



## Veterans and Military Families Caucus

# *Read White & Blue*

October 2021

Newsletter

Vol. 1, No. 8

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To view this in pdf, click [here](#).

### *Greetings from a VMF Caucus Guest Contributor*

At ease...

One of the proudest decisions of my post-active and -reserve military life is committing to volunteering for Democrats Abroad (DA). As I'm sure you're aware, there are many non-profit organizations and political groups that aim to support veterans and military families (VMF), but DA's Veterans and Military Families Caucus is unique. We are comprised of not only VMF Americans living abroad but also strong allies of our causes who live abroad and understand the overseas perspective. In my involvement with the VMF Caucus, I've created templates for our members to contact their Members of Congress, edited podcast discussions with issue-expert guests, brainstormed ideas on how to take advocacy action, and much more. Why am I dedicated to volunteering with the VMF Caucus and urging you to do the same?

Since last year's General Election, Democrats across the board have made significant progress in taking care of America's veterans and military families. Six months ago, President Biden signed into law legislation to provide COVID-19 vaccinations, whenever available, to all veterans, veteran spouses, caregivers, and VA Civilian Health and Medical Program recipients. The Democratic-led Senate has taken legislative steps forward on tackling the serious issue of eliminating sexual assault within the military, while the Democratic-led House of Representatives has tackled other important issues such as allowing VA employees to organize into labor unions, researching ways to halt veteran suicides, and repatriating deported veterans. In addition, Secretary McDonough has committed to making meaningful reforms to the oft-plagued Dept. of Veterans' Affairs while Democratic governors throughout the states have been enacting pro-veterans laws supported by millions of Americans. We need to not only keep these Democratic incumbents in office but expand this group by booting out anti-compromise, do-nothing Republican politicians holding back meaningful pro-VMF policies.

However, despite the above Democratic-led accomplishments, I'm not yet fully satisfied with the state of things and I suspect you aren't either. If you're anything like the fellow Marines and Sailors I served with, you know that legislative victories that support veterans and military families don't come easily. The current system of VA health care is far from covering all of our

nation's veterans from the physical injuries and mental scars sustained from their time in service, especially those veterans needing care who live abroad. An estimated millions of veterans harmed from toxic smoke and particulate matter stemming from so-called "burn pits" over the past few decades have yet to receive the earned VA-provided care needed to address their health. Moreover, with mold, lead-based paint, asbestos, poor water quality and exposure to sewage, base housing is still not completely safe for military families, especially for those military families residing abroad. When it comes to veterans and military families, "taking care of our own" goes without saying. But it also is an all-of-the-above strategy that the DA VMF Caucus strives to achieve.

Maybe you've thought about becoming more active with our caucus but aren't quite sure what we do. Let's discuss. We register U.S. citizens living abroad to vote. We provide assistance to those needing to request their ballot from their home state voting jurisdiction. We spread our messaging via social media and encourage others to share. We strive to have diversity and inclusion among our steering committee and full caucus membership. In short, we want what you want: to improve the federal government's response to supporting and taking care of our nation's veterans and military families; to hold our elected officials accountable; to always seek to improve our Party and our Caucus; and to increase voter turnout from Americans overseas.

So what can we as VMF Caucus members do? As it turns out, there are plenty of action items we can and must do to move our country forward. Whether it be:

- making a generous contribution to getting out the critical military overseas vote,
- spearheading an issue advocacy campaign,
- sharing with us your personal veteran or military family experience that you believe should be brought to our attention,
- researching ways federal issues affect the American veterans and/or military families abroad population,
- recommending notable guests for VMF webinar discussions and roundtables,
- drafting an op-ed, letter-to-the-editor, or convincing language to reform our Party and stances on VMF issues,
- participating in a commemorative or remembrance occasion,
- being an extra pair of hands during in-person VMF events,
- attending monthly online VMF meetings and sharing new information with fellow Democrats Abroad members in your country committee and personal network,
- raising awareness of a political issue,
- assisting with I.T.-related projects,
- mentoring, engaging, or empowering other VMF members, or
- following us on social media to learn of events and activities, it is easy:

Connect with us on     

*There are countless ways you can help the VMF Caucus!*

We take great pride in the fact that since our caucus' founding four years ago, we have been 100% volunteer-run and operated with an overall clear goal of supporting American citizens abroad exercising their right to vote, and we invite you to help with our missions as our vital work continues to grow. Thank you for being a valued member of our caucus. And if you've received this newsletter from someone else, consider [joining us](#), then let us know your skills and level of motivation, and we'll make sure your volunteering contributions won't be wasted.

Semper fi, Michael Ramos (DA Australia, IL voter, former enlisted USMC)

**\*\* IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT \*\***

You might be surprised to hear that there are **over 20 states** having elections right now. All states allow absentee ballots to be returned by mail, but with supply chains slowed down by COVID, mail may not be the fastest or best option for you. **Many states allow ballots to be faxed**, so please check your state's guidelines at [Votefromabroad.org](https://Votefromabroad.org). (If you don't have access to a fax machine, there are several online fax services that will send your ballot quickly and safely, or perhaps a copy store near you.)

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**HEAR YE, HEAR YE!**

**American football has begun!**  
**Will Army, Navy, or Air Force be the**  
**winner of the**  
**Commander-in-Chief Trophy?**



**JOIN US FOR OUR FIRST EVER FUNDRAISER**  
**TO SUPPORT VOTING ASSISTANCE OFFICERS**  
**DO VOTER OUTREACH**  
**AND REGISTER FIRST-TIME VOTERS**  
**ON MILITARY BASES AND**  
**AROUND THE WORLD!**

**How?**

**Pick the winner of**  
**The Commander-in-Chief Trophy**

**Air Force** played **Navy** on September 11 (Air Force beat Navy 23-3)  
**Army** takes on **Air Force** November 6

The **Army/Navy Game** is December 11

Your contribution (we recommend \$10) lets you  
choose the overall winning team!

For full details, a bit of history, and the ***DONATE button***, [click here.](#)

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## OCTOBER EVENTS

### ***October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month***

Nearly 300,000 American women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year and over 40,000, sadly, will die. Early detection is the greatest defence! For a free eBook [click this link.](#) Breast cancer also affects men. [Click here for details.](#) Follow us on social media for more and for continuing information on September's focus [Suicide Prevention.](#)

**October 2 Women's March** Two days before the Supreme Court reconvenes — 90 diverse organizations, including Planned Parenthood, will convene another Women's March in support of reproductive rights all across the country. [Info/Sign-up Here](#)

**October 10 Ms. Veteran America Pageant** This year marks the 10th annual pageant. Run in conjunction with Final Salute, a non-profit organization working to assist homeless women veterans and their children. There are an estimated 55,000 homeless women veterans. The purpose of the pageant is four-fold: to highlight "The woman beyond the uniform", to create a venue for sisters-in-arms to support each other, to raise awareness about homeless women veterans and to raise money for programs to house and assist women veterans in need. [Learn more](#)

**October 11 Columbus Day** Was first celebrated in New York City in 1742 celebrating 300 years since Christopher Columbus arrived in the "New World" in 1492. Having become controversial, only 24 states still observe it as a national holiday. Several states celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day and South Dakota has renamed it Native Americans' Day. [More here](#)

**October 13 2021 Navy Birthday** 245 years old today! The Navy was established in 1775 by the Continental Congress attempting to harness privateers to help fend off the British forces. [More here](#)

**October 21 National Pets for Veterans Day** In 2009 Clarissa Black created Pets for Vets, combining her animal science degree with her understanding of PTSD. Concerned for returning veterans and shelter animals she worked on training and matching these needs. Many more organizations have followed suit. To get involved click [Here, Here or Here.](#)

**October 26 National Day of the Deployed** Initiated in the state of North Dakota in 2006 when a constituent asked the then Governor Hoeven to create a day to recognize American soldiers deployed outside the country, it became a day annually recognized by congress when Senator



Hoeven brought the bill to the senate floor. It is a day to respect the sacrifices of those who serve, and die, abroad. To become involved click [Here](#)

**October 27 Navy Day** While Navy Day doesn't celebrate the Navy's birthday, it is still celebrated in recognition of President Theodore Roosevelt's birthday, who was an Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

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## UPCOMING GLOBAL VMF CAUCUS MEETINGS

The Global VMF Caucus Steering Committee meets once per month. All Democrats Abroad members are welcome to attend. The next VMF meeting will be Sunday, October 17.

Time Zone	Vancouver (PDT, UTC-7)	Guatemala (CST, UTC-6)	Central Europe (CEST, UTC+2)	Greece & Turkey (EEST, UTC+3)	South Korea (KST, UTC+9)	New Zealand (NZST, UTC+12)
Rotation C	1400 (day before)	1500 (day before)	2300 (day before)	Midnight (day of)	0600	0900

Here is the login info for the Zoom Meetings:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6298521858>

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**New Leadership:** In August, the new International Chair of Democrats Abroad chose leaders for all of the Global Caucuses, Task Forces, and Committees. These leaders will be expected to continue growing their communities, to build on the foundations built by their predecessors, to work together on strengthening our overall sense of community within the Party and organization-at-large, and to advocate on behalf of their communities. We are happy to announce the new **Global VMF Chair**, Anthony "Mike" Nitz of DA Vietnam, and **Vice Chair**, Kee Evans of DA Guatemala. Mike and Kee will be working hard to continue the success of the Global VMF Caucus and its community. Their first challenge will be restructuring the VMF Caucus and building a team of leaders who will propel the Caucus to further success. So far, they have made three appointments:

**Communications Coordinator:** Christine Valverde of DA New Zealand  
**Newsletter Coordinator:** Bob Gould of DA United Kingdom  
**GOTV Coordinator:** Erin Watson of DA Republic of Korea

Soon, though, we will be releasing a recruitment call asking for interested members of DA to step up and express their interest in either leading or serving on our teams. We will be recruiting a **Secretary**, **Regional Liaisons (Americas, Europe, Middle East/Africa, Asia-Pacific)**, **Advocacy Coordinator**, and an **Events Coordinator**. If you're interested in working with any of these teams or leading one, keep an eye on the [Global VMF Caucus webpage](#) and your email!

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## GOOD NEWS

**California Recall Results:** California's Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom overwhelmingly defeated a Republican-led recall attempt, and with 92% of the vote counted, voters rejected the recall effort by a 63% to 37% margin, giving the GOP an embarrassing thrashing. Estimated at costing California taxpayers \$276 million, the election was fueled by partisan grievances over COVID-19 restrictions, housing affordability, uneven economic opportunities, and homelessness. But Newsom's victory isn't just news for residents of the state: The election marked the first big contest since the Delta variant sent COVID-19 cases soaring again, making it an essential check-in on party electoral trends ahead of the 2022 midterms. There are two big takeaways from the race:

1. **Voters don't want "individual choice" in the pandemic.** In his campaign, Newsom accused Republicans of wanting to undo California's pandemic progress. As governor, he pursued aggressive vaccine mandates. Recent polling suggests that Republicans who have centered their messaging on defending the 'rights' and 'choices' of the unvaccinated are playing to the short side of public opinion.
2. **The GOP is still crying about election fraud.** This time, it started [even before the first ballot was tallied](#). The dangerous trend points toward an ominous future in which more GOP candidates challenge the results of any election that they do not win. [Such claims are starting to form a frightening new Republican consensus](#).

In sum: If the recall's near-term impact may be to stiffen the willingness of Democratic leaders to support tougher steps to combat the virus, the long-term effect may be to illuminate how deeply Trump's Big Lie about election fraud is taking root inside the GOP. Read more [here](#).

**The Freedom to Vote Act:** The "Freedom to Vote Act" is a comprehensive voting rights bill crafted by a group of Democratic Senators built off of a chassis proposed by Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV). Provisions included in the bill are

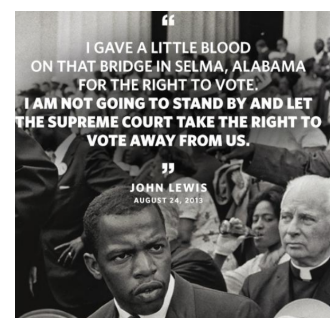
- automatic voter registration for eligible individuals,
- Election Day as a legal public holiday,
- across-the-board internet and same day voter registration,
- across-the-board regulations on early voting and mail voting,
- better access for voters with disabilities and absent military voters,
- blocking partisan and racial gerrymandering, and
- break the grip of big money in politics.

It will give everyday people a bigger voice in politics and create a more ethical and accountable government. You can read more about this comprehensive important bill [here](#).

### **The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act:**

H.R. 4 passed the House of Representatives on August 24th with a vote of 219-212. Click [here](#) to learn how your Member of Congress voted.

**VMF Legislation Tracking Website:** We are happy to announce that we have started a tab on our website for tracking legislation that is important to our community. We will have longer



descriptions of the bills than currently in the newsletter, including updates on where those bills are in the legislative process. To check it out, click [here](#).

**January 6 House Select Committee:** There were no hearings in September, but the committee requested documents from 35 government agencies and private companies (mostly telecom and internet). While they have received thousands of documents by the requested date (Sept. 9) there is some non-compliance. As the Chairman Thompson forewarned, subpoenas have begun to be served. On Sept. 23, Steve Bannon, former presidential advisor, Mark Meadows, former White House Chief of Staff, Dan Scavino, former deputy chief of staff for communications and Kashyap Patel, who became chief of staff to the new acting Defense Secretary in December 2020, received the first subpoenas with the clear information that non-compliance would be considered contempt of Congress. [Details here](#) Depositions and other committee activities will begin in early October. Some events may be public. To follow the action go to: [january6.house.gov](http://january6.house.gov).

**Good News: Veteran Suicide Rates Dropped to Lowest Level in 12 years**  
[Here](#)

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## ADVOCACY FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES

### Letter From Gold Star Families

The following excerpt from a letter signed by 108 Gold Star families explains how the Pentagon team that supports them “have not protected us, and have refused to listen.” They want ‘archaic’ support systems fixed:

“Dear America and our leaders,

We live in the land of the free because of our brave. This is the country, and you are the precious people, that our husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters died for while fighting in the Global War on Terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Niger, and across the globe.

We write today as Gold Star families whose loved ones were killed in action over the last twenty years... The current systems and processes for supporting our Gold Star families are archaic, fraught with inconsistency, and nearly impossible to navigate. The small team who manages supporting Gold Star families hasn’t modernized.

Catastrophic mistakes have occurred: leaked information, improperly identified remains, failures to file paperwork accurately and on time. They have not protected us, and they have refused to listen. We want changes that help future survivors navigate a confusing process, get answers to questions, and know where to turn to when we need help. We want engaged leadership, real long-term support, and an end to the political infighting around our loss.”

*You can read the entire letter [here](#).*

**Want to support the resettlement of our Afghan allies?** Before the end of our war in Afghanistan there were already 22 million Afghan refugees, mostly in neighboring countries.

[Here](#) is an excellent article. The UN expects another half-million to flee this year partially due to drought and to the millions displaced by the Taliban take over. As for the few who have made it to America, you can volunteer your service with community organizations that help the cause [here](#).

**Jobboard: Transitioning out of the military and looking for a job?** Click [here](#) for listings from companies looking for vets.

### **Want to Advance Your Career, Start a Business or Further Your Education?**

Transitioning from military to civilian life is a unique and uncertain time for military members and their families. It's a time when figuring out what you want to do is just as difficult as figuring out how to do it. Here is one way for veterans and spouses to do both. For a free **Find-a-Future** program developed by Walmart to serve the veteran community, click [here](#)

**Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government** In 2009, President Obama signed Executive Order 13518, Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government, which establishes the Veterans Employment Initiative. The Initiative is a strategic approach to helping the men and women who have served our country in the military find employment in the Federal Government. The Executive Order states the Federal Government will help lead by example in promoting veterans' employment, "creating advocates for veterans' employment within each federal agency." All 24 agencies have established a Veterans Employment Program. You may contact the U.S. Department of State Veterans Employment Program Manager at [vets@state.gov](mailto:vets@state.gov).

To further support the Veterans Employment Initiative, the U.S. Department of State launched the Veterans Innovation Partnership (VIP) Fellows Program, a public-private alliance platform that serves America's veterans and separating service members by preparing them for diplomacy and development careers through a one-year fellowship experience. For more information, please visit [www.vipfellowship.org](http://www.vipfellowship.org).

All federal jobs are posted on [USAJOBS](#) and linked [here](#). You may search quickly for job postings — by skill, Department component or state. Use the advanced search options on USAJOBS to further expand or refine your search for Department careers. To view all jobs open to preference eligible veterans, select "Yes" under "Applicant Eligibility."

### **Ensuring Americans Overseas Get Vaccinated**

In May, Democrats Abroad passed the Covid Vaccination for Veterans Resolution and formed the DA Global Covid Task Force. See the following link for the latest video:

<https://youtu.be/J9lakugrkQc>

### **Ensuring Overseas Veterans Have Access To Mental Health Resources:**

- The **Real Warriors Campaign** aims to break down the stigma associated with mental health care and encourages service members to reach out for help when they need it. Find articles with support resources, video profiles with service member and veteran stories, and materials to download or order. [Here](#)
- The **Psychological Health Resource Center** is available 24/7 for service members, veterans, and family members with questions about psychological health topics.

Trained mental health consultants can help callers access mental health care and community support resources in their local area. Click on the link or call 1-866-966-1020 for assistance. [Here](#)

- The **inTransition Program** is a free confidential program that provides specialized coaching and assistance for service members, National Guard members, reservists, veterans, and retirees who need access to mental health care when relocating to another assignment, returning from deployment, transitioning between active duty and reserve component, preparing to leave military service, or any other time they need a new mental health provider, or need a provider for the first time. Click [here](#) or call 1-800-424-7877.
- The **Military Crisis Line**, text-messaging service, and online chat provide free VA support for all service members, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, and all veterans, even if they are not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care. Click [here](#) to chat, call: 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, or text: 838255.
- **TRICARE** offers mental health care to all its enrollees. Click [here](#) to find out how and to find other links to mental health providers through the TRICARE network.
- **Military Medical Treatment Facilities** often provide mental health services, including integrated behavioral health clinics. Contact your primary care manager to see if this resource is available for you. If it is, you can schedule an appointment the same day. Click [here](#).
- **Military OneSource** can provide access to confidential Military Family Life Counselors in your community. Call 1-800-342-9647 or click [here](#).
- **Military OneSource** also provides resources so you can manage stress and access benefits and tools that will help you stay strong in body and mind. [This page](#) provides access to self-care mobile applications developed within the Department of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and other partners.
- You can also visit these [Health.mil](#) and [Tricare.mil](#) **Military Health System** web pages for more information.

**Have Any Questions About Tricare?** Go [here](#) for answers to all your Tricare questions.

**VMF Bill Tracking Page:** The VMF Caucus has a **new tracking page** for more detailed descriptions of the legislation we are following, including status updates on each bill. [Click here](#) to check it out!

*In case you want to access our previous newsletters, go [here](#).*

*In case you want to access our DA-VMF webpage, go [here](#).*

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## GETTING OUT THE VOTE!

### Land, Sky, or Sea... Dems Abroad will GOTV!

Americans overseas are allowed to vote through the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA). The form to request your ballot is called the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), and it must be filled out each year.





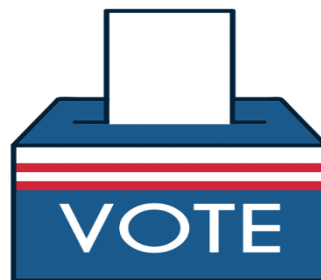
Americans living overseas can request their ballot as soon as January 1st. Also, there is time in some state elections listed below to get your ballot request in before November!

You can fill out a physical FPCA and mail it back, but our Military GOTV coordinator recommends using the digital service at [Vote From Abroad](#). It's designed for Americans overseas, and comes with helpful features like a Voter Help Desk, how to send your ballot request faster online, [an election calendar](#), and state-by-state helpful voter info. It's quick, reliable and eco-friendly!

### Help Us Get Out the Vote!

- You can help GOTV right away by joining our [Phone Banking Team](#). Our phone bankers have been crucial to getting out the vote during COVID. A new team focusing on New Jersey started their work on September 22.
  - If you have base-access or are passionate about the military vote, join our team by sending us an email at [VMF-Editors@democratsabroad.org](mailto:VMF-Editors@democratsabroad.org)
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## UPCOMING ELECTIONS



### **\*\* IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT \*\***

All states allow mail return of their absentee ballots, but with supply chains slowed down by COVID, mail may not be the fastest or best option for you. Many states allow ballots to be faxed, so please check your state's guidelines at [Votefromabroad.org](https://Votefromabroad.org).

If you don't have access to a fax machine, there are several online fax services that will send your ballot quickly and safely.

### Florida's 20th Congressional District Special Election

Primary Election: November 2, 2021

General Election: January 11, 2022

Voter Registration Deadline: Postmarked October 1, 2021

Ballot Request Deadline By Mail: October 23, 2021 5:00 PM EST

Ballot Request Deadline Emailed/Faxed: October 23, 2021

Ballot Return Deadline By Mail: Postmarked November 2, 2021 and Received November 11, 2021

Ballot Return Deadline by Fax: November 2, 2021 7:00 PM EST

### New Jersey General Election for Governor, General Assembly & State Senate

General Election: November 2, 2021

Voter Registration Deadline for a Physical Ballot: October 3, 2021

Voter Registration Deadline for a Digital Ballot October 12, 2021

Ballot Request Deadline for a Physical Ballot October 3, 2021  
Ballot Request Deadline for a Digital Ballot October 29, 2021  
Ballot Return Deadline: November 2, 2021 8:00 PM EST

### Ohio's 11th and 15th Congressional District Special Elections

General Election: November 2, 2021  
Registration Deadline for All Ballots (Digital and Physical): October 4, 2021  
Ballot Request for All Ballot Types: October 30, 2021 12:00 PM EST  
Ballot Return Deadline for USPS: Postmarked November 1, 2021 & Received November 12, 2021  
Ballot Return Deadline for Couriers: Received November 2, 2021 7:30 PM EST  
Voters are encouraged to go to <https://www.votefromabroad.org/states/OH> to find contact info for their Local Election Office.

### Virginia General Election for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, and its General Assembly

General Election: November 2, 2021  
Registration Deadline for Overseas Citizens: October 12, 2021 5:00 PM EST  
Registration Deadline for Uniformed Services and eligible family: November 2, 2021 7:00 PM EST  
Ballot Request Deadline for all Voters: October 22, 2021 5:00 PM EST  
Ballot Return Deadline: Postmarked November 2, 2021 7:00 PM EST and Received November 5, 2021 12:00 PM EST

***Here is an Excellent Resource for Election Dates and Information: [Here](#)***

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## WHAT'S CONGRESS UP TO?



***VMF Bill Tracking Page:*** *The VMF Caucus has a new tracking page for more detailed descriptions of the legislation we are following, including status updates on each bill. [Click here](#) to check it out!*

### Major Legislation Updates (as of September 22)

- [H.R. 1448](#), the “Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers (PAWS) for Veterans Therapy Act”, was signed into law by President Biden on August 25.
- [S. 189](#), the “Veterans’ Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act”, passed in the House on September 20 and will go to President Biden’s desk to be signed into law.
- The House passed [H.R. 4350](#), the “National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022”, 316-113 ([Roll no. 293](#)) on September 23 after days of debate and amendments. It is a 1,350+ page omnibus bill that contains many parts of the legislation we are tracking. The Senate is expected to complete its own version soon,

and Congress will then begin the process of reconciling the two bills until it has come to an agreement.

## New Voting Rights Legislation

**S. 2747:** The “**Freedom to Vote Act**” is a comprehensive voting rights bill crafted by a group of Democratic Senators built off of a chassis proposed by Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV). Provisions included in the bill are automatic voter registration for eligible individuals, Election Day as a legal public holiday, across-the-board internet and same day voter registration, better access for voters with disabilities and absent military voters, and across-the-board regulations on early voting and mail voting.

**Sponsor:** Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN).

**Original Co-Sponsors:** Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA), Angus King (I-ME), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Jon Tester (D-MT), and Raphael Warnock (D-GA).

**Status:** Introduced in the Senate on September 14 and placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar.

## Voting and Statehood

The following bills deal with the admission of Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico into the Union as the 51st and 52nd States and comprehensive voting issues.

- **H.R. 4:** The “**John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act**”
- **H.R. 51 / S. 51:** The “**Washington, D.C. Admission Act**”
- **H.R. 1522 / S. 780:** The “**Puerto Rico Statehood Admission Act**”
- **H.R. 2070 / S. 865:** The “**Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act**”
- **H.R. 2358 / S. 954:** The “**Voter Empowerment Act**”
- **H.R. 3646 / S. 2328:** The “**Reducing Barriers for Military Voters Act**”



## Veteran Deportation and Military Family Naturalization

The following bills would streamline access to naturalization for veterans and military families, repatriate eligible deported veterans, prevent most deportations of veterans, and ensure that deported veterans have access to their VA benefits.

- **H.R. 163:** The “**Protect Patriot Spouses Act**”
- **H.R. 1182:** The “**Veteran Deportation Prevention and Reform Act**”
- **H.R. 4382:** The “**Repatriate Our Patriots Act**”
- **S. 2261:** The “**Healthcare Opportunities for Patriots in Exile (HOPE) Act**”
- **S. 2265 / H.R. 4137:** The “**Veterans Visa and Protection Act**”
- **S. 2268:** The “**Immigrant Veterans Eligibility Tracking System (I-VETS) Act**”

## Criminal Justice and Law Reform

The following bills would create new legal protections for veterans and service members.

- **H.R. 983:** The “**Preventing Crimes Against Veterans Act**”
- **H.R. 1491:** The “**Fair Debt Collection for Servicemembers Act**”
- **S. 1520 / H.R. 4104:** The “**Military Justice Improvement and Increasing Prevention Act**”

## Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) Legislation

The following bills deal with the Special Immigrant Visa program that was originally created to allow Iraqi and Afghan allies of the U.S. to apply for visas to the United States.

- [H.R. 2838](#): The “**Syrian Partner Protection Act**”
- [H.R. 3385](#) / [S. 2083](#): The “**HOPE for Afghan SIVs Act**”
- [H.R. 3985](#): The “**Averting Loss of Life and Injury by Expediting SIVs (ALLIES) Act**”
- [H.R. 5134](#): The “**Showing American Values by Evacuating (SAVE) Afghan Partners Act**”

## VA and Veterans Health Care Legislation

The following bills seek to improve the VA and veterans’ health care access and quality.

- [H.R. 234](#): The “**Korean American VALOR Act**”
- [H.R. 239](#): The “**Equal Access to Contraception for Veterans Act**”
- [H.R. 475](#) / [S. 1972](#): The “**Health Care Fairness for Military Families Act**”
- [H.R. 958](#) / [S. 796](#): The “**Protecting Moms Who Served Act**”
- [H.R. 1123](#): The “**Veteran Suicide Prevention Act**”
- [H.R. 1448](#): The “**Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers (PAWS) for Veterans Therapy Act**”
- [S. 771](#) / [H.R. 1948](#): The “**VA Employee Fairness Act**”
- [H.R. 2775](#) / [S. 1319](#): The “**VA Quality Health Care Accountability and Transparency Act**”
- [H.R. 3452](#) / [S. 1779](#): The “**Veterans Preventive Health Coverage Fairness Act**”
- [H.R. 3942](#) / [S. 2088](#): The “**Brandon Act**”
- [H.R. 5170](#): The “**Securing the Rights Our Veterans Earned (SERVE) Act**”
- [S. 189](#): The “**Veterans’ Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act**”



## VA Benefits for Burn Pit and Other Toxic Exposures

The following bills would streamline the process for obtaining VA benefits for burn pit and other toxic exposures or allow citizens other forms of redress for toxic exposures. Under current law, a veteran who has an illness or disability must establish a direct service connection in order to be eligible for VA benefits. Veterans exposed to burn pits face a cumbersome “burden of proof” to provide enough evidence to establish a direct service connection between their health and burn pit exposure. These bills would remove this burden of proof.

- [H.R. 2192](#): The “**Camp Lejeune Justice Act**”
- [H.R. 2372](#) / [S. 952](#): The “**Presumptive Benefits for War Fighters Exposed to Burn Pits and Other Toxins Act**”
- [S. 437](#) / [H.R. 2436](#): The “**Veterans Burn Pits Exposure Recognition Act**”
- [S. 1188](#) / [H.R. 2601](#): The “**SFC Heath Robinson Burn Pit Transparency Act**”
- [S. 927](#) / [H.R. 2127](#): The “**Toxic Exposure in the American Military (TEAM) Act**”

## Other Important Legislation

- [H.R. 2093](#) / [S. 2195](#): The “**Veterans and Family Information Act**”
- [S. 1095](#) / [H.R. 2457](#): The “**Colonel John M. McHugh Tuition Fairness for Survivors Act**”

- [S. J. Res. 10](#) / [H.R. 256](#) / [H.R. 3261](#): To repeal authorizations of military force against Iraq from 1991 and 2002.
- 



**The Second Worst Day of My Life**  
**by Isa Kocher (DA-Turkey)**

In honor of September 11, 2001, I am relating my own very personal struggle with the second worst day of my life, January 6, 2021. I cannot add anything to the commemoration of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 that others have not said better than I. However, this brief thesis, I believe, does give us tools to work with the crisis we now face. (See reference note #1)

On January 6<sup>th</sup> I watched the insurrection with disbelief. The Commander-in-Chief of the United States (at the time) was launching an assault by a lynch mob of terrorists carrying confederate Nazi fascist and race supremacist banners and standards into the sacred halls of our Congress itself. Only the courage of a handful of Capitol police saved our democracy by minutes holding off, redirecting, and outwitting the assassins intent on doing away with the U.S. Vice President, the house speaker, and others, and stopping the most important duty our Congress has, validating our Constitutional system of government by the people for the people.

As a disabled veteran with PTSD living abroad, the feelings of helplessness were overwhelming: it pushed every trigger I have. The only day worse in my life was September 11, 2001. Impossible to understand or comprehend. All I could feel was grief. In disbelief, I watched. We know now, with the most recent revelations from General Milley, and from the testimony of the Capitol police, it was even worse than CNN and others showed, but what we



did see was more than enough.

But then, on April 9th, after his death, I read about the Prince Philip Movement in Vanuatu, and it reminded me that, essentially, we know full well how societies get changed, go through irrational upheaval, sometimes for the better, oftentimes not. I realized what I was seeing, and realized that I have the intellectual, scientific, rational analytical tools to understand these inexplicable, terrifying people with cable ties, nooses, Nazi banners and violent hatred of everything the USA has ever stood for, fought for, died for.

The Prince Philip Movement (See references 3, 4, and 5) is one of hundreds of “Cargo” cults (Reference 2) that occurred during and after WWII in Melanesia and all over the Pacific. Someone would have a vision, sometimes several people. The ancestors appear and promise to bring the people the wealth and prosperity of Europe in cargo planes and cargo ships, but only if the whole community destroys, literally destroys, everything they had and everything they knew: crops, homes, temples, everything. Some cargo cults built runways and docks. Some built forts. Some practiced marching. The Prince Philip Movement is one of these cargo cults and still rules over the island of Tanna in Vanuatu today.

According to the Tanna, there is a prophecy in their own Tanna tradition that one of their ancestors would incarnate, go to England, marry the Queen and bring back her protection, and also bring back European wealth and technology: when the Prince formally accepted the pig hunting spear and sent back photographs of himself holding this ‘divine’ symbol, and then, on a royal visit to Vanuatu, brought the Tanna Island a white pig, the Tanna took this as validation, verification and certification of his being truly their ancestor and a Tanna. Today they are now considering who will be Prince Philip’s successor, Prince Charles or Prince William.



It was reading about Tanna and the Prince Philip Movement that reminded me of cargo cults, millenium movements and the whole anthropological analysis of social movements over the last century. My own research on social movements through the 60s and 70s gave me the analytical tools I needed to understand the cruelty, the irrationality, the insanity, and the rabid determination of our own cargo cult, #MAGA45, despite all human consequences.

Cargo cults and millenium cults have been widely studied in detail by anthropologists over the last century, and plenty is known from those studies. The “go-to” research is the work of two anthropologists, Luther Gerlach and Virginia Hine. (See reference #6). Their work has had a deep and wide impact on the study of political movements and even movements like Occupy Wall Street actively applied their research into practice.

There are 5 features that social movements and revolutionary movements have in common, but the one feature I want to focus on is the feeling of identity that people in the movement feel with the network of social relations in the movement. Cult members become so personally identified that the more irrational, illogical, absurd, and impossible the ideology is, the more determined they become in holding on to it. Any attack on the ideology becomes a personal attack. Any attack on the ideology's absurdity is experienced as an attack on themselves.

The January 6 insurrection reminded me of the irrationality of cargo cults behavior, their disavowal of personal consequence and their personal individual allegiance to the cult, whether it was a cargo cult, or the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution, or the Rape of Nanking (Nanjing) in the name of the divine emperor, or the genocide rule of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia: the power of attachment to and identity with the group over all else.

#MAGA, also, for now, is at least a very specific movement with a specific ethnic and demographic, people who, it must be said, are doing quite well compared to other Americans, yet they carry grievances so grievous they justify assaulting Congress to overthrow the U.S. American union itself. They reject the most essential core value of the union of the people in the name of the most anti-American patriotism since the assault on Fort Sumter that began the Civil War.

The #MAGA cult has roots first of all in the 50 year war on science by the carbon industry investing its billions in anti-science conspiracy theory vilifying and demonizing climate science, ecology, geology, basic physics. The anti-science hate cults of industry find their natural allies among the so called 'evangelical' anti-science tradition, denying basic biology, geology, psychology, anthropology. "The bible", they believe quite baselessly, requires them to hate science and to not teach it to their kids. The educated secular and religious right have nurtured denial of science as the essential cornerstone of their intellectual life and economy.

Race and race sovereignty is arguably the most egregious assault on rationality in all of human history, erected as it is solely to turn workers into a commodity. It gives rise to the post WWII growing tradition of anti-science hatred and counterfactualism in society. These are the roots of #MAGA, far better explained by others, starting all the way back in 1619. The 1890s KKK changed our culture all through the 20th century, and since the banner of the KKK was taken up by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher and the neo-liberals, it's become the poison killing us all. #MAGA and the various cults of anti-science are rooted firmly in the concept of race sovereignty. The #MAGA zombie movie is rooted in that ethnic and that demographic.

Social movements are loosely organized with no central authority. There may be a central figure, or central figures, but they don't control the day-to-day of the movement. Movements recruit from members, friends, families, and neighbors, and associate so they begin with a

close cultural uniformity. And local organizations are bottom up, self organized. The ideology is short and easy to latch on to, e.g., cargo, MAGA, all power to the people, freedom now, down with tyranny, \$15 an hour. The ideology can be widely interpreted differently and still be agreed upon. And they have an enemy that is all powerful: the deep state, the oligarchy, the hierarchy, etc.

I briefly knew Gerlach and Hine in the 1960's and in graduate school, attended their seminars, and did fieldwork research and documentation myself on the 60's-70's Hippie movement, the cooperative and commune movement, and on Hasidism.

However, the 5 feature model of cults and movements of Gerlach and Hine does give a well documented, scientifically validated and verified structure that does explain a great deal of the appeal and power of the January 6th movement and how it is an infection in our body politic that needs to be cured.

We can learn from Gerlach and Hines's model how cults work, take over, gain in strength and we can develop strategies informed with understanding, not just dismay.

My grief over January 6th has not lessened, but this essay – I believe – is about giving the demon a name. Once you have the demon's name, you have a means to bring it under control. God willing.

## References

1. Constitutional Crisis is Already Here

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/09/23/robert-kagan-constitutional-crisis/>

2. CARGO CULTS: Encyclopedia of Anthropology [Here](#) The Prince William Movement in Tanna, Vanuatu

3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56713953>

4. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/apr/10/prince-philip-south-sea-island-god-duke-of-edinburgh>

5. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/14/his-spirit-lives-on-vanuatus-tanna-island-mourns-prince-philip-as-its-own>

6. Luther Gerlach and Virginia Hine have written too many research articles to list and have had an enormous influence on leftist, liberal, and ecology movement writings as well.

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**Covid Vaccinations for Veterans and Americans Living Overseas,**  
by Anna Marie Matson (VMF-France) and Mike Nitz (VMF-Vietnam)

Many Americans overseas still do not have access to vaccinations due to the policies of the countries where they live. Americans living in Europe and developed countries are fortunate

enough to have healthcare and a vaccination policy that extends to all residents, whether citizens or not. But large communities of Americans reside in developing countries where vaccination efforts are limited by supply and policies within the country. A lot of people around the world still don't have access to a vaccine, whether they want it or not, while the United States is having to do raffles, giveaways, and Ohio even had million dollar lotteries to get people to vaccinate.

In Vietnam, only 7.5% of people are fully vaccinated and 30.6% have at least one dose. In Armenia, only 4.4% of people are fully vaccinated and 8.0% have at least one dose. In Kenya, our newest Democrats Abroad Country Committee, only 1.7% of people are fully vaccinated and 5.0% have at least one dose. [Click here](#) for the source for these COVID vaccination statistics, and you can go [here](#) and [here](#) for testimonies.

In May, Democrats Abroad passed the Covid Vaccination for Veterans Resolution and formed the DA Global Covid Task Force. See the following link for the latest video;  
<https://youtu.be/J9lakugrkQc>

Earlier, in March, DA passed a [resolution](#) calling on President Biden and Congress to ensure the availability of vaccinations for all Americans abroad. In June, 26 senators sent a bipartisan [letter](#) to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, urging the State Department to explore all viable options to support the vaccination of Americans abroad.

These countries are doing everything they can to bring relief to their people. Remember -- an estimated 9 million Americans live overseas, and they live in these countries too. The world cannot move past this until every corner of the world has easy access to the vaccine for the people who want and need it.

Urge your Representatives in Congress to do more. Tell them either to lobby the world to stop hoarding vaccines in the United States and other rich countries, or to support lifting the vaccine patents so that nations can manufacture their own doses for their people. [Go here](#) to learn more about what Democrats Abroad and the COVID-19 Task Force are doing about vaccines abroad, to learn more about how you can help, and to keep up-to-date.

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## POETRY CORNER

This month the Poetry Corner has yielded its space to the Spotlight section.  
Please send poetry submissions for the November issue  
to: [VMF-Editors@democratsabroad.org](mailto:VMF-Editors@democratsabroad.org)

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## FILM RECOMMENDATIONS

### **'Top Gun: Maverick' Sequel Delayed to 2022**

Everything seemed to be full speed ahead for its Nov. 19, 2021, release date, but Tom Cruise and Paramount have decided that the current spike in coronavirus cases around the world

make that release too risky. The release is now scheduled for May 27, 2022. The filming on the sequel didn't wrap until June 2019.

## Director Roland Emmerich's Documentary Film Shares Secrets Behind His WWII Epic 'Midway'

Director Roland Emmerich has made some beloved movies about America: "The Patriot," "Independence Day" and "White House Down." His documentary about the making of "Midway" (2019) will arrive in theaters on Nov. 8. For an interview with Emmerich about the creation of the film, go [here](#). The Battle of Midway began 77 years ago on June 4, 1942, and continued until June 7. It represented the first great American victory against Japan after a string of bad news for U.S. forces, starting with the attack on [Pearl Harbor](#) in December 1941. "Midway" stars Woody Harrelson as Adm. Chester Nimitz and features an epic cast that includes Luke Evans, Patrick Wilson, Mandy Moore, Dennis Quaid, Nick Jonas, Aaron Eckhart and Darren Criss. To stream the 2019 film, "Midway," go to HBO Max or Amazon Prime.

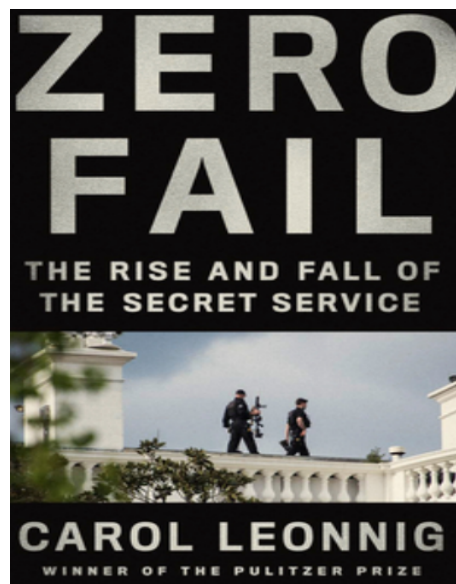
## Top 10 Military Films of 2020 [Here](#)

### 'The Best of Enemies'

In 1971, a summit on school integration in North Carolina pits a civil rights activist against a Ku Klux Klan leader, sparking an unlikely friendship. On Netflix and YouTube [Here](#).

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## BOOK RECOMMENDATION



This is an excellent book about the Secret Service, from its early history but mostly the time period of John F. Kennedy up through Trump. Written by a 3-time Pulitzer Prize winning investigative journalist, it includes many detailed incidents regarding grave danger to the Presidents, many of which she learned from interviewing anonymous insiders. The gaffes and scandals that plague the agency today--from a toxic work culture to outdated equipment and training to the deep resentment among the ranks with the agency's leadership, are described



in vivid detail and beautifully written. But the Secret Service wasn't always so troubled. The book is fascinating and highly recommended.

## SUGGESTION BOX

We welcome your input. What's important to you? What are we missing? Any VMF experts you would like us to interview in a live webinar? Please use the link below to send us articles, poems, research, and anything else that is VMF-related: [VMF-Editors@democratsabroad.org](mailto:VMF-Editors@democratsabroad.org)



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## VMF COUNTRY CAUCUSES

Country VMF Caucuses are around the world! To start a VMF Caucus in your country, send us an email [here](#) and we will help you navigate the process.

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To read up on news and events from the DA Germany VMF Caucus, [click here](#).

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## BRAIN-ZONE

### Air Force History/Knowledge Quiz

1. How many U.S. Presidents have served in the U.S. Air Force?
  - A. 1
  - B. 2
  - C. 3
  - D. 4
2. One of the Air Force's most revolutionary aircraft, the F-117 is often thought to use aerodynamics originally discovered studying:
  - A. Children's paper airplane creations
  - B. Migrating Monarch butterflies
  - C. Floating dandelion seeds
  - D. The common bumblebee
3. What type of plane was the first official Air Force One?
  - A. Boeing 747 (VC-25)
  - B. Boeing 707 (VC-137)
  - C. C-54 Skymaster
  - D. Lockheed Constellation
4. Actor Jimmy Stewart ("It's a Wonderful Life") retired with what Air Force rank?
  - A. Lieutenant Colonel
  - B. Colonel
  - C. Brigadier General
  - D. Major General
5. The Air Force is the same age (and shares a birthday with) what other governmental organization?

- A. DEA
- B. CIA
- C. ATF
- D. NSA

6. Who's the Air Force's top ace in the jet age?

- A. Manuel J. Fernandez
- B. Joseph C. McConnell
- C. Richard S. Ritchie
- D. Randell H. Cunningham

#### Answers

- 1. A One---George H. W. Bush
- 2. D The common bumblebee
- 3. D Lockheed Constellation
- 4. C Brigadier General
- 5. B CIA
- 6. B Joseph C. McConnell

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