



# The ALLIANCE



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## SMA Dailey: 'We Must Fight and Win'



*Sergeant Major of the Army  
Daniel A. Dailey*

**S**ergeant Major of the Army Daniel A. Dailey told a gathering of U.S. Army Reserve senior leaders they must execute the Army's core mission of fighting and winning. In order to do that, Dailey said leaders must maintain readiness, look to the future of the Army, and support Soldiers and their families.

He shared his initiatives that echo the priorities of the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Mark A. Milley, at the U.S. Army Reserve Senior Leader Conference, April 25, 2016, at the Iron Mike Conference Center.

"At the end of the day, if we fail to do anything else, if we fight and win, we have accomplished our mission for the taxpayers of the United States of America and have done our part for the joint force of the Department of Defense," Dailey said.

Dailey said that readiness is the number one in priority in the Army.

"As the Sergeant Major of the Army, our number one Soldier problem across the Total Force is personal readiness," he said. "I know we all have different MOSs (Military Occupational Specialties) and we all are in different roles, but at the end of the day, the first and the last Soldier in the United States Army will be behind the trigger. And every Soldier has to get on the line and fight."

Dailey said America hasn't played a "home game" since World War II, when the Aleutian Islands in Alaska were invaded.

"We have no intention of playing a 'home game' so if you're not on the 'away bus' you're not on the team," Dailey said. "We pay Soldiers to do one thing -- fight and win."

Dailey said leaders should do a better job of addressing the issue of Soldiers that are non-deployable.

"We've got to get our hands around this deployable problem," he said. "What I ask you to do is write down the number of acceptable non-deployables in the United States Army and hand it to me. The goal should be that 100 percent of the Army is deployable. That is the only number you should be writing down."

Dailey said the Secretary of the Army recently signed

*(cont'd on page 4)*



## REPORT from the HILL

**U**nfortunately, as this is written we do not yet know what will come out of Congress regarding proposals to change military health care. We remain very concerned because last year key members of Congress let it be known that they planned to act this year to reduce the costs of military health care -- to the government, NOT TO YOU, the user of military health care. We do know

what DoD has proposed to do and we highlight the changes it wants below. The House Armed Services Committee and the Senate Armed Services Committee are the key committees in Congress that have jurisdiction over the defense budget. They propose legislation to the entire House and Senate and although what they propose can be modified, it usually isn't.

As of right now the House Armed Services Committee has a goal of passing the House version of the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) by the end of April and sending it to the full

House for a vote. The Senate Armed Services Committee's goal is to send their version of the FY2017 NDAA to the full Senate by the end of May, with a goal of then getting it to the President by the end of July.

While these are noble goals, and should be achievable, things very often don't seem to get done in Congress as quickly as they hope -- and as we have often seen. By the time you read this we should know if the House met its goal and we may have an idea if the Senate will reach its goal. Whatever the case, we will update you in our next issue of the *Alliance*.

*(cont'd on page 3)*



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

**Bernd Dela Cruz**

One of the most common legislative related questions asked at AFTEA . . . “is concurrent receipt still a priority for AFTEA?”

Definitely . . . YES! AFTEA continues to support full concurrent receipt of both military retired pay and VA disability pay regardless of the percentage of disability. This issue remains one of AFTEA’s key legislative priorities.

In the current session of Congress, there are currently three AFTEA supported bills on this issue.

Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.) introduced the Retired Pay Restoration Act (S. 271). This bill would permit retired members of the Armed Forces who have a service-connected disability rated less than 50 percent to receive full concurrent receipt of both retired pay and veterans’ disability compensation, including Chapter 61 disability retirees with less than 20 years of service. The House companion to this bill is H.R. 333, introduced by Rep. Sanford Bishop (D-Ga.).

Another AFTEA supported bill regarding concurrent receipt is H.R. 303, introduced by Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-Fla.). This bill would authorize full concurrent receipt for retirees with regular or Guard/Reserve retirement, regardless of disability rating.

AFTEA is committed to advocating for concurrent receipt until the offset is eliminated for all disabled retirees. We believe strongly in the principle that career military members earn their retired pay by service alone, and those unfortunate enough to suffer a service-caused disability in the process should have any VA disability compensation added to, not subtracted from, their service-earned retired pay.

The main challenge, as it is with so many of our legislative goals, is funding. Under congressional rules, the only way the Armed Services Committees can propose such fixes is by identifying equal spending cuts in other programs in their purview. That’s why it’s been so difficult winning further progress.

In all likelihood, progress will come as it has in the past -- in increments rather than in one big change.

In that regard, AFTEA’s top concurrent receipt priority is providing relief for severely disabled medical retirees with less than 20 years of service. Under current law, a 100 percent (non-combat) disabled medical retiree with 19 years of service still loses most or all of his retired pay to the disability offset.

We’re convinced the offset will be fully eliminated for

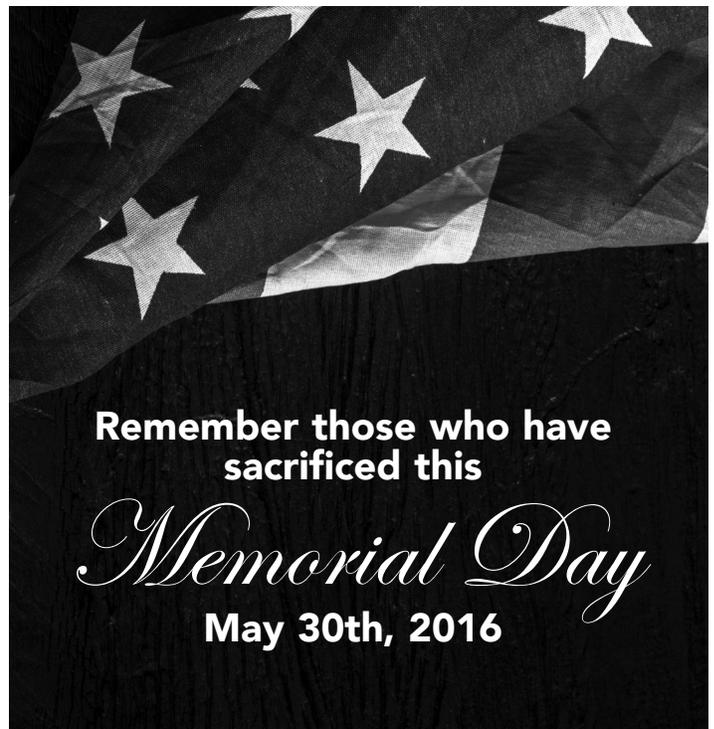
all disabled retirees at some point. But the current budget environment poses a huge obstacle for the short term.

\* \* \*

In the Report from the Hill, we report that DoD’s FY17 budget proposed annual enrollment fees that would eventually reach 2 percent of retired pay for those who become Medicare-eligible on or after Jan. 1, 2017.

Under its proposal, beneficiaries already enrolled in Medicare on Jan. 1, 2017 would be exempted from the new fee. Chapter 61 (military disability) retirees and survivors of servicemembers who died on active duty also would be exempt from the new fee.

The House Armed Services Committee (HASC) rejected the proposed TRICARE For Life fees in its version of the FY17 Defense Authorization Act. The Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) is scheduled to take up its version of the bill next week, and AFTEA hopes the SASC will follow the HASC in resisting additional TRICARE For Life costs.



## Report from the Hill

(cont'd from page 1)

Once the House and Senate Armed Services Committees pass their versions of the NDAA, we'll know what is likely to happen with military health care. Even though Congress often does NOT do what DoD requests, it remains to be seen where it will come down on this important issue, so here, as a reminder, is what DoD has proposed regarding military health care.

The budget proposes that future TRICARE For Life eligibles -- specifically, those who become Medicare-eligible on or after Jan. 1, 2017 -- to start paying an annual enrollment fee based on a percentage of the member's retired pay.

Under this proposal, beneficiaries already enrolled in Medicare on Jan. 1, 2017 would be exempted from the new fee. (You can draw your own conclusions whether that exemption might be reconsidered in the future.) Chapter 61 retirees and survivors of servicemembers who died on active duty also would be exempt from the new fee.

The annual enrollment fee would start at ½ of one percent of gross retired pay in 2017, increasing to 2 percent of retired pay by 2021. In the first year, the fee would be capped at \$150 for lower grades and \$200 for retired flag and general officers. As the fee increased to 2 percent of retired pay over the next four years, those caps also would increase, reaching \$632 and \$842 annually in 2021.

We are particularly concerned because this plan means-tests service-earned health care benefits. No other employer means-tests their retired employees' health benefits. AFTEA is opposed to such means-testing, which would impose successively greater financial penalties for longer and more successful service.

It is particularly inappropriate to seek to impose additional fees on TFL-eligibles for three other reasons.

First, this population is already

paying the highest fees of any military beneficiaries, as TFL requires one to enroll in Medicare Part B and pay the associated premium, which starts at \$2,500 per year for a married couple and can run far higher.

Second, the expressed intent of Congress in enacting TFL was that Medicare Part B premiums would be the only enrollment fee for TFL, acknowledging that Medicare would be paying 80 percent of these beneficiaries' health costs. DoD and Hill leaders at the time stated their belief that a career of service and sacrifice constituted a full, pre-paid premium for TFL coverage of the other 20 percent.

Third, the Pentagon's costs for TFL have dropped dramatically -- from \$11 billion in FY2011 to an estimated \$6.4 billion in FY2017, as Defense actuaries now have 15 years of actual experience with the program and can more accurately project program costs. Rather than "spiraling out of control," DoD health costs for this group are spiraling downward -- so why the need to charge them an additional fee?

**Retirees under age 65** will also see huge increases under the budget plan, with lots of fee and co-pay changes. Among the more complex changes are proposed increases in co-pays for various kinds of provider visits.

TRICARE Prime enrollees would see some increases in fees for seeing civilian network providers. TRICARE Standard beneficiaries would pay flat fees (and would not have a deductible) if they see civilian providers in the network. If they see out-of-network providers, they would still pay 25 percent of TRICARE-allowed charges, but would see their current deductible doubled -- from \$150/\$300 (single/family) to \$300/\$600.

Prime beneficiaries who use out-of-network care without a referral would be subject to steep point-of-service fees: 50 percent of allowable charges after paying a \$300/\$600 deductible.

In addition, the DoD plan proposes charging all military retirees under age 65 an annual enrollment fee for participating in either TRICARE Prime or Standard. The Prime enrollment fee would rise to \$350/\$700 (single/family) vs. the current \$283/\$565.

The new enrollment fee for TRICARE Standard would be even higher -- \$450/\$900 (single/family) -- plus the \$300/\$600 deductible for out-of-network care.

Retiree copays and cost sharing also would apply to survivors (except those whose sponsors died on active duty) and TRICARE Young Adult beneficiaries with a retired sponsor.

TRICARE Select and TRICARE Retired Reserve beneficiaries would continue their current premium levels, and their deductible and cost-shares would be the same as proposed for TRICARE Standard.

Care in Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) would continue to be provided at no cost.

**Active duty family members** would not see the same drastic increases, unless they use out-of-network providers, in which case they also would incur the \$600 family deductible (and high point-of-service charges if they don't have a referral).

Active duty family copays and cost sharing would apply to survivors whose spouses died on active duty, TRICARE Young Adult beneficiaries with an active duty sponsor, and the Transitional Assistance Management Program.

All fees, deductibles, and copays for all categories of beneficiaries would be increased annually by a national health care expenditure index, projected to rise over 5 percent annually. Needless to say, AFTEA believes this wide array of fee increases would impose disproportionate financial penalties on retired military beneficiaries. 🌿

## SMA Dailey: 'We Must Fight and Win'

(cont'd from page 1)

a memo stating that Soldiers are either deployable or non-deployable, and leaders should not go to a unit if they are not fully able to deploy with that unit.

"We can't do it because what we have found is there is a high probability of individuals in that organization will be non-deployable as well," he said. "We have to take a hard look at this. We have to look internally at whether or not we are ready to fight and win and what we are projecting to our Soldiers as a readiness model to ensure we are successful in the future."

Along the lines of readiness, Dailey said the Army has to take back individual and collective training and put it in the hands of noncommissioned officers.

For the reserve components (U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard), Dailey said he and the chief have to look at how to raise the number of training days, saying it was a tough subject.

"We are looking at some creative ways. We have to reduce the mandatory training tasks. That has a huge effect on the reserve component," he said. "They come in for their training cycles and they spend a lot of that time just doing a list of things that we (the Army) says they have to do that are more important. But so is fighting and winning. We are looking at that very hard. The (Army) G-3/5/7 is leading a Herculean effort to get rid of some of those things. Some of that is DOD policy, some of that is regulation, and some of that is law. So we've found ourselves in a situation where we have to review the entire thing. The good news is the Chief of Staff of the Army has given commanders authority to use mission command to delegate that authority down to be able to say, 'You need to focus on those things that are most important to your organization.'"

When looking to the future of the Army, Dailey said he looks to

people, not gadgets and widgets. Dailey cited initiatives in enlisted and NCO professional development, talent management, and establishing Army University.

"We are not the only trained and educated enlisted force in the world anymore," he said. In 2005, the People's Republic of China reorganized their entire military education system for enlisted and officers, committing to train and educate their senior NCOs to the three-year collegiate level, he said.

"We are not there. And that was a decade ago," Dailey said, adding that Russia is doing the same thing with educating their enlisted force. "So we've got to continue to focus on this. Not just focus on it but figure out how we maintain pace on our adversaries as we professionally educate and train our force -- officers, warrant officers, and enlisted. We lived under the glory of having the best professional military education system. But I'll tell you, our adversaries or potential adversaries have learned from us for many years.

"That's why Army University is so important," Dailey continued. "For many years we've been training and educating our Soldiers with world-class capabilities but not giving them any (college) credit for it for whatsoever. If we don't give ourselves academic credit, nobody is ever going to do it.

"With Army University, it would combine all of our academic resources into one homogenous organization and give us the ability to issue the degree," he said. "That's the power that we don't have over our academic partners -- we don't have the power to issue a degree."

He said the Army is not looking to build mechanical engineers or business leaders but the Army can "stake claims on things like leadership. Many of these (academic) organizations have come to us to use our curriculum and then turn around and give credit for training that we're giving every single day."

Dailey said he would be meeting with the Department of Education

officials to further discuss how Army University can become a reality.

His final initiative is taking care of Soldiers and their Families. He said he tells young Soldiers that we owe it to Americans to give them a better chance at life.

"So it requires every one of us to be deployable. It requires every one of us to get behind a rifle and selflessly serve," Dailey said. "It requires the same motivation of those individuals approaching Omaha Beach and waiting for that ramp to go down on Wave 1 on D-Day."

He said that none of us would have what we have today if those men had not gotten in those landing craft.

"We engage in the crucible of ground combat with the enemy and it is a nasty, dirty business," he said. "And sometimes we forget that. And that is why we are here -- to preserve that -- to take care of people."

He said studies have shown the number one reason young Americans join the military today is to go to college, not because of sense of service.

Dailey said while serving in the military is still perceived by the majority of Americans as an honorable service, the perception of serving in the Army is the lowest of all the uniformed services.

"This is unsustainable, just like non-deployables," Dailey said. "We have to get back at becoming an organization that people want to join and recruiting is not easy right now, it's hard."

He also said too often when a Soldier is getting out of the Army and they have done a good job, we often don't give them enough recognition and help to make their transition back to civilian life better.

"We have to really take a hard look into how we are sending our Soldiers off to our great communities out there," Dailey said. "Because we are relying on them to regenerate the next Soldier that wants to serve." ❁

## Prep Your Home Before You Pack Your Bags

*A message from Liberty Mutual Insurance*

Vacations were invented to help you leave your worries behind. Here are a few tips designed to help ensure that your trip isn't interrupted with problems from the home front.

### Tell the Good Guys You're Going Away...

Ask a neighbor to watch your house, or have a friend drive by to keep an eye on things – it will be well worth the added peace of mind. You can even bribe them with treats or a souvenir from your trip. The U.S. State Department also recommends that you have a friend or neighbor hold onto your spare key and, if possible, ask them to park their car in your driveway to make it look like someone is home. Be sure to notify the Post Office and have your mail delivery stopped, suspend your newspaper deliveries, and for longer trips, notify the police department.

### ...Not the Bad Guys

While it's hard to resist sharing selfies taken on the beach, be careful about what you post to social media. AARP.org cautions against broadcasting that your home is empty.

Make sure your settings allow only family and friends to view your feed. An un-mowed lawn can also be a tip-off, so be sure to hire someone to keep it trim while you're away.

### Put Lights on Timers

A house that is dark all evening is a sure sign that nobody's home. Same thing with a house where the lights are on all night. A timer will not only create the illusion that someone is flipping the switch, it will help you use energy efficiently. If you normally keep your curtains open, don't close them while you are away.

### Lock Up More Than Your Home

If you have a safe, throw in important documents, computers and valuables.

If you need to hide money, don't put it in your sock drawer...thieves know most people hide cash in their dresser. Place it out of sight in a very high or very low place, outside of the bedroom. Just don't make your hiding place so good that you can't find it later or you forget where it is.

### Install an Alarm

They're a great deterrent. Plus, they can also help you save money

on your insurance. Be sure to ask your insurance agent about **Liberty Mutual's Protective Device Discount.**

### Don't Let a Burst Pipe Burst Your Bubble on Vacation

If you live in a cold climate, be sure to keep your heat at a temperature warm enough to ensure that your pipes don't freeze. That will also ensure a warmer welcome when you return from your trip

The best way to put your mind at ease? Make sure your home is protected with good insurance, year round. You can trust Liberty Mutual Insurance to provide superior coverage -- we've been doing it for 100 years.

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### SOURCES:

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<http://travel.aarp.org/articles-tips/articles/info-2015/home-safety-travel-tips-photo.html#slide5>

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## Resumes Sought for AFTEA Board of Directors

2016 is an AFTEA BOD election year and greater participation is needed from the membership, both in the number of candidates for election and the numbers voting once the ballots are published in the *Alliance*.

The election shall be held in September, 2016, by "mail-in" ballot. The following offices shall be filled:

- President (2-year term)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President (2-year term)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President (2-year term)
- Secretary (2-year term)
- Treasurer (2-year term)
- Director (*One*) (4-year term)

Election information and qualifications are contained in AFTEA Bylaws, Article X, and are available on the AFTEA web-site at <http://www.aftea.us>.

Members who wish to place their names in nomination for a position on the BOD must submit their qualifications to AFTEA on a Resume of Candidate for Elective Office form. Resume forms may be downloaded from the AFTEA web-site at <http://www.aftea.us>, or by calling Member Services at 800-808-4517, ext. 1010.

Any member interested in seeking elective office who has previously submitted a resume need not do so again unless changes need to be made. Candidates who have not previously submitted a resume need to do so and may contact Parliamentarian George Miles at (719) 591-0969 or [gjmiles2@gmail.com](mailto:gjmiles2@gmail.com) for any needed assistance.

Resumes must be mailed to: Armed Forces Top Enlisted Association, ATTN: Nominating Committee, P.O. Box 16848, Colorado Springs, CO 80935, and post-marked no later than July 10, 2016.

All elected officers and directors will take office on January 1, 2017.

## Lawmakers Push for a Bigger Military Pay Raise and 27,000 More Troops

House lawmakers want a 2.1 percent military pay raise for next year and a force expansion totaling 27,000 troops beyond the Pentagon's request, according to their first draft of the annual defense authorization bill just released.

The legislation, which features hundreds of defense spending priorities and policies for fiscal 2017, also includes an overhaul of military judicial rules but does not yet include any major military medical reform measures. House Armed Services Committee staff said those proposals will be unveiled next week.

Committee leaders have not yet released the total cost of their proposal, expected to be a contentious fight in the months to come.

A budget deal reached by Congress and the White House last fall set fiscal 2017 defense spending around \$580 billion, but House conservatives have insisted that new overseas threats mandate additional contingency spending above the agreed-upon level.

Here's an overview:

### A BIGGER PAY RAISE

Lawmakers' 2.1 percent pay raise recommendation matches the expected jump in private sector wages for 2017, and surpasses the White House's call for a 1.6 percent pay hike next year. The House Armed Services Committee staff said they are confident lawmakers can override any possibility the president will substitute his preferred rate. But they'll need the Senate's support.

If, ultimately, they are unsuccessful, a 1.6 percent pay raise in 2017 would be the highest for troops since 2013, and would continue a six-year streak of military pay hikes that fall below 2 percent. Defense Department officials have said the lower-than-expected raise will save more than \$300 million in fiscal 2017, and more than \$2.2 billion over the next five years.

They have also emphasized that even at a lower level, troops will see bigger salaries starting next January. A 1.6 percent pay increase amounts to a \$400 yearly pay boost for most junior enlisted troops and up to \$1,500 more in

annual pay for mid-career officers.

But the differences in the pay plans can have a noticeable effect on military families' finances.

For an E-4 with three years of service, the gap between the two pay raise plans totals about \$136 a year. For an E-7 with 10 years, it's almost \$228.

Among officers, the lower pay raise plan would drop the annual earnings of an O-2 with two years service by roughly \$234 in 2017. An O-4 with 12 years would lose about \$425.

Troops' advocates have argued that such losses are significant, saying military pay won't keep up with private sector wages and costs. They estimate the pay gap between civilian paychecks and military salaries will increase to more than 5 percent if the administration's 2017 plan becomes law.

### MORE TROOPS

The Army, Marine Corps and Air Force all would see personnel growth over current levels under the House measure, a stark contrast from White House plans to trim each of the services.

Lawmakers want 25,000 more soldiers for the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve. Additionally, the Army's active-duty force would rise from 475,000 to 480,000 soldiers, instead of dropping to 460,000 under planned Pentagon cuts. House Republicans have criticized that drawdown, saying the move will leave the service degraded and unprepared.

The Marine Corps would grow by 1,000 troops under the House plan, instead of shrinking from 184,000 to 182,000 under White House proposals.

Air Force personnel would grow by 285 instead of shrinking by almost 4,000, to 317,000.

Lawmakers agreed with administration drawdown plans only in their Navy recommendation. That service is slated to drop from 329,200 sailors by this fall to 322,900 by fall 2017.

The House plan does not specify how it would pay for personnel increases, and Defense Department officials have said they cannot provide adequate training and equipment for those force levels without hefty increases elsewhere in the

defense budget.

### BASES, CRIME, WOMEN IN COMBAT

The House committee's draft bill once again rejects Pentagon requests for another Base Realignment and Closure round.

Defense officials repeatedly have pushed for one, arguing that post-war military cutbacks have left the services with too much costly infrastructure. But lawmakers have regularly opposed the idea, citing ongoing costs associated with the last round of base closures and potential risk of losing surge capabilities.

It also includes a Pentagon-led overhaul of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, including changes such as expanding the statute of limitations for child abuse offenses and fraudulent enlistment. The changes also adds new offenses to the UCM, including improper use of government computers and enhanced penalties against individuals who victimize military recruits and trainees.

Lawmakers also included a provision to develop "lighter, stronger and more advanced personal protective equipment systems" for all troops, including gender-appropriate sizing of body armor and other gear.

And they added language allowing Women Airforce Service Pilots who served honorably during World War II to have their remains buried at Arlington National Cemetery, overriding an Army policy change from last year that has infuriated activists.

The full House is expected to vote on the authorization bill in mid-May. Senate lawmakers are expected to offer their first drafts of the legislation around the same time.

Leaders from both chambers have expressed optimism that a final authorization bill can be sent to the president before the fiscal year ends Sept. 30. But that has only happened a few times in the last three decades, and both chambers are scheduled to leave Capitol Hill for a two-month break this summer in advance of the November elections. 🌿

# Why Aren't Newly Enrolled US Veterans Receiving Timely Care?

Despite efforts of review and reform, a new report from the Government Accountability Office shows weeks-long wait times and scheduling challenges.

Systems for accessing health care from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs do not “effectively oversee newly enrolled veterans’ access to primary care,” according to a new US Government Accountability Office (GAO) report.

The GAO found that VA scheduling practices often leave veterans seeking primary care from the VHA with weeks to months-long waits for appointments with the medical agency.

“This report proves what we’ve long known: wait-time manipulation continues at VA and the department’s wait-time rhetoric doesn’t match up with the reality of veterans’ experiences,” said Rep. Jeff Miller (R) of Fla., the Veteran Affairs committee chairman. “I am not at all surprised these problems persist,” he added.

Scheduling problems and long wait lists are not a new problem for the veteran’s service agency. A 2014 report first brought to light the VA’s “corrosive culture” and “significant and chronic system failures,” highlighting excessive wait times and falsified records of how long it took to secure an appointment.

Following those highly publicized revelations, it was found last year that the number of veterans seeking care and waiting a month or more for service increased by 50 percent from 2014, despite reform efforts in the wake of that year’s investigation.

A review also found that the administration had a backlog of more than 860,000 pending records, although the amount related to health care applications or the number of “old and inactive” records could not be determined.

While that review could not substantiate the exact scope of the VA’s application backlogs, it did expose a mismanaged system with more than

300,000 pending records related to deceased veterans, illegitimately deleted or falsified records, and more than 11,000 unprocessed health care applications.

The new GAO report, finalized in March 2016, examined the records of 180 veterans newly enrolled in the VHA across six VA medical centers. Of that sample, 60 had not been seen by a medical provider and around half did not have access to primary care, due to scheduling that did not follow VHA policy.

The investigation also found that the amount of time veterans spent waiting between a request to schedule an appointment and the date they were finally seen varies greatly between VA centers. Slightly more than half were seen within 30 days of their scheduling request, but the remainder waited three or more months before finally being seen by care providers. The average wait ranged from 22 to 71 days.

In addition, nearly one-third of veterans newly added into VA systems were not contacted within the mandated seven-day timeframe to even schedule their initial appointment.

“These time frames were impacted by limited appointment availability and weaknesses in medical center scheduling practices, which contributed to unnecessary delays,” the GAO wrote.

Top VA officials addressed the agency’s reform efforts before the Congressionally appointed Commission on Care in Washington last week.

“I know transformational change is not easy but it is our commitment to the Veterans we serve in order to bring them the customer service and the care and benefits they have earned,” Veteran Affairs secretary Robert McDonald said in a written statement.

VA officials underscored the agency’s commitment to change, while saying that 90 percent of veteran’s report being “completely satisfied” or “satisfied” with their wait time.

“We have challenges in VA and we own them, but the transformation that Bob talked about is well underway and already delivering measurable results for improving access to care and improving the Veterans experience,” added Deputy Secretary Sloan D. Gibson.

House majority leader Kevin McCarthy issued a statement blaming “unaccountable bureaucrats” and calling for better private care access for veterans.

“The VA needs a radical transformation if it is ever going to adequately care for our veterans,” Rep. Miller said in a statement.

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## The AFTEA Alliance

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Association  
1 (800) 808-4517

Publisher  
Bernd Dela Cruz  
CSM USA (Ret)

Executive Editor  
Catherine Tavarozzo

Managing Editor/Designer  
Sue Boyles



**Armed Forces Top Enlisted Association**  
**P.O. Box 90030**  
**Washington, D.C. 20090-0030**  
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 <h1 style="text-align: center;">ALLIANCE</h1> <p style="text-align: center;">In This Issue</p>	
SMA Dailey: ‘We Must Fight and Win’ .....	page 1
Report from the Hill.....	page 1
President's Column.....	page 2
Prep Your Home Before You Pack Your Bags.....	page 5
Resumes Sought for AFTEA Board of Directors.....	page 5
Lawmakers Push for a Bigger Military Pay Raise and 27,000 More Troops .....	page 6
Why Aren’t Newly Enrolled US Veterans Receiving Timely Care? .....	page 7



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