



# **The Veteran's Voice**

## **Newsletter**

### **October 2024**

#### **Edition**



**Email: [cwomaine@metrocast.net](mailto:cwomaine@metrocast.net)**

## IT'S THE RIGHT THING TO DO

# House Republicans tee up bill to partially fund \$15 billion VA shortfall



By [Alex Miller](#) - *The Washington Times* - Friday, September 6, 2024

Republicans have introduced a bill that would shore up part of the Department of Veterans Affairs' expected \$15 billion budget shortfall and demanded that the Biden administration explain why the agency has a financial hole. The Veterans Benefits Continuity and Accountability Supplemental Appropriations Act, introduced Friday



by Rep. Mike Garcia, California Republican, would inject the agency with \$3 billion in cash to make up for the gap by the end of September.

“The Biden-Harris administration’s reckless mismanagement of the VA’s budget has led to a crisis that puts veterans’ benefits at risk,” Mr. Garcia said. “This isn’t just about a funding shortfall — it’s about holding the administration accountable for its failures. We cannot simply throw more money at a broken system and enable further waste and mismanagement.”

VA officials warned Congress in July that they expected the agency would outspend this fiscal year’s budget by \$2.88 billion and go over President Biden’s fiscal 2025 budget request by a further \$11.97 billion.

The financial issue is tied to a massive uptick in veterans seeking benefits and the need to hire more employees to handle the surge, which was spurred by an aggressive campaign launched by the VA after Congress greenlit legislation that would grant benefits to veterans exposed to toxic substances and burn pits.

Mr. Garcia’s legislation doesn’t go all the way to address the agency’s expected shortfall next year. Instead, it requires that the Biden administration and Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough produce a report within 60 days of the bill’s passage that details how much money is left in pension and benefit accounts up to 2026.

The measure also would require reports on the accuracy of financial projections and the movement of money under the VA in fiscal 2025, plus a green light for the VA inspector general to investigate how the shortfall during this fiscal year happened.

“This shortfall is a glaring failure by the Biden-Harris administration and its VA, marking one of the largest financial discrepancies in recent history,” said House Appropriations Committee Chairman Tom Cole, Oklahoma Republican. “It also reflects a grave departure from their budget submission provided mere months ago. Our heroes deserve more than this incompetence.”

The bill isn’t scheduled to come to the House floor next week when lawmakers return to Washington. The legislation will likely be separate from the impending short-term funding patch.

• Alex Miller can be reached at [amiller@washingtontimes.com](mailto:amiller@washingtontimes.com).



## WOMEN VETERANS

# WOMEN VETERANS IN FOCUS



### WOMEN ARE THE FASTEST GROWING GROUP IN THE VETERAN POPULATION



### WOMEN VETERANS SERVED ACROSS ALL MILITARY BRANCHES AND DIVISIONS

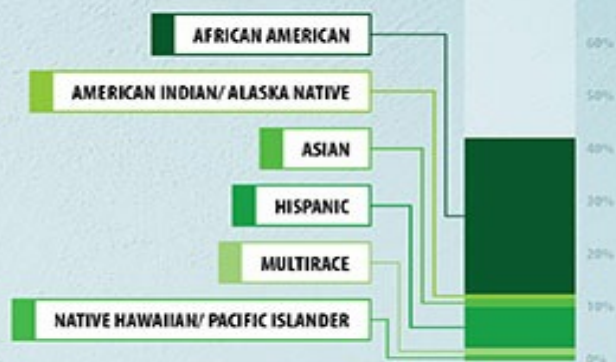


### 3 OF 4 WOMEN VETERANS WHO USED VA HEALTH SERVICES IN FY19 HAD AN URBAN RESIDENCE BUT THE NUMBER OF RURAL WOMEN IS INCREASING



### WOMEN VETERANS ARE RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE

43% OF THE WOMEN WHO USED VA HEALTH SERVICES IN FY20 BELONGED TO A RACIAL OR ETHNIC MINORITY GROUP.



No matter where she lives, every women Veteran has access to the VA health system which provides care at 1,255 health facilities, including 170 VA Medical Centers and 1,074 outpatient clinics.



Every VA Medical Center nationwide has a Women Veterans Program Manager to advise and advocate for women Veterans and help coordinate all the services they may need, from primary care to specialized care for chronic conditions or reproductive health.



Every VA offers maternity care coordination. VA Maternity Care Coordinators understand women Veteran's unique needs and will support them through every stage of their pregnancy.



VHA provides the highest quality, state-of-the-art systems and healthcare equipment, including on-site mammography at 69 sites across the country.

**VA**  
RESOURCES  
FOR WOMEN



## Women Veterans Health Care

womenshealth.va.gov | #WomenVets

DATA AS OF 10/30/2020 | UPDATED 12/2022

**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



# President's Corner

**Hello Everyone**

**Well I think the nice weather is finally here. Our thoughts have shifted from the dreaded snow shoveling to the fun of outdoor festivities.**

**What ever outdoor event(s) you and your family participate in please be safe and most of all enjoy yourself (You deserved It).**

**Speaking of outdoor events, from time to time our chapter will be setting up informational tables at various locations, Date, time, and locations will be sent out to you all prior to the event. If you have some time to spare maybe a half hour or hour please consider coming down and helping out.**

**By now you all may or may not know that our chapter has its own TV show on the Public Access System in Biddeford entitled "The Veterans Voice". Due to health concerns I was having we had to stop filming the TV show for awhile but hope to start up again this month.**

**Our first show was tapped on Wednesday 09 April 2014. On the show we discussed what a Veterans Service Officer was and what you (the veteran) could and should expect from him/her.**

**We also talked a little about our chapter and organization. Jim Davis the Chapter Representative for AVVA talked about AVVA and how to go about joining. We also talked about tips on what to do if you should decide to file a claim.**

**The way it is set up is if you would like to view our show you can go to our website at <http://www.vva1044maine.org> go to the tabs on top and click Veterans Voice. When you are on the page click on which ever show it is that you would like to view.**

**Being able to do a show like this opens up so many advantages for us. We can get a lot of information into the hands of our veterans and their families as well as information about our chapter and events that we will be having. From time to time we will have guest speakers from other organizations come on and talk about their events and organizations.**

**So you see we are moving forward in a very positive manner and I look forward to working with you all on many projects.**

**If you have an idea for a show please email me and we can talk about it.**

**Respectfully  
Joseph Armstrong  
President**

***From the Desk***  
***Of***  
**Conrad Letellier**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President**

Respectfully  
Conrad Letellier  
1<sup>st</sup> vice-president

# **Membership Corner**

**By  
Conrad Letellier Membership Chairman**

**We are still in the process of updated our membership rosters. Recently we sent out 48 letters to our members that do not have an email address and 6 came back as undeliverable no forwarding address.**

**It is so very important to keep up updated on your contact information. Otherwise we can not update you on events and news important to our chapter.**

**Conrad Letellier  
Membership Chairman**



# VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

## Conrad Letellier

Veterans with a rare lung disease could have an easier time collecting Department of Veterans Affairs disability benefits under proposed changes announced by the agency.

The ailment, called constrictive bronchiolitis, or CB, is one of the burn pit-related illnesses covered under the PACT Act, the sweeping law passed two years ago that aimed to make it easier for veterans with certain diseases linked to toxic exposure to get VA care and Benefits.

But veterans with CB have reported still facing unique challenges to getting their benefits approved by the VA.

Any questions on this topic or any other VA benefits please contact me.

Conrad Letellier  
Veterans Service Officer

***Never be a Prisoner of your Past.  
It was just a lesson, not a lifer sentence  
By Walt Whitman***

***Submitted by  
Pricilla L. Miles AVVA member***

# **POW MIA INFORMATION**

*Conrad Letellier*

## **STATUS OF THE POW/MIA ISSUE**

**March 1, 2024**

**1,577 Americans are now listed by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) as missing and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War: Vietnam - 1,237; Laos - 285; Cambodia = 48; Peoples Republic of China territorial waters - 7.**

**On March 23 rd, DPAA posted the accounting for two USAF officers, listed MIA in Vietnam on April 12, 1969/ Their identities - Colonel Ernest DeSoto and Captain Frederick Hall were released on April 7, 2023.**



## **History of the POW/MIA Flag**

**In 1970, Lt. Commander Michael Hoff went missing in action when his plane crashed over Laos, Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. His wife, Mary Hoff, felt there was a need for the nation to have a symbol in which those who were lost to war would not be forgotten, thus becoming the pioneer of the POW/MIA flag. She read an article in the Jacksonville Florida Time Union about how Annin & Co. Helped to design and manufacture flags for newer UN member nations. Mrs. Hoff contacted Annin and their VP of Sales, Norman Rivkkes commissioned graphic designer Newt Heisley to design a flag to represent the group/**

**Newt Heisley found inspiration for designing the flag from his past experiences as a WWII pilot: "I used to fly within range of the Japanese and wondered how I would hold up if I ever got captured. When I did the design, I thought how easy it would be to forget those guys." The now familiar slogan :You are not forgotten" was born of that senti-**



ment. Heisley's son, Jeffrey, upon returning home ill from Marine training, inspired the gaunt appearance of the flag's silhouette. In addition to the slogan and silhouette, the flag also boasts a 5-point star, a watchtower with a guard on patrol, a strand of barbed wire, and a black and white wreath.

## **WHAT DOES THE POW/MIA MEAN?**

The POW/MIA flag is a reminder for Americans to never forget our Prisoners of War (POW) and those Missing in Action (MIA). Prisoners of War are individuals - whether military personnel or civilians - who are captured and imprisoned by the enemy during times of war. The status of life for those who are MIA have not yet been confirmed. According to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, over 83,00 Americans who fought in wars since World War II are still; missing.

On November 18, 1997 the 1998 Defense Authorization Act was signed into law. A section of the act required that the POW/MIA flag be flown from Military Installations, National Cemeteries, V.A. Medical Centers and many other Federal Buildings

**From The Desk of the Events Coordinator  
Jim Davis**



**MEETING  
NOTICE!**

**NEXT CHAPTER MEETING WILL BE SUNDAY 06 October  
2024. MEETING WILL START AT 1:30 PM 13:30 HRS.  
THERE WILL BE NO BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING PRIOR  
TO OUR REGULAR MEETING. BOD MEETINGS WILL START  
AT 12:00 NOON.**

# *Membership in VVA is the Right Choice*

First I want to say "WELCOME HOME "

The goals of Vietnam Veterans of America are to promote and support the full range of issues important to Vietnam veterans. To create a new identity for this generation of veterans and to change public perception of Vietnam veterans.

VVA is a "home of our own" - a community of fellowship with people who share our experiences, needs, and hopes for the future.

Be as active as your time, talents, and interests allow. Or, simply be a proud member of VVA, knowing that your membership helps VVA work for you and your fellow Vietnam veterans.

Membership includes a subscription to our award-winning newspaper, The VVA Veteran, bringing you updates on issues and legislation affecting veterans, as well as unique articles on the people, places, and history of the Vietnam experience.

Membership is open to U.S. armed force veterans who served on active duty (for other than training purposes) in the Republic of Vietnam between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975, OR in any duty location between August 5, 1964 and May 7, 1975.

Our chapter is working very hard to help our brothers and sisters, their families and veterans of today.

We meet once a month at the American Legion Post 26 located at 508 Elm Street Biddeford. Meetings start at 1:30 (13:30)