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FRA Participates in Roundtable Discussion of Mandatory National Service

Director of Legislative Policy John Davis participated in a roundtable discussion with the Commission on Military, National and Public Service. This Commission was created with a broad, aspirational mandate: to develop ideas that will foster a greater ethos of military, national and public service among Americans of all ages. The 11-member, bipartisan commission was created by Congress on September 19, 2017 and launched in January 2018. The commission plans to release an interim report in early 2019 that will be available to the public, Congress and the President. It will outline issues and summarize the commission's work to date. A final report will be published, complete with policy recommendations and legislative proposals, by March 2020.

FRA will continue to work with and monitor the work of the Commission. FRA will provide questions regarding mandatory service that will be included in FRA's annual online survey.

President Appoints Four Additional Judges to VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that President Trump recently approved the appointment of four new Veterans Law Judges to VA's Board of Veterans' Appeals.

"Bringing on additional judges means the Board will be better staffed to conduct hearings and decide appeals properly in a timely manner," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Combined with procedural changes under the Appeals Modernization and Improvement Act of 2017 (AMA) and the hiring of more than 200 additional board attorneys, this translates into better and faster service for veterans."

Veteran's law judges are presidential appointees and go through a thorough vetting process. After an initial screening, the chairman of the board recommends a list of candidates to the Secretary of the VA. If agreed to, the list of selectees is forwarded to the White House for final approval. Once approved, the selectees are notified by the chairman and officially sworn in. The following Veterans Law Judges assumed their roles October 14, 2018: Lauren Cryan, Evan Deichert, William Donnelly and Cynthia Skow.

In fiscal year 2018, the Board issued an historic 85,288 decisions to veterans—61.6 percent more than 2017. Expanding the roster of Veterans Law Judges will allow the Board to continue issuing more decisions for veterans, as VA prepares for full implementation of the AMA. This law

transforms a complex appeals process into one that is simplified, timely and transparent by providing veterans with increased choice and control. The AMA was legislation supported by FRA and will go into effect on February 14, 2019.

For more information about the Board and its progress on appeals modernization, go [online](#).

VA and DoD Leaders Commit to Aligned EHR System Rollout

The Secretaries of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Defense (DoD) signed a joint statement pledging their two departments will align their plans, strategies and structures as they roll out a new Electronic Health Records (EHR) system that will allow the VA and DoD to seamlessly share patient data.

Signed by Defense Secretary James N. Mattis and VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, the joint statement reinforces both departments' commitment to ensuring the successful transition. "The joint statement between DoD and VA represents tangible evidence of our commitment to change how we deliver veteran-focused, provider-friendly care," said Wilkie. "The new EHR system will be interoperable with DoD, while also improving VA's ability to collaborate and share information with community care providers. This will ease the burden on service members as they transition from military careers and will be supported by multiple medical providers throughout their lives."

VA signed a contract with Cerner Corp. May 17 to replace VA's 40-year-old legacy Veterans Integrated System Technology Architecture (Vista) health care records technology over the next 10 years with the new Cerner system, which is in the pilot phase at DoD. Collaborating with DoD will ensure the VA: understands the challenges encountered as DoD deploys its EHR system called Military Health System Genesis (MHS GENESIS); adapts an approach by applying lessons learned to anticipate and mitigate known issues; assesses prospective efficiencies to help deploy faster; and delivers an EHR that is fully interoperable.

"We are committed to partnering with the VA to support the lifetime care of our Service members, Veterans and their families," said Mattis. "This modern electronic health record will ensure those who serve our nation have quality health care as they transition from Service member to Veteran. "

"The EHR will give health care providers a full picture of patient medical history, driving better clinical outcomes," said Wilkie. "It will also help us identify Veterans proactively who are at higher risk for issues, such as opioid addiction and suicide, so health care providers can intervene earlier and save lives." It has been a long-standing goal of FRA to support adequate funding for DoD and VA health care resource sharing in delivering seamless, cost effective, quality services to our wounded warriors.

Marine Receives MOH from President

President Trump recently presented retired Marine Sergeant Major John Canley the Medal of Honor for his heroic service during the Vietnam conflict in the campaign to take back Hue City during the 1968 Tet offensive. When their commanding officer was seriously injured, Canley, the company gunnery sergeant at the time, took command and led his men through what would become one of the bloodiest battles during the Vietnam War. Canley repeatedly exposed himself to enemy machine gun fire to reach wounded Marines, while disregarding his own wounds.

Earlier this year, President Trump signed a bill (H.R.4641) sponsored by Rep. Julia Brownley (Calif.) that waived the five-year deadline for presenting the Medal of Honor, to allow Sergeant Major Canley to receive the MOH.