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1. VFW National Commander Testifies Before Congress: VFW National Commander Brian Duffy testified on Wednesday before 23 members of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees on issues important to America's veterans, service members and their families. Backed by a standing-room-only packed house of 500 fellow VFW comrades, the Chief stressed the need for this Congress to finally eliminate the budget ax called sequestration, and to continue transforming the Department of Veterans Affairs so that it can better provide timely access to quality health care and benefits that wounded, ill and injured veterans earned and deserve. [Read the Chief's full testimony or view the hearing video.](#)

2. IB Coauthors Release FY 2018 Budget Recommendations: The three Independent Budget (IB) coauthors (VFW, DAV and PVA) released a fiscal year 2018 recommendation today that calls for an 8.3 percent increase in medical care funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Administration has yet to release a FY 2018 budget request, which is normally presented the first week of February, but such a delay is not unusual in the first year of a new president.

Highlights from new IB report include:

- \$88.9 billion in overall discretionary budget authority for VA — an approximate 10 percent increase over FY 2017;
- \$76.9 billion for veterans' medical care funding for FY 2018 — a \$5.9 billion or 8.3 percent increase over FY 2017;
- \$82.8 billion for veterans medical care for FY 2019 advance appropriations — a 7.6 percent increase over the IB's FY 2018 recommendation;
- \$3.1 billion for the Veterans Benefits Administration — a \$278 million or 9.7 percent increase over FY 2017;
- \$2.5 billion for VA construction programs to repair, renovate, expand and replace VA's aging infrastructure — a \$1.5 billion increase over FY 2017; and
- \$713 million for medical and prosthetic research — a \$38 million or 5.6 percent increase over FY 2017, as well as an additional \$75 million to support the Million Veteran Program.

The three IB coauthors have presented budget and policy recommendations to Congress and the Administration for 30 years. The recommendations, which are supported by 27 other organizations, are meant to inform Congress and the Administration of the needs of all veterans, and to offer substantive solutions to address the many health care and benefits challenges they face. The IB serves as the veterans groups' benchmark for properly funding VA so it can provide the timely delivery of quality health care, and accurate and appropriate benefits. [View the new IB.](#)

3. In Memory Program Deadline Today: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is accepting applications for Vietnam veterans to be honored at the 2017 *In Memory* ceremony on June 17 on the east knoll of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The *In Memory* program honors those whose lives were cut short as a result of their service, but do not meet the Department of Defense guidelines to be added to The Wall. Causes of death that meet the inclusion criteria include Agent Orange exposure, suicide, cancer, diabetes and heart attack, among others. The deadline for loved ones to apply to honor a Vietnam veteran at the ceremony is today. [Learn more or submit an application.](#)

4. Marine Reunion Web Page: The Commandant of the Marine Corps General Robert B. Neller is encouraging all Marines to “get connected ... Reach out, catch up, and when needed, help others” by using a new Marine Corps web page designed to facilitate unit reunions. The “Year of the Reunion” page offers logistical advice for planning a reunion, as well as after action reviews of past reunions, a photo gallery and a list of upcoming reunions. [Read about Year of the Reunion.](#)

5. MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced the identification of remains of five Americans who had been missing in action from WWII and Korea. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

-- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Robert R. Cummings**, 20, of Manistique, Michigan, will be buried March 4 in Clarksville, Tennessee. In late November 1950, the 187th regiment was moved to positions along the Chongchon and Kuryong rivers in order to preserve lines of communication after an attack by approximately 300,000 Chinese soldiers. On Nov. 29, Cummings was sent out as part of a reconnaissance patrol. The patrol was ambushed near Hajoyang, North Korea, and Cummings was declared missing in action. [Read more about Cummings.](#)

-- **Navy Steward's Mate 1st Class Cyril I. Dusset** was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Dusset was one of 429 crewmen killed in the attack. Interment services are pending. [Read more about Dusset.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Lawrence H. Fecho** was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Fecho was one of 429 crewmen killed in the attack. Interment services are pending. [Read more about Fecho.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Paul S. Raimond** was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Raimond was one of 429 crewmen killed in the attack. Interment services are pending. [Read more about Raimond.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Walter B. Rogers** was assigned to the USS Oklahoma, which was moored off Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, when Japanese aircraft attacked his ship on Dec. 7, 1941. Rogers was one of 429 crewmen killed in the attack. Interment services are pending. [Read more about Rogers.](#)

To sign up new veterans' advocates, click here: <http://capwiz.com/vfw/mlm/signup.htm>.

As always, we want to hear your advocacy stories. To share your stories or photos with us, simply email them directly to yfwac@vfw.org.