

Veterans Studies Interest Group Listserv

Issue #51 March/April 2021

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: Workshop: Supporting Veterans After 50 Years of the All-Volunteer Force and 20 Years of War: Ideas Moving Forward; COVID Update; Biden Visit to Vietnam War Memorial; New Focus for Korean Veterans Memorial Wall; Online War Museum; and GI Bill Loophole

Workshop: Supporting Veterans After 50 Years of the All-Volunteer Force and 20 Years of War: Ideas Moving Forward

In April and May, a group of leaders on veterans' policy will meet virtually in a Georgetown University workshop to discuss the All-Volunteer Force. The workshop will consider the many unique aspects of the AVF including the impact on AVF veterans of their increasing social and geographic isolation; the multifaceted perceptions of veterans; society's obligations; to AVF veterans; distinctive health considerations; better civilian use of the futuristic high quality technological training of military personnel; and the impact of the growing diversity in the AVF. All of these issues have broad policy implications. In this workshop we will look at these differences, analyze the policies and discuss and generate new approaches and ways to implement them. We have assembled a group of high-level leaders in government, VSO's, academia and the private sector to this task.

The results of this workshop will be discussed at an open meeting on May 21, 2021. The meeting is entitled ***Policy Making for AVF Veterans Town Hall***. Further information will be available soon.

COVID Update

VA COVID-19 Statistics (as of 4/7/21)	
Cases Diagnosed	245,692
Active Cases	4,266
Convalescent Cases	229,881
Known Deaths	11,420
Known deaths, VA Employees	<u>138</u>

Vaccinations by VA	
Totals	2,091,550
Veterans	1,801,701
Employees	271,451
Federal Partners	18,398

On March 24, President Biden signed the Save Lives Act into law. The measure makes all veterans, not only those enrolled in the VA, and their spouses and caregivers eligible to receive the coronavirus vaccine from the VA. According to Secretary Denis McDonough, the law will increase the number of individuals eligible for VA vaccines from 9 to 33 million and the VA has begun pilot programs for this massive [undertaking](#). Information about vaccination is available at the department's website [here](#)

One particular veteran, John Whetstone of Suhuarita AZ, was released from Tucson VA Medical Center after 105 days of hospitalization for COVID. He had served in the army for over 24 years including a deployment to Afghanistan but felt that this was the toughest fight he ever had. He missed holidays and birthdays but looks forward to his 25th wedding anniversary in [June](#).

Biden Visit to Vietnam War Memorial

National Vietnam War Veteran's Day, on March 29 marked the 40th anniversary of the disestablishment of the U.S. Military Assistance Command in Vietnam and the departure of the last U.S. combat troops. To note this anniversary, President Biden and Dr. Jill Biden made an unannounced visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. They strolled alongside the memorial and also created a “rubbing,” – a tracing of the name of one of the veterans, Dennis F. Shine who was killed in Vietnam in [1969](#). Rubbings are a common tradition for visitors to the [site](#). The memorial’s walls contain the names of more than 58,000 American war dead.

New Focus for Korean Veterans Memorial Wall

In May, the Korean War Veterans Memorial on the National Mall will have a new focus. Similar to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, it will have a remembrance wall that features the names of about 36,000 Americans and 7,200 Koreans who were killed or missing in the war. Their names will be presented by rank and branch of service. The Korean War memorial is one of the most popular visitor’s sites on the National Mall with about 4 million visitors per year. Its renovation will cost about \$22 million, raised by the Korean War Veterans Memorial Foundation from both Korean and American [citizens](#). Its purpose is to provide education about the high cost of this particular war. Often called the “forgotten war” (though apparently not by visitors to the capitol), the Korean War lasted little under 4 years from 1950 to 1954 and resulted in almost five times the number of deaths than the Global War on [Terror](#).

Online War Museum

The Museum of American Letters opened on March 28th, the day before National Vietnam War Veteran's Day. It is a completely virtual, interactive museum with no street [address](#). According to its website [here](#), it is “committed to the ongoing collection, preservation and promotion of those incomparable records of the American

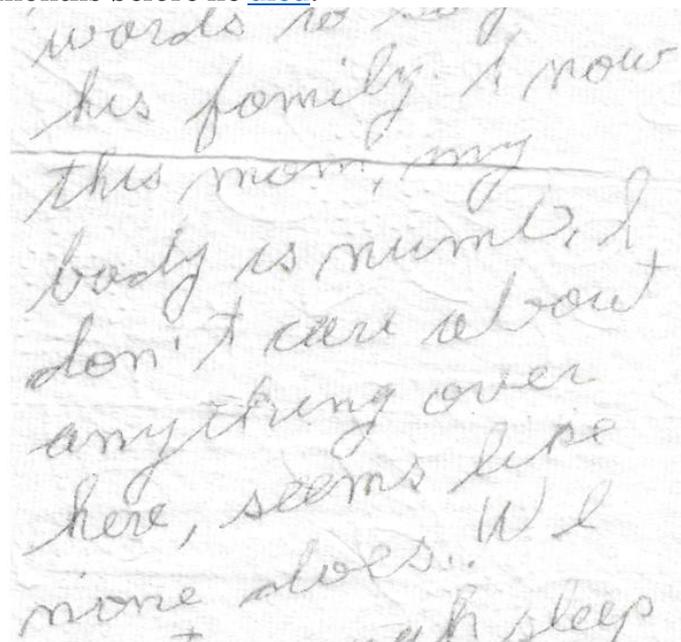
[experience...](#)” . Such records include plays and live readings, documentaries, traveling exhibits, articles and books incorporating the letters, educational guides and other materials. Its “first wing” relates to Vietnam but its founder, Andrew Carroll, of Chapman University in Orange CA intends to have it encompass the span of wars starting with the American [Revolution](#).

Carroll calls the letters “America is great undiscovered literature” which “humanize the men and women who served and show their sacrifices” he added “They’re incredibly well written, they convey riveting events from our past and they bring history to a life in a way that resonates with people who think they don't like [history](#).” One of the reasons to start with the Vietnam War was that its letters were not censored as they had been during World Wars I and II.

Some examples: Warrant Officer John H. Pohlman, a former Peace Corps volunteer, writes to a friend that his political opinions on the war had been subsumed by the simple desire to survive. “I developed this mental tunnel vision during a mortar attack the first night I was here,” he wrote. “Something happens to your mind when you realize there are people out there who don’t like [you](#).”

Pvt. Ralph Knerem wrote a message home on 7 feet of toilet paper, describing how he had been ordered back to the United States for a military funeral and was speechless on meeting the family of the soldier who had been killed. “My body is numb. I don’t care about anything over [here](#).”

Twenty-two-year-old Lance Corporal Arthur Bustamante wrote “My time here is getting short,” adding “I don’t know what I am going to do as my first thing when I get home. But I will like it.” 2 months before he [died](#).

A photograph of a piece of white toilet paper with handwritten text in cursive. The text is written in dark ink and is somewhat blurry. The visible text reads: "words no more", "his family. I now", "this man, my", "body is numb, I", "don't care about", "anything over", "here, seems like", "none else.. We", "sleep".

Part of a letter written on 7 feet of toilet paper by Pvt Ralph Knerem expressing his speechlessness in front of the family of a killed serviceman. From the NY [Times](#).

GI Bill Loophole

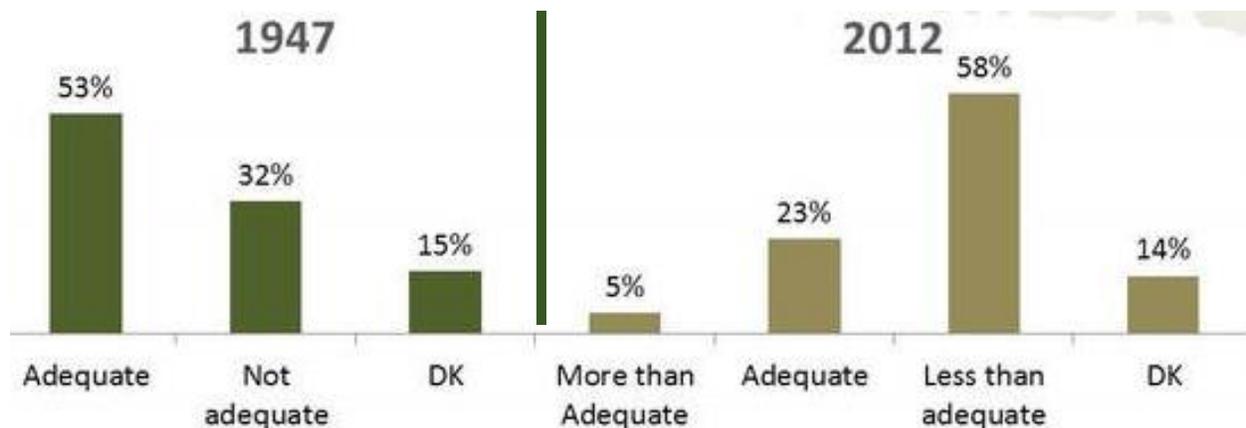
In the COVID Stimulus bill, signed by President Biden on March 11, Congress closed a loophole related to for-profit schools. The 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act had provided what was called the 90/10 rule that required for-profit schools to take at least 10% of their revenue from funding other than student loans. In this tally, the schools could count Defense Department and VA funds including those from the GI bill toward the 10% [threshold](#). For this reason, schools often chased after veterans with an eye on these sources of money. The loophole has now been closed and DoD and VA government money will no longer count in the same way. Veterans' advocates and conventional educational institutions had been lobbying against the loophole for some [time](#).

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

Public Perception of Adequacy of Veterans Benefits 1947 (Conscripted Force) versus 2012 (All-Volunteer Force)



Roper Poll quoted by Huffington [Post](#).