

**WASHINGTON WEEKLY**  
**July 8, 2011**

**In This Issue:**

- 1. VFW Call to Action Against S. 277**
- 2. New VA Outreach to Women Veterans**
- 3. House Passes FY 2012 Defense Appropriations**
- 4. VFW Supports 11 of 14 House Bills**
- 5. Fort Hood Shooter Referred to Court-Martial**
- 6. Three MIAs Identified**

**1. VFW Call to Action Against S. 277:** The Marine Corps family stationed at North Carolina's Camp Lejeune between 1957 and 1987 is aware of some severe health issues that may have resulted from using contaminated well water that contained carcinogens. Until this week, the VFW was a strong advocate of the "Caring for Camp Lejeune Veterans Act of 2011 (S. 277)," which the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee passed recently to provide VA healthcare to assigned Marines, their families and veterans. Now we have learned that SVAC changed the bill — without public notice or hearing — to fund the care it would provide through the elimination of federal subsidies for military commissaries, and by directing the military exchange system to consolidate with the Defense Commissary Agency. The VFW can no longer support S. 277 because the new proposal threatens the existence of the commissary and exchange systems. We ask that you urge your senators to reject S. 277. If additional funding is needed, then SVAC should request it through the traditional legislative process, and not attempt to obtain funding from a federal department over which it has no jurisdiction. Contact your senators today at <http://capwiz.com/vfw/dbq/officials/>.

**2. New VA Outreach to Women Veterans:** In June, representatives from VA's Health Resource Center began calling to ask women veterans nationwide to share their experiences with VA, and to suggest potential improvements to the care it provides them. HRC also wants to know why some women veterans who are enrolled in the VA have not yet used their services. According to the VA, women veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the veteran population. They comprise nearly 8 percent of the total veteran population and 6 percent of VA healthcare patrons, percentages that the VA expects to rise by the year 2020 to 10 and 9.5 percent, respectively. Read more at <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2129>.

**3. House Passes FY 2012 Defense Appropriations:** The House today passed H.R. 2219, the \$649 billion Defense Appropriations bill for FY 2012, which includes several amendments that the VFW was instrumental in getting passed. Two amendments will provide additional funding for military suicide prevention programs, two shift funding to increase Traumatic Brain Injury research, and one adds funding to Gulf War Illness research. Also included is a measure that will help protect servicemembers who are traveling on active duty orders from being charged any baggage fees. The VFW will continue to monitor these provisions as the bill goes to the Senate for their approval. Read the committee's press release [here](#).

**4. VFW Supports 11 of 14 House Bills:** The VFW testified twice Thursday before the House VA Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity on pending legislation to add protections to the

Servicemembers Civil Relief Act and processing improvements for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and before the House VA Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs to discuss accountability in VA claims processing, and fraudulent claims processing charges. The VFW supports 11 of the 14 proposed bills. For more on the hearings and to read VFW testimony, go to the House VA Committee website at <http://veterans.house.gov/>.

**5. Fort Hood Shooter Referred to Court-Martial:** Army Maj. Nidal M. Hasan has been referred to a general court-martial on charges of 13 counts of premeditated murder and 32 counts of attempted premeditated murder in the November 2009 attack at Fort Hood, Texas. A general court-martial is authorized to consider the death penalty as punishment. Read more at <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=64566>.

**6. Three MIAs Identified:** The Defense POW/MIA Office announced the identification of remains belonging to a soldier from the Korean War and two airmen from the Vietnam War.

- Army Capt. Melvin R. Stai, of Spokane, Wash., died in captivity after being captured in January 1951 and marched north to a POW camp in Suan County, North Korea.
- On April 29, 1966, Air Force Col. Leo S. Boston, of Canon City, Colo., disappeared while flying a search-and-rescue mission in North Vietnam in an A-1E Skyraider.
- And on March 26, 1970, Air Force Maj. Richard G. Elzinga, of Shedd, Ore., and his co-pilot went missing when their O-1G Birdog failed to return to base from a mission over Laos.

Read more about search, recovery and identification efforts at [http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/news/news\\_releases/](http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/news/news_releases/).