving Spouse Keep Tricare?](#)** Please answer my question. If a [surviving spouse](#) remarries after age 65, will that spouse be able to ...

28. [Bow-wow: Vets get free pet health insurance.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **San Antonio Express-News: In January, the Department of Veterans Affairs signed a contract with Trupanion that pays 100 % of the**

health care costs for military service dogs. That includes preventive medicine, prescriptions and emergency services.

29.VA / VSO-MSO Hearings as February 26, 2014:

- **February 26, 2014.** HVAC, Subcommittee on Health will conduct an oversight hearing entitled, “VA Accountability: Assessing Actions Taken in Response to Subcommittee Oversight.”
- **February 26, 2014.** Senate Armed Services Committee, Personnel Subcommittee will be conducting an open session on the relationships between military sexual assault, posttraumatic stress disorder and suicide, and on Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs medical treatment and management of victims of sexual trauma.
- **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.
- **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 13, 2014.** HVAC, Full Committee, “U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2015.”
- **March 25, 2014.** SAC-MILCON-VA FY15 Budget Hearing.
- **March 25, 2014.** SVAC, Full Committee, “U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2015.”
- **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.

30.Today in History:

- [1815](#) – [Napoleon Bonaparte](#) escapes from [Elba](#).
- [1876](#) – [Japan](#) and [Korea](#) sign a [treaty](#) granting Japanese citizens [extraterritoriality](#) rights, opening three ports to Japanese trade, and ending Korea's status as a [tributary state](#) of

- [Qing Dynasty](#) China.
- [1909](#) – [Kinemacolor](#), the first successful color [motion picture](#) process, is first shown to the general public at the [Palace Theatre](#) in [London](#).
 - [1914](#) – [HMHS Britannic](#), sister to the [RMS Titanic](#), is launched at [Harland & Wolff](#) shipyard in [Belfast](#).
 - [1917](#) – The [Original Dixieland Jazz Band](#) records the first [jazz](#) record, for the [Victor Talking Machine Company](#) in New York.
 - [1919](#) – President [Woodrow Wilson](#) signs an act of the [U.S. Congress](#) establishing most of the [Grand Canyon](#) as a [United States National Park](#) - the [Grand Canyon National Park](#).
 - [1929](#) – President [Calvin Coolidge](#) signs an [Executive Order](#) establishing the 96,000 acre [Grand Teton National Park](#) in [Wyoming](#).
 - [1935](#) – [Adolf Hitler](#) orders the [Luftwaffe](#) to be re-formed, violating the provisions of the [Treaty of Versailles](#).
 - [1935](#) – [Robert Watson-Watt](#) carries out a demonstration near [Daventry](#) which leads directly to the development of [radar](#) in the [United Kingdom](#).
 - [1936](#) – In the [February 26 Incident](#), young [Japanese](#) military officers attempt to stage a [coup](#) against the [government](#).
 - [1946](#) – [Finnish](#) observers report the first of many thousands of sightings of [ghost rockets](#).
 - [1952](#) – [Vincent Massey](#) is sworn in as the first [Canadian](#)-born [Governor-General of Canada](#).
 - [1966](#) – [Apollo Program](#): Launch of [AS-201](#), the first flight of the [Saturn IB](#) rocket
 - [1966](#) – [Vietnam War](#): The [ROK Capital Division](#) of the [South Korean Army](#) massacres 380 unarmed civilians in [South Vietnam](#).
 - [1971](#) – [U.N. Secretary General U Thant](#) signs [United Nations](#) proclamation of the vernal equinox as [Earth Day](#).
 - [1972](#) – The [Buffalo Creek Flood](#) caused by a burst dam kills 125 in [West Virginia](#).
 - [1980](#) – Egypt and Israel establish full [diplomatic relations](#).
 - [1987](#) – [Iran-Contra affair](#): The [Tower Commission](#) rebukes President Ronald Reagan for not controlling his national security staff.
 - [1991](#) – Gulf War: United States Army forces capture the town of [Al Busayyah](#).
 - [1992](#) – [Nagorno-Karabakh War](#): [Khojaly Massacre](#): Armenian armed forces [open fire on](#) Azeri civilians at a military post outside the town of Khojaly leaving hundreds dead.
 - [1993](#) – [World Trade Center bombing](#): In [New York City](#), a truck bomb parked below the [North Tower](#) of the [World Trade Center](#) explodes, killing six and injuring over a thousand.
 - [1995](#) – The [United Kingdom](#)'s oldest investment banking institute, [Barings Bank](#), collapses after securities broker [Nick Leeson](#), loses \$1.4 billion by speculating on the [Singapore International Monetary Exchange](#) using [futures contracts](#).
 - [1995](#) – [Selena](#) gives her last televised concert in front of over 66,746 people, for a record breaking 3rd time at the [Houston Astrodome](#), nearly a month before she is shot to death by [Yolanda Saldívar](#), the former president of her fan club.
 - [2012](#) – A [train derails](#) in [Burlington, Ontario, Canada](#) killing at least three people and injuring 45.
 - [2013](#) – A [hot air balloon crashes](#) near [Luxor, Egypt](#), killing 19 people.

VA HQ Veterans News for Tuesday, February 25, 2014. From Kevin Secor, VA VSO Liaison.

1. [Leesburg Man Sentenced for Role in Procurement Fraud Scheme Affecting over \\$33 Million in](#)

Federal Contracts.

2. [Nashville veteran who worked while accepting disability pay pleads guilty.](#)
3. [Proposed Pentagon budget favors high-tech over personnel.](#)
4. [Commissaries avoid cuts, but at cost to customers.](#)
5. [Alaska National Guard members face accusations of sexual misconduct.](#)
6. [Local veterans worry about funding deadline.](#)
7. [Veterans Journal: Promised benefits restored, but vets warn against future cuts.](#)
8. [Agent Orange study with OHSU co-author challenges VA's conclusions on residue-tainted aircraft.](#)
9. [Our View: Gulf War syndrome research merits more time.](#)
10. [Veterans Reluctant to Seek Mental Health Assistance.](#)
11. [A Concrete Way to Honor Military Sacrifices.](#)
12. [Massive veterans bill heading toward Senate vote.](#)
13. [Dozens of veterans priorities rolled into 1 bill.](#)
14. [Sanders' Veteran Bill Asphyxiates the VA System.](#)
15. [Group wants heart attack warning on testosterone.](#)
16. [Defending Veterans' Rights.](#)
17. [Help our Homeless Veterans and Citizens Receives Surprise Cash.](#)
18. [Dorn VA Medical Center opens unit for veterans.](#)
19. [In Roseburg, veterans and the VA flare up again over the hospital's lack of intensive care.](#)
20. [Task force hears veterans' testimonies.](#)
21. [Special Court for Veterans Gaining Momentum.](#)
22. [Good days, bad days: Life as a chaplain's assistant in Afghanistan.](#)
23. [Iraq War vet honored with belated homecoming celebration.](#)
24. VA / VSO-MSO Hearings as February 25, 2014:
25. Today in History:
 1. [Leesburg Man Sentenced for Role in Procurement Fraud Scheme Affecting over \\$33 Million in Federal Contracts.](#) 16 Months Prison Time, \$1M Forfeiture for Leesburg, VA, Man for Fraud Involving Government Contracts Meant for Disabled Veterans
 2. [Nashville veteran who worked while accepting disability pay pleads guilty.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **The Tennessean:** A Nashville man pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court in Nashville on Monday to theft of government property after embezzling more than \$26,900 from the Department of Veterans Affairs.
 3. [Proposed Pentagon budget favors high-tech over personnel.](#) Facing fiscal constraints, the Defense Department will try to preserve high-tech warfare capabilities while cutting people and platforms and curbing the growth of pay and benefits, according to a budget preview unveiled by Pentagon officials Monday.
 4. [Commissaries avoid cuts, but at cost to customers.](#) The long-feared cuts to military commissaries appear to be real: The Defense Department subsidy would drop from \$1.4 billion annually to \$400 million under a defense budget proposal the Obama administration plans to deliver to Congress next week, Pentagon officials announced Monday.
 5. [Alaska National Guard members face accusations of sexual misconduct.](#) A dozen members of the Alaska National Guard face charges of sexual misconduct in what members of the guard call a severe problem in the ranks.
 6. [Local veterans worry about funding deadline.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **WHAM-TV:** It's called the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program, VRAP for short, and according to the VA more than 74,000

veterans are enrolled in the program. It gives approximately \$1,600 a month in tuition assistance for veterans at community colleges, but VRAP is scheduled to expire on March 31st.

- 7. [Veterans Journal: Promised benefits restored, but vets warn against future cuts.](#)** The Providence Journal Veterans and their families protested on Capitol Hill, attended news ... project to bring accountability to the U.S. Department of
- 8. [Agent Orange study with OHSU co-author challenges VA's conclusions on residue-tainted aircraft.](#)** [Hyperlink to Article](#) **The Oregonian:** The paper, which was written by lead investigator Peter Lurker along with Fred Berman, a toxicologist at Oregon Health and Science University and two other scientists, argues that the Department of Veterans Affairs has wrongly downplayed the likelihood that the crews who flew the C-123 aircraft were exposed to dangerous levels of toxins.
- 9. [Our View: Gulf War syndrome research merits more time.](#)** [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Fayetteville Observer:** The Gulf War of early 1991 was among the quickest and most successful military operations in U.S. history. But 23 years later, a mysterious illness that has plagued veterans of that conflict remains poorly understood, difficult to treat and a painful ongoing problem for too many who served.
- 10. [Veterans Reluctant to Seek Mental Health Assistance.](#)** [Hyperlink to Article](#) **WBOY-TV (Video):** According to a January report from Veteran's Affairs, of the service members that seek assistance from the program, more than half will be diagnosed with a mental health disorder... But beyond those, there are many that never even seek help for their mental health. This could be due to the mentality of many in the service.
- 11. [A Concrete Way to Honor Military Sacrifices.](#)** [Hyperlink to Article](#) **The Wall Street Journal:** But despite the best wishes and good intentions of many elected officials, our nation is not living up to this ideal. One of the principal reasons is Congress's annual failure to enact veterans appropriations bills on time.
- 12. [Massive veterans bill heading toward Senate vote.](#)** [Hyperlink to Article](#) **USA Today:** What has been characterized as the most sweeping veterans legislation in decades could reach the Senate floor for a vote as early as Tuesday... The legislation authored by Sen. Bernie Sanders... contains 143 provisions and would cost more than \$30 billion.
- 13. [Dozens of veterans priorities rolled into 1 bill.](#)** [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Atlanta Journal-Constitution:** Two weeks after rolling back an effort to slow cost-of-living pension increases for working-age military retirees, the Senate is now being asked to give veterans new benefits that would cost \$21 billion over the next decade.
- 14. [Sanders' Veteran Bill Asphyxiates the VA System.](#)** [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Heritage Action for America (The Forge Blog):** ...it became clear to me that S.1982 does very little to improve services to our veterans; indeed, it actually may make things worse in some of the most vital programs, adding roughly \$20 billion in new debt along the way.
- 15. [Group wants heart attack warning on testosterone.](#)** [Hyperlink to Article](#) **The Washington Post (AP):** A consumer advocacy group is calling on the Food and Drug Administration to add a bold warning label to popular testosterone drugs... The agency said its review was first prompted by a U.S. Veterans Affairs study published in November 2013 that showed a 30 percent increase in stroke, heart attack and death among older men taking testosterone.
- 16. [Defending Veterans' Rights.](#)** [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Salem-News.com:** Veterans across the country are outraged and frustrated with the Department of Veterans Affairs' ("VA") improper denial of their benefits.

Many vets are unsure of their rights and how to proceed in a legal action against the VA. Some are not even aware that they may bring a legal action against the VA for improperly denying their benefits.

[17.Help our Homeless Veterans and Citizens Receives Surprise Cash.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **WHNT-TV**

(Video): Whether you pay attention or not, whether you like it or not, there are homeless people in our community. Many of them are veterans. One man is on a mission to make sure they get help.

[18.Dorn VA Medical Center opens unit for veterans.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **San Francisco Chronicle**

(AP): The Dorn Veterans Administration Medical Center in Columbia is set to hold a ribbon-cutting for a new center devoted to veterans, including those who've served since the 2001 terrorist attacks.

[19.In Roseburg, veterans and the VA flare up again over the hospital's lack of intensive care.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **The Oregonian:**

Officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs' Roseburg hospital have hit a frosty impasse with southern Oregon veterans who want the hospital to reinstate its shuttered intensive care unit.

[20.Task force hears veterans' testimonies.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Rapid City Journal:**

About 30 local veterans gave strong, passionate testimonies on behalf of keeping the VA Black Hills Health Care System's facility open in Hot Springs, before a crowd of more than 100 people at the American Legion on Monday, Feb. 17.

[21.Special Court for Veterans Gaining Momentum.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Military.com (Minneapolis Star**

Tribune): After a slow start, an innovative effort to reduce crime by veterans in Washington County is showing encouraging signs of lowering recidivism rates among vets, county court officials say... The county's veterans court was established two years ago, around the same time that similar diversion programs were sprouting up across the metro area.

[22.Good days, bad days: Life as a chaplain's assistant in Afghanistan.](#) Army Staff Sgt. David George's

job is to protect the chaplain, a non-combatant who cannot carry a weapon. Armed always with his pistol and often with his assault rifle, George accompanies him wherever he goes.

[23.Iraq War vet honored with belated homecoming celebration.](#) It was Sunday afternoon and Tiffini

Horton, 48, was nervous. Her husband never got a genuine homecoming celebration. Well, today he was going to.

24.VA / VSO-MSO Hearings as February 25, 2014:

- **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 26, 2014.** Senate Armed Services Committee, Personnel Subcommittee will be conducting an open session on the relationships between military sexual assault, posttraumatic stress disorder and suicide, and on Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs medical treatment and management of victims of sexual trauma.
- **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.
- **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 13, 2014.** HVAC, Full Committee, “U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2015.”
- **March 25, 2014.** SAC-MILCON-VA FY15 Budget Hearing.
- **March 25, 2014.** SVAC, Full Committee, “U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2015.”
- **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.

25. Today in History:

- **1797** – [Colonel William Tate](#) and his force of 1000-1500 soldiers surrender after the [Last Invasion of Britain](#).
- **1821** – [Greek War of Independence](#): [Alexander Ypsilantis](#) issues a proclamation at [Iasi](#), announcing that he had "the support of a great power" (i.e. Russia).
- **1831** – [Battle of Olszynka Grochowska](#), part of Polish [November Uprising](#) against Russian Empire.
- **1836** – [Samuel Colt](#) is granted a United States [patent](#) for the [Colt revolver](#).
- **1843** – [Provisional Cession of the Hawaiian or Sandwich Islands](#) established by [Lord George Paulet](#).
- **1848** – Provisional government in [revolutionary](#) France, by [Louis Blanc](#)'s motion, guarantees workers' right.
- **1856** – A [Peace conference](#) opened in Paris after [Crimean War](#).
- **1866** – Miners in [Calaveras County, California](#), discover what is now called the [Calaveras Skull](#), human remains that supposedly indicated that man, [mastodons](#), and [elephants](#) had co-existed.
- **1870** – [Hiram Rhodes Revels](#), a [Republican](#) from [Mississippi](#), is sworn into the [United States Senate](#), becoming the first [African American](#) ever to sit in the [U.S. Congress](#).
- **1875** – [Guangxu Emperor](#) of [China](#) began his reign, under [Empress Dowager Cixi](#)'s

regency.

- [1901](#) – [J. P. Morgan](#) incorporates the [United States Steel Corporation](#).
- [1912](#) – [Marie-Adélaïde](#), the eldest of six daughters of [Guillaume IV](#), becomes the first reigning [Grand Duchess](#) of [Luxembourg](#).
- [1916](#) – [World War I](#): the Germans capture [Fort Douaumont](#) during the [Battle of Verdun](#).
- [1919](#) – [Oregon](#) places a 1 cent per U.S. [gallon tax on gasoline](#), becoming the first [U.S. state](#) to levy a gasoline tax.
- [1921](#) – [Tbilisi](#), capital of the [Democratic Republic of Georgia](#), is [occupied](#) by [Bolshevist Russia](#).
- [1928](#) – [Charles Jenkins Laboratories](#) of [Washington, D.C.](#) becomes the first holder of a [television](#) license from the [Federal Radio Commission](#).
- [1932](#) – [Adolf Hitler](#) obtains German citizenship by [naturalization](#), which allows him to run in the 1932 election for [Reichspräsident](#).
- [1933](#) – The [USS Ranger](#) is launched. It is the first US Navy ship to be built solely as an [aircraft carrier](#).
- [1941](#) – [February Strike](#): In [occupied Amsterdam](#), a [general strike](#) is declared in response to increasing anti-Jewish measures instituted by the [Nazis](#).
- [1945](#) – [World War II](#): [Turkey](#) declares war on Germany.
- [1947](#) – The State of [Prussia](#) ceases to exist.
- [1948](#) – The [Communist Party takes control](#) of government in [Czechoslovakia](#) and the period of the [Third Republic](#) ends.
- [1951](#) – The first [Pan American Games](#) are held in [Buenos Aires](#), Argentina.
- [1954](#) – [Gamal Abdel Nasser](#) is made premier of [Egypt](#).
- [1956](#) – In his speech *On the Personality Cult and its Consequences* [Nikita Khrushchev](#), leader of the [Soviet Union](#) denounces the [cult of personality](#) of [Joseph Stalin](#).
- [1964](#) – [North Korean](#) Prime Minister [Kim Il-sung](#) calls for the removal of [feudalistic](#) land ownership aimed at turning all [cooperative](#) farms into state-run ones.
- [1964](#) – U.S. Air Force launches a satellite employing a US Air Force Atlas/Agna combination from [Point Arguello](#) (LC-2-3) in California and from [Cape Kennedy](#) in Florida.
- [1968](#) – [Vietnam War](#): 135 unarmed citizens of Hà My village in [South Vietnam's Quảng Nam Province](#) are killed and buried *en masse* by [South Korean troops](#) in what would come to be known as the [Hà My massacre](#).
- [1971](#) – The first unit of the [Pickering Nuclear Generating Station](#), the first commercial [nuclear power](#) station in Canada, goes online.
- [1980](#) – The government of [Suriname](#) is [overthrown by a military coup](#) which is initiated with the bombing of the police station from an army ship off the coast of the nation's capital, [Paramaribo](#)
- [1986](#) – [People Power Revolution](#): President of the Philippines [Ferdinand Marcos](#) flees the nation after 20 years of rule; [Corazon Aquino](#) becomes the [Philippines'](#) first woman president.
- [1987](#) – [Southern Methodist University's](#) football program is the first college football program to receive the [Death Penalty](#) by the NCAA's Committee on Infractions. It was revealed that athletic officials and school administrators had knowledge of a "[slush fund](#)" used to make illegal payments to the school's football players as far back as 1981.
- [1991](#) – [Gulf War](#): An [Iraqi scud missile](#) hits an American military barracks in [Dhahran](#), [Saudi Arabia](#) killing 28 [U.S. Army Reservists](#) from [Pennsylvania](#).
- [1991](#) – The [Warsaw Pact](#) is declared disbanded.
- [1992](#) – [Khojaly massacre](#): about 613 civilians are killed by [Armenian](#) armed forces during the conflict in [Nagorno-Karabakh](#) region of [Azerbaijan](#).

- [1994 – Mosque of Abraham massacre](#): In the [Cave of the Patriarchs](#) in the [West Bank](#) city of [Hebron](#), [Baruch Goldstein](#) opens fire with an automatic rifle, killing 29 [Palestinian](#) worshippers and injuring 125 more before being subdued and beaten to death by survivors.
- [2009 – Members of the Bangladesh Rifles mutiny](#) at their headquarters in Pikhana, [Dhaka](#), Bangladesh, resulting in 74 deaths, including more than 50 army officials.

From: Ryan Gallucci, VFW

Sent: Tuesday, February 25, 2014 4:30 PM

Subj: Budget Uncertainty Forces Military Reductions: VFW demands that Congress end sequestration

BUDGET UNCERTAINTY FORCES MILITARY REDUCTIONS

VFW again calls on Congress to end sequestration

WASHINGTON (February 25, 2014) — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. met with Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel yesterday morning to learn firsthand the impact of his department's fiscal year 2015 budget request on future readiness and modernization programs, and on those who serve in uniform and their families.

The VFW and other veteran and military service organization representatives in attendance also learned of the continued implications of congressional budget decisions that could reduce defense spending by almost \$1 trillion over the next decade.

“There are consequences to forcing the Department of Defense to first reduce its budget by \$487 billion over 10 years, then to double that amount due to sequestration,” said VFW National Commander William A. Thien, a Vietnam veteran from Georgetown, Ind. “And no matter how some might perceive these lower troop numbers, weapons systems retirements and benefits reductions, the truth is these cuts will continue to grow deeper the longer Congress is unable to end the sequester.”

Joined by his top leadership, to include Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey, the defense secretary brought some of those consequences to light when he unveiled major provisions of his department’s budget request.

Previously announced reductions to the size of the active Army were increased, as were reductions to the Army National Guard and Reserve, all of which could worsen with a continued sequester.

The budget plan had no new troop reductions for the other services, but the proposed loss of some major weapons systems could further lower Air Force and Navy personnel requirements.

The VFW national commander is especially worried about the proposed reductions to pay and benefits, because “in an all-volunteer force, the troops get a vote,” he said, “and a resurging economy will impact individual decisions to join and reenlist.”

On the table for FY 2015 is a 1 percent pay raise for everyone below the pay grade of O-7; admirals and general officers would have their pay frozen for one year. Housing allowances would be gradually reduced from 100 percent of costs to 95 percent; payments would be grandfathered for troops in their current assignments. DOD is again recommending a TRICARE for Life enrollment fee, but this time it would be equal to 1 percent of retiree pay — not to exceed \$300 per person — plus additional increases to pharmaceutical copayments, which would impact military dependents as well as retirees. DOD also wants to merge the three TRICARE Prime, Standard and Extra programs into one, and reduce the current \$1.4 billion appropriated support of commissaries to \$400 million, which would force the Defense Commissary Agency to offset the difference either by raising prices, increasing the 5 percent surcharge, or both. DOD estimates that such decisions would lower overall commissary savings from 30 percent to 10 percent, which could close some smaller stores.

“Despite all the challenges of fighting a two-front war over the past 13 years, we know America will continue to field the world’s most professional and lethal military,” said Thien. “That’s why the VFW will redouble our efforts to work with Congress and the administration to preserve the all-volunteer force, end the sequester, and help bring

some financial stability to a military that will continue to operate in a very dangerous and unpredictable world.

“We are, of course, very concerned for our men and women in uniform, and for their families who serve and sacrifice, too, and that is why we are asking the Pentagon to provide more details on their people program changes,” he said. “The VFW understands fiscal realities, but we also understand that it first takes people to make our military the world’s best.”

VA Initiative Shows Early Promise in Reducing Use of Opioids for Chronic Pain

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 25, 2014

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has initiated a multi-faceted approach to reduce the use of opioids among America’s Veterans using VA health care. The Opioid Safety Initiative (OSI) is a comprehensive effort to improve the quality of life for the hundreds of thousands of Veterans suffering from chronic pain.

Launched in October 2013 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, OSI is already demonstrating success in lowering dependency on this class of drugs. At eight sites of care in Minnesota, OSI practices have decreased high-dose opioid use by more than 50 percent. OSI incorporates the team approach with the goal of reducing opioid use by alleviating a Veterans’ pain using non-prescription methods. There is an emphasis on patient education, close patient monitoring with frequent feedback and Complementary and Alternative Medicine practices like acupuncture.

“We have developed and implemented joint pain management guidelines which encourage the use of other medications and therapies in lieu of habit forming opiates,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Early results give us hope that we can reduce the use of opioids for Veterans suffering with chronic pain and share these best practices across our healthcare networks.”

The Opioid Safety Initiative faces the challenge of opioid dependency with an innovative and comprehensive plan that closely monitors VA’s dispensing practices system-wide and coordinates pain management to include patient and provider education, testing and tapering programs, and alternative therapies like acupuncture and behavior therapy.

Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system suffer from high rates of chronic pain. Each VA facility employs personnel including Interdisciplinary Pain Medicine Specialty Teams and Consult Services, Facility Pain Committees, Pharmacy staff and Primary Care/PACT, and other professionals to accomplish the goals and objectives of the OSI.

VA has developed patient management initiatives including Pain Coach, which is a pain management app available for download by patients receiving pain management treatments, a Veterans’ Health Library, including a Patient/Family Management Toolkit, and resources for Pain Management on My HealtheVet. All of these applications allow Veterans to better manage their pain without the use of opioids. VA’s measurement-based pain care includes the “Pain Scale,” which reduces uncertainty and helps Veterans by discussing the potential benefits of a medication and possible side-effects.

“The Opioid Safety Initiative is an example of VHA’s personalized, proactive and patient-centered approach to health care. We are also using a full-range of support treatments for Veterans, including Complementary and Alternative Medicine ,” said Dr. Robert Petzel, VA’s Under Secretary for Health. “We are delivering health care with the patient’s long-term personal health goals at the forefront.”

For further information, Veterans should contact their primary care health team. To learn more about VA health care, visit www.va.gov.

From: JS Pentagon OCJCS Mailbox Warrior and Family Support

Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 5:49 PM

Subj: Warrior & Family Support News: Wednesday, 26 February 2014

LINK OF THE WEEK: [Warrior and Family Support](#) (our updated page at www.jcs.mil/wfs)

COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

[Former US Marine Cycles Cross-Country for Veterans](#)

The Watch

Jones is cycling through the U.S. to raise \$1 million dollars for three veterans-related charities: the **Semper Fi Fund**, the Coalition to Salute America's Heroes and Ride2Recovery. So far, he has raised more than \$91,000. Traveling through New England ...

[Paralyzed Marine breaks ground on dream house in Jacksonville](#)

Alabama's News Leader

Donors include Veteran's United, AOD Federal Credit Union, General Electric, Carpet One, Shubert Design, **Semper Fi Fund**, and Hope For The Warriors. There was also a benefit concert in Jacksonville in May 2013, including a performance by Gary Sinise ...

[George W. Bush: There's a 'divide' between American civilians and military](#)

Washington Examiner

The truth is, it's both. TR pioneered a new paradigm in disaster response while redefining the meaning of **veteran reintegration** into society." Bush said that he has a "duty" to work with the veterans he ordered into war, both through the George W. Bush ...

EMPLOYMENT

[SC Gov. Haley, military work to get vets jobs](#)

San Francisco Chronicle

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley joined state **employment** officials and members of the state National Guard Wednesday to kick off an effort to battle nagging unemployment among **military** veterans and help them find **jobs** in the ...

[Event set March 6 for veterans interested in developing small businesses](#)

al.com (blog)

Participants at the "Exploring **Entrepreneurship** for **Veterans** and Spouses" event will learn the basics behind starting a new business and find out available resources to see them through the process. Blosser said that many times veterans don't think about using the skills they have learned in the military in business, but she said that almost anything they have learned can lead to a successful business...

[Companies Need To Help America's Military Veterans Get Back To Work](#)

Forbes

The government's Joining Forces **program** – which assists in the hiring efforts, as well as education, wellness and other initiatives – provides a necessary base to ease the transitions of these brave men and women. ... We've also taken inspiration from...

EDUCATION

[2nd annual NEK Veterans Summit at Lyndon State March 15](#)

Vermont Biz

The Lyndon State College Veterans Club, in partnership with the LSC Veterans Student Support Committee and other veteran service organizations, will be hosting the 2nd Annual NEK Veterans Summit at the college on Saturday, March 15. The purpose is to bring veterans, their families, and veteran service organizations together...

[Workshop provides financial education to veterans](#)

Lima Ohio

The college hosted Smart Money Choices, a financial literacy workshop aimed at **veterans** and military families. This was the third such event in the state, part of an initiative by Ohio Treasurer Josh Mandel to help local **veterans**

become aware of...

[Glendale Community College going extra mile to help vets](#)

Arizona Republic

Glendale **Community** College going extra mile to help vets. **Veteran** Services Center. The **Veteran** Services Center is designed specifically to help military **veterans** ease into life at Glendale **Community** College. It's a full-service amenity...

WELLNESS

[Therapists offering free help to veterans](#)

The Ranger

The physical structure that will house **the Soldiers Project** -- Wyoming Chapter when it opens this year in Riverton offers a fitting metaphor for the work Lander therapist Charlie Wilson hopes will take place at the facility. "We're taking this house ...

[George W Bush fights to stop PTSD being called a disorder](#)

Daily Mail

ABC News reported that, according to the U.S. Department of **Veterans** Affairs which still uses the designation 'PTSD', about 30 percent of post 9/11 **veterans** suffer from the malady, which hinders their **reintegration** into civilian society. The result is...

[Veteran's Court: Serving those who served our country](#)

WCSH-TV

AUGUSTA, Maine (NEWS CENTER)-- For those who serve returning to civilian life can be hard. Sometimes the **reintegration** process is harder for some than others causing some **veterans** to fall onto hard times and in some rare cases in prison. In Maine, a ...

Best regards,

Randall E. "Smitty" Smith, Lt Col, USAF
Deputy Director, Warrior & Family Support, Office of the Chairman

From: Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)

Sent: Wednesday, February 26, 2014 5:00 PM

Subj: Legislative Alert #113-36: SUPPORT H.R. 4068 & S. 1999, the SCRA Rights Protection Act of 2014

[Take Action!](#)

Issue Background: The purpose of Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) is to help reduce the legal and financial burdens that military duty places on our military personnel and their families. It is important for servicemembers to be able to focus on protecting our nation rather than being unduly stressed during deployment by predatory schemes such as scams, abuses and frauds that cause financial difficulties at home. SCRA does not grant the servicemember immunity from civil lawsuits or debts. Rather, the law in its current form postpones actions until the servicemember is in a position to address them.

The legislation has been amended several times since becoming law in 2003 to address the evolving issues surrounding military service covered by SCRA, and now includes matters concerning housing, insurance, and child custody. A 2012 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, however, identified that there were at least 15,000 instances of financial institutions failing to properly reduce servicemembers' mortgage interest rates and more than 300 illegal foreclosures in violation of SCRA. Many of these wronged servicemembers were unable to enforce their SCRA rights because of "voluntary" SCRA waivers and forced arbitration, which prevents them from utilizing our civil justice system and instead funnels SCRA claims into a one-sided arbitration system rigged by the same bad actors violating the law.

Action Required: Contact your Representatives and Senators and urge them to support and cosponsor H.R. 4068,

introduced by Representative Walter Jones (R-NC-03) and S. 1999, introduced by Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), the SCRA Rights Protection Act of 2014. These bills would eliminate forced arbitration and preserve the rights of servicemembers to bring class actions in disputes covered by SCRA.

Details (To Be Put Into Letter):

The initial purpose of the original Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) was noble. The legislation recognized the uncommon burden placed on servicemembers while serving on Active Duty and was intended to protect our nation's heroes from foreclosures, civil lawsuits, and excessive interest rates on unpaid debts, poor credit ratings, and child custody problems while their military service prevented them from addressing these issues. In general, SCRA performed respectably, undergoing many amendments and improvements over the last decade. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for servicemembers to enforce their SCRA rights due to the expanded use of forced arbitration clauses hidden in the fine print of many contracts. These clauses prevent our brave men and women in uniform from utilizing the civil justice system and instead funnel SCRA claims into an arbitration system set up by those who are originally violating the law. This one-sided system prevents our servicemembers from enforcing the rights guaranteed to them by SCRA.

These bills, H.R. 4068 and S. 1999, would eliminate forced arbitration in disputes covered by SCRA, putting control back in the hands of the servicemembers by giving him or her options of how to defend their rights. It also gives the servicemembers the ability to bring class action against those who violate their rights as defined by SCRA. The SCRA Rights Protection Act of 2014 is a great piece of legislation that seeks to give servicemembers back the rights they were originally granted when it became law in 2003. Passage of this legislation, stand alone or within the Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), would ensure that all rights of servicemembers are being protected and that the men and women who serve our country give proper focus to their duty of defending our nation without the unnecessary stress associated with dishonest financial schemes and forced arbitration back home.

Take Action: [Click the "Take Action" link at the top of the Alert](#) to immediately email and/or write to your Senators and Representatives. This is the quickest and most effective method of expressing your views to Congress. You can also write and/or e-mail the 'Details' section or edit as you desire for a more personalized communication. Also, contact friends and family and urge them to use the Contact Congress feature on AUSN's website as well. Please direct any questions concerning this issue to our Director of Legislation, Anthony Wallis, at 703-548-5800 or at Anthony.Wallis@ausn.org

Godspeed all..... Wayne

Wayne M. Gatewood, Jr., USMC (Ret)

Founder/President/CEO

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"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the Veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their Nation." - George Washington