

VFW Commends DOD for Addressing Force-Wide Economic Challenges, Offers Support

Mihelcic says efforts to help service members through financial hardships ‘long overdue’

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WASHINGTON — In a [memorandum](#) issued Nov. 17, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III acknowledged the economic challenges impacting many service members and their families as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and outlined the steps the Department of Defense will take to address the issue.

“The DOD taking significant steps to address the financial wellness of service members and military families is long overdue,” said VFW National Commander Matthew “Fritz” Mihelcic. “The pandemic hit our economy hard, and our military men and women suffered in silence as they continued to serve our nation. Financial peace of mind goes a long way when it comes to the readiness of the Force.”

Titled, “Strengthening Economic Security in the Force,” the memorandum calls out current hardships service members and their families are facing like food insecurity, housing costs and reduced housing inventory. The letter then directs the military department and service leadership to take the following actions: provide immediate relief such as temporarily increasing housing allowance, increase stability for service members and their families by lengthening tours, and expand financial readiness resources through education and counseling.

As another resource to service members and their families experiencing financial difficulties, the VFW offers support through its Unmet Needs program. The program provides financial aid grants of up to \$1,500 to assist with basic life needs. Unlike other financial assistance resources such as loans, the Unmet Needs program is a grant, so the service member does not have to pay it back.

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“Our nation’s service men and women sign a blank check in defense of our nation,” Mihelcic said. “They shouldn’t have to wonder if their pay check will cover their bills or feed their families.”

To learn more about the VFW’s Unmet Needs program, its eligibility requirements and how to apply for a grant, visit vfw.org/UnmetNeeds.