



Commander's Comments



"In the blink of an eye", "gone in a jiffy", and "before you know it" are all idioms of how quickly time passes by. If I used a similar approach as Tad's typical opening of his newsletter articles, I could display lyrics from numerous songs regarding this topic such as: Time by Pink Floyd, Time Passages by Al Stewart, or Your Gonna Miss This by Trace Adkins. I could go on and on, but you get the point.

In the past two months, my family and I felt the effects of time as we gained and lost members of our family. In July, the Zvoncheck family grew when my son Brendan married my now daughter-in-law, Megan.



Three weeks later, my daughter Claire and her husband Mitch brought into this world our first grandchild, a little bundle of joy named Cormac. Then, just a few weeks ago my family decreased in size due to the sudden passing of my mother. There was complete joy with the marriage of my son, and the birth of our grandson, followed by abrupt onset of sorrow by the loss of the matriarch of the Zvoncheck family, my mother Gerry.

I tell this story not looking for sympathy, but to remind everyone about the fragility of life, and how quickly time passes. Life is a temporary journey for all living things and there is no guarantee on how much time each of us will be given. From 100 days to 100 years, lives are filled with countless moments that make up the fabric of our existence.

In the blink of an eye though, time slips away, leaving us to reflect on how quickly our days turn into weeks, months into years, and before we know it, decades have passed.

From the moment we are born, time begins its relentless march forward. As children, we believe we are indestructible, with endless days stretching ahead. But as we grow older, we come to realize the transience of life, especially after the loss of a loved one. As I spoke in church delivering my mother's eulogy, I mentioned about how the closing of this chapter, the chapter titled "having parents" has now ended, and we, the children of Jack and Gerry Zvoncheck must continue to carry the torch of this family, so that the values they instilled in us, those of faith, love, and family continue for generations to come.

As I reflect back on how swiftly the past 59+ years have gone, I come to realize that time is precious, and that we must embrace each moment we have. Time and energy should not be wasted on or with negative situations or individuals but spent cherishing those things or people who put smiles on our face, and warmth in our hearts. Live life to its fullest, smile frequently, laugh often, and treasure today, because tomorrow is never guaranteed.

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Sponsored by Ohio VFW Charities

Now onto Post business.

Over the past three months, Post 3345 has been extremely busy. We had a great summer filled with all sorts of activities, including three awesome outdoor concerts, a very successful golf outing, and many other gatherings filled with fun and camaraderie.

As we roll into fall and the holiday season, please stay tuned for other activities such as the upcoming Halloween Party on October 28th, and December of course will be filled with events including the always fun Army/Navy Game on December 9th, and of course, our canteen Christmas Party later in the month.

By now you saw the wonderful upgrades we have done on the outside of the building. Working closely with the city, we were able to get drainage installed and the culvert filled in on Strongsville Blvd, which over the years was a trap for many cars and individuals, as they either slid off the road on a snowy day, or parked along the side of the road, and stepped into the ravine as they existed the passenger side door.

We also had the entire parking lot ground down and re-paved, along with new landscaping on the south end of the lot. The parking lot replacement was long overdue, as the maintenance and upkeep year after year was beginning to outweigh the cost of replacement. This new lot will last for many years to come.

That's all I have for now, so as always, I wish you all fair winds and following seas and ask God to bless you all.

Respectfully,
Tim Zvoncheck Commander.



Senior Vice Commander



Well, I picked out a tree
And I tied it to the car
There's a wreath up on our door
Eight tiny reindeer in the yard

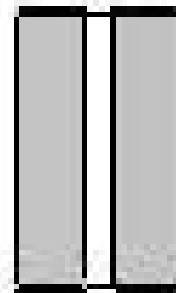
I drove under the downtown
lights
Red an' green and blue
The silver neon snowflakes
Only made me think of you

It's Christmas all around me
You're in someone else's land

So I'm sending out my only wish
Hey Santa, tell the man:

Hey mister
Send my baby home
This December
I don't want to be all alone
Oh, Christmas in America
I need you in my arms
Far away from harm
Send my baby home

"Christmas in America"
Melissa Etheridge



We're less than three months away from Christmas already! Everyone says the older you get, the faster time goes, and I certainly am not going to argue that point! The only instances when time seems to pass at a glacial pace are when you are looking forward to something like a vacation or waiting for the workday to come to an end!

Getting back to the idea of Christmas, I think it's a safe bet to presume that many of our veterans spent at least one Christmas away from home (overseas). Fortunately, the two times that applied to me, I was in very nice, interesting places – Hong Kong and Iceland – much nicer than Kei Sahn, the Chosin Reservoir, Kandahar, or Fallujah.

Nonetheless, being away from your loved ones is hard enough wherever you are, but being away during a holiday like Christmas is even harder. Many of us associate this holiday with 'family', along with Thanksgiving, and when you aren't with your family, there is an emptiness inside for both the service member and his or her family members at home.

Melissa Etheridge wrote "Christmas in America" in 2008, during the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. At that time, the US had nearly 139,000 military and civilian personnel in Iraq and 30,000 in Afghanistan. It's a great song that really speaks to one of the elements of military service that many of our fellow countrymen don't ever experience – the sacrifice of being where your country needs you, when your country needs you to be there.

Today, there are nearly 172,000 active-duty service members serving outside the United States. Many of them are forward deployed in Japan, Germany and South Korea. We have very few of our comrades (relative to 2008!) in active war zones – though there are still over 6,500 in North Africa and Southwest Asia to be nearby in the event they are needed quickly in some of our former hot spots. So, we're still talking about 14% of our military being away from home for the holidays.

There are a lot of ways we can brighten the holidays for our service members who cannot be home with their loved ones - several links are provided at the end of this article. Perhaps take some time to look at each one and see if anything jumps out at you as something you'd like to do.

Things have changed since MOST of us were deployed. Cell phones and the internet make staying connected with your families and friends at home a lot easier these days; however, receiving an actual handwritten card or letter is still an exciting event – even when you're here at home!

Please consider brightening the spirits of member of our armed forces who find themselves “in someone else's land” – unfortunately, we can't always get our wish of having them come home. But letting them know we are thinking about them, hoping for their safety and well-being could put a smile on someone's face and perhaps warm their heart, knowing they are not forgotten.

Here are some links to review – see if you can help make someone's Christmas overseas a little happier!

<https://www.usasoa.org/christmas-cards-for-our-deployed-troops> (need to be received by December 5)

<https://leapoffaithcrafting.com/making-cards-for-soldiers/#:-:text=Here%20are%20some%20suggestions%3A%201%20Tell%20them%20how,just%20start%20writing%20without%20a%20title.%20More%20items>

<https://www.redcross.org/volunteer/volunteer-opportunities/holidays-for-heroes.html>

Tad Brown
Senior Vice Commander

Membership Committee:

We really want to make a big push this year to once again meet the membership goals set out by the VFW. That's to be at 100% of what we were to end last year, “plus 2”!

So we need everyone to do their best to recruit members to our Post! If you see someone in a military hat or shirt, or a veteran license plate on their car – anything that lets you know they're a vet – talk to them! Most of us don't bite, and enjoy sharing their experiences of their days on active duty.

If you find that they are VFW-eligible, have them come by – or give them my name and cell number (440-376-7491) and I'll chat with them! Don't forget to see if they may be eligible for the Auxiliary if they themselves are not VFW eligible! We want the whole organization to grow!

Also, please let me know if you have any ideas for “events” to recruit! We can set up membership booths at various locations if we know about an event where there may be a good number of veterans – but only if we know about them (and get permission from the organizer!). Thanks!

Tad Brown,
Senior Vice Commander

Advertisers

Those of you who have previously advertised in the Scuttlebutt should have received a letter from me indicating the renewal costs.

If you would again like to be included in the newsletter, please let us know.

Also, if you are considering becoming an advertiser, see the information on the next page regarding the costs for the various sizes of ads. Print out the form and send it in to my attention, or our newsletter editor, Linda Burger.

RE-ELECT

TOM PERCIAK

STRONGSVILLE ★ MAYOR

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Paid for by The Boosters of Mayor Tom Perciak
John Ziegler, Treasure
17889 Monterey Pine • Strongsville • Ohio • 44136

[DONATE NOW](#)

The graphic features a dark green background with a faint image of a building. The text is white and centered. Social media icons for Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram are displayed in a row. A horizontal line separates the social media icons from the contact information. At the bottom, there is a white button with the text 'DONATE NOW'.



Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States
Strongsville Post 3345
17900 Strongsville Blvd.
Strongsville, OH 44149

October, 2023

Post Newsletter Advertising Application

- Ad sizes available:** Business Card single, 3 1/2 x 1 1/2 \$100.00 Yr.
Business Card double, 3 1/2 x 3 \$200.00 Yr.
Top or Bottom Banner, 1 1/2 x 7 \$200.00 Yr.
- Includes:** 6 bi-monthly issues, plus 24/7 coverage on Post website
- Circulation:** Emailed to 1,400 Post members
- Graphics and Text:** All graphics and pictures must be in any of the following formats: Jpeg, Tiff, Gif or Bitmap. Text should be in MS Word. Submit ad design for approval. Newsletters and Calendars are produced in MS Publisher.
- Payments:** All payments are due before printing; future payments are due prior to the end of the 12-month cycle. Your cycle begins with the month your first ad is printed. Your ad cost is protected for at least three years. All checks should be made out to Strongsville VFW Post 3345 with "Newsletter" noted on the memo line.

Application

Name of Business: _____

Name of Contact: _____

Billing Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Ad Size Requested: _____

Ad Graphics or Text Submitted:

Date Submitted: _____ Date Approved: _____ Date of 1st Ad: _____

Submit all ad material on separate sheet, or preferably by digital format to email listed below. Design assistance is available.

Contact information: Tad Brown, Sr. Vice Commander

Cell: 440-376-7491

Email: srv@vfw3345.com



Honor Guard Don Kennett



The Honor Guard would like to thank the personnel from our Auxiliary for the recommendation of honoring us by providing a dinner. The date has yet to be confirmed but we really appreciate their thoughtfulness.

A lot of the team members have gone through a lot of medical surgeries and issues this past year. Most of us are finally on the mend.

We have done a few private graveside honors for veterans in the last few months. Basically it has been a quiet third quarter of the year. I have been asked by family member at the cemeteries, “ what is the difference between a 21-gun salute and the three round volley?” The following should clarify this issue:

THREE ROUND VOLLEY

The practice of firing three rifle volleys over the grave originated in the old custom of halting the fighting to remove the dead from the battlefield. Once each army had cleared their dead, it would fire three volleys to indicate that the dead had been cared for and that they were ready to fight again.

The fact that the firing party consists of seven riflemen, firing these volleys does not constitute a 21-gun-salute. It is the three volleys that are significant, not the number of rifles. Three volleys fired over the casket have become a tradition to mean the dead have been cared for. It has evolved into a military salute for the deceased serving their country.

Firing the three volleys over the casket is one of the highest honors to give a deceased military veteran. Our nation’s highest honor is a flag draped over the casket, folded and presented. Tradition is to place three spent shell casings alongside the folded flag to prove now and forevermore that the deceased and his flag have had proper military honors. The three spent shell casings represent Duty, Honor and Country.

Respectfully Submitted,
Don Kennett,
Honor Guard Commander

Calendar for: October, November, December

October 7th –	Honor Guard Meeting
October 22nd –	Strongsville Eagle Scout Court
November 4th	Honor Guard Meeting
November 11th -	Veterans Day Observance
November 15th -	Tour of Duty at Rittman
December 2nd -	Honor Guard Meeting



TAPS



July, 2023: Joseph Wasdovich
Paul Monschien

August, 2023: Thomas Durica
James Ceccarelli
Elbert Bennett

September, 2023: None

New Members

July, 2023

James Phelps

August, 2023

No new members

September, 2023

David Brown
William Gearo
Michael Torres
Nicholas Torres

Donations

July, 2023

VFW National Home for Children	\$250
Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency	\$500
Ohio Western Reserve Cemetery Advisory Committee	\$1,000
Johnny R. (Gift Card)	\$500
Strongsville Rotary (Songfest)	\$500
American Legion Post 91 (Golf Outing Sponsorship)	\$100

August, 2023

VFW National Home for Children	\$250
Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency	\$500
Arts in Strongsville (Day at the Chalet)	\$250
Ohio National Guard Pionee Run	\$1,200
St. John Neumann Summer Family Fest	\$300
Vin Rouge Pup Tent #1 (Cooties)	\$500
Ride With Valor	\$1,000
USS Cleveland Legacy Foundation	\$5,000

September, 2023

VFW National Home For Children	\$250
Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency	\$500
Hanson House	\$500
Greater Cleveland Young Marines	\$250
Second Mile Outreach	\$250
Strongsville Food Bank	\$1,000
North Royalton Food Pantry	\$500
City of Strongsville (Town Center Project)	\$15,000
Reboot Recovery	\$3,500
Gold Star Table Marine Corp Ball	\$530
Veteran In Need	\$3,000



Canteen Manager Scott James

The Summer is over, but the Fall football season is upon us. Once again, we had great turnouts at all our summer concerts! We will definitely make the concerts a summer tradition.

Stop by whenever your favorite football team is playing and be an armchair quarterback with the rest of the gang. Pick your lucky square for every Browns and Ohio State games and maybe you'll walk away a winner.

Keep checking the Bulletin board for any events that might come up such as chili cook off or tailgate parties.

As always, we appreciate your business in the Canteen and remind everyone to drink responsibly.

Scott James
Canteen Manager



EECOH.ORG

eecofohio@gmail.com
330-727-2790

*Recognizing Ohio Veterans Whose
Ancestry Comes From Eastern Europe*



Auxiliary President

UNWAVERING SUPPORT



FOR UNCOMMON HEROES®

Please join us at the next Auxiliary meeting, 2nd Monday of the month October 9th at 7 p.m, to keep up on our current events, committees, and see how you can help the auxiliary, post and veterans.

Reminder, your annual Auxiliary dues are now due. Please send in a check or money order payable to VFW Auxiliary to Post 3345 in the amount of \$35.00.

It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to one of our own. Our sister, Gretchen Kvasager passed away suddenly on Saturday, September 2nd, 2023. Roger and family will have a Celebration of Life in her honor on Saturday, October 14th, at the VFW Post from 1 to 4 p.m.

Our Auxiliary will have a ceremony for her at 2 p.m. Ceremony uniform is white blouse/shirt and black pants. Please be at the Post by 1:30 p.m. to participate.

Anyone wishing to volunteer with upcoming events, please reach out to Auxiliary Junior Vice President Mike Zdravecky to see what is needed and where you can help - michaelzvfwohio@yahoo.com.

Lent is approaching, February 22nd through April 6th. Watch for information about the best Fish Fry in town at our Post. Friday evenings, members can eat starting at 4, all others at 5.

Stop in for the Queen of Hearts October 6th and 20th

How about a Browns vs Steelers Tailgate / Chili cookoff?? Stop up to watch our Browns beat the Steelers, November 19th game at 1 p.m. and have some chili. Bring your favorite crockpot with chili and win fabulous prizes. We will be raffling off a Cleveland Browns basket and a Browns jersey of your choice. This is sure to be a fun event!

Dress up for a Halloween costume party at the Post Canteen, on Saturday, October 28th. Check the Post for details or watch our Facebook page.

Mike Lungo, Auxiliary President



Auxiliary Junior Vice President



With the summer events wrapped up we enjoyed many great events in 2023. I would like to personally thank all of the volunteers who helped make the summer concerts a huge success. Custard Pie, Moxie, and Ace Molar did an absolutely incredible job making for some really awesome nights at the Post.

The annual golf outing went spectacularly with great weather and an even better time had by all of the attendees. Once again these events can only go so well with the dedicated individuals who give time to make them happen. We are very fortunate to have an organization that has many of these people and plenty more fun to be had this year.

The Post Clambake is Saturday September 30th at 6pm, be ready to bring an appetite. And the Queen still remains on the board so remember the 1st and 3rd Friday of every month the Queen of Hearts drawing where food is always available at the kitchen window.

We have one remaining tailgate party with a date to be announced soon so make sure to keep an eye on the events board and any Post emails and help us make this a big one.

Thank You again to all the members who volunteer and everyone who supports us by attending these events and parties.

Michael Zdravecky
Junior Vice President
Post 3345 Auxiliary

Our Members. Our Friends. Our Heroes

Duke Evans

Interviewed by Linda Burger

“Respect. A word that is both a noun and a verb. A word that perfectly describes, in both senses, Colonel Duke Evans, USAF (Ret.)

After a military career filled with exemplary service, honors, heroism and dedication, Col. Evans followed this with an equally impressive career as a civilian and now as a volunteer to his community, veterans and Post 3345.

Col. Evans started his military career at the USAF Academy. Out of thousands of applicants, he was one of five selected from the Akron area. And of those, only two graduated from the Academy.

“When I first started at the Academy, I had thoughts of becoming a Doctor but after a couple of years became more attracted to actually flying as a career,” he explained. “The discipline, adventure and opportunities to make a difference really appealed to me.”

After graduating, with honors, and completing his pilot training, Col. Evans married his lovely wife Maria and was assigned as an Instructor Pilot at Columbus AFB, MS, where he served for three years.



His next career move involved a very difficult choice – serving with ASTRA at the Pentagon or flying F15's overseas. He hurt his back in F-15 training and was subsequently assigned to B-52's. This played a major role later in his career.

Following an assignment as an Instructor Pilot and Evaluator Pilot at Griffiss AFB, NY, where he earned a Master's Degree in Aeronautical Science, he was assigned as Aide de Camp to the Strategic Air Command (SAC) Commander in Chief General Larry Welch, during which time he traveled all over the country and the world.

After this, it was a military storybook of assignments, reflecting recognition of Col. Evans' growing reputation for excellence, experience and ability – Executive Officer to the SAC Chief of Operations, Air Command and Staff College (distinguished graduate), Chief of Training of the conventional Bomb Squadron at Barksdale AF Base, LA; Commander of an Avionics Maintenance Squadron, and participation in Desert Shield/Storm as Commander of a 1500 person forward deployed Logistics Group.

Col. Evans' next assignment took him to the prestigious National War College at Ft. Lesley J. McNair, in Washington, D.C. The class included representatives from all services, as well as the CIA, State Department and FBI. Here he earned the equivalent of a second Masters, this time in National Security Strategy.

In recognition of his extraordinary accomplishments, at the age of 36, he was promoted to Full Colonel and assigned to Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), a part of NATO.

In addition to being a remarkable achievement at that age, this latest step reflected advancement six years ahead of the normal Air Force promotion track.

After serving in several billets in SHAPE/NATO, after 2 years he was recruited to become the Base Commander at Minot AF Base, ND. "It was like being Mayor of a city," Col. Evans recalled. "In addition to providing support to a Missile Wing and a Bomber Wing, I was also responsible for 2400 housing units, four schools. Policing, Human Resources. MWR and Civil Engineering – all the functions to keep the Base mission capable. In fact, Minot AF Base was the 6th largest city in North Dakota!"

After only a year, he was selected by the 8AF Commander to be the Deputy Commander for Operations, of the world's largest bomber wing at Barksdale AFB, LA, comprising 58 B52's and 2200 people. "We were tasked with keeping these huge, aging planes flying, and with determining innovative ways to best utilize their capabilities," he explained. "It was like teaching an old dog new tricks. I charged my folks with the challenge – how would you utilize the B-52's to prepare for a "come as you are war."



The result – a combat plan the Colonel termed "Light and Lethal" that a short time later played an extremely crucial role in a return to the Persian Gulf nicknamed "Desert Strike."

"We were asked on a Friday by Admiral Crowe, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, how quickly we could deploy and commence action to enforce the "No Fly" zone in the Iraq," he explained. "When I replied by tomorrow, the Admiral was astonished and almost unbelieving. "With heavy bombers armed with cruise missiles"? Do it, he ordered.



Thanks to Light and Lethal, in less than 24 hours we were on our way to Guam with four B52's, one C5, a crew of 70 maintainers and all needed cargo. Less than a day later we had planes in the air from Guam to strike.

In that incredibly short period of time, we deployed tremendous fire power to the Gulf, knocking out radar stations that were threatening our planes patrolling the "No Fly" zone and convincing Saddam it was a bad idea. 30+ hours Non-stop and back to Guam" he related, with a well-deserved note of pride.

The Light and Lethal program was later reviewed by the Air Force Science Board, after many wondered "how did you get out there so fast, and with so few assets?" Faster than fighter jets ever could.

Col. Evans was then offered another assignment to NATO Headquarters but, as he explained, his family came first. So, he opted instead for retirement.

Along the way he earned the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal with 3 Oak Leaf clusters and the AF Commendation Medal with 1 Oak Leaf cluster.

He is equally proud of being named an Honorary Chief Master Sergeant by the E-9's on his last Base.

Following his military service, Col. Evans began his civilian career with Ameritech, then as Training Manager for SBC and on the National Staff of ATT, before retiring in 2018.

He was a member of the Strongsville School Board for a number of years and is currently involved with the Strongsville Safety Forces VIP program – Volunteers in Policing, where he assists police during community events, at home football games and during the holidays as escorts at the Mall, providing security and assistance to shoppers.

Never still, Col. Evans also teaches Basic Handgun at a local range and loves “keeping his yard looking good.”

“Maria deserves all the credit for the inside of the house (which is beautiful) and, after 46 years of marriage, SHE deserves a medal,” he added, with a laugh.

It was while attending the first Post 3345 Community Day event that Col. Evans became a member and now serves as a Trustee. “The VFW is important primarily for its advocacy for veterans, they know about the military and how it impacts those who have served,” he explained. “It’s like the Sheep – Shepherd – Wolves analogy – the VFW is there to take care of the Shepherds that cared for the flock.

“Our Post is also a safe place, reflecting the brotherhood of arms. It’s being with other people who understand what you’ve been through, what you’re dealing with mentally and physically and who want to help you get through it,” he added.

Colonel Evans, for a lifetime of service that almost defies description, we at VFW Post 3345 are honored to have you as a member and as a friend.



What's Cooking!

*Our Post is very fortunate to have many great chefs, cooks and bakers!
Every event brings delicious donations that are enjoyed by members and guests.
And everyone always asks for the recipe!*

*If you have a favorite recipe you'd like to share, please email it to
vfwpost3345_1@gmail.com or drop it off at the Post, in the Auxiliary mail slot.*

*She's the Queen of the Christmas
Cookie Sale - and a darn good
baker, too! This issue we feature a
favorite recipe from Auxiliary
member Rosalee Bruno*



Coconut Bars

Ingredients:

1 Duncan Hines cake mix (white or chocolate)
1 package Macaroon Coconut
Hershey's Chocolate Syrup

Make cake according to directions. Bake in 9 x 13 pan.
When cool, cut into squares. Cover and freeze overnight or longer.

Put syrup in small bowl and microwave 15 to 20 seconds, until thinned out.
Cool a little, dip squares in syrup and then roll in coconut on all sides.

Place in cupcake paper liners. Re-freeze rest of cake for later use.

Yield - depends on size of cuts.

SCUTTLEBUTT PUBLISHING!

Newsletter publication: As a reminder, the Scuttlebutt newsletter and calendars have been switched to a quarterly electronic delivery - either as an email attachment we send to you, or by visiting the Post's website - www.vfw3345.com. Pictures from some events have been uploaded to the Post website, check out the fun. We are continually uploading pictures from various events held throughout the year so check it out frequently.

If you have pictures you would like to share, please email them to vfwpost3345_1@yahoo.com.

Please send your electronic contact information, and any updates to your home address, to svcdr@vfw3345.com and we will make sure you are added to our email distribution list.

NOTE: If you include your birth month and day, we will also add you to the Birthday List. There is also a Birthday Book behind the bar in the Canteen, where your information can be added.

Share Your Celebrations!

You can now share the good news and celebrate a Birthday, Anniversary, Retirement, Graduation or other Special Event in the Scuttlebutt Newsletter! One-time, quarter page ads can be purchased for \$25 per issue. Photos and other images can be included - and we'll even help with the design.

Information can be submitted via email vfwpost3345_1@yahoo.com or by contacting Linda Burger at lewburger2@gmail.com.

Comments, suggestions and ideas for the Scuttlebutt are always welcome - just let us know!

Linda Burger
Scuttlebutt Editor



October 23, 2023

Joint Senate Committee Hearing on Military Transition: VFW Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci testified at a joint hearing of the Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs and Armed Services on military to civilian transition. He explained the need to pass VFW-supported H.R. 3933/S. 2888, TAP Promotion Act, in addition to amending laws and policies that govern the DOD Transition Assistance Program (TAP), commonly referred to as TAP class. Gallucci stated, "A solid transition can set up veterans for success after service.

Conversely, a failed transition could lead to devastating consequences like unemployment, homelessness, even suicide. The perception of veterans after service directly correlates to the next generation's propensity to serve. Failed transitions hurt military recruiting, making this a national security priority." This hearing follows a December 2022 Government Accountability Office report on TAP that indicated 70 percent of transitioning service members did not begin the class at least 365 days before separation or retirement as mandated by law.

Shortened Survivor Benefit Plan Deadline: Military retirees interested in enrolling in the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) must now submit their letter of intent (LOI) to the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) by Nov. 1, 2023. Authorized by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, the SBP Open Season began in December 2022 and ends on Jan. 1, 2024. The initial step in the enrollment process is to file a non-binding LOI with DFAS. Once processed, individuals will be provided personalized buy-in amounts, premiums, and estimated benefits, which can then be used to make informed decisions.

Direct Deposit Only for VA Caregiver Stipends: VA will no longer issue paper checks for all primary family caregivers. Enrollment as a vendor for direct deposits may be done through VA's Customer Engagement Portal. Caregivers will need their social security number, address, and bank routing/account numbers to complete the required form. The CSP Direct Deposit Enrollment User Guide provides step by-step enrollment instructions.

TRICARE Open Enrollment Season Coming Soon: TRICARE Open Season will be Nov. 13 - Dec. 12, 2023. This is your chance to enroll or change your health care plan for the next year. If you are satisfied with your current plan, no action is necessary and your coverage will continue automatically for 2024. It is important to note that new retirees have only one year to enroll for TRICARE Prime or Select. Enrollment is not automatic for retirees.