

**From:** [Wayne Gatewood, Jr](#)  
**To:** [Wayne Gatewood, Jr](#)  
**Subject:** Veterans News for Friday, March 7, 2014  
**Date:** Friday, March 7, 2014 8:07:25 PM  
**Attachments:** [VetJobs Report for February 2014.pdf](#)  
[VA Beach-Hampton Roads Job Fair Flyer.pdf](#)

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Happy Friday good people. This weekend we may get temps up into the 50's here in the DC area. Halleluiah ! :-)

Hope you and yours are well. Wishing you a great weekend.

**For Today:** *It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur. You take the front line when there is danger. Then people will appreciate your leadership.* —Nelson Mandela

**DOD Contracts Awarded on Friday, March 7, 2014.**

<http://www.defense.gov/contracts/contract.aspx?contractid=5237>

**DOD Contracts Awarded on Thursday, March 6, 2014.** Beat down the doors for subcontracts! :-)

<http://www.defense.gov/contracts/contract.aspx?contractid=5236>

**Korean War hero Maj. Kurt Chew-Een Lee dies.** I was just speaking with Major Lee a couple of months ago. His amazing valor in combat during the Korean War is a matter of Marine Corps History.

<http://www.stripes.com/news/veterans/korean-war-hero-maj-kurt-chew-een-lee-dies-1.2713112>

[=&utm\\_source=Stars+and+Stripes+Emails&utm\\_campaign=Daily+Headlines&utm\\_medium=email](#)

Also, here's a video tribute from the *American Veterans Center* to Major Lee...from an interview they did in 2012: <http://vimeo.com/88290470> (Sent in by fellow Veteran Rob Wilkins, MSgt, USAF, The Weider History Group). *Thanks Rob!*

**Senator Mark Warner to Speak at Veterans In Business Conference.** March 27, 2014. Army Navy Country Club, Arlington, VA.

[http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=466xp8n6&v=001bX0lc4lcuhOO8mZfJRLehNxJzIPztgqivjRnpOkw18RmlyV6963HIFm0ELd3Vf7QjI2Dg2GJTkieo188zM2Q18eeMVilftA0C-rXRrhvY4MHqM9Pqo99szBDpdw6ZTrgyDMLpFRagE7\\_Do-Y5EKXnBpKcna4Mj9Qk0RZi7vuoBZqXeMQIUMtqX0NZBn3MX](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=466xp8n6&v=001bX0lc4lcuhOO8mZfJRLehNxJzIPztgqivjRnpOkw18RmlyV6963HIFm0ELd3Vf7QjI2Dg2GJTkieo188zM2Q18eeMVilftA0C-rXRrhvY4MHqM9Pqo99szBDpdw6ZTrgyDMLpFRagE7_Do-Y5EKXnBpKcna4Mj9Qk0RZi7vuoBZqXeMQIUMtqX0NZBn3MX)

**National Association for Uniformed Services (NAUS) Weekly Newsletter.** Join NAUS folks!

[http://naus.informz.net/naus/archives/archive\\_3866068.html](http://naus.informz.net/naus/archives/archive_3866068.html)

**Community Business Partnership 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Veterans in Business Conference.** March 27, 2014, Army Navy Club, Arlington, VA. This is a great conference, please consider attending. See you there!

<http://www.veteransbusinessconference.com/index.html>

**Concepts for Modernizing Military Retirement - March 2014 DOD Report.** Blood pressure is too high to even comment on this matter! Freedom is NOT Free folks!!! *Thanks to David Rababy, USMC (Ret) for getting this to us.* <http://projects.militarytimes.com/pdfs/military-retirement-report.pdf>

**Hampton Roads-Virginia Beach Military Transition Job Fair.** March 25, 2014. **Please see attached flyer** sent in by our friend and fellow Veteran John Bonnell, Marine Corps League. *Thanks John!*

**American Legion - Veterans Helping Veterans Find Work.**

<http://editor.legionemail.com/vo/?FileID=0a78ec03-7e14-4083-92dd-3199601a18c7&m=f60ba55a-761b-463f-8a2b-c1a65794d1dd&MailID=28168746&listid=84772>

**VetJobs Employment Situation Report for February 2014.** *Please see attached pdf.* Provided by our fellow Veteran Ted Daywalt, Captain, USNR (Ret), President/CEO of VetJobs. *Thanks Ted!*

**Reserve Officers Association (ROA) SmartBrief for Friday, March 7, 2014.**

<http://www2.smartbrief.com/servlet/encodeServlet?issueid=A150F79A-4185-46E3-9087-31FA1D822F61&sid=22cbe9eb-3ef0-4eca-8105-e9f466dc32d>

**Reserve Officers Association (ROA) SmartBrief for Thursday, March 6, 2014.**

<http://www2.smartbrief.com/servlet/encodeServlet?issueid=7870B5AF-6E0A-4C95-9F55-1AD31E6B1D67&sid=22cbe9eb-3ef0-4eca-8105-e9f466dc32d>

**National Veteran Owned Business Association (NaVOBA) Newsletter for March 6, 2014.**

<http://links.victorymedia.mkt4249.com/servlet/MailView?ms=ODEwNTQwOAS2&r=MTA2MzI4NzMwNjks1&j=MjYwNTI4NTgxSQ&mt=1&rt=0>

Provided by Ms. Mimi Lohm of NaVOBA. *Thanks Mimi!*

**Marine Lance Cpl. William Kyle Carpenter to be awarded the Medal of Honor.**

<http://www.stripes.com/news/report-afghanistan-veteran-william-kyle-carpenter-to-receive-medal-of-honor-1.271296#> Sent in by our friend, Rob Wilkins, MSgt, USAF (Ret) at The Weider History Group. *Thanks Rob!*

**American Legion On-Line Update for Thursday, March 6, 2014.**

<http://editor.legionemail.com/vo/?FileID=41c9e761-c0ab-40b6-a4b9-a3b2a3334a2e&m=f60ba55a-761b-463f-8a2b-c1a65794d1dd&MailID=28165110&listid=84772>

**Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Legislative Update regarding Veterans Bills.**

<http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=oq9y4fiab&v=001bX0lc4lcuhOO8mZfJRLehNxJzIPztgqic7oBnzU95FTH1vtXJzRS-PxhFs0x5JhXi2i2bNkQbT5YlhrCeRwIaHcgMLngJMUk3oigcvA4qANZ5oSTZA2FeRVaF51yvjZaw6BU6HLOO2c0Dyx-Qw%3D%3D>

**Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs News and Announcements for March 7, 2014.**

[http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=oq9y4fiab&v=001bX0lc4lcuhOO8mZfJRLehNxJzIPztgqic7oBnzU95FTWVq2jvdCnJGSSvUR0nmaOOOSKSzeTuwm4owqFXA2OrB1GODTqyiv-NRT3ewJF0g02lnHhEZUZyS\\_m0bcG6ZgBvf77-TK9af-V6fHfhhw%3D%3D](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=oq9y4fiab&v=001bX0lc4lcuhOO8mZfJRLehNxJzIPztgqic7oBnzU95FTWVq2jvdCnJGSSvUR0nmaOOOSKSzeTuwm4owqFXA2OrB1GODTqyiv-NRT3ewJF0g02lnHhEZUZyS_m0bcG6ZgBvf77-TK9af-V6fHfhhw%3D%3D)

**NET Force Monthly Meeting, Tuesday, March 11, 2014, at VVA HQ.**

<http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?ca=1aaa2eb0-b145-42ac-a029-00dbf4375c98&c=b8fe7b50-466a-11e3-a6b7-d4ae526edc76&ch=bbc7ad70-466a-11e3-a76c-d4ae526edc76>

**VetLikeMe News for Friday, March 7, 2014.** Provided by our fellow Veteran Hardy Stone, Founder and Editor of VetLikeMe. *Thanks Hardy!*

<http://us5.campaign-archive2.com/?u=c648aa063b9a33e587a494445&id=e69592de60&e=481d97425a>

**Working to Achieve Safe Care for Veterans:** During Patient Safety Awareness Week, March 2-8, we invite you to learn how VA is committed to patient safety with a systems approach to problem solving, focused on prevention, not punishment.

**FBC - DoD Hawaii 2014 Expo Series -Less Than One Month Away - Register Today**

[http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=qc5crxr7&v=0011Epg2wSvN84Za-ceUMQ8PISMyJhRQZ1Cgk321dJ-Uwn1mSvASUit9CbVYPi376FQI4dhS2iOV7ZxOHO\\_0kX9beR0iwU8hk3RAspXvO\\_djvYwRgO4WvYjCfGHOuzOikTIR-aujbfW0afasxqi7QFbHGfK1akC-Q\\_16kazfyvqHTUeinw152mw%3D%3D](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=qc5crxr7&v=0011Epg2wSvN84Za-ceUMQ8PISMyJhRQZ1Cgk321dJ-Uwn1mSvASUit9CbVYPi376FQI4dhS2iOV7ZxOHO_0kX9beR0iwU8hk3RAspXvO_djvYwRgO4WvYjCfGHOuzOikTIR-aujbfW0afasxqi7QFbHGfK1akC-Q_16kazfyvqHTUeinw152mw%3D%3D)

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

Best....Wayne

**HQ VA Veterans News for Friday, March 7, 2014. From Kevin Secor, VA VSO Liaison.**

1. ['So many questions': Botched recovery mission didn't follow JPAC's own protocol.](#)
2. [Sailors reassured that budget cuts won't affect staffing levels.](#)
3. [Army's top sex assault prosecutor suspended after assault allegation.](#)
4. [Bill to remove commanders from sex assault prosecutions fails.](#)
5. [Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sinclair admits guilt on 3 counts; denies sex assault.](#)
6. [VRAP gets cash to carry through school terms.](#)
7. [Veterans' Attorney Voices Concerns About VA's Reported Destruction of Veterans' Medical Records.](#)
8. [New bill aims to improve veteran's rights for those honorably discharged.](#)
9. [U.S. Senate bill aims to streamline VA claims, reduce backlog.](#)
10. [Veterans benefits claims backlog: proposed legislation addresses a comprehensive problem.](#)
11. [No Money for Bold Men.](#)
12. [Proposed DHA budget would triple funds for DoD-VA integrated EHR.](#)
13. [Female Vets Speak At Nazareth College.](#)
14. [VA initiative shows early promise in reducing use of opioids for chronic pain.](#)
15. [P., T., S., D., Help For Our Veterans.](#)
16. [All The World's A Stage: Using Shakespeare To Help Veterans.](#)
17. [The War on Veterans: Congress and the White House Are Much Better at Starting Wars Than Cleaning Up After Them.](#)
18. [Homeless vets say program promising help was 'a nightmare'.](#)
19. [Veterans launch effort to help homeless comrades.](#)
20. [Fewer homeless vets in Shreveport/Bossier.](#)
21. [Veterans in Abington, Whitman worried about loss of services.](#)
22. [5 things to know about getting a VA loan.](#)
23. [Civilian charged with stealing from Navy denies guilt.](#)
24. [Tampa VA worker gets six years for trading IDs for crack.](#)
25. [Multiple employees at Milwaukee's VA Center under investigation.](#)
26. VA / VSO-MSO Hearings as March 7, 2014:
27. Today in History:

1. ['So many questions': Botched recovery mission didn't follow JPAC's own protocol.](#) Families of the missing and JPAC whistleblowers believe modern technology and the analysis of war and post-war documents can easily identify a great number of these World War II unknowns but say JPAC has chosen to ignore them.
2. [Sailors reassured that budget cuts won't affect staffing levels.](#) In the wake of Pentagon plans to slash the size of the Army and to rein in military spending, the chief of naval personnel insisted during a worldwide all-hands call Wednesday that the U.S. Navy would not be cutting back on personnel.
3. [Army's top sex assault prosecutor suspended after assault allegation.](#) The top Army prosecutor for sexual assault cases has been suspended after a lawyer who worked for him recently reported he'd groped her and tried to kiss her at a sexual-assault legal conference more than two years ago.
4. [Bill to remove commanders from sex assault prosecutions fails.](#) A Senate measure to strip military commanders of authority over prosecutions of sexual assaults and other serious crimes failed Thursday in a procedural vote.
5. [Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sinclair admits guilt on 3 counts; denies sex assault.](#) Speaking in a hoarse voice with a rich Southern drawl, Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Sinclair pleaded guilty Thursday to several misconduct charges, describing to a military judge an illicit sexual affair with a junior officer and inappropriate sex talk with two other female officers who sent him nude photos of themselves.
6. [VRAP gets cash to carry through school terms.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Army Times:** A \$65 million fix by the Veterans Affairs Department will keep thousands of unemployed veterans in job training programs through the end of this semester.
7. [Veterans' Attorney Voices Concerns About VA's Reported Destruction of Veterans' Medical Records.](#) [DigitalJournal.com](#) According to a February 26, 2014 report on Fox News, employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) destroyed veterans' medical files in an ...
8. [New bill aims to improve veteran's rights for those honorably discharged.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **KXII-TV:** Ardmore State Senator Frank Simpson is pushing fellow legislators to do more for his fellow Oklahoma veterans. He's authored two bills aimed at better services and representation for all honorably discharged Oklahoma veterans.
9. [U.S. Senate bill aims to streamline VA claims, reduce backlog.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Las Vegas Review Journal:** A bill that aims to streamline veterans claims was proposed in Congress on Thursday by senators who said the government has failed to uphold its duty to disabled service members for the past 20 years.
10. [Veterans benefits claims backlog: proposed legislation addresses a comprehensive problem.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **The Patriot-News:** On Wednesday afternoon, Sen. Bob Casey, D-Pa., is set to unveil legislation designed to reduce a chronic backlog of veterans benefits claims that impacts approximately a million veterans.
11. [No Money for Bold Men.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **The Daily Show with Jon Stewart (Video):** In this 3:22 clip (Part 1 of 2), at 2:02 Jon Stewart begins to address the Senate's rejection of Senator Bernie Sanders' Veterans Omnibus Bill, focusing on Republicans' role in its defeat.
12. [Proposed DHA budget would triple funds for DoD-VA integrated EHR.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **FierceHealthIT:** The Defense Health Agency has requested a seven percent budget increase for 2015--\$1.6 billion--to support operations and maintenance of health information management systems, [reports](#) *Nextgov*.
13. [Female Vets Speak At Nazareth College.](#) [Hyperlink to Article](#) **Rochester Homepage (Video):** Female veterans visited Nazareth College Wednesday night to talk about their experiences. The Office of Veterans Affairs at Nazareth honored International Women's Days by bringing four prominent female veterans to the school for a panel discussion. Organizers

say it is an opportunity for enlisted students to see someone who was once in their shoes and a chance for civilians to learn about the reality of war.

**14. VA initiative shows early promise in reducing use of opioids for chronic pain.** [Hyperlink to Article Char-Koosta News](#): 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.

**15. P. T. S. D. Help For Our Veterans.** [Hyperlink to Article Columbia Star](#): Mankind's earliest literature tells us a significant proportion of military casualties are psychological, and witnessing death can leave chronic psychological symptoms.

**16. All The World's A Stage: Using Shakespeare To Help Veterans.** [Hyperlink to Article WUWM-FM \(Audio\)](#): Using the characters and words of Shakespeare, the group works with veterans suffering from PTSD and a range of other mental health and reintegration issues.

**17. The War on Veterans: Congress and the White House Are Much Better at Starting Wars Than Cleaning Up After Them.** [Hyperlink to Article Truthout](#): If our leaders really want to honor Cory Remsburg, they should stop making people go through what he experienced. It's time to stop waging unnecessary wars and start taking better care of our wounded warriors.

**18. Homeless vets say program promising help was 'a nightmare'.** [Hyperlink to Article KING-TV \(Video\)](#): Kathie King is still adjusting to her whirlwind move from New Mexico to Oak Harbor -- a move that began last summer after she saw an ad on Craigslist. King said the ad intrigued her because it was titled, "Homes for Heroes, Homes for Veterans."

**19. Veterans launch effort to help homeless comrades.** [Hyperlink to Article WFMZ-TV](#): Veterans served our country, and now people in Reading are gathering to serve them.

**20. Fewer homeless vets in Shreveport/Bossier.** [Hyperlink to Article KSLA-TV \(Video\)](#): The latest numbers show the amount of homeless veterans in the Shreveport/Bossier area has dropped by more 32 percent, and now local groups are joining forces to try to eliminate homelessness as a whole.

**21. Veterans in Abington, Whitman worried about loss of services.** [Hyperlink to Article Wicked Local](#): But Coyle and other local veterans say they fear a proposed regionalization of veterans services in Abington and Whitman will limit the effectiveness of veterans agents and diminish their ability to obtain benefits.

**22. 5 things to know about getting a VA loan.** [Hyperlink to Article Bankrate.com](#): As banks tighten lending standards, demand has increased tremendously in recent years for Veterans Affairs mortgages, known as VA loans.

**23. Civilian charged with stealing from Navy denies guilt.** A Navy civilian accused of forging documents and accepting more than \$360,000 in illegal housing payments pleaded not guilty to charges in a federal courtroom in Iowa on Tuesday.

**24. Tampa VA worker gets six years for trading IDs for crack.** [Hyperlink to Article Tampa Bay Times](#): On Thursday, U.S. District Judge Virginia M. Hernandez Covington sentenced identity thief and former hospital clerk David F. Lewis, 50, to six years in prison after hearing from Timoney, one of dozens of victims.

**25. Multiple employees at Milwaukee's VA Center under investigation.** [Hyperlink to Article WISN-TV \(Video\)](#): WISN 12 News has learned of a criminal investigation at the Veteran Affairs Medical Center involving the staff. The VA Medical Center is being very tight-lipped about the exact nature of the investigation, but WISN 12 News learned it involves accusations of the misuse of prescription drugs and involves multiple employees.

#### **26. VA / VSO-MSO Hearings as March 7, 2014:**

- **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 12, 2014.** SVAC, Full Committee, "U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2015."
- **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.

#### **27. Today in History:**

- **1799** – [Napoleon Bonaparte](#) captures [Jaffa](#) in [Palestine](#) and his troops proceed to kill more than 2,000 [Albanian](#) captives.
- **1814** – Emperor [Napoleon I](#) of France wins the [Battle of Craonne](#).
- **1827** – [Brazilian](#) marines unsuccessfully attack the temporary naval base of [Carmen de Patagones](#), [Argentina](#).
- **1827** – [Shrigley Abduction](#): [Ellen Turner](#) is abducted by [Edward Gibbon Wakefield](#), a future [politician](#) in colonial [New Zealand](#).
- **1850** – [Senator Daniel Webster](#) gives his "Seventh of March" speech endorsing the [Compromise of 1850](#) in order to prevent a possible [civil war](#).
- **1862** – [American Civil War](#): [Union](#) forces defeat [Confederate](#) troops at the [Pea Ridge](#) in northwestern [Arkansas](#).
- **1876** – [Alexander Graham Bell](#) is granted a [patent](#) for an [invention](#) he calls the [telephone](#).
- **1900** – The [German](#) liner [SS Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse](#) becomes the first ship to send [wireless](#) signals to shore.
- **1902** – [Second Boer War](#): In the [Battle of Tweebosch](#), a [Boer](#) commando led by [Koois de la Rey](#) inflicts the biggest defeat upon the [British](#) since the beginning of the war
- **1912** – [Roald Amundsen](#) announces that his expedition had reached the [South Pole](#) on [December 14, 1911](#).
- **1914** – [Prince William of Wied](#) arrives in [Albania](#) to begin his reign.
- **1936** – [World War II](#) (Prelude to): In violation of the [Locarno Pact](#) and the [Treaty of Versailles](#), [Germany](#) reoccupies the [Rhineland](#).
- **1945** – World War II: American troops seize the [Ludendorff Bridge](#) over the [Rhine River](#) at [Remagen](#).
- **1950** – [Cold War](#): The [Soviet Union](#) issues a statement denying that [Klaus Fuchs](#) served as a [Soviet](#) spy.
- **1951** – [Korean War](#): [Operation Ripper](#) – [United Nations](#) troops led by [General Matthew Ridgeway](#) begin an assault against [Chinese](#) forces.

- [1965 – Bloody Sunday](#): A group of 600 [civil rights](#) marchers are forcefully broken up in [Selma, Alabama](#).
- [1968 – Vietnam War](#): The [United States](#) and [South Vietnamese military](#) begin [Operation Truong Cong Dinh](#) to root out [Viet Cong](#) forces from the area surrounding [Mỹ Tho](#).
- [1985](#) – The song "[We Are the World](#)" receives its international release.
- [1986 – Challenger Disaster](#): Divers from the [USS Preserver](#) locate the crew cabin of [Challenger](#) on the ocean floor.
- [1989 – Iran](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) break diplomatic relations after a row over [Salman Rushdie](#) and his controversial novel, [The Satanic Verses](#).
- [1994 – Copyright Law](#): The [U.S. Supreme Court](#) rules that [parodies of an original work are generally covered](#) by the doctrine of [fair use](#).
- [2004 – New Democracy](#) wins the [Greek elections](#).
- [2006](#) – The terrorist organization [Lashkar-e-Taiba](#) coordinates a [series of bombings](#) in [Varanasi, India](#).
- [2007](#) – The [British House of Commons](#) votes to make the upper chamber, the [House of Lords](#), 100% elected.
- [2009](#) – The [Real Irish Republican Army](#) kills two British soldiers and two civilians, the first [British military](#) deaths in [Northern Ireland](#) since [The Troubles](#).
- 2009 – The [Kepler space observatory](#), designed to discover [Earth-like planets](#) orbiting other stars, is launched.

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**Invitation: Google Hangout March 14<sup>th</sup> – From Kevin Secor, VA VSO Liaison**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in collaboration with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and our community partners, is hosting a [Google+ Hangout and information session](#) to ensure uninsured Veterans, uninsured Veteran family members and care givers, have information about healthcare options and the Affordable Care Act (ACA). As a member or representative of one of our valued VSOs or NGOs, you are invited to join us for the Hangout on **Friday, March 14, 2014 at 12:00 noon EST**. VA leadership will provide opening remarks, which will be followed by an informational presentation and Q&A by ACA subject matter experts.

All together, the Hangout should last about 30 minutes, and will be a great way to foster communications in order to better serve our Veterans and their family members. **If you have any specific questions you would like to see addressed during the Hangout, please send them to [newmedia@va.gov](mailto:newmedia@va.gov).**

Thank you for all that you do each and every day to serve Veterans and their families. We look forward to your participation in our Hangout on March 14!

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**VA HQ Veterans News for Thursday, March 6, 2014. From Kevin Secor, VA, VSO Liaison**

1. [Korean War hero Maj. Kurt Chew-Een Lee dies](#).
  2. [Report: Afghanistan veteran William Kyle Carpenter to receive Medal of Honor](#).
  3. [VA Director Warns of Scam](#).
  4. [No longer needed? Troops survive combat, then lose their jobs](#).
  5. [Enlisted women could be serving on submarines by 2016](#).
  6. [Iran emphasizes nuclear reconciliation, criticizes US military posture in Persian Gulf](#).
  7. [Analysts: Russia unlikely to pull back in Crimea](#).
  8. [Hagel Promises to Look Into Vets' PTSD Lawsuit](#).
  9. [VA Boosts Funding to Expiring Training Program](#).
  10. [House to ask for autonomy for Gulf War Illness board](#).
  11. [Vet Groups Say VA Budget Underfunds Construction](#).
  12. [Biggest winners and losers in White House budget](#).
  13. [FY15 proposed budget takes aim at VA disability claim backlog](#).
  14. [Obama budget's military cuts could be rude awakening for veterans](#).
  15. [Minneapolis VA cuts down on use of opioids for chronic pain treatment](#).
  16. [Counseling available for combat military veterans](#).
  17. [Lovell FHCC Homeless Veterans Summit unites Lovell FHCC, Lake County, Illinois Joining Forces, community partners to end homelessness](#).
  18. [Denver VA Medical Center responds to 7NEWS investigations revealing parking shortage for veterans](#).
  19. [Guest commentary: The facts about VA health care and benefits](#).
  20. [DAV: Vocational rehab improves thousands of vets' lives](#).
  21. [VA Missing Timeliness Goals Issuing Hearing Aids](#).
  22. [Veterans' treatment court opens in Boston](#).
  23. [Legislative Notebook: Veterans panel pushing for Veterans Court](#).
  24. [Mobile Vet Center Campaign To Reach Every US Veteran](#).
  25. [VA adds mental health services: Substance abuse, post-traumatic stress in focus](#).
  26. [VA offers dental insurance for veterans](#).
  27. [Music Therapy and Military Populations: An Update](#).
  28. [Letters: Comfort dogs aid vets with PTSD](#).
  29. VA / VSO-MSO Hearings as March 6, 2014:
  30. Today in History:
1. [Korean War hero Maj. Kurt Chew-Een Lee dies](#). Maj. Kurt Chew-Een Lee, a Korean War hero who was also the first Asian American to be commissioned as a regular U.S. Marine Corps officer, has died at 88.
  2. [Report: Afghanistan veteran William Kyle Carpenter to receive Medal of Honor](#). President Barack Obama will award medically retired Marine Lance Cpl. William Kyle Carpenter the Medal of Honor later this year in recognition of Carpenter's heroic actions during a November 2010 grenade attack in Afghanistan, according to a Marine Corps Times report, which cited unnamed officials as sources.
  3. [VA Director Warns of Scam](#). [Hyperlink to Article GantDaily.com](#): Yesterday, Director of Veterans Affairs Betina Nicklas alerted the Clearfield County Commissioners and local residents about a scam in which individuals pose as military service members from overseas.
  4. [No longer needed? Troops survive combat, then lose their jobs](#). For thousands of career-military troops who endured combat and family separations during a dozen years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the end of hostilities brings a new directive from the government — your services are no longer needed.
  5. [Enlisted women could be serving on submarines by 2016](#). Enlisted women could begin serving aboard submarines as early as 2016, depending on the interest female sailors have in serving on the boats.
  6. [Iran emphasizes nuclear reconciliation, criticizes US military posture in Persian Gulf](#). Iran's foreign minister stressed that Tehran does not seek to weaponize its nuclear program, then questioned the continuing role of the United States military in the region during a meeting with reporters Wednesday.
  7. [Analysts: Russia unlikely to pull back in Crimea](#). Russia is unlikely to pull back its military forces in Ukraine's Crimean peninsula, analysts and former Obama administration officials say, forcing the United States and Europe into a more limited strategy of trying to prevent President Vladimir Putin from making advances elsewhere in the former Soviet republic.

8. [Hagel Promises to Look Into Vets' PTSD Lawsuit](#). [Hyperlink to Article ABC News \(AP\)](#): Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel says he is personally looking into the lawsuit filed earlier this week by Vietnam veterans who suffered from post-traumatic stress and received less than honorable discharges from the military.
9. [VA Boosts Funding to Expiring Training Program](#). [Hyperlink to Article Military.com](#): The Department of Veterans Affairs on Wednesday announced that veterans enrolled in training programs that will not end before program funding expires on March 31 will be provided the money needed to complete their courses.
10. [House to ask for autonomy for Gulf War Illness board](#). [Hyperlink to Article USA Today](#): The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs is putting together legislation to give autonomy back to a Gulf War illness advisory committee that has been stripped of its independence over the past year.
11. [Yet Groups Say VA Budget Underfunds Construction](#). [Hyperlink to Article Military.com](#): Veterans groups say the proposed 2015 Department of Veterans Affairs budget fails to address construction and maintenance needs at VA facilities across the country.
12. [Biggest winners and losers in White House budget](#). [Hyperlink to Article The Washington Post](#): Obama wants to dedicate \$138.7 million toward a Veterans Claims Intake Program that aims to reform and speed up the processing of disability claims, which have piled up into a massive backlog that the department has struggled to whittle down for years.
13. [FY15 proposed budget takes aim at VA disability claim backlog](#). [Hyperlink to Article Medill News Service](#): Fast tracking the backlog of VA disability claims and a renewed effort at eliminating veteran homelessness are among the efforts highlighted in the fiscal year 2015 budget request released by the Obama administration Tuesday.
14. [Obama budget's military cuts could be rude awakening for veterans](#). [Hyperlink to Article CBSNews.com \(Video\)](#): The unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans is 7.9 percent, higher than the national civilian average of 7 percent. The Pentagon's proposed budget cuts could force roughly 90,000 servicemen and women to seek civilian jobs.
15. [Minneapolis VA cuts down on use of opioids for chronic pain treatment](#). An initiative begun at the Minneapolis VA hospital has greatly reduced the use of opioids among veterans in its care, improving the chances for a better quality of life for veterans suffering from chronic pain.
16. [Counseling available for combat military, veterans](#). [Hyperlink to Article Knoxville News-Sentinel](#): Active-duty service members who served in a combat or war zone are now eligible for Vet Center counseling. The center will offer individual, group and family readjustment counseling to assist active-duty service members in making a successful transition from combat, to garrison or civilian life.
17. [Lovell FHCC Homeless Veterans Summit unites Lovell FHCC, Lake County, Illinois Joining Forces, community partners to end homelessness among Veterans by end of FY 2015](#). [Hyperlink to Article Chicago Tribune](#): Navy Veteran Joseph Yadron, dressed smartly in a suit and tie, hesitantly approached the podium, looked out at the supportive crowd of more than 150 people in Bourke Hall at the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center, and began telling his compelling story of homelessness and recovery.
18. [Denver VA Medical Center responds to 7NEWS investigations revealing parking shortage for veterans](#). [Hyperlink to Article KMGH-TV](#): The VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System is implementing major changes to improve patient parking at the Denver VA Medical Center after a series of 7NEWS Investigations exposed a parking shortage that raised concerns about patient safety for veterans.
19. [Guest commentary: The facts about VA health care and benefits](#). [Hyperlink to Article Contra Costa Times](#): America's veterans deserve the very best this nation can offer to honor their service and sacrifice. The 337,000 employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs -- nearly one-third of whom, like me, are veterans themselves -- care deeply for every veteran we are privileged to serve.
20. [DAV: Vocational rehab improves thousands of vets' lives](#). [Hyperlink to Article Army Times](#): Too few staffers, poor technology and inadequate tracking of results are hampering a Veterans Affairs Department program that is critical for disabled vets, according to government officials and veterans advocacy groups.
21. [VA Missing Timeliness Goals Issuing Hearing Aids](#). [Hyperlink to Article FEDweek](#): Tinnitus and hearing loss were the first and second most prevalent service-connected disabilities for veterans receiving compensation at the end of fiscal 2012, but the Department of Veterans Affairs' audiology services was not timely in issuing new hearing aids to veterans or in meeting its five-day timeliness goal to complete repair services, the VA inspector general has said.
22. [Veterans' treatment court opens in Boston](#). [Hyperlink to Article The Boston Globe](#): Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh and law enforcement and court officials today announced the launch of the new Boston Veterans Treatment Court Session at the Edward W. Brooke Courthouse. The court, the first of its kind in Suffolk County and the second in the state, is designed to help treat military veterans arrested for crimes linked to trauma caused by their service.
23. [Legislative Notebook: Veterans panel pushing for Veterans Court](#). [Hyperlink to Article The Telegraph](#): The state House Defense and Veterans Affairs Committee brought certain Georgia veterans who get in trouble with the law a step closer to a special court meant to offer treatment rather than punishment.
24. [Mobile Vet Center Campaign To Reach Every US Veteran](#). [Hyperlink to Article WBOY-TV \(Video\)](#): The US Department of Veterans Affairs estimates there are roughly 22 million veterans in the country. Reaching all of them takes some serious man power and dedication. A Veterans Affairs campaign is trying to do so.
25. [VA adds mental health services: Substance abuse, post-traumatic stress in focus](#). [Hyperlink to Article The Daily News Journal](#): New efforts to provide veterans with help with substance abuse and post-traumatic stress also requires more community support, an official with the program at York VA Medical Center said Tuesday.
26. [VA offers dental insurance for veterans](#). [Hyperlink to Article The Journal Times](#): The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provides comprehensive dental care to veterans who meet eligibility standards. However, the benefits are not available to many veterans.
27. [Music Therapy and Military Populations: An Update](#). [Hyperlink to Article The Huffington Post](#): I am very pleased to inform our readers that the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) has just announced the publication of *Music Therapy and Military Populations: A Status Report and Recommendations on Music Therapy Treatment, Programs, Research, and Practice Policy*.
28. [Letters: Comfort dogs aid vets with PTSD](#). [Hyperlink to Article Los Angeles Times](#): A PTSD veteran does not show obvious signs of combat trauma — but make no mistake, these veterans are suffering within.
29. **VA / VSO-MSO Hearings as March 6, 2014:**
  - **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 12, 2014.** SVAC, Full Committee, "U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2015."
- **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:

- 1788 – The [First Fleet](#) arrives at [Norfolk Island](#) in order to found a [convict settlement](#).
- 1820 – The [Missouri Compromise](#) is signed into law by President [James Monroe](#). The compromise allows [Missouri](#) to enter the [Union](#) as a [slave state](#), brings [Maine](#) into the Union as a [free state](#), and makes the rest of the northern part of the [Louisiana Purchase](#) territory slavery-free.
- 1836 – [Texas Revolution: Battle of the Alamo](#) – After a thirteen day [siege](#) by an army of 3,000 Mexican troops, the 187 Texas volunteers, including frontiersman [Davy Crockett](#) and colonel [Jim Bowie](#), defending the [Alamo](#) are killed and the fort is captured.
- 1857 – The [Supreme Court of the United States](#) rules in the [Dred Scott v. Sandford](#) case.
- 1899 – [Bayer](#) registers "[Aspirin](#)" as a [trademark](#).
- 1930 – [International Unemployment Day](#) demonstrations globally initiated by the Comintern
- 1943 – [Norman Rockwell](#) published [Freedom from Want](#) in the [The Saturday Evening Post](#) with a matching essay by [Carlos Bulosan](#) as part of the [Four Freedoms](#) series.
- 1945 – [World War II: Cologne](#) is captured by American Troops.
- 1946 – [Ho Chi Minh](#) signs an agreement with France which recognizes [Vietnam](#) as an autonomous state in the Indochinese Federation and the [French Union](#).
- 1951 – The trial of [Ethel and Julius Rosenberg](#) begins.
- 1953 – [Georgy Malenkov](#) succeeds [Joseph Stalin](#) as [Premier of the Soviet Union](#) and [First Secretary](#) of the [Communist Party of the Soviet Union](#).
- 1957 – [Ghana](#) becomes the first [Sub-Saharan](#) country to gain independence from the British
- 1962 – [Ash Wednesday Storm of 1962](#) begins on the mid-Atlantic coast of the United States.
- 1964 – [Nation of Islam's Elijah Muhammad](#) officially gives [boxing](#) champion [Cassius Clay](#) the name [Muhammad Ali](#).
- 1964 – [Constantine II](#) becomes King of Greece.
- 1967 – [Joseph Stalin's](#) daughter [Svetlana Alliluyeva](#) [defects](#) to the United States.
- 1968 – The first of the [East L.A. walkouts](#) take place at several high schools.
- 1968 – Three black males are executed by [Rhodesia](#), the first executions since [UDI](#), prompting international condemnation.
- 1970 – An explosion at the [Weather Underground](#) safe house in Greenwich Village kills three.
- 1975 – For the first time the [Zapruder film](#) of the [assassination of John E. Kennedy](#) is shown in motion to a national TV audience by [Robert J. Groden](#) and [Dick Gregory](#).
- 1975 – [Algiers Accord: Iran](#) and [Iraq](#) announce a settlement of their border dispute.
- 1981 – After 19 years of presenting the [CBS Evening News](#), [Walter Cronkite](#) signs off for the last time.
- 1983 – The first [United States Football League](#) game is played.
- 1987 – The British ferry [MS Herald of Free Enterprise](#) capsizes in about 90 seconds killing 193.
- 1988 – Three [Provisional Irish Republican Army](#) volunteers are killed by [Special Air Service](#) on the territory of [Gibraltar](#) in the conclusion of [Operation Flavius](#).
- 1990 – Ed Yielding and Joseph T. Vida set the [transcontinental speed record](#) flying a [SR-71 Blackbird](#) from Los Angeles to Virginia in 64 minutes, averaging 2,124 mph.
- 1992 – The [Michelangelo computer virus](#) begins to affect computers.
- 2008 – A [suicide bomber kills 68 people](#) (including first responders) in [Baghdad](#) on the same day that a gunman [kills eight students](#) in [Jerusalem](#).

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**From:** Rob Wilkins, USAF (Ret), Weider History Group  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 06, 2014 12:51 PM

**Subj:** African-American aviation pioneer to be honored by US postal service

Historical event -- In a significant move that brings to the forefront African-American aviation pioneers, the first-ever U.S. postal stamp honoring *Tuskegee Airmen* is due to be issued this month.

The definitive stamp, which immortalizes aviation trailblazer Charles Alfred Anderson, Sr., goes on sale nationwide March 13.

The 70-cent, First-Class Mail, two-ounce rate stamp, by artist and illustrator Sterling Hundley, will be [unveiled](#) next Thursday at a dedication ceremony at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania.

Here's a link to the article:

<http://thegrio.com/2014/03/06/african-american-aviator-pioneer-to-be-honored-by-us-postal-service/#s:chief-anderson-stamp-2>

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**From:** Curt Cashour, House Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 06, 2014 10:27 AM

**Subj:** VA's Top Spokesman Speechless On VA Misspeak to Congress

**NOTE:** "...I can't speak to Dr. Petzel's exact statements. I can speak to the broader system as a whole," Sowers said.

...We did ask VA Public Affairs to get us an explanation directly from Petzel, but so far there has been no response.

## Reports show conflicting statements about patient deaths at Atlanta VA Medical Center

ABC Atlanta

March 5, 2014

<http://www.wsbtv.com/news/news/local/reports-show-conflicting-statements-about-patient-/nd6Ym/>

One of the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' highest ranking executives is under fire because of what he told a congressional subcommittee about a patient death scandal exposed by Channel 2 Action News.

Our investigation uncovered federal reports that linked mismanagement at the Atlanta VA Medical Center to those deaths.

We now know the Department of Veterans Affairs disciplined seven Atlanta VA Medical Center employees following inspector general reports we exposed last April, which linked mismanagement at the hospital to three mental health patients' deaths.

In an exclusive interview last summer, VA Undersecretary for Health Dr. Robert Petzel told Channel 2 investigative reporter Aaron Diamant, "Most important thing in Atlanta right now is, one, recognition of the issues, and two, the way forward."

In later congressional hearings Petzel expressed regret, but at a House VA subcommittee hearing in Washington, D.C. last week Petzel told members, "Well, first of all the IG did not link any deaths to the activity at Atlanta. There were three mental health deaths, but the IG made no comment in their report on the quality of care that was delivered to them or the course of action."

But in the reports inspectors wrote, "We substantiated that staff's failure to 'watch' patients may have contributed to the subject patient's death ... Our review also confirmed that facility managers did not provide adequate staff, training, resources, support, or guidance for effective oversight of the contracted MH program."

Diamant asked VA's undersecretary for public affairs, Tommy Sowers, if he could explain the discrepancy at a veterans outreach program Wednesday at Georgia Tech.

"I can't speak to Dr. Petzel's exact statements. I can speak to the broader system as a whole," Sowers said.

A system he described as imperfect.

"We do what we do in the military. We acknowledge those mistakes, we learn from them, and we fix them and we spread that knowledge across the nation," Sowers said.

This week the House Veterans Affairs Committee chairman sent a statement, saying: "Such clear and definitive misstatements on VA's part demonstrate either a reckless ignorance of the facts or a deliberate attempt to downplay the department's responsibility for the deaths."

We did ask VA Public Affairs to get us an explanation directly from Petzel, but so far there has been no response.

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**From: Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) NewsBytes**

**Sent: Friday, March 07, 2014 9:51 AM**

### Administration 2015 Budget Requested Revealed

The Administration released details of its FY 2015 budget request this week. It includes a decrease in the Defense Department (DoD) personnel programs from \$144 billion in current FY 2014 to \$135 billion in FY 2015. The budget intends to slow the growth of military compensation and benefits with provisions that include:

- Capping military pay increases by one percent for FY 2015 and 2016;
- Creating an annual enrollment fee for new TRICARE for Life (TFL) beneficiaries;
- Merging TRICARE Standard, Prime, and Extra into one consolidated health plan;
- Requiring all retirees to use home-delivery or MTF for maintenance drugs;
- Increasing TRICARE annual fees and pharmacy co-pays for retirees under age 65;
- Creating a small co-pay (\$10) for retirees using Military Treatment Facilities (MTF);
- Requiring active duty family members to pay a co-pay for TRICARE services;
- Reducing Base Allowance for Housing (BAH) payments by six percent;
- Cutting the commissary budget from \$1.4 billion to \$400 million in three years with only stateside commissaries being cut (see Military Update Column by Tom Philpott on FRA website for more details on commissary cuts); and
- Cutting Army and Marine Corps end strength (Navy end strength is not reduced).

The Association will oppose these budget-driven pay and benefit cuts and is reviewing other issues addressed in the DoD budget proposal.

FRA staff attended the meeting at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding the agency's FY 2015 budget that increases spending by 6.5 percent over current fiscal year, and a 35.2 percent increase since FY 2009. The proposed budget provides the Veterans Benefit Administration with funds to adjudicate 1.5 million disability and pension claims in FY 2015, which is a 17 percent increase over the current year's funding. The proposed budget provides \$173.3 million for the Veterans Benefits Management System to administer a paperless claims system, and \$138.7 million to scan paper documents into e-folders. The proposed \$163.9 billion budget also provides \$58.7 billion in advanced spending for VA health care for FY 2016. The advanced appropriation for veteran's health care is a 4.7 percent increase over FY 2015. National President Virgil Courneya is scheduled to testify next week before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee to discuss the VA budget and other VA-related initiatives.

The FY 2015 proposed budget for U.S. Coast Guard, which is part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), will be reduced by \$795 million from the 2014 budget. FRA will review and monitor developments with the Coast Guard budget and other related issues.

### House Panel Looks at VA Health Care

The House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) Health Subcommittee recently held an oversight hearing for the Veteran's Health Administration (VHA). At the hearing, VHA was asked about recent media reports that the Greater Los Angeles VA Medical Center inappropriately destroyed exam requests and veterans' medical records so as to falsely report that they were reducing the disability claims backlog. The allegations were brought forward by a former VA employee. Dr. Robert Petzel, VA Undersecretary for Health, said that these reports are false and misleading, calling them "scurrilous." He stated that the VA Medical Center only deleted old requests from veterans who had repeatedly failed to show up for the exams, and that medical records in the VA Electronic Health Record System cannot be destroyed.

The Subcommittee also discussed VHA pain management treatments, physician staffing, and VA procurement process.

### USO Exec goes to VA

The Senate confirmed Sloan Gibson to be the deputy secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) last week. Gibson comes to the VA after more than five-years as the president and CEO of the nonprofit United Services Organizations, which provides morale, welfare and recreation-type services to uniformed military personnel.

During his confirmation hearing, he told Senate Veterans Affairs Committee members his priorities would include the ongoing effort to reduce and eliminate the longstanding backlog of disability claims. He said he also will work to find common ground with the Defense Department on a new strategy for a joint electronic health records system.

Gibson also spent 20 years in the banking industry, retiring from AmSouth Bancorporation in 2004. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and earned both Airborne and Ranger qualifications, and served in the infantry in the Army. Gibson earned a Masters in Economics from the University of Missouri in Kansas City and a Masters in Public Administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

FRA looks forward to working with the new deputy secretary on issues of mutual concern.

#### **DHA Wants EFT Payments from TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) Beneficiaries**

The Defense Health Agency (DHA) wants Reservists with TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) to monitor their electronic fund transfer (EFT) payments. While TRS beneficiaries are required to setup an EFT to pay their premiums, it's not foolproof and missed payments can result in a loss of health care coverage.

One major reason for missed payments is an expired credit card. Now is a good time to check the expiration date on the credit card used for TRS EFTs. Make sure to update the regional contractor with any new or pending account information.

If a payment is missed because of insufficient funds, beneficiaries must contact the regional contractor as soon as possible to make payment. If an EFT defaults, there is a service charge of up to \$20. Failure to pay any overdue premium amount will result in suspension of coverage effective the last day of the month last paid.

TRICARE's goal is to make it easy to manage and pay premiums through EFT. Premiums are deducted on the first business day of the month, so update the regional contractor with account changes as far in advance as possible. To learn more about TRS premiums and EFT options: [www.tricare.mil/Welcome/Enroll/TRS/Premiums](http://www.tricare.mil/Welcome/Enroll/TRS/Premiums).

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#### **Association of the United States Navy (AUSN) Legislative Watch for March 7, 2014.**

**From:** Association of the United States Navy (AUSN)

**Sent:** Friday, March 07, 2014 3:01 PM

**Subject:** The Legislative Watch, 7 March 2014

#### **In This Week's Legislative Watch:**

##### **AUSN LOOKS AT CBO REPORT ON "DOC-FIX" LEGISLATION**

*On 27 February 2014, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released its report to Congress on the cost estimates associated with "Doc-Fix" legislation being proposed in both the House and the Senate. Proposed legislation would replace the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula, which determines the annual updates to payment rates for physicians' services in Medicare, with new systems for establishing that payment rate. The proposed bills, S. 2000 and H.R. 4015, represent a policy agreement among three committees (Senate Finance, House Energy and Commerce, and House Ways and Means) and would cost \$138.4 billion for 2014 through 2024. This estimate comes as the current "Doc-Fix" patch is set to expire on 1 April 2014 and cause a 24 percent cut in physician Medicare payment rates.*

##### **FURTHER READING:**

Last week, with only one month left before the current "Doc-Fix" patch (P.L. 113-67) expires, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) released to the Senate Committee on Finance a report, with an estimate on the cost associated with the bipartisan compromise measure to replace how Medicare pays physicians. Proposed legislation would replace the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula, which determines the annual updates to payment rates for physicians' services in Medicare, with new systems for establishing that payment rate. The CBO score, at **\$138.4 billion**, score is on the lower side of cost estimates for numerous proposed measures that would repeal Medicare's sustainable growth rate and replace it with a new payment system. Previous estimates regarding different versions of replacement legislation have ranged from **\$121.1 billion** over ten years to **\$153.2 billion** over ten years. This CBO estimate is different, in that it estimates for an eleven year period by including 2024. This estimate comes as the current "Doc-Fix" patch is set to expire on 1 April 2014 and cause a 24 percent cut in physician Medicare payment rates. The CBO's score illuminates the major challenge of offsetting the bills cost, with the CBO estimating that the bulk of the increase in spending it to come from updates in the rates paid for physician services. As a result, the bill has been moving slowly through both chambers and has triggered lawmakers to consider a "parallel track" of possibly implementing another short-term patch that could last through the rest of 2014 while they continue work on this bill.

The legislation has several different phases in which it would replace the current pay system of Medicare. For the rest of 2014, the bills would maintain current rates, but starting in 2015 it would give providers a 0.5 percent annual payment update each year until 2018. In 2018, individual providers' payments would be adjusted based on whether they participate in an approved Alternative Payment Model (APM) or a new Merit-Based Incentive Payment System (MIPS). For 2024 and succeeding years, the payment rates for the services delivered by providers would be determined by which payment program the providers were on. For providers on the MIPS program, payment rates would be increased by 0.5 percent each year, while those on the APM program would have their payment rates increased by 1 percent each year.

For more details, see [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog on CBO "DOC-FIX" Report](#).

##### **AUSN ANALYZES QUADRENNIAL DEFENSE REVIEW OF 2014**

*On 4 March 2014, Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Chuck Hagel delivered the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) to Congress. The QDR details the strategic direction of the United States Armed Forces, and specifies resource priorities required to meet strategic objectives. The updated defense policy can be categorized into three main pillars of strategy. The first pillar is to protect the homeland by disrupting the potential for future attacks and mitigating the effects of natural disasters. The second pillar is that the United States will engage in efforts to develop global security and preserve regional stability by deterring potential adversaries and engaging in cooperative efforts to pursue common security objectives. The third pillar is that the United States will retain and enhance its ability to project power and win decisively through the deterrence of aggression, the destruction of terrorist networks, and the distribution of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Key points in the QDR outline the Navy's role which, through an aggressive effort to reduce acquisition costs and temporary ship lay-ups, the Navy will modernize its fleets of surface ships, aircraft, and submarines to meet 21st Century threats.*

##### **FURTHER READING:**

First and foremost, AUSN took notice of the regional security objectives within the QDR which will largely be focused upon the Pacific Pivot strategy as outlined in the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance, intended to right the strategic balance of power in the key Asia-Pacific region. The United States has commanded regional power over this area for over a century. Its presence there ensures peace and prosperity, open commerce, and a just international order. Despite continued American dominance, in the last decade, the Asia-Pacific has seen an elevated level of instability. Fueling this instability is the increasing military capability of smaller states, along with the rise of new regional powers. This imbalance disrupts the established order both politically and economically, and increases the possibility for competition to escalate into regional conflict. China's continued rise is particularly concerning.



In regards to the Navy, AUSN noted that there are key end strength and force structure decisions in this QDR which includes reserving Naval capacity to build security globally and responding to various national and international crises. Through an aggressive effort to reduce acquisition costs and temporary ship lay-ups, the Navy will modernize its fleets of surface ships, aircraft, and submarines to meet 21st Century threats. However, despite this modernization, the Department of Defense (DOD) has decided, as noted in the Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) President's Budget (PB), that no new negotiations beyond 32 Littoral Combat Ships (LCS) will go forward, and the Navy will submit alternative proposals to procure a capable and lethal small surface combatant. Of additional concern within the QDR, is the position that if sequestration-level cuts are imposed in Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16) and beyond, the USS *George Washington* (CVN-73) aircraft carrier would need to be retired before scheduled Refueling and Complex Overhaul (RCOH). DOD will have to make this decision, which would leave the Navy with ten carrier strike groups, in the Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16) budget submission.

For more details, see [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog on 2014 QDR](#).

#### SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HEARING ON FY15 DEFENSE BUDGET

*On 5 March 2014, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) held its hearing on the Department of Defense (DOD) Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) and the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP). The witnesses present were the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF), the Honorable Charles Hagel, and General Martin E. Dempsey, USA, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS). The hearing was held by SASC Chairman, Senator Carl Levin (D-MI), and Ranking Member, Senator James Inhofe (R-OK). Chairman Levin expressed his concern about what the overall effect on DOD's budget that the nearly \$1 trillion dollars scheduled to be cut over the next 10 years due to the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011 and sequestration will be. Some of his specific concerns centered around the compensation reform proposed in the FY15 budget including the one year pay freeze for all general and flag officers, the phase reduction in basic allowance for housing (BAH) for off-base housing (bringing the out of pocket costs from zero to five percent), reduction in funding and support for Commissaries on military bases and increased fees to TRICARE being proposed. Ranking Member Inhofe noted that the tide of war is not receding as the global security networks are more complex and volatile than any time since WWII. The Senator then expressed concern over cuts in the FY15 budget and the future plan that would bring the Navy to a historically low ship level, including the proposed reduction of our carrier fleet from 11 to 10. This was noted in the FY15 President's Budget (PB) request looking at such a change to be proposed next fiscal year, Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16), by DOD for reducing our carrier presence.*

FURTHER READING (Full AUSN Transcripts & After Action Reports (AARs) available upon request):

The hearing then began with opening statements from the both witnesses. SECDEF Hagel stated that the current budget proposal provides funding levels that would allow the Department of Defense (DOD) to execute the strategic priorities outlined in the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) but with added risk in some areas (which he outlined in his written, submitted testimony). The Secretary also discussed compensation reform, saying that there is a very serious need to balance fair compensation with the proper training and tools to perform for members of the armed services which is why the compensation cuts proposed are one time cuts and that pay increases are still recommended, but at lower levels. CJCS, General Dempsey, testified that that the one-time compensation cut proposals would provide savings directly returned to the services into their readiness accounts to maintain force readiness and capability and that these proposals were carefully crafted over the past year in order to ensure the best possible balance between compensation and the proper preparation that SECDEF Hagel mentioned.

Following opening statements and testimony, SASC members began rounds of questions started by Chairman Levin. The Chairman noted the additionally requested **\$115 million** from the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) and DOD's public statements on how this money would be used (amongst other things) to maintain the crucial 11 aircraft carrier (CVN) fleet. In expressing his support for maintaining an 11 carrier fleet, Chairman Levin noted that the budget documents provided by DOD included the FYDP funding, yet still planned for a reduction in the fleet size, reducing to 10 carriers for example, and asked Secretary Hagel why there was this glaring discrepancy. SECDEF Hagel responded that there is time to make decisions about the future fleet size when the allocation of resources becomes clearer and that DOD needs to plan for the worst scenarios. Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) asked General Dempsey about what effect there would be on the active forces and on benefits if the proposals for compensation cuts were not accepted by Congress. General Dempsey reiterated that there is a careful balance between long term responsibilities for troop readiness and capabilities and the earned compensation, benefits, and pay that members of our Armed Services sacrifice for. The General also said that there has been an open dialogue with Active Duty soldiers, retired Veterans, and Veteran's advocacy groups and that while compensation cuts are obviously not going to be widely accepted or supported, there has been support at different levels for different aspects of the cuts.

Senator John McCain (R-AZ) expressed grave concern with the cuts bringing the Navy to its smallest level since WWI at a time when the world is the most unsettled it has been since WWI and when China has recently announced they will be increasing their military budget by 12.2 percent. Next, Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) asked SECDEF Hagel about his thoughts on the recently introduced bill, S. 2075, which would halt any cuts on commissary funding in FY15 until the report of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) has been sent to Congress. SECDEF Hagel stated that DOD knew where commissary funding was headed and felt that they should act now, not wanting to wait for the report. Senator Kay Hagan (D-NC) asked the SECDEF Hagel to promptly respond to her recent letter in regards to TRICARE deciding to stop reimbursement of critical medical tests. Senator Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) noted that from the mid-1940's until the mid-2000's, defense spending was about six percent of GDP on average where it is now 3.4 percent of GDP in Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14) and by 2024 defense spending is projected to be 2.3 percent of GDP and asked the Secretary if this was sufficient now, and if it would continue to be sufficient in 10 years. Secretary Hagel responded that this is the exact reason why the President is requesting an additional **\$115 billion** over the next five years as well as an additional **\$26 billion** this year via the Opportunity Growth and Security Initiative.

#### HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HEARING ON FY15 BUDGET AND COMBATANT COMMANDS

*On 5 March 2014, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) held a hearing to discuss the budget needs for the Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) from the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM), U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM.) The hearing was presided over by Chairman Buck McKeon (CA-25) and Ranking Member Adam Smith (WA-09.) The witnesses testifying were Admiral (ADM) Samuel Locklear, PACOM Commander; General (GEN) Lloyd Austin, CENTCOM Commander; and General (GEN) David Rodriguez, AFRICOM Commander. HASC Chairman, Representative Buck McKeon (R-CA-25), began the hearing indicating his desire to assess the United States' ability to rebalance the military to the Asia-Pacific while maintaining strength in the Middle East based on the implications of these budget cuts, i.e. sequestration, noting the significant reduction within the President's Budget (PB) request for FY15. HASC Ranking Member, Representative Adam Smith (D-WA-09), stressed in his opening statement that he viewed these cuts as necessary, although undesirable.*

FURTHER READING (Full AUSN Transcripts & After Action Reports (AARs) available upon request):

After the Chairman and Ranking Member welcome the witnesses, each of them had the opportunity to give brief remarks from their opening written statements. Most notably, ADM Locklear from PACOM outlined the main issues that he was concerned about in his command region: the potential for a natural disaster and humanitarian relief, North Korea, territorial disputes in the region, regional transnational groups, and the emergence of China as an economic and military power. Next, Chairman McKeon opened the round of questioning, stating that he personally believed that too much had been cut from the defense budget and asking each of the witnesses about their individual gaps in capability resulting from decreases in funding. ADM Locklear replied that his follow-up force had been weakened because most of the force was now forward-deployed to maintain readiness. With PACOM encompassing 52 percent of the world, ADM Locklear stressed that the minimized support force would be vulnerable in the event of a crisis.

Representative J. Randy Forbes (R-VA-04) stated the importance of PACOM to the nation's defense strategy and asked about the role of aircraft carriers and the ideal size of the Navy's fleet to achieve global security goals. ADM Locklear replied that aircraft carriers were at the forefront of contingency efforts. He also stated that while size was not the most important factor in an effective Navy, the U.S. was getting close to losing its credibility as a global force. ADM Locklear also stressed the importance of stations for ship repair with dry-dock capabilities in Japan when asked about them by Representative Madeleine Bordallo (D-GU). Representative Rob Wittman (R-VA-01) expressed concerns about the cruisers (CG's) in "suspended animation" and the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS) cuts and the effects on the Navy's abilities to accomplish its missions. ADM Locklear responded that while capacity is an important component to a strong fleet, a ship can only be in one place at one time, which makes the quantity of ships equally as important. Currently, he stated his command region was having difficulties with numbers but was managing the force by highlighting the most dangerous areas and also distinguishing the areas where crises were most likely to occur. ADM Locklear also described the Reserve Forces as a very important segment of his command when asked by Representative Tammy Duckworth (D-IL-08), although he did say that they did not have a great number of Reserve forces in his region. In addition, Representative Jim Bridenstine (R-OK-01) asked ADM Locklear what he thought about a statement he had heard that the pivot to Asia-Pacific region could not candidly be done under the current budget. He replied that while there were certainly challenges with implementing the regional shift. He went on to state that the pivot was not entirely military-centric and PACOM was having great success establishing trade agreements and regional partnerships.

Finally, Ranking Member Smith opened a discussion about the possible impact of cutting the fleet of aircraft carriers. He expressed concern that if certain cuts were not made, cuts in training would be implemented instead and affect overall military readiness. Stating that he had heard reports that the Navy could operate with as few as 8 to 10 aircraft carriers, he wondered whether there were cheaper ways to establish a global presence by cutting the fleet to fewer than 11 carriers. ADM Locklear replied that, based on the war-time need for a rapid response; there was no way for the United States to meet its security goals with a fleet of less than 11 ships. Aircraft carriers brought unique capabilities to the table as being the platform utilized, "before the shooting begins." Diminishing the long-range capabilities offered by the aircraft carriers would limit the space of time for decisions to be made, he argued. ADM Locklear went on to assert that the U.S. has 10 operating carriers now and still cannot meet the global demand. Chairman McKeon stated his belief that the aircraft carrier presence was a deterrent that kept the United States out of war. ADM Locklear concurred but said that the current fleet did not meet the day-to-day demands

of CENTCOM and PACOM.

## HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HEARING ON FY15 DEFENSE BUDGET

*On 6 March 2014 the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) held a hearing to discuss the Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) President's Budget (PB) request from the Department of Defense (DOD). The witnesses present at the hearing were the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF), Chuck Hagel, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), General Martin Dempsey, USA. HASC Vice-Chairman, Representative Mac Thornberry (R-TX-13) presided over the hearing, sitting in for HASC Chairman, Representative Buck McKeon (R-CA-25) who was absent, and opened remarks along with HASC Ranking Member, Representative Adam Smith (D-WA-09). The Committee hearing was widely attended by HASC Members in order to discuss ways the President's Budget balanced between security demands and available resources, as well as, what recommendations the witnesses provided to better connect national security with fiscal responsibility. Vice Chairman Thornberry opened the hearing, clarifying the base budget that both the House and Senate Budget Committees agreed to. He recognized that DOD is requesting an additional **\$150 billion** to supplement the cuts to defense. Ranking Member Smith commented that the budget anticipated the cutting of roughly **\$5 billion**, however when sequestration hit even greater cuts were made. Furthermore, Ranking Member Smith commented that with eight more years of sequestration on the books in conjunction with the FY15 budget, there won't be adequate funding for the defense strategy of the military. He went on to stress that the budget does not choose to cut defense, but follows the laws of sequestration which has been passed. What HASC asked of its witnesses in this hearing, according to the Chairman and Ranking Member, are what alternatives may be considered and what is needed for DOD to support the defense strategy.*

FURTHER READING (Full AUSN Transcripts & After Action Reports (AARs) available upon request):

The witnesses began to answer the questions regarding the FY15 budget and the future defense strategy with Secretary Hagel highlighting the difficulties of this past year in his testimony including the sixteen days of the Federal government shutdown, furloughs, and the budgetary uncertainty for defense. He also briefly commented on the most recent need for defense to be running at optimal efficiency, noting the current situation in Ukraine. Secretary Hagel made a point to explain that it is the focus of the United States to de-escalate the crisis in Ukraine and support their government with economic support as well as trying to take a diplomatic track in this crisis. The United States promised to commit **\$1 billion** to Ukraine in assistance and to re-affirm its commitments to allies in Europe. With crisis's that the United States continuously faces, the FY15 budget does not accurately reflect the reality nor accounts for all types of situations. He went on to state that the request from DOD means to assist in preparing the military to protect and meet future challenges and threats. The request is a product of collaboration, keeping in mind every level of military leadership and their input into this process. The cuts, specifically due to sequestration, included national security concerns and he urged Congress to support their request. He closed by stating that the FY15 PB request represents America's highest security interest in defending the country, deterring aggression, and defeating adversaries. Next, General Dempsey echoed the sentiments of Secretary Hagel and in his testimony he explained that the current budget proposal imparts great risk on the defense strategy, specifically in its capability, capacity, and readiness. He also noted that the Navy, for its part, will take 11 ships out of its operational inventory, but they will be modernized and returned to service with greater capability and longer lifespan. The Marine Corps also planned draw down to 182,000, but will devote 900 more Marines to increased embassy security. General Dempsey referred to this as a significant near-term readiness risk. Without adequate funds there will be reductions to equipment, resources, and transportation. This translates to severely affecting the defense strategy and the inability to defend the country from aggression could be a real possibility. His recommended adequately supporting the defense strategy to avoid these risks.

Following the witnesses' testimonies, Vice-Chairman Thornberry deferred to the Members of the Committee for rounds of questioning. Ranking Member Smith asked the witnesses what alternatives the request proposed to hedge sequestration and budget cuts? Secretary Hagel first responded that any alternatives considered continues to put the country's security at risk. As long as infrastructure, which supports readiness and modernization, are cut down, so is their ability to respond. General Dempsey's response fell in line, but was much stronger. He stated that if the recommendations are not accepted, then there is a greater cost in the losses DOD would face. While the hearing sought to find alternatives which might soften the effects cuts would make to the country's defense strategy, the witnesses adamantly argued that alternatives should not be considered so as not to increase risk. The losses DOD faces significantly changes the defense strategy and does not adequately or efficiently provide for security. Next, Representative Derek Kilmer (D-WA-06) asked about the reduction to the Navy ship depot maintenance budget of **\$1.4 billion** and the subsequent operations cut to the Navy. Secretary Hagel responded that he thinks the Navy has recommended in some of the proposals on how to adapt are pretty creative ideas they've got and being able to bring some of the Navy's ships out and upgrade them and overhaul them, while not taking them out of the fleet, but bringing more capacity, with longer lifespan, are noteworthy proposals of the Navy.

Representative Bradley Byrne (R-AL-01) asked about the press conference both Secretary Hagel and General Dempsey gave where Hagel not that he would be open to, in regards to the LCS, "Existing ship designs... Including the LCS," and a modified LCS." He went on to state that by virtue of the fact that Secretary Hagel include in your parenthetical, including the LCS and an existing ship design, that would mean supporting the existing LCS design. Secretary Hagel responded that he has given the Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV), and the Chief of Naval Operations not options, but directives as to what he wants to see. These include details on LCS survivability, combat power, more capability, and if they can they do that with an existing design that would give more survivability, more capability, and even more combat power. However, that's not why, in Secretary Hagel's opinion, we need 52 of LCSs. The original point was if the LCS is fulfilling, will fulfill the mission that we've asked it to fulfill, but that's not in dispute. The bigger question is if you build out the LCS to 52, in a 300 ship Navy that represents about a sixth of our Navy. In his opinion, with some of the initial testing, it doesn't appear to have the survivability, capability, firepower for ships the U.S. may well need to confront much more sophisticated adversaries, especially in the Asia-Pacific, in the next few years. Representative Byrne then asked if the LCS did meet all of its requirements though, with the future ships coming down the line that are more advanced and modified than the first two, if Secretary Hagel would accept a "modified LCS." Secretary Hagel responded that if it meets those requirements, then yes, he would support it, but only if it meets those requirements. Further discussion is to be conducted between the witnesses and members of the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) in a closed session in order to disseminate the FY15 Defense Budget.

## AUSN BRIEFLY ANALYZES FY15 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET (PB) REQUEST

*On 4 March 2014, the Administration sent to Congress the President's Budget (PB) request for Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15). The PB requests a total of **\$495.6 billion** for the DOD budget, about **\$31 billion** less than FY14 requested levels, but is consistent with the revised spending cap set by Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) of 2013. Of particular concern are proposals within DOD's budget to reduce military pay raises, lowering Commissary subsidies, reducing the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) and merging three different TRICARE plans; Prime, Standard and Extra, into one Consolidated TRICARE Health plan while instituting TRICARE for Life (TFL) enrollment fees. The Navy also will see funding cuts for its weapons programs, particularly the Littoral Combat Ship (LCS), F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) and P-8A Poseidon's. AUSN takes a quick look at some of the major highlights which will precede a more thorough report in the coming weeks.*

FURTHER READING

The PB allocates to the DOD for FY15 a total of **\$495.6 billion**, in addition to a placeholder figure of more than **\$79.4 billion** for the war in Afghanistan and the global war on terrorism, otherwise known as Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). For the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) the PB for FY15 requests **\$65.3 billion** in discretionary funds, a 3% increase over the FY14 enacted level (P.L. 113-76). However, the PB includes an estimated **\$3.1 billion** in collections from health insurers, bringing the total discretionary budget authority to approximately **\$68.4 billion**. The mandatory VA provisions, most of which are dedicated to pensions and disability compensation, total **\$95.6 billion**. Therefore, the PB in its entirety calls for **\$163.9 billion** in mandatory and discretionary VA funding, a 6.5% increase over FY14. Other proposed changes in PB for FY15, regarding Military Compensation in DOD's budget, include DOD's efforts to combat the rising cost of pay and benefits. According to DOD budget documents, which appear to have been largely exaggerated, military pay, for example, since 2001 is claimed to have outgrown the civil sector by about 40 percent. The FY15 PB mentions the fact that the Administration will again propose a 1% pay raise, rather than the mandated 1.8% calculated by the Employment Cost Index (ECI), citing Executive privilege, which is exactly what the Administration did in FY14. Also, Flag and General officers will see their pay rates frozen. In addition, the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) will be reduced so much that at E-5 could stand to lose **\$1,224** in purchasing power in a given year. Although closing of Commissary's were not in the PB, there was a description of changes in regards to fees for products and services where military families could stand to lose a total 66% loss in savings in Commissary purchases. This would be done by lowering commissary subsidies (phased in over time), particularly over 5 years. Overall, the PB for FY15 predicts that if Congress again blocks the compensation and health care package changes, it would cost **\$2.1 billion** in FY15, and **\$30 billion** over the next five years. Furthermore, DOD looks to implement enrollment fees for all new TRICARE for Life (TFL) beneficiaries.

In the FY15 PB, the Navy would maintain an end-strength of 323,600 Active Duty Sailors, but reduce Navy Reserve Sailors from 59,100 to 57,300. The Marine Corps would see an increase in end-strength from 182,100 Marines in FY14 to 182,700 Marines in FY15; however the Marine Corps Reserve would be reduced from 39,600 to 39,200 Marine Reservists. Navy O&M funding would increase from **\$36 billion** in FY14 to **\$39 billion** in FY15, respectively. The Marine Corps' O&M funding would increase from **\$5.4 billion** in FY14 to **\$6 billion** in FY15. The Navy would also see an **\$800 million** reduction in its shipbuilding account, from **\$15.2 billion** in FY14 down to a total of **\$14.4 billion** in FY15. The reduction will occur over major ship programs. In addition, despite the decision to preserve the USS *George Washington* (CVN-73), and maintain an 11 carrier fleet, the FY15 PB does note that there is potential to look at reducing our carrier presence down to 10 in Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16). According to RADM William Lescher, USN, the Navy's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget, who briefed reporters on 4 March 2014, he stated that maintaining an 11 carrier fleet and all the associated air-wings would cost an additional **\$6 billion** to **\$7 billion** between 2016 and 2019.

For more details, see [AUSN's Capitol Hill Blog on FY15 Budget Analysis](#).

## AUSN ON THE HILL

This week, the President's Budget (PB) request for Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) was released. A few minor details are missing, which will be released next week on 11 March 2014, but for the most part it offer AUSN and Members of Congress an idea of what the Administration has in mind for Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) funding levels. Along with the FY15 PB release was DOD's release of the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). In hearings this past week, which AUSN covered, both the QDR and the FY15 PB took center stage. In addition to these hearings, AUSN was also very active in and around Capitol Hill. AUSN had meetings this week with Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI), staff of Representative Tim Walz (D-MN-01) and staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), Subcommittee on Seapower. These meetings focused primarily on the FY15 budget outlook as far as Navy readiness and Veterans benefits are concerned. In addition, AUSN presented [written testimony for the Joint House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee](#), where both Members of the House and Senate on those committee's heard from AUSN and other Military and Veteran Service Organizations (MSO/VSO) on our top legislative priorities.

## PRIORITY BILLS INTRODUCED THIS WEEK

**S. 2095, (Official title yet to be released).** Introduced by Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS), the bill would reauthorize and modify the pilot program of the Department of Veterans Affairs under which the Secretary of Veterans Affairs provides health services to Veterans through qualifying non-Department of Veterans Affairs health care providers.

**S. 2091, 21st Century Veterans Benefits Delivery Act.** Introduced by Senator Dean Heller (R-NV), the bill would amend Title 38, United States Code, to improve the processing by the Department of Veterans Affairs of claims for benefits under laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

**S. 2075, Military Commissary Sustainment Act.** Introduced by Senator Mark Warner (D-VA), the bill would prohibit a reduction in funding for the defense commissary system in Fiscal Year 2015 pending the report of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission.

**H.R. 4184, Fair Access to Benefits for Student Veterans Act.** Introduced by Representative Dina Titus (D-NV-01), the bill would amend Title 38, United States Code, to clarify the manner in which an advance payment of initial educational assistance paid by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs is charged against the entitlement of a Veteran to such assistance.

**H.R. 4151, Veterans Education Survey Act of 2014.** Introduced by Representative Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-12), the bill would direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into a contract with a non-government entity to conduct a survey of individuals who have use or are using their entitlement to educational assistance under the educational assistance programs administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

**H.R. 4150, Veterans Employment and Training Service Longitudinal Study Act of 2014.** Introduced by Representative Paul Cook (R-CA-08), the bill would amend Title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Labor to enter into a contract for the conduct of a longitudinal study of the job counseling, training, and placement services for Veterans provided by the Secretary.

**H.R. 4149, Help Hire Our Heroes Act.** Introduced by Representative Julia Brownley (D-CA-26), the bill would amend the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 to extend the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP).

**H.R. 4140, Homeless Veterans with Children Act of 2014.** Introduced by Representative Gloria Negrete-McLeod (D-CA-35), the bill would amend Title 38, United States Code, to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide per diem payments to eligible entities for furnishing care to dependents of certain homeless Veterans.

In the advocacy section of the website, you can click on [Bills of Interest](#) to get daily revisions on Congressional action for all AUSN priority bills. We STRONGLY encourage you all to visit our [Advocacy](#) page, especially the [Capitol Hill Blog](#) which receives almost daily submissions when Congress is in session to see what AUSN is doing for you on Capitol Hill.

We also encourage you and your friends and family to visit the [AUSN FACEBOOK PAGE](#). If you have an account, please Login and "Like" us, which will allow you to see our [TWITTER](#) feeds and other updates from AUSN that shows us monitoring Capitol Hill on your behalf!

## NEW LEGISLATIVE ALERTS

There were no new legislative alerts this week. When these alerts are sent to your email, please click on the **TAKE ACTION** link that is at the top of the alert email to send a letter response to your Members of Congress (a few of you have written in that you wish to send letters, but don't know how). Please continue to go to the [Legislative Alerts](#) section on the AUSN webpage and/or check your e-mail and submit ones you haven't seen yet to your Congressional delegation.

## NEXT WEEK OUTLOOK

Next week, Congress will be in to hold another round of hearings on the Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) President's Budget (PB) request, including a House Armed Services Committee (HASC) hearing on specifics within the Department of the Navy's budget for FY15. In addition, AUSN will be participating in a discussion to follow-up with testimony that AUSN's Vice-Chairman, MCPON Jim Herdt, USN (Ret.), presented before the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) last fall, where AUSN will have significant roundtable time with the Commissioners. Next week, AUSN will also be meeting with the new Director of the Defense Health Agency (DHA), Lt. Gen. Robb, USAF, as part of a regular series of roundtable discussions. Lastly, AUSN will be participating in its regular meetings with members of The Military Coalition (TMC) next week to discuss moving forward together on some of the alarming cuts within the FY15 PB request. As mentioned earlier in this Legislative Watch, AUSN is hoping to have completed thorough analysis report of the FY15 PB to have posted on our website for AUSN members to review later next week.

## QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/CONCERNS

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**From: Teresa Morris, VFW**

**Sent: Friday, March 07, 2014 3:02 PM**

**Subj: VFW Washington Weekly, March 7, 2014**

**1. VFW Advocates Take Message to Hill:** As part of our March National Legislative Conference over 400 VFW leaders took to the hill and met with their members of Congress on critical issues facing veterans, service members and their families. Dropping off our 2014 Advocacy in Action booklet, entitled "Our Nation Is Still at War" and our 2014 Legislative Priority Goals, advocates explained in detail the VFW's position on a variety of issues including VA funding, access to disability benefits, military quality-of-life programs, economic opportunity, and health care. Other critical concerns included ending sequestration, passing advance appropriations for all VA accounts and in-state tuition for veterans using GI Bill benefits. Key legislators on the House and Senate VA Committees were just a few who had one-on-one meetings with VFW members from their states. To read more about the meetings on the Hill to include twitter feeds from congressional offices, visit our blog at: <http://thevfw.blogspot.com/2014/03/live-updates-vfw-advocates-storm-hill.html> For our Advocacy booklet, click here: [http://www.vfw.org/uploadedFiles/VFW.org/VFW\\_in\\_DC/OnTheHill%20cover\\_2014%20WEB.pdf](http://www.vfw.org/uploadedFiles/VFW.org/VFW_in_DC/OnTheHill%20cover_2014%20WEB.pdf)

For the 2014 Legislative Priority Goals: <http://www.vfw.org/VFW-in-DC/National-Legislative-Service/>

**2. Defense Budget Hits Troops Hard:** DOD's FY 2015 budget request further reduces troop strengths and military compensation and benefits. The reason is because current budget agreements have forced the Pentagon to reduce spending by \$487 billion over 10 years, an amount that's doubled by sequestration, which further jeopardizes readiness and modernization programs and the continued viability of the all-volunteer force. VFW National Commander Bill Thien said the VFW will redouble its efforts to work with Congress and the administration to end the sequester and help bring financial stability to a military that is still at war. Key personnel actions proposed in the \$496 billion FY 2015 defense request are:

\* Further drop the active Army from its post-9/11 high of 570,000 soldiers to 440,000, a number sequestration could lower 420,000. Lower the Army National Guard from 358,000 to 335,000, and the Army Reserve from 205,000 and 195,000, again numbers sequestration could further lower to 315,000 and 185,000, respectively.

\* Reduce the active Air Force from 327,600 to 310,900, and Reserve from 70,400 to 67,100.

\* The Marine Corps is on pace to draw down to 182,000 Marines, a number that could go to 175,000 if the sequester continues.

\* A 1 percent military pay increase for everyone below the pay grade of O-7, and to limit future pay increases, which could recreate the double-digit, military-civilian pay gap of a decade ago.

\* Housing allowances would be gradually reduced from 100 percent of costs to 95 percent, but payments would be grandfathered for troops in their current assignments. It also appears that enlisted BAH reductions are disproportionately more than

\* Create a TRICARE for Life enrollment fee for new enrollees equal to a half percent of retiree pay in 2015, and increase it to 2 percent by 2019, plus additional increases to pharmaceutical copayments, which would impact military dependents as well as retirees. DOD would also merge the three TRICARE Prime, Standard and Extra programs into one, which would create new enrollment fees and increased copayments.

\* Slash the current \$1.4 billion in appropriated support to military commissaries down to \$400 million, which could increase prices and the current 5 percent surcharge. DOD estimates that such decisions would lower overall commissary savings from 30 percent to 10 percent, which could close some smaller U.S. stores.

**3. VA Budget Released:** This week, the President released his FY 2015 budget for the Department of Veterans Affairs. The \$163.9 billion dollar proposal includes mandatory funding for programs such as disability compensation and pension, as well as discretionary funding for VA medical care, to include advanced appropriations. The amount represents a 6.5-percent increase over FY 2014 funding, but falls more than \$4 billion short of what is recommended by The Independent Budget, which the VFW co-authors with AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans and Paralyzed Veterans of America. The VA budget request includes:

- \* \$7.2 billion for mental health programs
- \* \$238 million for readjustment counseling
- \* \$229 million for TBI programs.
- \* \$173 million to continue implementation of VBMS for claims processing.
- \* \$1.6 billion for veterans' homelessness programs
- \* \$403 million for women veteran programs, and
- \* \$562 million for major construction and \$495 million for minor construction projects

While we appreciate the increases offered by the Administration's budget for FY 2015 and for advance appropriations for FY 2016, we have serious concerns regarding the lack of commitment to infrastructure funding which we believe will undermine VA's ability to deliver those services. For the VFW press release, click here: <http://www.vfw.org/News-and-Events/Articles/2014-Articles/Veterans-Groups-Urge-Congress-to-Strengthen-VA-Budget/>

For a complete look at the Independent Budget's funding requirements for VA, click here: <http://www.independentbudget.org/>

**4. VA to Cover Full Semester for VRAP Students:** This week, VA announced that they have taken steps to extend payments for those participants using the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP). VRAP was passed as a part of the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act of 2011 and was specifically designed to cover veterans who are not eligible to receive GI Bill educational benefits. Current enrollees will now receive payments to cover them from April 1, 2014 through the conclusion of their enrollment semester or term or through June 30, 2014, whichever is earlier. For more information on the VRAP program, please go to: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2014/03/05/covering-veterans-retraining-assistance-program-participants-through-june>

**5. Take the Military Family Survey:** Blue Star Families has asked VFW to help distribute their 2014 Military Family Lifestyle Survey to active-duty, Guard, Reserve and veteran families. The survey is now available online at <http://tiny.cc/2014VFW>. The data collected provides real-time feedback from military families on issues ranging from operations tempo to pay and benefits, stress, caregiving and employment.

**6. Korean War MIA Identified:** The Defense POW/MIA Office announced the identification of Army Pfc. Donald C. Durfee, 19, of Painesville, Ohio. In November 1950, Durfee was assigned to Company M, 31st Infantry Regiment, 31st Regimental Combat Team, when his unit was attacked by Chinese forces on eastern side of the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea. Durfee was reported killed in action on December 2, 1950. He was buried yesterday in Rittman, Ohio.

**From: Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) NewsBytes**  
**Sent: Friday, March 07, 2014 3:13 PM**

**Subject: FRA NewsBytes March 7, 2014 (v2)**

#### **Administration 2015 Budget Requested Revealed**

The Administration released details of its FY 2015 budget request this week. It includes a decrease in the Defense Department (DoD) personnel programs from \$144 billion in current FY 2014 to \$135 billion in FY 2015. The budget intends to slow the growth of military compensation and benefits with provisions that include:

- Capping military pay increases by one percent for FY 2015 and 2016;
- Creating an annual enrollment fee for new TRICARE for Life (TFL) beneficiaries;
- Merging TRICARE Standard, Prime, and Extra into one consolidated health plan;
- Requiring all retirees to use home-delivery or MTF for maintenance drugs;
- Increasing TRICARE annual fees and pharmacy co-pays for retirees under age 65;
- Creating a small co-pay (\$10) for retirees using Military Treatment Facilities (MTF);
- Requiring active duty family members to pay a co-pay for TRICARE services;
- Reducing Base Allowance for Housing (BAH) payments by six percent;
- Cutting the commissary budget from \$1.4 billion to \$400 million in three years with only stateside commissaries being cut (see Military Update Column by Tom Philpott on FRA website for more details on commissary cuts); and
- Cutting Army and Marine Corps end strength (Navy end strength is not reduced).

The Association will oppose these budget-driven pay and benefit cuts and is reviewing other issues addressed in the DoD budget proposal.

FRA staff attended the meeting at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regarding the agency's FY 2015 budget that increases spending by 6.5 percent over current fiscal year, and a 35.2 percent increase since FY 2009. The proposed budget provides the Veterans Benefit Administration with funds to adjudicate 1.5 million disability and pension claims in FY 2015, which is a 17 percent increase over the current year's funding. The proposed budget provides \$173.3 million for the Veterans Benefits Management System to administer a paperless claims system, and \$138.7 million to scan paper documents into e-folders. The proposed \$163.9 billion budget also provides \$58.7 billion in advanced spending for VA health care for FY 2016. The advanced appropriation for veteran's health care is a 4.7 percent increase over FY 2015. National President Virgil Courneya is scheduled to testify next week before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Veterans Affairs Committee to discuss the VA budget and other VA-related initiatives.

The FY 2015 proposed budget for U.S. Coast Guard, which is part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), will be reduced by \$795 million from the 2014 budget. FRA will review and monitor developments with the Coast Guard budget and other related issues.

#### **House Panel Looks at VA Health Care**

The House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) Health Subcommittee recently held an oversight hearing for the Veteran's Health Administration (VHA). At the hearing, VHA was asked about recent media reports that the Greater Los Angeles VA Medical Center inappropriately destroyed exam requests and veterans' medical records so as to falsely report that they were reducing the disability claims backlog. The allegations were brought forward by a former VA employee. Dr. Robert Petzel, VA Undersecretary for Health, said that these reports are false and misleading, calling them "scurrilous." He stated that the VA Medical Center only deleted old requests from veterans who had repeatedly failed to show up for the exams, and that medical Records in the VA Electronic Health Record System cannot be destroyed.

The Subcommittee also discussed VHA pain management treatments, physician staffing, and VA procurement process.

**USO Exec goes to VA**

The Senate confirmed Sloan Gibson to be the deputy secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) last week. Gibson comes to the VA after more than five-years as the president and CEO of the nonprofit United Services Organizations, which provides morale, welfare and recreation-type services to uniformed military personnel.

During his confirmation hearing, he told Senate Veterans Affairs Committee members his priorities would include the ongoing effort to reduce and eliminate the longstanding backlog of disability claims. He said he also will work to find common ground with the Defense Department on a new strategy for a joint electronic health records system.

Gibson also spent 20 years in the banking industry, retiring from AmSouth Bancorporation in 2004. He graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and earned both Airborne and Ranger qualifications, and served in the infantry in the Army. Gibson earned a Masters in Economics from the University of Missouri in Kansas City and a Masters in Public Administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

FRA looks forward to working with the new deputy secretary on issues of mutual concern.

#### **DHA Wants EFT Payments from TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) Beneficiaries**

The Defense Health Agency (DHA) wants Reservists with TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) to monitor their electronic fund transfer (EFT) payments. While TRS beneficiaries are required to setup an EFT to pay their premiums, it's not foolproof and missed payments can result in a loss of health care coverage.

One major reason for missed payments is an expired credit card. Now is a good time to check the expiration date on the credit card used for TRS EFTs. Make sure to update the regional contractor with any new or pending account information.

If a payment is missed because of insufficient funds, beneficiaries must contact the regional contractor as soon as possible to make payment. If an EFT defaults, there is a service charge of up to \$20. Failure to pay any overdue premium amount will result in suspension of coverage effective the last day of the month last paid.

TRICARE's goal is to make it easy to manage and pay premiums through EFT. Premiums are deducted on the first business day of the month, so update the regional contractor with account changes as far in advance as possible. To learn more about TRS premiums and EFT options: [www.tricare.mil/Welcome/Enroll/TRS/Premiums](http://www.tricare.mil/Welcome/Enroll/TRS/Premiums).

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**From: Curt Cashour, Houae Veterans Affairs Committee**  
**Sent: Friday, March 07, 2014 3:03 PM**

**Subj: ADVISORY: HVAC Hearing Schedule March 10-14**

#### **Media Advisory**

**For Immediate Release**

**Media Contact: Curt Cashour, (202) 225-3527**

#### **HVAC Hearing Schedule March 10-14**

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Chairman Jeff Miller (FL-01) today released the hearing schedule for March 10-14. The following events are open to the press:

#### **Wednesday, March 12, 2014**

Hearing: "[Legislative Presentations of Multiple Veterans Service Organizations: PVA\\_IAVA\\_GSW\\_WWP\\_FRA\\_AFSA\\_NCOA\\_and\\_AXPOW](#)"

House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs

(10:00 AM – G-50 Dirksen Senate Office Building and streaming at [www.veterans.house.gov](http://www.veterans.house.gov))

#### **Thursday, March 13, 2014**

Hearing: "[U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2015](#)"

House Committee on Veterans' Affairs

(10:00 AM – 334 Cannon House Office Building and streaming at [www.veterans.house.gov](http://www.veterans.house.gov))

*For more news from the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, please visit:*

[Veterans.House.Gov](http://Veterans.House.Gov)

Find us on Facebook at: [Facebook.com/HouseVetsAffairs](https://www.facebook.com/HouseVetsAffairs) or follow us on Twitter at:

[@HouseVetAffairs](https://twitter.com/HouseVetAffairs)

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**From: JS Pentagon OCJCS Mailbox Warrior and Family Support**

**Sent: Friday, March 07, 2014 6:06 PM**

**Subj: Warrior & Family Support News: Friday, 7 March 2014**

**CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED**

**LINK OF THE WEEK: [Registered Apprenticeship - Dept of Labor](#)**

#### **WELLNESS**

#### **[Returning veterans fight identity 'war' at home](#)**

Futurity: Research News

Withholding such information can stunt a **veteran's** ability to **reintegrate** into civilian life by straining those relationships with people who would be their primary support systems, the authors say. These "warring identities" can act as a catalyst for...

#### **[Shane Kruchten's wounded warrior mini documentary](#)**

FanSided

Mixed Martial Arts is a lot more than two men or women stepping into the cage to fight one another. It is years of hard work and dedication culminating in a 15 or 25 minute battle to test your mettle against a fellow competitor. For some it is sport...

#### **[Wounded Warrior Regiment meets with caregivers during Marine Corps Trials](#)**

Marines.mil (press release)

For the group of caregivers at the Marine Corps Trials, the **Wounded Warrior** Regiment organized a special luncheon that gave them a chance to meet and network with other caregivers that have struggled with the same hardships at the **Wounded Warrior**...

#### **[Suicide rates climbed among both soldiers who went to Iraq and Afghanistan ...](#)**

TIME

In the three reports the study has yielded thus far, researchers report that many of those who suffer from mental **health** problems while in the **military** may bring the seeds of those problems into the services with them. Soldiers in the survey were twice...

#### **[Suicide warning signs for loved ones, especially those in the military](#)**

Fox News

Keep an eye on these warning signs if you think your loved one is at risk. Frightening statistics on the rate of **suicide** among **military** personnel highlight the need for better screening and prevention of psychiatric disorders in enlisted men and women.

## COMMUNITIES IN ACTION

### [From selling to service](#)

Fortune (blog)

FORTUNE -- Vicki Thomas, 68, still remembers sitting in her high school auditorium and hearing her principal announce the names of fallen **soldiers** in the Vietnam War. Throughout her 35-year marketing and advertising ... She called Beatty and Gallina...

### [Phoenixville VFW donation \\$24k to help protect and serve Schuylkill Township](#)

The Phoenix

He added that the vets truly exemplified the Marine Corps motto of **Semper Fidelis**, or "always faithful." The plaque was only a small token of ... We'll be able to **fund** this without taking away from something else," he said. Fitzsimmons said the project...

### [Working Woman: 'Freedom Petals' for Wounded Warriors](#)

WJLA

Volunteers gather to make floral arrangements with donated flowers, vases, and American flags. The finished product is given to a **Wounded Warrior** at Walter Reed or placed on their table at a military dinner. "I have people come from Aldie and...

### [Veterans' treatment court opens in Boston](#)

Boston Globe

We can give them the tools to emerge from the justice system and be heroes of their **communities**." Not every **veteran** accused of a crime is eligible for the Boston treatment court session, said Sinnott. Applicants must persuade the court that their crime...

## EMPLOYMENT

### [Jobs program for National Guard members expanding to include all military ...](#)

The State

An effort to help S.C. National Guard members find **jobs** will be expanded to serve all **military** members, Gov. Nikki Haley announced last week. Advisors for Operation Palmetto **Employment** will be stationed at the 12 S.C. Department of **Employment** and...

### [Study: More military spouses overqualified than civilian workers](#)

Jacksonville Daily News

Rhonda Harvey helps a customer at Naval Hospital Camp Lejeune recently. Harvey recently was hired at the hospital with the help of the Family Member **Employment** Assistance Program. Before her current **job**, she was one of many **military** spouses who are...

## EDUCATION

### [Education committee approves measure helping military kids](#)

Minneapolis Star Tribune

The panel unanimously approved the recommendation that Minnesota join the Interstate Compact on **Educational** Opportunity for **Military** Children. The compact has been adopted by 46 other states, and, with an average of six to nine family moves during the...

### [Oklahoma program helps veterans start and grow businesses](#)

NewsOK.com

Oklahoma program helps veterans start and grow businesses. The **Veterans Entrepreneurship Program** at Oklahoma State University always has a waiting list, the director says. Plans to expand it include bringing more schools on board and partnering with...

Best regards,

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

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**From: Devance Walker Jr., *Montgomery County, MD***

**Sent: Friday, March 07, 2014 11:18 AM**

**Subj: FW: Available solicitations for *Local Businesses***

The County is seeking businesses to respond to the following solicitations. Please pay close attention to the closing dates.

- Solicitation 1039772 – Senior Citizens Fire Safety Education and Outreach – Closing date March 10, 2014 at 11:00 a.m.
- Solicitation 1036704 - Business Process Consulting Services – Closing date March 13, 2014 at 4:30 p.m.
- Solicitation 1038615 GIS Technician Services – Closing date March 21, 2014 at 2:00 p.m.
- Solicitation 1038311 Printing and Mailing Services for Tax Operations – Closing date April 2, 2014

For specific information, go to [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/lbbrp](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/lbbrp). Look for solicitations. You should be able to download the solicitation by clicking on the solicitation number.

DeVance Walker, Jr., Ph.D.  
Acting Chief, Division of Business Empowerment  
Montgomery County Department of Economic Development  
111 Rockville Pike, Suite 800, Rockville, Maryland 20850

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*Godspeed all.....Wayne*

**Wayne M. Gatewood, Jr., USMC (Ret)**  
Founder/President/CEO  
Quality Support, Inc., Established 1989  
A VA CVE-Verified SDVOSB  
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Landover, MD 20785  
301-459-3777 EXT 101 - Fax 301-459-6961  
[www.qualitysupport.com](http://www.qualitysupport.com)

***"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***

