



**Department of
South Carolina
The American Legion**

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July 17, 2014

SOUTH CAROLINA NEWS LINE

What we need is more people that specialize in the impossible.

Salute from the Shore V

Here is something you might want to check out. It was recently received from Howard Metcalf and I would like to share it with you. Please go to the following site and view it. Attached is a link to the video of Salute from the Shore V, a 4th of July South Carolina tribute to the men and women of the military.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bvz6AIA05V8&feature=youtu.be>

Legion Baseball

Both the Junior and Senior American Legion Baseball state tournaments will be starting soon. For the Juniors the tournament starts **July 19** and runs to **July 23** at the Florence Legion Field. It is a 8 team double elimination tournament.

For the Seniors the tournament starts with a banquet on **July 25** with games being played commencing on **July 26** and runs to **July 30**. The banquet and games will be held at the historic Riley Park, Sumter. To see the game times and team brackets, please go to the department website, scarolinalegion.org and click on **Programs-SC Baseball-2014 Brackets**. Any other information can be obtained from Mr. Buck Swing or Mr. Legree Oswald. If at all possible, let's attempt to go see some up and coming baseball players in their early stages of play and support our program.

Vietnam Era Vets

Senator Tim Scott is hosting a Vietnam Era Veterans Recognition Ceremony scheduled for Saturday August 2nd. The Senator is honored to have the opportunity to express our gratitude to these Vietnam War Era veterans and will present each one with a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition and a pin.

The event is scheduled in a central location - downtown Columbia. At 10 AM on August 2nd, we will be recognizing these brave men and women at the First Baptist Church of Columbia, at 1306 Hampton Street. We are enlisting your help to spread the word about this event within your organization and throughout the community. This Recognition Ceremony cannot be a success without the involvement of our Veteran partner organizations. There is no fee to participate in or attend this event. We do ask these veterans and the surviving families of deceased veterans to contact us to register. You can do this online at: <http://scott.senate.gov/veterans> <https://outreach.senate.gov/iqextranet/iqClickTrk.aspx?&cid=quorum_scott-iq&crop=14308.6409133.5232973.7131919&redirect=http%3a%2f%2fwww.scott.senate.gov%2fveterans> or by phone, at 844-820-0146 (toll free). The Vietnam War era was one of the most challenging in our nation's history, and it is truly my honor to host these brave men and women who fought for freedom this year. Their sacrifices, as well as those made by their families, will never be forgotten.

Thank you for your support of our Veterans and the Vietnam War Era Veterans Recognition Ceremony. I hope to see you and your fellow veterans in Columbia on August 2nd!

Military Pay Raises

Senators on Tuesday backed the Pentagon's proposed cap on military pay raises for next year in an early subcommittee draft of its annual defense spending bill. The \$549-billion legislation drafted by the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on defense backs proposals by the Obama administration and the Pentagon to cut long-term personnel costs beginning with a 1 percent cap. But it remains early in the game for the Senate defense spending bill and changes are likely. The House has already voted to keep the standard 1.8 percent cap on raises next year and there is similar support in the Senate at large.

A summary of the subcommittee bill released Tuesday shows a \$489.6 billion base budget with \$59.7 billion for supplemental war funding. On Thursday, the proposal will go to the full Senate Appropriations Committee for debate and amendments. The Senate appropriations bill is the last piece of the 2015 military budget needed for Congress to craft a final plan for defense priorities and spending. The chamber has already passed a defense authorization bill and the House passed both an authorization bill and appropriations bill earlier this summer. Along with the pay cap, the subcommittee also bucked Pentagon wishes by blocking \$200 million in cuts to military base supermarkets and providing money to save the venerable A-10 Thunderbolt II, nicknamed the Warthog, from retirement, as the Air Force wants. The aircraft has won wide support from the rest of Congress and is likely to survive the budget ax. "I think the A-10 is a great aircraft. There are those who disagree in the Pentagon," said Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., who chairs the defense appropriation subcommittee. "I will tell you in the Senate support among members is very strong."

The draft pumps money into other military hardware, including \$1.3 billion for the E/A-18G Growler aircraft, \$120 million for Abrams tanks, and an additional \$5.9 billion for defense research and development. Durbin said the funding maintains key military assets and preserves the U.S. military industrial base and its expertise in defense manufacturing. Meanwhile, without significant increases in money for DARPA and other innovative programs, Durbin said the United States could lose its edge over China, which dedicates a larger piece of its defense budget to military technology. Also, the subcommittee has proposed eliminating federal subsidies on tobacco products sold on military bases, which Durbin said can cut the costs of cigarettes and smokeless tobacco by up to 25 percent for service members despite the known health risks. The budget for \$25 million in funding for special victims counseling in military sexual assault cases would — a three-fold increase from 2012, according to the Senate. Under the bill, the U.S. would also double down on its

funding for Israel's Iron Dome missile defense shield as tensions increase with the Palestinians. Durbin said rockets being launched from the Gaza are not causing harm due to the shield built with U.S. assistance. "It works," he said, "and we are dramatically increasing our investment in Iron Dome and Israeli missile defense."

**New POW/MIA
Agency**

Defense Department officials testified Tuesday that the new agency to replace the troubled POW/MIA accounting community in charge of recovering and repatriating the remains of troops killed in past conflicts will be stood up on Jan. 1. The agency will consolidate the work of the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office and the Joint Personnel Accounting Command as ordered by the secretary of defense in February, said Michael Lumpkin, the assistant secretary of defense for special operations and low-intensity conflict. Lumpkin testified before the House Armed Services' military personnel subcommittee, which for years has pressed for reform and in 2009 helped pass a congressional mandate that the DOD recover at minimum of 200 remains annually beginning next year. On Tuesday, Rep. Joe Wilson, R-S.C., chairman of the House subcommittee, said he was pleased that the DOD is moving ahead with the changes. "What a positive report — that is very unusual in Congress," he said. The DOD efforts to recover 83,000 Americans still missing from past conflicts have so far fallen far below the goal set by Congress and been dogged by incompetence and dysfunction, including claims agencies ignored leads, arguing against identifying remains in government custody, desecrated and mishandled of remains, and failed to keep critical records.

An interim inspector general report, obtained last week by ProPublica, outlined some of the problems:

- a remarkably low number of identifications each year — just 60 in 2013
- no standard operating procedures, or central database of the missing
- leadership and management problems resulting in a hostile and dysfunctional work environment
- no acknowledgment that as many as 50,000 missing at sea are unlikely to be recovered
- Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel ordered the overall and consolidation in February and called maximizing the number of identifications a top priority for the DOD.

Lumpkin said the new central agency will open at the start of 2015 but will not be fully operational until January 2016. "Throughout this process, operations to account for the missing and to keep their families informed will continue," he said. Jamie Morin, director of DOD Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, said JPAC and DPMO as well as the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory, which handles forensic work, will continue on recovery efforts until the new agency is completely operational in 2016. "We are building something up while we are shrinking something down to ensure that this is seamless," Morin said.

Plans for the new agency call for:

- Oversight by a newly created DOD policy under secretary who's central task will be the recovery effort
- A medical examiner in charge of all identification and scientific operations
- Centralized data base and case management system containing all POW/MIA case information

Lumpkin said the department will also try to improve the way it treats the families of those still missing in action. From a business perspective, who is the customer here? We haven't focused on the families as much as we could," he said. "I think that is the underlying piece we all agreed upon."

New VA Scandal

[A new Department of Veterans Affairs scandal](#) emerged this week as VA employees and an independent investigator said the agency made old benefits claims appear new by altering their dates. VA officials have said that the problem resulted from “confusion and misapplication” of a 2014 leadership memo that authorized processors to mark once-overlooked claims with the dates they were found instead of the dates they were submitted. At a hearing Monday, VA Undersecretary for Benefits Allison Hickey described that recently suspended memo as a “pro-veteran position,” explaining that it allowed processors to approve old claims without sending applicants back to their doctors for reexamination.

Hickey also outlined steps that the VA is taking to ensure the integrity of its claims data in the future, and the agency summarized those measures in an [announcement](#) Wednesday. Below is a list of the planned actions:

- Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs Sloan Gibson has ordered that a team of experts should determine possible scenarios in which employees might find ways “around the system” and decide if further controls are needed.
- Hickey directed the Veterans Benefits Administration to apply for ISO 9001 certification — a global benchmark for quality management — to provide external validation and quality assurance of the agency’s data.
- Gibson promised to hold accountable any employees who are found to have worked around standard claims processes.
- The VA has pledged to immediately notify its independent inspector general when it discovers practices that stray from standard claims processes.
- The VA continues to provide performance data on benefits through its weekly [Monday Morning Workload Reports](#).

RSVP Request

I recently was contacted by Ms. Beverly Brandt, Director, RSVP of the Midlands inquiring about veterans volunteering to assist in various avenues for seniors 55 and older. There are many areas that RSVP could use the assistance in and the only requirement is that the individual be 55 and older and have the time to do so. Anyone interested can either contact Ms. Brandt at 803-252-7734 ext. 246 or go to the following website www.seniorresourcesinc.org and check things out. Some of the many School volunteer liaison, cook book coordinator, receptionist, van driver, armed forces casework family follow-up volunteer, disaster services volunteer, military hospital/clinic volunteer, library assistant, volunteer shuttle driver, clerical assistant-women’s clinic, packer, greeter, product rescue volunteer, thrift store attendant, food pantry and meals on wheels volunteer.

Pro Bono Info

Lawyers4Vets - Monthly Pro Bono Veterans Legal Clinic

Introduction: As a service to area Veterans, the South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center has partnered with the Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center and members of the private bar to establish Lawyers 4 Vets, a Pro Bono Veterans Legal Clinic.

Purpose:

Lawyers 4 Vets connects low income and homeless Veterans with attorneys who provide legal advice and representation on certain issues.

Legal Issues and Services: The clinic will ONLY address the following topics:

- Obtaining identification (Social Security, South Carolina State ID, birth certificates)
- Child support and visitation issues (in South Carolina)
- Expungements and pardons (for convictions from South Carolina courts)
- Consumer protection
- Simple wills and healthcare power of attorney

Eligibility:

Veterans will be screened for eligibility, and if eligible will be given an appointment at the clinic. Lawyers 4 Vets will assist eligible Veterans regardless of military discharge status.

Appointments: Veterans who would like to be screened for eligibility should call the number listed below and leave a message including their name, phone number, and legal issue. The Veteran will be contacted within 2 business days by an intake volunteer who will ask the veteran a number of questions to determine if they are eligible. If the Veteran is eligible and has a qualifying legal issue, they will be given the next available appointment at the legal clinic. Appointments are required for a Veteran to receive a face-to-face meeting with a lawyer. Walk-ins will not be seen and will be directed to contact the telephone intake.

Number to call: Toll Free 1-877-289-6000

Clinic Dates: The Clinic will be held from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month. The 2014 Clinic dates are:

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|----------------------|--------------------|
| * May 15, 2014 | *June 19, 2014 |
| * July 17, 2014 | *August 21, 2014 |
| * September 18, 2014 | *October 16, 2014 |
| * November 20, 2014 | *December 18, 2014 |

Where: (BY APPROVED APPOINTMENT ONLY AND SPECIFIC LOCATION PROVIDED UPON CONFIRMATION): Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center, 6439 Garners Ferry Road, Columbia SC 29209.

What's Happening

July 19, Saturday – District 18 Florence Post #1 12noon

July 19 – Florence Legion Field – Junior Baseball Tournament

July 26, Saturday – District 13 Easley Post #52, 118-A Legion St., 10 a.m. Light refreshments

August 16, Saturday – District 5, Boiling Springs Post #200 at Unity Presbyterian Church, 750 Rainbow Lake Rd. 10 a.m.

Post Officer Listings

District and Post Commanders Please Note: Even though you may have the same officers in the same positions for the 2014-2015 year, you should also submit a listing to department. Also, for those that have email addresses, please indicate that on the listing. Your assistance and attention to this matter will be greatly appreciated.

Proud To Serve

Lloyd H. Woods
Department Adjutant