



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

# WASHINGTON WEEKLY



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## VFW Elects New Leadership

William A. "Bill" Thien of Indiana was elected VFW Commander-in-Chief on Wednesday at the VFW's 114th National Convention in Louisville, Ky. The new "Chief" is a Vietnam veteran who served in the Navy and later, the Army National Guard. Also elected was new Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Stroud of Nevada, and new Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief John Biedrzycki of Pennsylvania. Appointed as the new VFW Adjutant General is former national commander John Hamilton, who succeeds former national commander "Gunner" Kent, who faithfully served in the position for eight years. Bob Greene was reelected as VFW Quartermaster General. [Read more](#) or watch video of the entire convention.

## Saluting Korean War Vets

President Obama will commemorate the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Korean War armistice in ceremonies tomorrow at the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington. Representing the VFW will be five former national commanders who are Korean War veterans: John Carney from Florida; Walter Hogan from Wisconsin; Clifford Olson from Massachusetts; John Staum from Minnesota; and Dr. John Wasylik from Ohio. Many VFW Posts across the country will be joining in the commemoration by hosting "Pancakes for Patriots" breakfasts to honor and educate local communities about the service and sacrifices made by so many of our VFW members and their families. The 10 a.m. (Eastern) ceremony will be carried live in part or full on all the national networks, with pre-ceremony events beginning at 7 a.m. on C-SPAN3's American History TV and on the Pentagon Channel, which will also stream [live video](#). More information about the 60th anniversary is on the commemoration committee's [website](#). Satellite dish coordinates are: Saturday, July 27, Sat. Window 0600-1200x30, Sat. Space AMC 9/K3A, Bandwidth 18MHz, U/L: 14051V, D/L: 11751H, SR: 13, FEC: 3/4, Data Rate: 17.9705, MPEG2/DVBS, 4:2:0.

## Senate Clears VFW-Supported Bills

This week, the Senate Veterans Affairs' Committee cleared several VFW-supported bills. S. 944,

*Veterans Educational Transition Act of 2013*, contained provisions from several other bills including requiring public universities participating in VA's education program to only charge veterans the in-state tuition rate regardless of their state of residence and asking VA to report publicly on its progress in reducing the backlog of pending disability benefits claims. The VFW has minor concerns about the specific in-state tuition language included in S. 944, but applauds Chairman Bernie Sanders and Ranking Member Richard Burr for their attention to the issue. **Other bills cleared include:**

**S. 6**, *Veterans Retraining Assistance Program*, which offers up to 12 months of job retraining for unemployed veterans. The bill also extends through Dec. 31, 2016, VA's authority to provide the same vocational and rehabilitation programs to severely injured or ill members of the armed forces that are provided to veterans and asks VA to develop a single Web-based employment portal for veterans to access information on employment opportunities, training and unemployment benefits.

**S. 131**, *Women Veterans and Other Health Care Improvements Act*, would allow for fertility treatment and counseling, reproductive treatment and care for the spouses and surrogates of veterans as part of medical services. The bill also provides adoption assistance to veterans who have an infertility condition incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.

**S. 893**, *Cost of Living Adjustment Act of 2013*, which will provide an increase in veterans' disability payments at the same rate as Social Security benefits.

**S. 851**, *Caregivers Expansion and Improvement Act*, which expands eligibility for the caregiver program to all service members with serious service-related injuries. Under current law, only veterans with injuries that occurred since Sept. 11, 2001 are eligible to participate in the program.

**S. 572**, *Veterans Second Amendment Protection Act*, which would require a judge's ruling on a veteran's mental competency to bar the veteran from buying firearms. Under current law, a determination of mental incompetency by VA is enough to put a veteran's name on the prohibited list of the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

For a complete listing of all the bills, visit the [SVAC website](#).

For VFW testimony on many of the bills, [click here](#).

### **House VA Subcommittees Clear Veterans' Bills**

**On Tuesday**, the House VA Subcommittee on Health cleared several bills that would enhance healthcare for veterans. They included: H.R. 1443, the *Tinnitus Research and Treatment Act of 2013*, which would prioritize the study of tinnitus by VA; H.R. 1612, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to convey a parcel of land in Tuskegee, Alabama, to Tuskegee University; and H.R. 2065, the *Safe Housing for Homeless Veterans Act*, which would require that veterans' transitional housing facilities meet local building codes. These bills were cleared for full committee consideration and all three are supported by the VFW. H.R. 2726, the Long-Term Care Veterans Choice Act, was withdrawn from the agenda by unanimous consent.

**Late last week**, the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity cleared a host of bills that would improve education and job programs for veterans. The VFW provided testimony earlier in the year on several of the bills including H.R. 2210 which extends Post-9/11 education benefits to children of service members who die from combat-related injuries after a medical discharge and H.R. 2011 which reauthorizes the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education for two years and includes Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. Other bills passed included H.R. 1357, which allows veterans in a part-time educational program to receive retraining assistance if they are enrolled for 16 credit hours and H.R. 2150, which will extend homeless veterans programs for five years. For complete

coverage of all subcommittee activity, visit the [House VA website](#).

### **Senate Hosts Hearing on Veterans' Education**

The Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee hosted a hearing this week on veterans' education and specifically the 90/10 policy for school funding. Your VFW was on hand to hear testimony about the issue. The VFW has been a leading voice on improving veterans' access to information prior to enrolling in college and views the discussion on 90/10 as a distraction to ongoing work to improve educational outcomes for veterans. While on the surface 90/10 may look like a reasonable policy, the VFW believes that it does not focus on academic quality or student outcomes in education. Your VFW will continue to work with all stakeholders in DOD, VA, the veterans' community, and higher education to ensure student-veterans are academically and financially prepared to make responsible academic decisions. To learn more about the hearing, [click here](#).

### **Four MIAs Identified**

**The Defense POW/MIA Office recently announced the identification of remains belonging to three soldiers and one airman from World War II and the Korean War. Identified are:**

- Army Air Force Sgt. Jerome E. Kiger, of Mannington, W.Va. On July 21, 1944, a B-24H Liberator aircraft with nine crewmembers was shot down by enemy fire and crashed while on a bombing raid to Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany. Six were able to parachute to safety and a seventh crewman's remains were recovered near Hadorf. Kiger and another crewman were not recovered.
- Army Cpl. Glyndon E. Moyer, 18, of Luray, Va. In late November 1950, Moyer and elements of the 31st Regimental Combat Team were deployed along the east side of the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea. On Dec. 1, 1950, remnants of the 31st RCT, known historically as Task Force Faith, began a fighting withdrawal to a more defensible position south of the reservoir when he was reported missing on Dec. 2, 1950.
- Army Sgt. Clement Thibodeaux, Jr., 18, of Baton Rouge, La. In late Nov. 1950, elements of the 25th Infantry Division and 35th Infantry Regiment were fighting with units of the Chinese army north of the Ch'ongch'on River in North Korea. In 1953, returning American POWs said Thibodeaux had been captured but died in January 1951 of malnutrition and pneumonia.
- Army Sgt. Bernard J. Fisher, 21, of Wilkes Barre, Pa. In January 1951, Fisher and elements of Company L, 3rd Battalion, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division, were deployed northeast of Seoul, South Korea, when attacked. Fisher would be reported missing as his unit moved towards a more defensible position.

[Read more](#).

**Thanks to John Spahr and the Department of Texas and Bruce Sorensen, Department of Wisconsin, for sending in a large amount of new advocates to join our team! Great job and keep up the good work!**

As always, we want to share your advocacy stories on the VFW Capitol Hill blog. To share your stories, [fill out our online form](#) or simply email photos and stories directly to [vfwac@vfw.org](mailto:vfwac@vfw.org).

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