

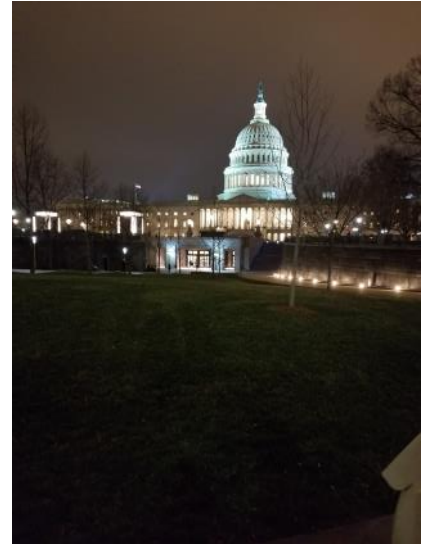
# ***LOUISIANA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE***

## **Legislative Newsletter**

Hello all and welcome to the first Legislative Newsletter from your Legislative Committee Member, Matt West. I will try to have one of these each month, and provide you with the latest Legislative information provided from the National

Legislative Committee and from information provided by the Action Corps. Please let me know if you have questions or comments, at lavfwcommand-er2018@gmail.com; or 337-353-6009.

Matt West



### **Highlights:**

- ⇒ Action Corps Monthly Highlights for November
- ⇒ Legislative Conference

### **Action Corps Weekly**

1. Tell Congress to Stand Up for Vietnam Veterans: Right now, congressional conference committee members are deciding which provisions will remain in the final version of S. 4049, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (NDAA). Senate Amendment 1972 to this bill would provide the life-saving care and benefits needed for Vietnam veterans suffering from bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism. Take action today to urge your senators and representatives to ensure Senate Amendment 1972 remains in the final version of the NDAA. Hold Congress accountable to do the right thing for our Vietnam veterans!
2. Mental Health Bill for Transitioning Service Members: Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Joni Ernst (R-IA) introduced VFW-supported S.

## Action Corps Weekly

4900, the Daniel J. Harvey Jr. and Adam Lambert Improving Service Member Transition to Reduce Veteran Suicide Act. This important legislation would create a pilot program to incorporate mental health counseling into the Transition Assistance Program. This new training would inform separating service members of the resources available at VA health facilities to help them meet the challenges of transition from military to civilian life. This proposal was generated by a 2019 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellow and shows the importance of grass roots advocacy. The VFW thanks Sens. Brown, Blumenthal, and Ernst for introducing this important legislation and for their efforts to improve the mental health of veterans.

3. “Find A Veteran, Post A Tribute” Campaign Launched: The VA National Cemetery Administration has launched a “Find A Veteran, Post A Tribute” campaign to increase awareness of the Veterans Legacy Memorial (VLM). VLM is a completely digital platform that allows family, friends, and others to post tributes to the individual pages of the more than 3.7 million veterans interred in VA’s national cemeteries. Members of the public are encouraged to join in memorializing the service and sacrifice of our nation’s veterans by posting a tribute and sharing veterans’ tribute pages to their social media accounts.

4. Veterans Appreciation Day at Gettysburg: Gettysburg National Military Park and the Gettysburg Foundation have announced it will hold a special Veterans Appreciation Day on Nov. 12. Veterans can enjoy free admission to the Film, Cyclorama & Museum Experience at the Museum & Visitor Center. Guests have the unique opportunity to see the Gettysburg Cyclorama painting in a special “lights up” presentation and discussion.

5. Walmart Reopens Five VA Telehealth Access Points: VA has announced five Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations (ATLAS) sites in select Walmart stores have resumed clinical services for veterans in rural areas. VA suspended the operation of clinical services at all ATLAS sites in April to prevent the spread of

## Action Corps Weekly

COVID-19. The reopened ATLAS sites give veterans more options to receive care that does not require hands-on exams, such as primary care, nutrition, mental health counseling and social work.

6. Congress Passes Mental Health Care and Services Bill: This week, the Senate passed VFW-supported H.R. 8247, the Veterans Comprehensive Prevention, Access to Care and Treatment (COMPACT) Act, which passed the House in September and now heads to the president for signature. This legislation seeks to enhance a wide variety of services related to improving transition, suicide prevention, and care and services for women veterans.

7. Volunteer for COVID-19 Research Studies: VA is conducting studies to test new COVID19 vaccines, treatments, and to better understand how the virus affects people. Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age, but do not have to be veterans or be enrolled in VA health care. Participants will not be required to pay for care related to the study and will possibly be compensated for their travel and time.

8. TRICARE Select Enrollment Fee to Start Jan. 1: DOD announced that TRICARE Select Group A retirees will be required to pay an enrollment fee beginning on Jan. 1, 2021. Congress directed the Defense Health Agency in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 to implement TRICARE Select retiree enrollment fees, but delayed the implementation. Group A is comprised of retirees and their family members if the sponsor's initial enlistment or appointment occurred before Jan. 1, 2018. The enrollment fee is waived for medically retired individuals and their family members, and for survivors of active-duty deaths. During TRICARE Open Season, running now to Dec. 14, beneficiaries must set up an allotment with their regional contractors for the enrollment fee to begin on Jan. 1, 2021. Beneficiaries who do not set up their allotment by the deadline will be unenrolled due to nonpayment. These individuals would have previously had 90 days from the termination date to request reinstatement. However, recently the Defense Health Agency has agreed to extend the reinstatement period to 180 days.

9. VA Cost-of-Living Adjustment for 2021: Veterans receiving government benefits will see a cost of living increase take effect on Dec. 1, 2020, and will be reflected in the Dec. 31, 2020 payment. This is equal to the increase granted for Social Security benefits, which will be 1.3% for 2021. The increase will be for wartime disability compensation, compensation for dependents, clothing allowance, and dependency and indemnity compensation to surviving spouses and children.

## Upcoming Events

As most of you have heard, or might have assumed, the Legislative Conference that was scheduled for March Legislative Conference is NOT canceled. There will be no in-person meetings, hotel stays, or flights, but we will still conduct our business virtually just like we did in September. You will still be responsible for leading your delegations as Legislative Representatives in virtual meetings.

Commander-in-Chief's testimony is NOT canceled. We are exploring alternative ways to bring our voice to Congress, including virtual options.

The VFW/SVA Fellowship is NOT canceled. The VFW team and our partners at SVA are developing an alternate agenda that will replace the in-person aspect of the advocacy program.



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**No One Does More For Veterans  
than the VFW!**

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<HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/VFW-DEPARTMENT-OF-LOUISIANA-LEGISLATIVE-CHAIRMAN-182181135810376>

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