

# WE WILL NOT FORGET



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29th Rolling Thunder demonstration roars into D.C. this weekend

Hundreds of thousands of motorcyclists ride for full accountability of POW/MIA from all wars

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# Rolling Thunder rides into D.C. for the 29th time

By JENNIFER HARPER

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Listen. It's the collective roar of motorcycles on a mission, their faithful riders on the same route to the same cause: to draw public attention to the needs of military veterans, and the unanswered question surrounding prisoners of war and those still missing in action. Welcome to "Rolling Thunder" — the perfect name for one of those most patriotic events on the planet. These riders do roll, and there will be thunder during the 29th "Ride for Freedom," set for Sunday in the nation's capital.

"Never forget all of our prisoners of war and those still missing in action from all wars. That's our message, and that's our mission," said Artie Muller, who served in the U.S. Army 4th Infantry Division in the jungles of South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos at age 20. Years later, he went on to found the feisty group that took its name from a combat operation.

Operation Rolling Thunder was the U.S. military code name for the long-term bombing of North Vietnamese targets in the mid-1960s.

This year, the ride comes with added star power. Presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump will make an appearance at the big event; the candidate is a favorite with the "biker" demographic — and the feeling is mutual. Mr. Trump has praised the riders as both loyal Americans and a canny and formidable political force.

And when the time comes for them to ride, the hundreds of thousands of bikers will assemble in the vast parking lot of the Pentagon Sunday morning. It will take five hours to coordinate the procession — rows after rows of motorcycles that range from full-dress, old school Harley-Davidsons to impeccably chromed choppers and tricked-out "trikes." Some folks have journeyed for days to get to this rendezvous point, their cross-country routes marked with American flags donated by the American Legion. Then comes the big moment. The men and women of Rolling Thunder will fire up their faithful steeds, say a little prayer and begin the solemn ride across Memorial Bridge.

Indeed, they are rolling, and there is thunder — lots of it — along with cheering from bystanders lining the roadway, plus nonstop media coverage.

Rolling Thunder, the organization, is



WASHINGTON TIMES PHOTOGRAPHS

Artie Muller, who served in the U.S. Army 4th Infantry Division in the jungles of South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos at age 20, founded Rolling Thunder years later.



Participants in the Rolling Thunder annual motorcycle rally ride across Memorial Bridge near the National Mall during the Memorial Day weekend. The organization's mission is to bring awareness to the POW/MIA issue and to educate the public of the fact that many American prisoners of war were left behind after all past wars.

run entirely by volunteers in 90 chartered chapters across the nation. Anyone can join up; a motorcycle is not required. Though there's time spent talking over favorite rides and maintenance tips, this is a civic-minded organization that stages local and regional raffles and rallies to raise money through a separate charitable division for disabled and homeless vets, rehabilitation centers, military families in need, kids who could use a new toy or two, and senior citizens.

There was some talk that maybe this year's event would be Mr. Muller's last. The planning and safe coordination is a monumental task; estimates for the number

of motorcycles arriving from every state in the union and several foreign countries for the annual ride range up to 500,000.

Not to worry.

"No, this is not Artie's last ride," says a close associate. "He'll be showing up for Rolling Thunder until the day he dies."

Mr. Muller is adamant that the ride is "a demonstration, not a parade." It is a very personal cause. He has never shaken off past intelligence reports suggesting that American prisoners of war had been spotted in remote locations "living in dismal captivity." Those reports helped fuel the fire when he founded the organization in 1987 with Ray

Manzo, a Marine Corps corporal and fellow Vietnam veteran. Both were inspired by visits to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The passion is still there.

"I don't think anyone in Washington, D.C., really cares about investigating the live POWs that the government knows were left behind. Their main concern is keeping politically appointed, well-paying jobs long enough to retire," Mr. Muller said in a message to Rolling Thunder membership. "What a sad government we have when they don't care enough to find out what happened to the troops they sent to fight foreign wars."

The organization is up to the moment on legislation about the issue, monitoring the complicated congressional wars over proper funding for veterans' benefits and medical care. Mr. Muller is also a political entity on his own.

"Remember the history of World War II, the last war we fought to really win," he noted in his message. "If our WWII troops had today's rules of engagement, they would have lost the war. We better pray for a new administration in the 2016 election that will follow the Constitution of the United States and worry about America, our people and our troops first!"

Mr. Muller has also called upon the White House on multiple occasions. In past years, former President George W. Bush welcomed Rolling Thunder members — Harleys and all — in the driveway of the White House. The event became somewhat of a ritual over the years; Mr. Bush was finally inducted into Rolling Thunder as an honorary member and accepted a cowhide biker vest.

President Obama has also met with the group's representatives during his term of office; the encounters were described as "brief but cordial."

This weekend's activities get underway Friday with a formal blessing of the bikes at Washington National Cathedral, followed by a candlelight vigil at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. There's a barbecue supplied by a very supportive local Harley-Davidson dealer on Saturday, followed by a major evening meeting and cheerful banquet — then that very early call to assemble at the Pentagon the next morning. It is a group effort. Instructions to participants specify "no attitude." And helmets are required.

"We are committed to helping American veterans from all wars," said Mr. Muller. "Everyone donates his or her time because they believe in the POW/MIA issue."



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# Mobile health clinic for vets on display

By JENNIFER HARPER  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**W**hen thousands of patriotic motorcyclists arrive in the nation's capital for the annual Rolling Thunder "Ride for Freedom" over Memorial Day weekend, another wheeled vehicle will be in the mix. A state-of-the-art mobile medical clinic will glide into town on 18 wheels, meant to draw attention to the medical care and health care challenges of military veterans in rural or remote communities — particularly female veterans.

The cause is shared by Rolling Thunder organizers, who have long called for improved benefits for veterans, and continued vigilance about the fate of prisoners of war and those missing in action.

The big "concept vehicle" — outfitted with the same medical and diagnostic tools of a stationary facility — will be situated Sunday on the National Mall not far from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and will be open to curious visitors.

The hospital-grade clinic is a joint project of DMS Health Technology, a health care equipment provider, and TrillaMed, a hospital supply company owned and managed by a trio of combat veterans who

served as U.S. Army Airborne Rangers. The two companies have a new mission.

"It's distressing that so many of our country's service women and men are not able to find and receive appropriate

"population specific" health care needs in urban and rural settings, among American Indians, and for the homeless.

Frank Campanaro, CEO of TrillaMed, prefers to think of himself and his two part-

care system ourselves," Mr. Campanaro said. "Unfortunately, our sister veterans do not have the same level of access to quality of care, so to uphold our promise to never leave a fallen comrade, we continue to fight on behalf of our female soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines."

Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, along with the Rolling Thunder organization itself, continue to pay keen attention to progress in improving health care for veterans.

"Two years after a Veterans Affairs scandal that revealed patients were dying waiting for health care, veterans continue to endure weeks and even months of delays before they first see a medical provider," said Rep. Raul Labrador, Idaho Republican.

He cited a new Government Accountability Office report revealing that veterans newly enrolled for health care could wait up to 71 days to see a health care provider.

There's positive movement on Capitol Hill, however. The Senate last week approved the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act, which contains \$83 billion in funding — over \$3 billion above the fiscal year 2016 level — including increases for veterans' health care, benefit claims processing, the Board of Veterans Appeals, the VA Inspector General, medical and prosthetic research, and information technology.



A state-of-the-art mobile medical clinic will join the Rolling Thunder cause to draw attention to the medical care and health challenges of military veterans in rural or remote communities — particularly female vets. (Image courtesy of DMS Health Technology)

health care when they return home due to a strained VA health system," said William Vogel, CEO of North Dakota-based DMS.

The company has outfitted the mobile units to care of chronic conditions such as diabetes and heart ailments, or for

ners as "vetpreneurs" who understand what their fellow veterans are up against.

"We serve the war fighter and veterans through the highest quality service and medical products within the health care industry. As veterans, we use the VA health

## Answers sought on Bibles removed from 'Missing Man' displays

By THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Some 41 members of Congress have asked the Veterans Affairs secretary to explain why Bibles have been removed from the "missing man" tables in several VA clinics.

One of the ways the nation recognizes prisoners of war and those missing in action is the Missing Man Table and Honors Ceremony, Sen. James Lankford, Oklahoma Republican, and Rep. J. Randy Forbes, Virginia Republican, said in an April 28 letter signed by 39 more lawmakers.

"The National League of POW/MIA Families provides a script for this ceremony and a description of the table," the members said in their letter to Secretary Robert McDonald of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

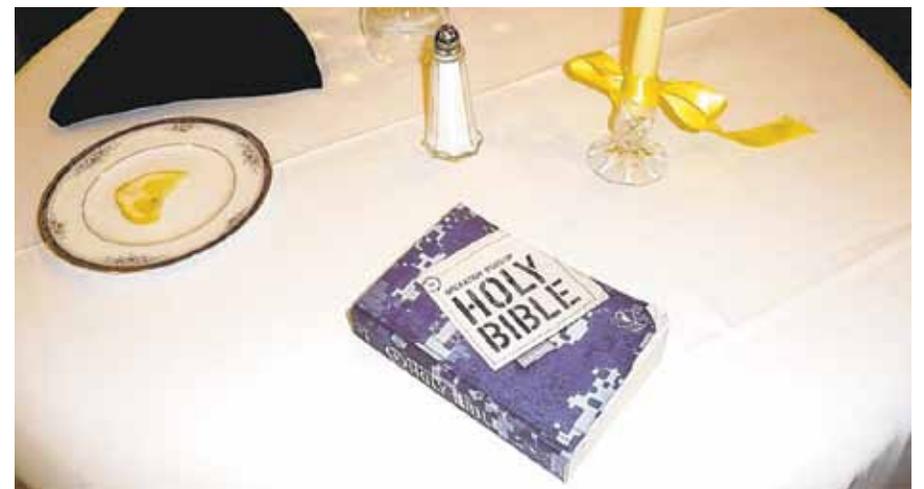
A Bible, which represents "the strength gained through faith to sustain us and those lost from our country, founded as one nation under God," is expressly requested to be part of the display.

However, officials in VA clinics in Houston and Youngstown, Ohio, and Akron, Ohio, as well as at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, have removed the Bibles from the displays, the lawmakers wrote.

"It is our understanding that the individual facility directors at the three VA clinics made the decision to remove the Bibles following complaints issued by the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, and that the November 7, 2014 Guidance on Religious Exercise and Expression in the VA Facilities and Property Under the Charge and Control of VA was used to justify the removal," their letter said.

"We request an explanation as to why the Bibles were removed from the three VA facilities, as well as any policy that will be applied going forward, including a summary of who will be responsible for implementing it," said the letter.

"The mere presence of a Bible coerces no one," the letter said, noting that the Establishment Clause does not require government to "scrub all references of



A "missing man" table was set up at a 2015 memorial luncheon held by the USS Helena organization. ([www.usshelena.org](http://www.usshelena.org))

religion from the public square."

Mr. Lankford and Mr. Forbes are co-chairmen of the Congressional Prayer Caucus; many of the lawmakers who signed the letter are part of the caucus. The lawmakers have yet to receive a response, a congressional aide said Tuesday.

According to the National League of POW/MIA Families, the Missing Man Table and Honors Ceremony has six empty chairs, representing the five branches of the military and civilians. The table should be round, covered with a white tablecloth, and have a single red rose, yellow ribbon, lighted candle, a copy of the Bible, a slice of

lemon to symbolize the bitter fate of being captured and missing in a foreign land and a pinch of salt to symbolize the tears of the missing and their families who long for answers after decades of uncertainty.

A final element is an inverted glass, symbolizing the inability to share a toast with loved ones.

The "remembrance table" was started decades ago by a group of U.S. fighter pilots, dubbed "River Rats," who flew dangerous missions along the Red River near Hanoi. When the pilots held a reunion, they set up a table for their missing or fallen comrades, and the idea became a tradition.



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# ROLLING THUNDER

Memorial Day weekend

### MAIN EVENT SCHEDULE

Some of the top events from the 29th Rolling Thunder rally:

<p><b>Friday</b>  <b>9 p.m.</b> Candlelight vigil at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.</p> <p><b>Saturday</b>  <b>9 a.m.</b> Thunder Alley opens. The official vendor site for Rolling Thunder XXIX is on 22nd Street and Constitution Avenue Northwest.</p> <p><b>Sunday</b>  <b>6 a.m.</b> Wake-up call for all riders taking part in the Rolling Thunder XXIX Run. Bikers rally in the north and south Pentagon parking lots at 7 a.m. for a noon departure.  <b>9 a.m.</b> Thunder Alley opens.</p>	<p><b>Noon</b> Rolling Thunder XXIX First Amendment Demonstration Run departs.  <b>1:30–5:00 p.m.</b> Speakers and Musical Tribute Program near the Lincoln Memorial.  <b>8 p.m.</b> Memorial Day Concert at the Capitol.</p> <p><b>Monday</b>  <b>9 a.m.–5 p.m.</b> Thunder Alley is open.  <b>11 a.m.</b> Wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Arlington National Cemetery.  <b>2 p.m.</b> Memorial Day observance at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.  <b>2 p.m.</b> National Memorial Day Parade.  <b>3 p.m.</b> National moment of remembrance.</p> <p style="text-align: right; font-size: small;">THE WASHINGTON TIMES</p>
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## After the ride come the tributes

By THE WASHINGTON TIMES

After Sunday's powerhouse Ride for Freedom, spectators and riders will be treated to the soaring sounds of pipes and drums as well as inspirational remarks from men and women who have long stood up for veterans.

Speakers at the program, held near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, include:

- Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump, who has promised he will "take care of our vets" and has enthusiastic supporters in Bikers for Trump.

- Former New York Rep. John LeBoutillier, an activist on POW/MIA issues since the 1970s. During his years in Congress in the 1980s, he served on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and pressed for investigations as a member of the Special House POW/MIA Task Force.



Image courtesy of Donald J. Trump for President

Today, he is an author and political commentator who writes at Boot's Blasts at JohnLeBout.com.

- Actor Robert Patrick, a lifelong supporter of the military and USO. Famous for his roles in "Terminator 2,"

"Cop Land," "The X-Files" and "Scorpion," Mr. Patrick has shined a light on veterans, going on countless USO hospital visits and joining four USO tours to seven countries.

- Nicolette Rose, who was raised in the POW/MIA issue due to the 1967 loss of her uncle, U.S. Air Force Major Victor J. Apodaca Jr., in North Vietnam on June 8, 1967. Ms. Rose's aunts and mother were founding members of the National Alliance of Families, and she has spoken about the issue since she was a child.

- Christian Walters, Harley-Davidson managing director for the United States. A West Point graduate, Mr. Walters held significant leadership positions as an officer in the U.S. Army in aviation and special operations assignments overseas before joining

Harley-Davidson in 2005.

- Country singer-songwriter Rockie Lynne, co-founder of Tribute to the Troops, which raises money for college funds for children who have lost a parent in active duty. His debut single, "Lipstick," was No. 1 on Billboard's Country Sales chart; many of his performances are for patriotic and military events.

- Country singer Gordon Painter, a strong supporter of veterans and Rolling Thunder.

- Musician, pianist and composer Ben Mason, who writes for film and other media, as well as choirs, bands and orchestras.

- Loch Rannoch Pipes and Drums, a full-fledged Scottish pipes-and-drums unit that has been participating in Rolling Thunder events since 2008.

# At least 1,620 Vietnam-era service members still sought

By THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Since it was formed in 1970, the National League of POW/MIA Families has sought three things: the return of all POWs, the fullest possible accounting for those still missing and the repatriation of all recoverable remains of those who died serving the United States during the Vietnam War.

Today, the organization says 1,621 people are still missing and unaccounted for since 1975, when the Vietnam War ended.

Some 90 percent of these POW/MIA service members were lost in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia that were under North Vietnamese military control. These include 466 people in North Vietnam, 798 in South Vietnam, 301 in Laos, 49 in Cambodia and seven in local waters, the league said in April.

According to the Defense Department's POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), two Vietnam-era service members have been accounted for this year: U.S. Air Force Major Dean A. Klenda, who was lost Sept. 17, 1965, and identified March 1; and Army Sgt. First Class Alan L. Boyer, who was declared missing in action March 28, 1968, and identified March 16.

Another long-missing officer's remains may have been recovered in Vietnam, but an analysis has not been completed, the league said.

In 2015 13 Vietnam-era service members were identified, including three Army officers lost in Cambodia in 1970; two U.S. Air Force officers lost in Laos in 1966 and 1970; and eight officers from several military branches lost in Vietnam between 1965 and 1971, according to the DPAA.

Secretary of State John F. Kerry, who traveled to Vietnam this week with President Obama, said last month that the accounting of POW/MIA service members is "absolutely a prerequisite and nonnegotiable" part of the ongoing normalization talks with Vietnam.

"Literally, we have people over there still today ... to complete that task of accountability," Mr. Kerry said April 27, recalling how archaeologists were looking for human remains at a C-130 crash site in Vietnam.



Rolling Thunder co-founder Artie Muller and other members of Rolling Thunder were personally welcomed to the White House several times by President George W. Bush. (Images courtesy of The White House).

According to the families' organization, as of May 19, the state-by-state breakdown of Americans who are POW/MIA are as follows:

Alabama .....	31
Alaska .....	2
Arizona .....	15
Arkansas .....	15
California .....	166
Colorado .....	24
Connecticut .....	25
Delaware .....	4
District of Columbia .....	8
Florida .....	57
Georgia .....	29
Hawaii .....	7
Idaho .....	8
Illinois .....	66
Indiana .....	51
Iowa .....	25
Kansas .....	24
Kentucky .....	14
Louisiana .....	24
Maine .....	11
Maryland .....	23
Massachusetts .....	39
Michigan .....	49
Minnesota .....	33
Mississippi .....	12
Missouri .....	36
Montana .....	17
Nebraska .....	17
Nevada .....	6
New Hampshire .....	6
New Jersey .....	42
New Mexico .....	12
New York .....	106
North Carolina .....	39
North Dakota .....	8
Ohio .....	75
Oklahoma .....	32
Oregon .....	35
Pennsylvania .....	90
Rhode Island .....	7
South Carolina .....	27
South Dakota .....	7
Tennessee .....	27
Texas .....	104
Utah .....	14
Vermont .....	5
Virginia .....	45
Washington .....	38
West Virginia .....	17
Wisconsin .....	26
Wyoming .....	5

\*Another 15 Americans did not list a home state or were based outside the United States.

# Robert McDonald, VA secretary, faces calls for resignation after 'Disneyland' gaffe



By DAVE BOYER  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**T**apped by President Obama less than two years ago to fix the scandal-ridden Department of Veterans Affairs, VA Secretary Robert McDonald is now facing calls for his resignation amid persistent agency mistakes and his own highly publicized gaffes.

Mr. McDonald's latest misstep, dismissively comparing veterans' wait times at VA clinics to lines for rides at Disneyland, further eroded goodwill toward him among lawmakers and veterans groups, prompting a Tuesday evening apology after a whole day of refusals.

"Secretary McDonald's preposterous statement is right out of Never-never Land," Sen. Roy Blunt, Missouri Republican, said on the Senate floor Tuesday. "I call on him to resign because it's clear he cannot prioritize getting our veterans the health care they deserve and have earned in a timely manner."

The lawmaker said Mr. McDonald's comment trivializing wait times — when veterans can often wait months for an appointment with a doctor — "is negligent and a clear sign that new leadership is needed at the VA."

Sen. David Vitter, Louisiana Republican, also called for Mr. McDonald to step down.

An official at one veterans group said Mr. McDonald is now soft-pedaling the problem of wait times at VA facilities because he hasn't been able to fix it in two full years.

"You can make a pretty compelling argument that things are actually worse than when he took over," said Dan Caldwell, a retired Marine who is vice president for legislative and political action at the Concerned Veterans for America. He said VA data show that the number of appointments for veterans that are scheduled more

than 30 days in advance has increased by about 20 percent nationwide since 2014.

A Government Accountability Office report last month found that the VA has not done enough to prevent schedulers from manipulating appointment wait times, and the agency's wait-time data are still misleading the public on how long veterans wait for care.

"Ongoing scheduling problems continue to affect the reliability of wait-time data," the GAO said of its audit that ran from January 2015 to March.

The report blamed the VA for a "piece-meal approach" to correcting problems since the wait-time scandal broke in 2014 in Phoenix, where schedulers created phony wait lists and at least 40 veterans died awaiting care. In the auditors' review of six VA medical centers, they found improper scheduling in 25 percent of veterans' appointments.

Mr. Caldwell noted that it was the Phoenix wait-time scandal that led to the

but he needs to fix it," Mr. Ryan said.

Rep. Vern Buchanan, Florida Republican, said Mr. McDonald's comment "exposes a shocking indifference to an issue that is life or death for millions of our veterans awaiting care in VA facilities." He called on the secretary to apologize or resign.

Even Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Johnny Isakson, Georgia Republican and a supporter of Mr. McDonald, called on him to apologize.

"I think the secretary owes veterans of the United States of America, and this committee, an apology," Mr. Isakson said. "Waiting in line does mean something. It's one thing to wait for a roller coaster; it's another thing to wait for a blood transfusion."

Mr. McDonald did apologize Tuesday evening, saying in a statement that "I deeply regret" the words he used, while also using the conditional "if I offended" tense and repeating that he intended no

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**"When you go to Disney, do they measure the number of hours you wait in line or what's important? What's important is, what's your satisfaction with the experience?" Mr. McDonald said. "And what I would like to move to, eventually, is that kind of measure."**

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forced resignation of VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki and the president's selection of Mr. McDonald to lead the agency.

"This is the very practice that got his predecessor fired," he said. "Whoever the next president is should not retain Secretary McDonald. Were it not for the fact that we have no faith in the Obama administration to appoint a competent, reform-minded secretary, and the fact that McDonald's deputy, Sloan Gibson, is just as bad as him, CVA would likely be calling for Secretary McDonald's resignation today."

The firestorm of criticism began Monday, when Mr. McDonald told attendees at a Christian Science Monitor breakfast with reporters that questions over delays in care distracted from overall satisfaction rates.

"When you go to Disney, do they measure the number of hours you wait in line or what's important? What's important is, what's your satisfaction with the experience?" Mr. McDonald said. "And what I would like to move to, eventually, is that kind of measure."

House Speaker Paul D. Ryan, Wisconsin Republican, said Mr. McDonald's comments were "disgusting" and showed a lack of empathy for veterans. But he stopped short of calling for his resignation. "I don't know how he's going to fix it,

offense.

"It was never my intention to suggest that I don't take our mission of serving veterans very seriously," the secretary said.

"If my comments Monday led any veterans to believe that I, or the dedicated workforce I am privileged to lead, don't take that noble mission seriously, I deeply regret that. Nothing could be further from the truth."

The statement also came after an appearance on MSNBC earlier in the day in which he refused to apologize three times, saying his comments were misunderstood.

"If I was misunderstood, or if I said the wrong thing, I'm glad that I've had the opportunity to correct it," he said.

He defended his efforts since 2014 to improve the VA and its hospitals.

"Look, we get it, wait times are important," Mr. McDonald said. "There's no question wait times are important. But there's more to the veteran experience than just wait times."

Under Mr. McDonald's stewardship the agency has failed to fulfill Mr. Shinseki's promise, issued in January 2013, to cut the number of unresolved veterans' disability claims that were 125 days old or older to zero by Sept. 30, 2015. As of this week the backlog stood at 74,452 claims, down from a peak of 611,000 in

March 2013.

"Zero for us is not an absolute zero," said Allison Hickey, a top VA official who resigned last October rather than face a congressional hearing into mismanaging a taxpayer-funded employee-relocation program.

As the claims backlog has been reduced, veterans groups point out, the appeals backlog has soared to more than 400,000 cases, up from about 167,000 in 2005. Veterans are allowed to appeal decisions about their disability payments endlessly.

The agency says about three-fourths of veterans are already receiving some benefits when they appeal seeking greater benefits. But the backlog means that some veterans never receive a final answer — agency records show that about 32,000 veterans have died since 2009 with appeals unresolved.

Some lawmakers, including administration allies, blame Congress for contributing to problems with wait times at the VA. Sen. Mark R. Warner, Virginia Democrat, and other lawmakers of both parties called on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Tuesday to approve leases of more than \$1 million each for 18 major medical facilities in 12 states that have been awaiting congressional authorization for more than one year.

Mr. Warner said among the projects stuck in limbo is a 155,000-square-foot outpatient facility in Hampton Roads, Virginia.

"The simple fact is the wait times can and will go back up unless Congress does the right thing and authorizes a new outpatient facility for Hampton Roads, which has one of the fastest-growing veterans populations in the country," he said.

The growing number of critics of Mr. McDonald also say the secretary is sometimes his own worst enemy, making unforced errors in his public pronouncements. He has overstated to Congress the number of VA employees disciplined for wrongdoing in the wait-time scandal and even was caught on camera last year falsely telling a veteran that he once served in the U.S. Special Forces.

The top Democrat on the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, called the secretary's remarks "unfortunate" and said they don't reflect Mr. McDonald's intention to improve the VA's delivery of services.

"Part of delivery is doing it without delay," Mr. Blumenthal said. "Time is a critical factor, as well as the quality of service."

• Douglas Ernst contributed to this report, which was published on May 25.

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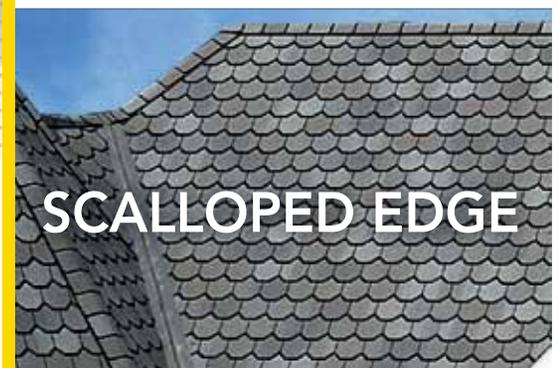
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# 'We honor them, as a Nation forever indebted'

**P**residential Proclamation for National POW/MIA Recognition Day 2015:

America has long stood tall as a beacon of freedom, thanks to the women and men of our Armed Forces who safeguard our country and our ideals with courage, honor and selflessness.

While our heroes and their families continue to give of themselves for us all, we must recognize the unthinkable pain that remains with the loved ones of those who have not returned home.

Today, we honor them, as a Nation forever indebted. We rededicate ourselves to our ironclad commitment to never leaving one of our own behind, and we pay tribute to those patriots known to God and never forgotten.

To further uphold our eternal promise, we established the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. This Agency will



WASHINGTON TIMES PHOTOGRAPHS

Veterans join the tomb guard to place a wreath at The Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery as part of a Run to the Wall event.



Hundreds of bikes line Route 50 outside of the Patriot Harley-Davidson in Fairfax as volunteers and riders prepare for the annual Ride of the Patriots in support of Rolling Thunder.

help recover and account for prisoners of war and those missing in action, work to better anticipate family needs, and ensure that timely, accurate information is communicated to loved ones. Bringing home Americans who have been taken prisoner or who have gone missing is a sacred mission, and my Administration is increasing our efforts to ensure every service member knows with absolute certainty that — should they ever find themselves in that position — ours is a country that will never give up on retrieving them.

As a grateful Nation, we owe it to all

who put on the uniform of the United States to remain unwavering in our promise to them. With hearts full of love, families carry on with an unfillable void, and we stand beside them — one and all — acutely aware of the cost at which our liberty comes. Today and every day, let us renew our pledge to never stop working to bring home the ones they love to the land they risked everything to protect.

On September 18, 2015, the stark black and white banner symbolizing America's Missing in Action and Prisoners of War will be flown over the White House; the United States Capitol; the Departments of State, Defense, and Veterans Affairs; the Selective Service System Headquarters; the World War II Memorial; the Korean War Veterans Memorial; the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; United States post offices; national cemeteries; and other locations across our country. We raise this flag as a solemn reminder of our obligation to always remember the sacrifices made to defend our Nation.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 18, 2015, as National

POW/MIA Recognition Day. I urge all Americans to observe this day of honor and remembrance with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of

September, in the year of our Lord two thousand fifteen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and fortieth.

BARACK OBAMA



People come from near and far to show their support to participants during the Rolling Thunder Ride for Freedom.

# Senate leader calls for action on VA bill by Memorial Day

By THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The Senate leader of the veterans' affairs committee said a sweeping reform bill should be brought up for a vote by Memorial Day.

"Every time we turn around, there's been no accountability in the VA," Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Johnny Isakson, Georgia Republican, said on the Senate floor April 28.

Mr. Isakson and ranking committee member Sen. Richard Blumenthal, Connecticut Democrat, introduced the Veterans First Act (S. 2921) on May 11, with 30 original co-sponsors. It passed out of the Veterans' Affairs Committee on May 16, but no floor action had been taken as of May 25.

The omnibus reform is intended to "change the culture of corruption" at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Mr. Isakson said in April, by improving



accountability, health care services, education and employment opportunities and burial benefits, among other things.

Mr. Isakson said he wanted to see the Veterans First Act brought to the

Senate floor for a vote before Memorial Day. The House has already passed its VA reform bill, and the chambers need to conference on them, Mr. Isakson said.

In July, the House passed the VA

Accountability Act of 2015 (H.R. 1994) by a 256-170 vote, largely along party lines.

House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jeff Miller, Florida Republican, has said the House bill properly permits sanctions, including firings, of "corrupt and incompetent bureaucrats."

Mr. Miller called the new Senate bill a "positive development," while Mr. Isakson has told reporters he is confident the two chambers can craft a joint bill that will resolve the accountability problems in the VA.

The VA, which has some 312,000 employees, has been embroiled in numerous scandals, including excessive wait-listing and subpar treatments for sick and injured veterans, and wasteful spending on facilities and personnel.

Advocacy groups representing federal workers are monitoring the bills to ensure that civil servants' due process rights are not eroded.

## Falsified wait times persist at 40 VA facilities

By DAVE BOYER

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Senior Republican lawmakers called for more changes at the Department of Veterans Affairs after internal investigations found widespread falsifying of patient wait times at 40 VA medical facilities in 19 states and Puerto Rico.

On April 8, the VA's inspector general released two years of reports totaling 70 investigations, finding that VA supervisors ordered employees to cook the books on wait times regularly, despite a promised crackdown on mismanagement and data manipulation by Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert McDonald. In some cases, investigators found that VA facilities had been falsifying records for a decade.

Rep. Jeff Miller, Florida Republican and chairman of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee, said the reports "outline a host of serious scheduling issues that masked wait times at VA facilities around the country."

"And in classic VA fashion, almost no one has been seriously held accountable for any of this wrongdoing," Mr. Miller said. "In fact, according to VA's own data, the department has successfully fired just four low-level employees for wait-time manipulation. Right now, it's incumbent on VA leaders to explain why that's the case given the IG's findings of widespread

wait-time manipulation and other serious problems."

Sen. John McCain, Arizona Republican, called for an investigation into whistleblower accusations that the Phoenix VA Health Care System staff had been canceling pending appointments for deceased veterans to conceal connections between



the pending appointments and veterans' deaths, or to improve hospital and clinic wait-time statistics.

Mr. McCain also asked Attorney General Loretta Lynch to review potential criminal activity at the VA if the latest inspector general investigation uncovers wrongdoing.

"This weekend marks two years since the scandal in which veterans died waiting for care on nonexistent wait-lists first came to light," Mr. McCain said. "Despite the severity of this national scandal, whistleblowers in Arizona continue to report serious failures at the VA, including gross scheduling violations that closely resemble

the widespread wait-time manipulation that led to the crisis of denied and delayed care in the first place. It's past time for this administration to root out wrongdoing at the VA by holding corrupt executives accountable and finally reforming the culture that is denying our veterans the care they deserve."

USA Today, which uncovered many of the inspector general's reports through the Freedom of Information Act, said the probes showed that VA supervisors ordered employees to manipulate wait times in Arkansas, California, Delaware, Illinois, New York, Texas and Vermont, giving the false impression that facilities were meeting VA performance measures for shorter wait times.

In some cases — Gainesville, Florida; White River Junction, Vermont; and Philadelphia, for example — investigators found VA employees kept lists of veterans needing care outside the scheduling system, a violation that also hid actual wait times, the paper said.

The VA said in a statement that many of the problems date back more than two years and that the department has taken many corrective steps since then.

The agency also announced April 8 that it is taking more steps to improve veterans' access to health care.

"We are working to rebuild the trust of the American public and, more importantly, the trust of the veterans whom we are proud to serve," said Dr. David Shulkin, VA undersecretary for health. "We are taking action and are seeing the results. We are serious about our work to improve access to health care for our nation's veterans. We want them to know that this is a new VA."

*This article was originally published April 11, 2016.*

*Crystal Clear founder John Ellis found this article on the internet under [http://www.jonchristianryter.com/Two\\_Cents/2cworth.160509.html](http://www.jonchristianryter.com/Two_Cents/2cworth.160509.html) If you want to know why you need the John Ellis Electron 5 distiller in your home, this article tells you exactly why.*

Live Longer. Live Healthier.

## The “link” between Hepatitis-C and “careless sex” and IV drug use has been given a pass as the reason for the rampant and deadly spread of Hep-C by social engineering, and AIDS gets a pass.

From Jan., 1976 to July, 1981 the CDC estimated that 94% of all cases of AIDS came exclusively from male homosexual misconduct. Only one female case of AIDS was reported by the CDC during that 5 year period. The CDC classified AIDS as a disease spread entirely by homosexual activity (which is why heterosexual taxpayers were reluctant to allow politicians to spend their tax dollars searching for a cure which many believed did not exist because they were wrongly convinced God created AIDS as a punishment for those who engaged in same-sex sex).

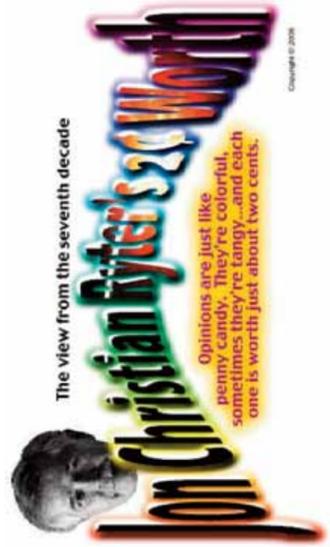
By 1982, medical researchers knew that AIDS was a retrovirus (RNA) with the ability to attach itself to the DNA of its host victim. In its 1987 report, supporting the gay rights protest against **Ronald Reagan**, the *New York Times*, in an attempt to mitigate the catastrophic spread of AIDS, estimated that by 1991 it was possible that as many as 270 thousand people nationwide might have AIDS. Some of those victims, the *Times* supposed, might be heterosexual drug users.

During the **Clinton** years a scandal which, according to **Ambrose Evans Pritchard**, personally tied **Clinton** to the corrupt practices of a blood plasma contractor, *Health Management Associates* (who reportedly paid massive kickbacks to **Gov. Bill Clinton** for access to the Arkansas prisons) where they harvested blood plasma from convicts infected with viral hepatitis and HIV for sale to foreign countries. The infected convicts were paid for their blood in order to provide them with small incomes to buy incidentals not provided by the State while they were incarcerated. None of the harvested blood was reportedly checked for the HIV retrovirus (mostly from IV drug users). HIV-tainted blood plasma from *Cummins Prison* in Arkansas was sold to whole blood and plasma suppliers in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Japan to treat hemophiliacs and those with catastrophic illnesses—both civilian and military. The Canadian Red Cross tracked the plasma back to the Arkansas penal system. In July 2006, the Canadian government approved a \$1 billion compensation settlement for the “forgotten hemophiliacs” treated by the Canadian government healthcare system. The Canadian Red Cross pleaded guilty to dispensing retrovirus tainted blood products and infecting Canadian citizens with HIV and Hepatitis C.

Apparently the *New York Times* sources the CDC only when their data makes Christian America look bad. In 1986—a year before the *New York Times* article—**Dr. J.W. Curran**, a CDC epidemiologist, reported that between two and three million Americans were permanently infected with the AIDS virus, adding that “...in many areas, the AIDS virus is at least one hundred times greater than the reported cases of AIDS.” A year earlier, on July 22, 1985, **Dr. Dani Bolognesi** of Duke University Medical Center testified before Congress where he said that it was his educated opinion that over two million US citizens were permanently infected with Hepatitis-C, and were at risk of having full-blown AIDS. *Those numbers, he said, would double every year.* Tragically for the American people, there has been a very deliberate misinformation campaign about AIDS due largely to the gay rights lobbyists and an increasingly communist government in Washington, DC that conceals rather than reveals. The CDC is too political for the American people. For that reason, when you look at their website or the articles they post, you may learn how many new cases of Hepatitis A, B, C, D or E were reported last year, but they won't report the total number of people infected.

Looking at the Hepatitis universe at the end of 2014 (the latest CDC statistics I have), the total number of Hepatitis affected Americans (excluding Hep-A which the CDC either doesn't feel a medical or political need to track, or the number of affected people is so high they won't release the data). Instead, they claim because there's an effective vaccine for Hep-A, it's not a problem that merits close scrutiny. Therefore, skipping Hep-A, conservatively, there were 10.7 million Hepatitis B through E victims in the United States two years ago. Adding anywhere from one to two million new Hepatitis B, C, D and E victims each year, we now have between 12.7 million and 15 million Hepatitis victims in the United States today. **And, the number will continue to grow because no one's talking about AIDS anymore when, in fact, the threat to American lives continues to grow because two of these retroviruses—Hep-A and Hep E—cause four and a half or five decades ago the virus was only transmitted by direct contact with blood or other bodily fluids. Everything evolves.**

**On Wednesday, May 4, 2016 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC] announced that one infectious disease now kills more people than all other infectious diseases in the United States—combined.** That disease? Today, the leftwing media calls it HCV, or by its long form name, Hepatitis C. They used to call it HIV-AIDS. But since AIDS is a death sentence disease, and



people with active AIDS are still stunned because, with all of the politically-correct rhetoric notwithstanding about how hard it is to transmit Hep C, or HCV, from one person to another, or how easy it is to protect yourself from contracting the infection through association, the opposite may actually be true.

When AIDS became pandemic in the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, the aficionados of political correctness poophahed the threat of Hep C by saying “...the AIDS virus is so fragile that you can kill it simply by spraying any surface a cough or sneeze may have landed with common household bleach.” The simplification was an erroneous oversimplification because *chlorine bleach is one of the few non-medical things that you would likely have in your home, which will kill the hepatitis-C virus.* If anyone infected with hepatitis-C coughed on your kitchen table or counter top and you wiped the surface with a cloth containing your regular dish detergent, the virus would survive on that dry surface for ten days. Which means if you somehow got the still-living virus on your hands and, for any reason, licked that area of your hand, the likelihood of your being infected with Hep-C would be probable.

The CDC data from the 2014 *National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System* [NNDSS] document noted that all reported viral hepatitis case are received electronically from all 50 States and US territories weekly through the CDC's computerized public health surveillance system. While the tracking system was originally created to track Hepatitis-C (new or past [newly released] data on acute or chronic infections) case logs on Hepatitis-B viral infections [HBV] were also being tracked. HCV infections account for the greatest number of cases. However, only 37 States filed HCV reports with the CDC while 40 States, in 2014, reported on people infected with chronic HBV infections.

Keep in mind there are major differences between Hep-A, Hep-B, Hep-C, Hep-D, Hep-E and Hep-G. We're concerned, at the moment, with four of them—A, B, C and E. There is such an ingrained fear of Hepatitis C, that when someone mentions the word “hepatitis,” images of AIDS always come to mind.

However, while they are all infections of the liver, they are caused by different viruses with different modes of transmission which impact the liver in different ways.

Hep-A infections come from contaminated food or water. A vaccine is now used to kill that virus. Hep-E is also transmitted by contaminated water. But, until a few months ago, there was no vaccine for this liver virus (which is pandemic in southeast Asia). China has developed what they claim is the world's first vaccine to prevent Hep-E (a non-enveloped, positive-sense, single-stranded ribonucleic acid [RNA] virus), but it's not yet available in the West. Fortunately (or, “sometimes” fortunately), the symptoms of Hep-E, a self-limiting form of hepatitis usually resolves itself in days or weeks. While most people stop counting at Hep-C, you may not be familiar with Hepatitis E. Over 20 million people in Southeast Asia fell victim to HEP-E last year. Of them, there were 3 million symptomatic cases which turned into fulminant hepatitis (acute liver failure) and required hospitalization. Of those, 56,900 died. Why? Because Hep-E, like Hep-A, is spread by drinking water contaminated with human urine or waste from carriers of the hepatitis retrovirus. Additionally, Hep-A is also spread by eating foods contaminated with human waste. Hep-A is rarely life-threatening.

In the poverty-stricken third world, healthy sanitary conditions are pretty much non-existent. What that means is that if you pee in the water you drink bad things, like Hepatitis A or E, will happen. **By the way, Hep-A and Hep-E aren't just third world diseases. They also happen in the industrialized nations as well.** You live in a big city like San Francisco or any mega-metropolis with a large homosexual community. Like you, they urinate in a toilet. That urine ends up in the city sewer system. The urine and fecal matter ends up in a waste treatment plant where the liquid is separated from the solids. The solids—now sludge—are dried and processed into fertilizer. Can you get the Hep-C virus from the feces or the urine? Not likely.

A trained hematologist would have to answer that question

**Gilbert Daunant (Prince Rainier's cousin): “I just walked 40 blocks and I am 95! Send another E5 to Monaco!”**

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clinically and more accurately. The transport system Hep-B, Hep-C and Hep-D use is blood. My uneducated guess would be that because Hep-A and Hep-E are transported by water, the potency of the virus is less lethal, and may even morph into another, less deadly hepatitis virus. For example, among the various hepatitis retroviruses is Hepatitis-G, identified in 1995, and now designated as Hepatitis GB or HP-gV or GBV-C. When hematologists realized it was a non-A or non-B form of hepatitis, they named after its first known victim, **Dr. G. Baker** who fell ill from the same type of virus in 1966 and died from it. What hematologists initially thought was one virus turned out to be two new viruses in play that were directly linked to Hep-C (HIV-AIDS): Hep-G and Hep-GB belong to the flaviviridae family of viruses which is phylogenetically tied to Hep-C. Shocking as it may seem Hep-GBV-C appears to be a fourth genus in the flaviviridae family. GBV-C affects humans.

Now if you live in rural America where thousands of Americans every year buy a piece of converted farmland or a tract of pastureland, you are likely going to build on a lot not supplied by city water or city sewage. If so, you are likely facing the same problems with contaminated drinking water faced daily by millions of indigent people in the third world. Not only are you likely drinking your own family's urine waste, but if you have neighbors sharing the same water table that feeds water to your home, you are also drinking their's—and they, quite naturally, are drinking yours. Anything that gets into the ground water that you access through the water pump that brings water into your home is likely going to get into the water you drink from your kitchen sink from water filtered through the ground back to the water table which feeds your home.

Keep in mind that water filtration systems designed to remove organic nanoparticles of various chemical and organic materials from the tap water you drink, use for cooking and bathe in, may remove all of the debris found in the water table under your yard, but without repetitive recirculation to kill all the pathogens in the ground water, most filtration systems are designed to remove septic tank effluent from the ground water and organic chemicals like limestone, calcium and sulphur. To rid your well water of pathogens from diseases, chemicals or drugs (like cocaine, marijuana or heroin) which are excreted from the body through urine and enter the drinking water supply through a septic system, that recycled water needs to be repetitively distilled and repurified numerous times. Common dime store plastic distillers, which produce water with a hydrogen bond angle of 101° don't reach that level of health safety. Only distillers which continually recirculate and repurify the water they distill, are capable of producing a permanent hydrogen bond angle of 1.14° which can kill those types of pathogens. Only one company in the world has the patented rights to that process: Westbrookville, New York-based Crystal Clear.

Contracting Hep-C from the water from your kitchen sink is next to impossible since HIV-AIDS is not transmitted by water. Hep-B, Hep-C and Hep-D are transmitted only by blood or other bodily fluids. The fear of catching Hepatitis from your drinking water is also remote, but remember that Hep-A and Hep-E are water-transmitted contagions transported by contaminated water, like the GBV-C virus which can enter the bloodstream in humans the same way bacteria enters the bloodstream, gaining access to the rest of the host's body in a condition know as “Viremia.” (*Viremia comes from the word virus and the Greek word for blood, “haima,” meaning “blood virus.”*) Usually the condition, in humans, is temporary, lasting 4 or 5 days. It's known as “primary viremia.” Secondary viremia occurs when the infection, traveling in the blood stream results in the secondary infection of tissue in other areas of the body. This is a process called “viral shedding” when the virus begins to replicate and the viral load reaches its natural host cell and attaches to it. Which is what blood-borne Hep-C does.

**Once again, let me reiterate a point made at the beginning of this piece. Because the politically-correct socialist government officials in charge of “word use” in the United States have decided that the word AIDS is no longer politically-correct because it imbues negative feelings about the homosexual origin of the term where Hepatitis-C does not since AIDS initially affected the homosexual community and Hep-C affects the whole population.**

**And because that is so, and AIDS is no longer on everyone's lips and in their mind, they believe the disease has been defeated as it silently affects a population no longer being warned of its deadly nature. Do you get your water from a well? There was a book, and a movie, back in the late 1950s or 1960s entitled: “Don't Go Near the Water.” Today, that moment from the past is a point to ponder. Well, for whatever it's worth, once again, you have my two cents worth on this subject. Until next time...**

# Rolling Thunder's 'chair of honor' coming to the Capitol

By **CHERYL WETZSTEIN**

**A** commemorative chair in honor of POW/MIA service members — which will remain empty in perpetuity — will be soon placed in the U.S. Capitol, according to a newly passed law.

The National POW/MIA Remembrance Act of 2015, sponsored by Rep. Stephen F. Lynch, Massachusetts Democrat, and passed this spring with unanimous support in both chambers of Congress, was signed into law by President Obama on April 29.

The act, also known as H.R. 1670, directs the Architect of the Capitol to place a chair in a prominent location in the U.S. Capitol in honor of American military personnel who remain missing or prisoners of war.

The chair will bear the logo of the National League of POW/MIA Families and will be paid for by privately raised funds; it must be established on Capitol grounds within two years.

Lawmakers praised Rolling Thunder leaders and members for their efforts to get a chair of honor into the U.S. Capitol.

"Each day, members of Congress and visitors to the U.S. Capitol will pass by the chair of honor and take a moment to pay



HUSSEY SEATING CO.

Tim Hussey, CEO of Hussey Seating Co., stands between Maine Sen. Angus S. King Jr. (right) and Rolling Thunder leader Joe D'Entremont with a POW/MIA commemorative chair. The family-owned company, based in North Berwick, Maine, is a partner in the effort to place these chairs in public venues as a reminder of veterans who are missing or held captive.

respect to our prisoners of war and missing in action who bravely serve our nation with honor and valor," Mr. Lynch said after the law was signed.

"It was the strong advocacy of Rolling Thunder that brought this bill to the finish line and on to the president's desk," he added, citing Rolling Thunder leaders Gus Dante and Joe D'Entremont and members of Rolling Thunder Massachusetts Chapter 1 for their advocacy for the issue.

House Administration Committee Chairman Candice S. Miller, Michigan Republican, who shepherded the bill to its unanimous voice vote on March 21, said, "Our heroes deserve to be honored, especially in the U.S. Capitol, which is itself a symbol of our American beliefs and the liberties and freedoms that they sacrificed to defend."

In the Senate, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Massachusetts Democrat, and Sen. Marco Rubio, Florida Republican, introduced the "chair of honor" measure in 2015.

"As the brother of a veteran and from a state with over 1 million veterans, I know firsthand the sacrifices that our men and women in uniform and their families make to keep our nation safe every single day of the year," Mr. Rubio said after the Senate passed the measure by unanimous consent on April 14.

"Within the past year," Mr. Rubio said,

"multiple veterans service organizations, including Rolling Thunder, have visited my office to advocate for this bill on behalf of those who left this country to defend our freedoms abroad and never returned. I'm proud of the fact that when they visit, they are continually greeted by a black and white POW/MIA flag that always stands outside my office."

"My three older brothers served in the military, and I appreciate the sacrifices our service members and their families make each day to keep our country safe," said Ms. Warren. "This commemorative chair will serve as a lasting reminder to honor America's missing service members and prisoners of war, and I thank the Massachusetts Chapter of Rolling Thunder and Rolling Thunder National for their hard work to get this bill passed and signed into law."

Similar POW/MIA chairs of honor have been established in many major sports stadiums and other public places through a program with Hussey Seating Co., in Maine. The chairs are intended to be public reminders of the estimated 83,000 troops still missing in action or held as prisoners of war.

*Cheryl Wetzstein, formerly a national news reporter, is manager of special sections for The Washington Times.*

## Chair to be a reminder of 83,000 missing U.S. service members



By **REP. STEPHEN F. LYNCH**

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of my bill, H.R. 1670, the National POW/MIA Remembrance Act.

This bill actually comes from the recognition we all share that, in our country, oftentimes the families of POWs and MIAs suffer alone. And it is through the efforts of groups like Rolling Thunder

and other veterans' groups who have brought to the forefront the fact that we should carry more immediately the memory of the sacrifice of those families.

In my own life, I came to know a man named James Fitzgerald, who was a member of Operating Engineers Local 4 in Boston. I worked on a job with him. I remember at noontime, when everyone would go off to lunch, he would go off into his pickup truck and eat his sandwich by himself. Day after day, in his lap, he would have a tri-corner flag that this country gave him in remembrance of his son, who went down as a result of enemy fire in Vietnam in the early 1960s.

It was not until the late 1980s, early 1990s, that his son was actually recovered, returned to his family, and buried in Massachusetts. For many, many years, the Fitzgerald family carried that burden by themselves. They carried it alone.

I had a chance to travel with JPAC, the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, to Vietnam, to Korea and to the South

## Heroes deserve to be honored, especially in the U.S. Capitol



By **REP. CANDICE S. MILLER**

Mr. Speaker, the measure before the House today directs the Architect of the Capitol to obtain a chair featuring the logo of the National League of POW/MIA Families and to prominently place it on display in the U.S. Capitol.

As members of Congress, certainly we each represent diverse congressional

districts, but one of the things that ties us together are the many brave men and women we represent who stood on the battle lines in defense of our nation's freedom, our liberty, and our way of life.

This legislation introduced by our colleague, Rep. Stephen Lynch of Massachusetts, honors American prisoners of war and Americans missing in action. The chair will serve as a permanent reminder of the enormous sacrifice made by those who served our country and were taken as POWs or listed as MIA.

The importance of remembering and honoring their great sacrifice can never be overstated. Our nation has a responsibility to them and to their families who have shared in their sacrifice, and we must never forget.

Our heroes deserve to be honored, especially in the U.S. Capitol, which is itself a symbol of our American beliefs and the liberties and freedoms that they sacrificed to defend.

This chair will honor veterans like



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# GAO: Delays still plague VA health care

By **DAVE BOYER**  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**T**he Department of Veterans Affairs still has not done enough to stop employees from manipulating veterans' appointment waiting times, and the agency isn't giving an accurate picture of the delays in veterans' health care, a nonpartisan watchdog report said in April.

The Government Accountability Office found that the Veterans Health Administration is plagued by "the lack of comprehensive scheduling policy" that makes it difficult for officials to identify and fix the problems.

GAO looked at 180 newly enrolled veterans at six VA facilities nationwide and found that 60 had not been seen by providers at the time of the review.

"Nearly half were unable to access primary care because VA medical center staff did not schedule appointments for these veterans in accordance with VHA policy," the report said.

The 120 veterans waited 22 to 71 days from the time they requested appointments until they were seen by a provider, the study found.

"These time frames were impacted by limited appointment availability and



weaknesses in medical center scheduling practices, which contributed to unnecessary delays," GAO said.

The VA was rocked two years ago by a widespread scandal showing that employees manipulated wait times to make the agency's performance appear better than it was. Dozens of veterans died while awaiting care. The problem surfaced in Phoenix but expanded to VA facilities across the nation and led to the resignation of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric K. Shinseki.

VHA provided care to about 6.6 million veterans and spent about \$58 billion for their care in fiscal year 2014. The report said that,

over the past decade, the number of annual outpatient primary care medical appointments VHA provided through its medical facilities increased by 17 percent, from about 10.2 million to 11.9 million.

The VA said in a statement that it is "in the midst of the largest transformation in its history" with two new programs to give veterans greater access and control of their health care.

"We realize that there is more work to be done, but we have made progress and remain steadfast in our commitment" to veterans, the agency said.

White House press secretary Josh Earnest

said President Obama and VA Secretary Robert McDonald are still committed to implementing reforms at the VA and that the agency's problems have been "deeply entrenched" for more than a decade.

"There's nobody right now that's satisfied," he said. "We know that there's a lot more important work to be done."

Nevertheless, he said, "There's no denying that in this first seven years of the Obama administration that we've made remarkable progress in improving the service delivery system and drastically reducing the backlog in benefits claims."

The report said the VA is evaluating its own performance for responding to veterans based on flawed data. In measuring how long veterans wait for care, the agency starts the clock when a VA employee responds to a veteran's inquiry, not when the veteran calls for an appointment.

GAO investigators found that schedulers at three of the six medical centers changed dates improperly 25 percent of the time, so the VA system falsely showed shorter wait times.

While the agency's records showed average waiting times from four to 28 days, the actual wait times were 11 to 48 days, the GAO said.

*This news article was originally published April 19, 2016.*

## LYNCH

From page **C14**

Pacific, the Philippines.

We have 83,000 — 83,000 — men and women from this country that died in the Second World War, in Korea and in Vietnam who are still there.

About 1,000 remain in Vietnam. About 5,000 remain in North Korea up around the Chosin Reservoir. And then the great majority of those MIA are buried at sea as a result of the great naval battles in World War II. They are buried in place, and their resting places are our sacred ground.

We have an opportunity here to place within the Capitol a remembrance, a shrine, in effect, to their sacrifice in remembrance of their service to this

country. H.R. 1670 would honor them by authorizing a placement of a POW/MIA Chair of Honor on the grounds of the United States Capitol.

That chair will forever stand unoccupied as a solemn reminder of the over 83,000 brave Americans from as far back as World War II who are still waiting to be brought home.

Chairs of honor carrying the POW/MIA insignia have already been placed in public spaces in cities and towns around the country. It is only fitting that the Capitol, the seat of the U.S. Congress, should do so as well.

Mr. Speaker, when our fellow Americans go to war, we make them a promise never to leave them behind. That vow is sacred. When we pass this chair every day, we will be reminded of our commitment to our POW/MIAs and their families that we have not forgotten them,

we will never forget them, and we will not rest until they all come home.

I want to take a moment to thank Joe D'Entremont, who first approached me about undertaking this initiative a couple of years ago. He is a past president of Rolling Thunder of Massachusetts Chapter 1 and is now a Rolling Thunder, Inc., National member.

I want to thank all the members from all the chapters of Rolling Thunder from across the country who have kept this idea alive.

Joe D'Entremont is a passionate advocate on behalf of our veterans and our POWs and MIAs. Joe has worked with my office from the very beginning on this effort.

I also want to thank Gus Dante, also with Rolling Thunder National, who has worked steadfastly at Joe's side to see this through.

Finally, I want to thank the members of Rolling Thunder Massachusetts Chapter 1 and all of the Rolling Thunder chapters around the nation. Their efforts were integral to bringing us here today.

After today, H.R. 1670 will move to the Senate for its consideration. I want to recognize and thank my Massachusetts colleague, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, for introducing her Senate companion bill and for making this truly a bicameral effort.

I look forward to continuing to work with her to get this past the finish line and have the National POW/MIA Remembrance Act signed into law.

*Democrat Rep. Stephen F. Lynch represents the 9th District in Massachusetts. His remarks are excerpted from the Congressional Record of March 21, 2016.*

## MILLER

From page **C14**

Sam Johnson, one of our colleagues here in the House. Sam is one of the most stalwart protectors of those who have served and who himself endured nearly seven years as a POW, including 42 months in solitary confinement, in the infamous Hanoi Hilton.

Forty-three years ago, Sam Johnson returned to the United States to be reunited with his loved ones, and we are

so honored to have the privilege to serve with him today here in this House.

In addition to Sam Johnson, Mr. Speaker, when I think about the meaning behind this memorial, I think about an individual who lives in my district. His first name is Donald, but we all call him Digger, Digger O'Dell.

Digger enlisted in 1952 into the Air Force. He was shot down in October of 1967, and he, like Sam, was a prisoner in the Hanoi Hilton, in Digger's case, for five and a half years. Thankfully, Digger made it home, as Sam did, after all of those years

in a North Vietnamese camp. He is now in his 80s and serves as a member of our local air base community council and chairs a fundraising event for the Special Olympics. Digger is a remarkable man. He is one of many who selflessly served our nation facing enormous adversity.

I might even mention my husband, who was a fighter pilot and is a proud member of Vietnam Veterans of America and is now a proud member of Chapter 154 of the VVA in Macomb County, which is actually one of the largest chapters in our entire nation.

Again, Mr. Speaker, these heroes who so bravely served our nation deserve to be honored, especially in the U.S. Capitol, and certainly this chair with the MIA/POW logo on it will forever demonstrate that we will never forget.

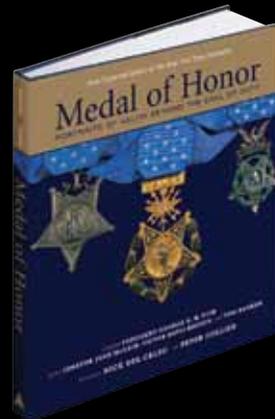
*Republican Rep. Candice S. Miller is chairwoman of the House Administration Committee and represents the 10th District in Michigan. Her remarks are excerpted from the Congressional Record of March 21, 2016.*



## THE MEDAL OF HONOR

Created during the American Civil War and signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln, the Medal of Honor is bestowed on those in military service who display valor above and beyond the call of duty. Since the medal was created, there have been fewer than 3,500 Recipients.

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## ONE HERO'S STORY

### TIBOR RUBIN, CORPORAL US ARMY

On May 5, 1945, Rubin clung to life in Mauthausen. Among thousands of Jews in Hungary rounded up by the Nazis, as the U.S. Army liberated the camp, Rubin made a promise that if he could ever immigrate to the U.S. he would join the Army and become a "GI Joe".

Rubin came and fulfilled his dream by joining the U.S. Army in 1950. He was assigned to the 8th Cavalry Regiment and sent to Korea. On one of his first engagements, he stayed behind, covering his company on a nighttime redeployment. In the dark, he stocked empty foxholes and when the North Koreans attacked the next morning he ran from foxhole to foxhole firing his rifle and lobbing grenades. Rubin single handedly held the hill throughout the next day. On another occasion, when Chinese forces attacked his unit in a massive night assault, Rubin took over a .30-caliber machine gun, and continued to man it while his unit retreated, staying at his post until he ran out of ammunition, was injured, and ultimately captured. As a POW for the next two and a half years, Rubin employed everything he had learned surviving the Holocaust to keep himself and others alive, saving more than forty lives during his captivity.

Finally, after the cease-fire and his repatriation to America, Rubin received his long awaited U.S. Citizenship. He was awarded the Medal of Honor by President George W. Bush.

Rubin's story exemplifies the selfless sacrifice, courage, and humility of the Medal of Honor Recipients. They are true heroes.

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Tibor Rubin (1929 - 2015)  
*Corporal, U.S. Army, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division*

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## MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS ESTABLISHED A FOUNDATION WITH A UNIQUE MISSION

The Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation was chartered by Recipients in 1999. The Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to perpetuating the Medal of Honor's legacy through awareness, outreach, and education.

The Foundation strives through its programs and initiatives, and the personal contributions of the Recipients in communities across America, to promote the behaviors and values shared by servicemen and Recipients.

Today the number of living Medal of Honor Recipients is at its lowest point in history. And the Foundation faces a tough challenge, maintaining a heritage that is quickly vanishing.

While each of the Recipients is quick to point out that, since the Medal can only be received for war-time heroism, they hope that there will be no new Recipients, we as Americans are rapidly losing some of our greatest heroes and role models.

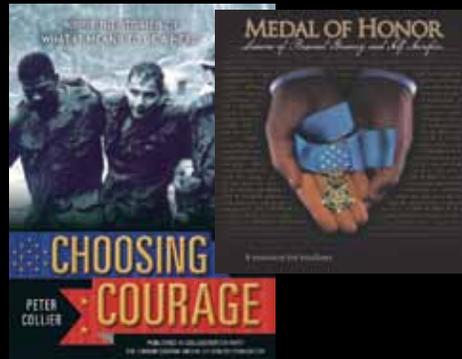
Read the stories of the Recipients in the book, "Medal of Honor: Portraits of Valor Beyond The Call of Duty" (2011). And living history videos can be found on the Foundation website. The Foundation is dedicated to preserving their memory and inspiring generations of Americans young and old. But more must be done.

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## RECIPIENTS ENGAGE COMMUNITIES & EDUCATE THE YOUTH OF AMERICA

They do so through speaking in public, in schools and at private events and by recognizing fellow Americans (not in military service) who emulate the values they so strongly believe in with a citizen medal -- recognizing them for their personal acts of heroism and selfless sacrifice.

The 76 living Recipients of the Medal of Honor believe that the mark of a true hero is to have the moral courage to do what needs to be done because it is the right thing to do. They believe that every person can change fate by acting on their convictions with selflessness and courage. It is the mission of the Foundation to spread this message.

The Character Development Program was initiated by Medal of Honor Recipients specifically to take their message to the schools. This unique curriculum is available free from the Foundation. Stories of these great men are shared in the book, "Choosing Courage: Inspiring Stories of What It Means To Be a Hero" (2015).

The Citizen Honors Program is managed by the Foundation and receives nominations from across the country regarding acts of heroism. Medal of Honor Recipients consider all those who are nominated and ultimately select the few most deserving to bestow upon them the Citizen Honors Medal.

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## OUR TRUE HEROES NEED HELP TO SPREAD THEIR MESSAGE

The Medal of Honor Foundation strives to reach the American public. Too many are unaware of the Medal of Honor and the values it *really* stands for.

Help is needed to increase their reach, so Recipients can touch more Americans and inspire the kind of selfless courageous acts that average people can take part in every day when extraordinary circumstances call for action.

Individuals can change fate. They can change America and change the world for the better. It's a powerful message and one that deserves our support.

For more information on supporting The Medal of Honor Foundation contact:

CMOHF  
cmohf@cmohfoundation.org  
+1-703-469-1861

To find out more about how your organization can become a corporate sponsor of the Medal of Honor advertising program contact:

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*"Any nation that does not honor its heroes will not long endure."*

*Abraham Lincoln*



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