The Veteran’s Creed
1. I am an American Veteran
2. I proudly served my country
3. I live the values I learned in the military
4. I continue to serve my community, my country and my fellow veterans
5. I maintain my physical and mental discipline
6. I continue to lead and improve
7. I make a difference
8. I honor and remember my fallen comrades

This month’s Listserv includes Speaking PTSD; Bipartisanship Teamwork in the Congressional Veterans Caucus; President Pardons Navy Seal; Suicide in VA Waiting Room; Forgotten Honor; and, DC Memorial Day Activities

Speaking PTSD
Last month we discussed research on new blood tests to diagnose PTSD. Now researchers at NYU school of medicine, the VA and the team that developed Siri have found that voice analysis may also be able to diagnose the disorder. They use the same technology as ordering “pizza on a smart speaker”. The researchers created an algorithm for patient interviews and among 40,500 speech characteristics found indicators that could diagnose PTSD 89% of the time. Like blood testing, speech characteristics are “biomarkers” which could replace the current method of diagnosing PTSD that relies on patients answering questions about symptoms. Speech recognition or a blood test that works will certainly make the diagnosis much more precise.
Patients with PTSD have “flatter speech” – less articulation of the tongue and lips and a more monotonous tone. One expert raised the possibility that the speech characteristics may be less associated with PTSD specifically but more to pre-existing conditions that make patients susceptible to the disorder. So, more work has to be done but these results are very promising.

Bipartisanship Teamwork in the Congressional Veterans Caucus
Over the years, the number of military veterans in Congress has declined. On the other hand, many new members of Congress are veterans. Congressional military veterans have formed a “For Country Caucus” consisting of both Democrats and Republicans ”to put country over party” Four them wrote an Op-Ed in the Washington Post to discuss their plans.

Members of the caucus, a number of whom also serve in the National Guard, represent diverse districts throughout the country. In forming this caucus, the House members stress bipartisanship and the need to act for the country over and above party. Traditional nonpartisan areas such as public service, veterans’ issues and national
security are good places to start, they say. And they consider, civility, so often lacking in Washington, a centerpiece. These congressperson-veterans certainly display the principles of the Veteran’s Creed above. Hopefully, they can overcome at least some of the severe partisanship in Congress.

**President Pardons Navy Seal**

On May 6, President Trump pardoned Navy seal 1st Lt. Michael Behenna whom a military court had convicted by in 2009 for killing a suspected Al Qaeda prisoner. After being sentenced to 25 years in military prison, Behenna was paroled in 2014. The case has been part of a continuing controversy about what constitutes crime in a war zone and what punishments there should be. Behenna shot and killed Ali Mansur Mohammed, during questioning about a lethal roadside explosion in the platoon under Behenna’s command. The Lieutenant acknowledged that he questioned Mansur on his own after he had been released for lack of sufficient evidence. He claimed that Mansur, who was naked at the time, had tried to take his weapon.

Led by his mother, Vicki Behenna, a former federal prosecutor in Oklahoma City, and joined by his father Scott Behenna a former FBI employee, a group that included several members of Congress, a former Oklahoma governor and state Atty. Gen. petitioned Pres. Trump for the pardon. Their statement said “Behenna served his country with distinction... admitted to mistakes... and had and deserves to move on from this incident without living under its cloud for the rest of his life”. There were also doubts about the military court’s handling of the case. On the other side, the American Civil Liberties Union disputed the pardon with very strong words that it is a “presidential endorsement of a murder that violated the military zone code of justice.”

The White House said that Behenna was a model prisoner and "is entirely deserving of the Grant of Executive Clemency."

**Suicide in VA Waiting Room**

In the March, Listserv #28 we discussed a new Executive Order related to suicide and noted that suicides are even occurring on the grounds of VA Medical Centers. Unfortunately, these horrid events keep happening. An article in the Military Times describes a suicide in the waiting room of a VA clinic in Austin TX on April 9. where a veteran shot himself before hundreds of horrified witnesses. Also in April, two veterans committed suicide outside VA hospitals in Georgia in separate incidents. Between October 2017 and November 2018, 19 veterans committed suicide on the grounds of a VA medical facility. The tragedy of veteran suicide continues relentlessly.

**Forgotten Honor**

On April 27, 200 people witnessed military funerals for 17 homeless or unclaimed veterans who were put to rest in a military cemetery in Marana AZ. Each deceased veteran received full military honors, with name reading and a bell rung in his honor. The poem “Forgotten Honor” was recited. This ceremony was part of the Missing in America Project which has helped to bury 3900 veterans since 2007. The Daughters of the American Revolution also played a role. Some of those in attendance displayed
mixed emotions – happy that the veterans receive a funeral with full military honors but also sad that veterans are homeless.

U.S. Army members carrying veterans’ remains during a ceremony for 17 homeless, unclaimed or indigent military veterans at the Arizona veterans' Memorial Cemetery in Marana. From the Arizona Daily Star

DC Memorial Day Activities
Washington DC sports a number of events and exhibits to recognize our fallen military on the Memorial Day weekend, May 25-27 including the opportunity to:

1. Attend the largest Memorial Day parade in the country down Constitution Avenue at 2 PM on May 27.
2. Watch the Rolling Thunder Motorcycle Rally. Unfortunately, because of cost and local logistic issues, this will be the last year for Rolling Thunder. The event advocates for POW/MIAs and is expected to host over 900,000 riders in DC on Memorial Day
3. Attend National Memorial Day Concert on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol on May 26 at 8 PM.
4. Visit the National Mall which includes the National World War II Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Korean war Veterans Memorial and the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial
5. Observe the flag at Arlington national Cemetery on May 27 when servicemen and women place American flags on more than 250,000 graves.
6. Hear the free National Memorial Day Coral Festival at Kennedy Center on May 26 with a 300-voice choir accompanied by the U.S. Air Force Orchestra.
7. Watch baseball all weekend at Nationals Park including at 1:05 PM on Memorial Day
8. Hear jazz at the National Gallery of Art.
9. Visit the Iwo Jima Memorial
10. Learn Civil War history at the Claire Barton Missing Soldiers Office Museum
11. Attend one of Washington’s many rooftop parties.

The Listserv is available as an archive on the Georgetown University Library website under the title “Veterans Interest Newsletters”.

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Stats Section

Number of U.S. Veterans by Service-Connected Disability Rating Status 2017

From Statista