

## VSC NAACP VETERANS NEWSLETTER Issue 5

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### **Military data reveals dangerous reality for black service members and veterans**

Washington (CNN)Top US military officials are seeking to reassure the nation's roughly two million active duty and reserve personnel that they are committed to addressing issues of racial inequality across the branches following George Floyd's death and protests across the country.

But the challenges they face are huge.

A CNN review of data provided by the Pentagon and Department of Veterans Affairs reveals the stark reality that black service members are less likely to become officers and, as a result, are more likely to be seriously injured serving their country than their white colleagues.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/13/politics/military-diversity-data/index.html>

### **BLUE WATER NAVY VETS MAY QUALIFY FOR DISABILITY BENEFITS**

Veterans who served within 12 miles offshore from Vietnam between 1962 and 1975 may qualify for disability benefits thanks to the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019. Survivors can also file claims for benefits if the veteran's cause of death was associated with Agent Orange.

Veterans Legal Group is here to help veterans navigate the complicated legal and filing process. Click the link below to begin.



[https://veteranlegalgroup.org/lp/shipexposure.php?fbclid=IwAR3zkhGBsHgsXVDNVsXFCT4ceh2h-2qBCSgzEPO\\_ZQ8KMy7\\_lpdIue3B7TY](https://veteranlegalgroup.org/lp/shipexposure.php?fbclid=IwAR3zkhGBsHgsXVDNVsXFCT4ceh2h-2qBCSgzEPO_ZQ8KMy7_lpdIue3B7TY)

## November 3rd Election Result

Amendment 2

“Should an automobile or pickup truck be exempt from state and local taxation if it is owned and used primarily by or for a veteran of the armed forces of the United States or the Virginia National Guard who has a 100% service-connected, permanent, and total disability?” The disability must be documented by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Veterans would not have to prove, however, that their disability necessitates vehicle modifications. Statewide, more than 85 percent of voters approved of the referendum.

<https://www.veteransunited.com/futurehomeowners/veteran-property-tax-exemptions-by-state/>

<https://www.dvs.virginia.gov/benefits/real-estate-tax-exemption>

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## Virginia

A disabled veteran in Virginia may receive a full property tax exemption on his/her primary residence if the veteran is 100 percent disabled as a result of service.

### ***In Fairfax County:***

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/taxes/relief/vehicle-disabled-veterans>

Applicants will be required to provide official documentation from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that verifies the disabled veteran has been rated by such agency to have a "100% service-connected, permanent, and total disability or has either lost, or lost the use of, one or both legs, or an arm or a hand, or who is blind."

By statute: Only one vehicle may be taxed at the lower rate for each qualifying disabled veteran. Disabled veterans need only apply once, but must contact our office to receive the lower rate on a different vehicle should the approved vehicle be otherwise moved, sold, or disposed.

## **Black Woman Chaplain Makes Rank of Colonel and History**



The U.S. Army has promoted an active-duty African- American woman chaplain to the rank of colonel for the first time.

Chaplain Monica R. Lawson was given the new status of colonel in a ceremony streamed live Sept. 2 on the Facebook page of the U.S. Army Chaplain Center and

School. The African Methodist Episcopal minister is the chief of recruiting and accessions for the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps.

Col. Lawson, a native of Five Points, Ala., is a graduate of Spelman College and earned a master's of divinity from Turner Theological Seminary, the A.M.E. Church's school on the campus of Atlanta's Interdenominational Theological Center.

Her military assignments include serving as a battalion chaplain at Fort Story, Va., and Fort Jackson; a family life chaplain at Fort Bliss, Texas; a deputy cadet command chaplain at Fort Knox, Ky.; a command chaplain at Fort Bragg, N.C.; and a deputy Pentagon chaplain.

<http://richmondfreepress.com/news/2020/sep/17/black-woman-chaplain-makes-rank-colonel-and-histor/>

## **Miles 4 Vets transportation program gives Southern Virginia veterans a lift**



The Miles 4 Vets program through the Southern Area Agency on Aging offers free door-to-door transportation for local veterans in four counties to medical appointments, including weekly trips to the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Salem. Pictured with the Miles 4 Vets bus are Mobility Manager Mandy Folman, left, and Sam Robinson, who has been driving for the program since it began.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not slowed down a local veterans transportation program that provides free weekly trips to out-of-town medical appointments.

Every Wednesday, veterans in Martinsville-Henry County and surrounding areas can book a trip aboard the wheelchair accessible Miles 4 Vets bus to the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Salem. On Mondays, the bus travels to Danville's Community Based Outpatient Clinic.

This is the sixth year of the program, which is run by the Southern Area Agency on Aging (SAAA). Last year, the agency served 60 unduplicated riders with more than 700 trips, SAAA Mobility Manager Mandy Folman said.

Miles 4 Vets contracts with Charis Transportation to provide door-to-door service, picking up clients and dropping them off at their homes. In addition to Martinsville and Henry County, the bus also serves residents of Franklin County, Danville and Pittsylvania County.

It does not travel to Patrick County, but veterans there are served by local volunteer drivers because "we don't want to exclude them," Folman said.

The mobility program also offers volunteer drivers and transportation vouchers to help veterans get to other medical appointments, both in and out of town. [Southernaaa.org](http://Southernaaa.org)  
Contact Mandy Folman for more information at 276-632-6442 or [mfolman@southernaaa.org](mailto:mfolman@southernaaa.org).  
[miles4vets@yahoo.com](mailto:miles4vets@yahoo.com)

[https://martinsvillebulletin.com/news/local/miles-4-vets-transportation-program-give-s-southern-virginia-veterans-a-lift/article\\_ode7aa9b-9a3e-59c5-89c6-2ffe4e002f17.html?fbclid=IwAR1HKDA8yVwFz3rEfdBCkLdHOuni3HV5ceC\\_xHNvQiSHyHKToM5Hid798Kw](https://martinsvillebulletin.com/news/local/miles-4-vets-transportation-program-give-s-southern-virginia-veterans-a-lift/article_ode7aa9b-9a3e-59c5-89c6-2ffe4e002f17.html?fbclid=IwAR1HKDA8yVwFz3rEfdBCkLdHOuni3HV5ceC_xHNvQiSHyHKToM5Hid798Kw)

## ‘Thousands’ of veterans with bad paper discharges might not know they can upgrade

WASHINGTON — Veterans kicked out of the military due to negative behavior related to post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury and sexual trauma have been upgrading their discharges after a 2017 law change, but there are potentially thousands of others left without access to care or benefits because of less-than-honorable discharges.

The landmark Fairness for Veterans Act, included in the 2017 military funding bill, aimed to help veterans upgrade their discharges. It requires a review from military officials to consider medical evidence to see whether mental illness or injury led to the discharge.

Since the measure went into effect, 1,580 veterans have upgraded their discharges through 2019, according to the most recent Defense Department data.

Despite the boost and efforts from Congress, some say a shockingly low number of veterans are applying for upgraded discharges.

Leaving the military with any type of discharge other than honorable can cripple a veteran’s life and can be a huge hurdle to obtaining benefits. A general discharge disqualifies a veteran from the GI Bill benefits. An other-than-honorable discharge

still allows veterans to seek health care from the Department of Veterans Affairs, but they often are turned away improperly.

Discharges that are other-than-honorable, including general discharges, are given for misconduct ranging from alcohol abuse, drug use and insubordination, but those infractions rarely result in courts-martial, meaning the service member never has their day in court and never gets due process. Those discharges are referred to as “bad paper” because of the negative consequences they have and the stigma they can carry.

Getting an upgrade is not easy. It can involve legal hurdles and a lengthy bureaucratic process.

A veteran needs to have a diagnosed mental health disorder before submitting a request to his or her branch’s review board. A diagnosis could come post-service, but a doctor would need to note that it was service-connected and that the veteran had the issue before the event that caused them to be discharged.

[https://www.stripes.com/thousands-of-veterans-with-bad-paper-discharges-might-not-know-they-can-upgrade-1.647817?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=Stars+and+Stripes+Emails&utm\\_campaign=Weekly+Update](https://www.stripes.com/thousands-of-veterans-with-bad-paper-discharges-might-not-know-they-can-upgrade-1.647817?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Stars+and+Stripes+Emails&utm_campaign=Weekly+Update)

## First monument honoring all military women is unveiled at Arlington



WASHINGTON — The Women in Military Service for America Memorial, at the gateway to Arlington National Cemetery, is regularly placed on lists of “hidden gems” within the nation’s capital — a perspective on the memorial that its leaders are trying to change.

“I don’t want it to be hidden,” said Phyllis Wilson, president of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation and a retired chief warrant officer.

The memorial has been closed for about seven months during the coronavirus pandemic. It reopened Oct. 18 with a new feature that Wilson hopes will draw more people inside: the first monument in the Washington area that honors all military women.

The monument, titled The Pledge, was unveiled during a ceremony Oct. 17. In bronze, it depicts a service woman outfitted for combat, kneeling and staring face-to-face with a military working dog. The base of the monument says it honors “all women of the U.S. military, past present and future.”

It will be placed in the center of the memorial’s lobby to draw visitors in to see the rest of the exhibits, Wilson said. The monument was commissioned by the U.S. War Dogs Association and is meant to honor female veterans and military dogs.

“People may come in for the dog, but then stay and learn that women have served from the Revolutionary War to today, when they can serve in every single career field they can qualify for,” Wilson said. “Because women are a smaller — but ever-growing — percentage of the military and veteran populations, sometimes people fail to think of us in these more dangerous roles, like military dog handler.”

One side of the monument is inscribed with a quote from Anne Sosh Brehm, a first lieutenant in the Army Nurse Corps during World War II: “Let the generations know that women in uniform also guaranteed their freedom. That our resolve was just as great as the brave men who stand among us. And with victory, our hearts were just as full and beat just as fast — that the tears fell just as hard for those we left behind.” [womensmemorial.org](http://womensmemorial.org)

[https://www.stripes.com/first-monument-honoring-all-military-women-to-be-unveiled-at-arlington-1.647881?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=Stars+and+Stripes+Emails&utm\\_campaign=Daily+Headlines](https://www.stripes.com/first-monument-honoring-all-military-women-to-be-unveiled-at-arlington-1.647881?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Stars+and+Stripes+Emails&utm_campaign=Daily+Headlines)

## **National Museum of the US Army opened on Veterans Day**

After several months of coronavirus pandemic-related construction delays, the D.C. region’s newest free museum opened to the public on Nov. 11, Veterans Day.

The National Museum of the United States Army is located at 1775 Liberty Drive, a publicly accessible area of Fort Belvoir in Fairfax County, Virginia.

Construction on the privately funded museum began in 2016. The 185,000-square-foot museum houses almost 1,400 artifacts throughout 11 galleries in the five-story building. The museum’s 84 acres also include a garden, amphitheater and a parade ground.

The museum will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week, with free, timed-entry tickets required. [www.thenmusa.org](http://www.thenmusa.org) 800-506-2672

See video produced by the Army Historical Society about the new museum at <https://wtop.com/business-finance/2020/10/national-museum-of-the-us-army-to-open-on-veterans-day/>

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/army-museum-opening/2020/10/12/d7e1eb1c-0bfa-11eb-b1e8-16b59b92b36d\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/army-museum-opening/2020/10/12/d7e1eb1c-0bfa-11eb-b1e8-16b59b92b36d_story.html)

## *VMI appoints Black interim superintendent amid shakeup*

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*Under fierce attack over racism in its ranks, the Virginia Military Institute has appointed a Black man to lead the school for the first time in its 181-year history, VMI officials announced on Nov. 13.*

*Retired Army Maj. Gen. Cedric T. Wins, who graduated from VMI in 1985, will serve as interim superintendent until the Board of Visitors appoints a permanent chief to oversee*

*the country's oldest state-funded military college. He takes over from the school's longtime superintendent, retired Gen. J.H. Binford Peay III, who resigned after Black cadets described startling bigotry. Cadets described incoming freshman being forced to salute the statue of Stonewall Jackson and being forced to re-enact a Civil War battle in which VMI cadets took part.*

*Gov. Ralph Northam (D) ordered an independent investigation of what he and other officials called "the clear and appalling culture of ongoing structural racism" at VMI, which received \$19 million from the state in fiscal 2020.*

*During his military career, Wins held numerous titles and staff assignments, including in the Headquarters Department of the Army and the Joint Staff at the Pentagon.*

*The school, which was founded in 1839 and whose cadets fought and died for the Confederacy in the Civil War, has had 14 superintendents, all of them White. It was the last public college in Virginia to integrate, admitting five Black students in 1968. (It took a 1996 Supreme Court decision to end its resistance to admitting women.) About 8 percent of the school's 1,700 students are African American.*

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/cedric-wins-vmi-black-superintendent/2020/11/13/8f07f1a8-25c1-11eb-a688-5298ad5d580a\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/cedric-wins-vmi-black-superintendent/2020/11/13/8f07f1a8-25c1-11eb-a688-5298ad5d580a_story.html)

## **Air Force Retiree Newsletter**

The Afterburner Newsletter for Department of the Air Force Retired Personnel and spouses is available online. The *Afterburner* is produced twice a year when funding permits. [www.retirees.af.mil/Library/Afterburner](http://www.retirees.af.mil/Library/Afterburner)

## *African-American astronaut pilots SpaceX capsule to International Space Station*

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*NASA astronaut Victor Glover reacts on Nov. 15 to family members as he leaves the Operations and Checkout Building at the Kennedy Space Center with fellow crew members for a six-month mission to the International Space Station.*

*CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. - SpaceX's newly launched capsule with four astronauts arrived on Nov. 16 at the International Space Station, piloted by Navy Cmdr. Victor Glover, 44.*

*Cmdr. Glover, the lone space rookie among the diverse crew that includes a woman and an astronaut from Japan, will be the first African-American astronaut to move into the Space Station for a long stay.*

*The Dragon capsule pulled up and docked on Nov. 16, following a 27-hour, completely automated flight from NASA's Kennedy Space Center. The linkup occurred 262 miles above Idaho.*

*The three Americans and one Japanese astronaut will remain at the orbiting lab until their replacements arrive on another Dragon in April. And so it will go, with SpaceX — and eventually Boeing — transporting astronauts to and from the station for NASA.*

*Cmdr. Glover, who is from the Los Angeles area, wrestled and played football at California Polytechnic State University. When picked as a NASA astronaut in 2013, he was working as a legislative fellow for the late Sen. John McCain.*

<http://richmondfreepress.com/news/2020/nov/19/african-american-astronaut-pilots-space-ex-capsule-i/>



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