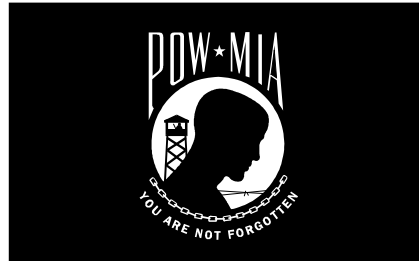


ADJUTANT'S  
NEWSLETTER  
OFFICE PHONE 856-8951  
EMAIL:  
ADJUTANTNH@LEGIONNH.ORG



THE DEPARTMENT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
THE AMERICAN LEGION

TO MY LEGION FAMILY:



**FISHER CAT TICKETS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

I still have plenty of tickets left for the American Legion Day baseball game, the Fisher Cats hosting the Portland Seadogs, on July 16, 2017, game time 1:35 PM.

Tickets are ONLY \$12.00 a piece.

Location is Fisher Cat Stadium, Manchester NH

The Fisher Cat organization is going to donate back to the department a percentage of all tickets we sell, which at this point is few and far between. We need your help to make it a good showing for the Department of New Hampshire at this game and show the Fisher Cats they did not go wrong by sponsoring a game for the American Legion!

Opening ceremonies will include members and leadership from the American Legion. There is a 50/50 raffle as well which the Fisher Cats are donating back to the Department. If this partnership works out this can be an annual fund raiser for the Department. If it is not, then it is another opportunity lost for this Department to get the word out on membership in a crowd like setting and local news outlets. I have done my part in setting this partnership up, how about you do your part and come on down to the ball game! Support the American Legion!

**DEPARTMENT EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING**

**July 18, 2017 at Sweeney Post 2, in Manchester, starting at 7:00 PM. There will be a dinner provided at 6:00 PM prior to the meeting.**

## NATIONAL CONVENTION

Now on to the 99<sup>th</sup> National Convention which will be held in **Reno Nevada, August 18 – 24, 2017**. The due date for requesting housing has passed. If you are a delegate listed and have not submitted your request for housing I will assume you are not planning on attending. I will not be able to submit for additional rooms once my housing form has been submitted to the hotel.

I am in the process of setting up committees and making last minute preparations. I will be in RENO in advance of those attending and will be preparing to greet each of you to issue credentials. I continue to post information on the website pertaining to events and activities going on at the convention.

The banquet tickets this year will be \$47.00 a piece. I originally will order 30 tickets, and have a few still left if you still want to go. After that it is first come first serve for any tickets that departments might have left over.

The following people have been elected as National Delegates for this Convention.

John Graham  
Tony Rabbia  
Bob Dionne  
Maurice Anderson  
Emil Ouellette  
George West  
Robert Glover  
Joe Caouette  
Bob Bournival  
Ken Maynard  
Bill Roy  
David Meaney  
George McCall  
Bill Firth  
Charlie Arkwell

## Congressman hopes to rename Department of the Navy, incorporate US Marine Corps

I found this to be very interesting.

A North Carolina congressman is continuing in his quest to rename the Department of the Navy, reports the [Jacksonville Daily News](#).

U.S. Rep. Walter Jones has been trying to rebrand the department as the Department of the Navy and Marine Corps since 2001, according to the Daily News.

Sixteen years later, the rebranding is included as an amendment to the House Armed Services Committee's version of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2018. Jones is a member of the committee.

"The Marine Corps is an equal member of this department, and therefore, deserves equal recognition in its title," Jones said in a [statement](#).

Not all of Jones' constituents are in favor of the name change, however. Some see it as merely a symbolic change and an empty gesture that won't impact the relationship between the Navy and the Marines.

"Why change the name? What does it achieve? At the end, I can't think of anything that would improve the stature of the Marine Corps," Retired Marine Col. Pete Grimes, who lives in Jones' district, told the Daily News.

The House is expected to vote on the defense bill later this month, said Jones.

# VA Choice funding problem looms for Congress

WASHINGTON — When they return from legislative recess next week, lawmakers will have only a few days to address financial problems with the Veterans Affairs Choice program before users start to see significant problems.

Last month, in testimony before the Senate, VA Secretary David Shulkin warned lawmakers that money in the Choice program funds was being spent at a faster rate than officials expected, threatening to bankrupt the program before the end of the fiscal year. Available funds dropped from about \$2 billion to less than \$850 million in three months.

Shulkin has asked for authority to move money from other outside care initiatives to the program to cover the funding gaps, ensuring that veterans medical appointments aren't disrupted while VA officials work on an update of the Choice program.

But Congress left town for the July 4 recess without addressing the issue. VA officials have warned that the money will run out in early August, and the program will face problems if a fix isn't put in place well before then.

In testimony before the House Veterans Affairs Committee on June 22, acting VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Poonam Alaigh predicted longer wait times for veterans seeking care, fewer available appointments for veterans with physicians outside the VA system, and layoff of some private-sector staff working with the Choice program.

"There will be unintended consequences if we continue down this path because the Choice accounts will start to be used very judiciously," she said.

The Choice program has been at the center of several VA controversies since Congress created it three years ago in the wake of the department's 2014 wait times scandal.

It was billed as a response to access and timeliness problems within the VA system, but has been criticized by some conservatives for being overly restrictive and some liberals for appearing to be the first step towards privatizing department health services.

Among veterans groups, the main complaint has been the bureaucratic nature of the program. Veterans who live at least 40 miles from a VA clinic or face a 30-day wait at department facilities are eligible for the outside care funding.

Shulkin has proposed significant changes to the program next fiscal year, and is expected to detail specifics at a Senate hearing on July 11.

But before they can be approved by Congress, he wants the authority to more easily move VA funds among similar accounts, an authority that his predecessor, former VA Secretary Bob McDonald, also repeatedly requested.

Lawmakers have been receptive to the idea but slow to make the change.

In a letter to the leaders of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees on June 28, nine of the largest veterans organizations petitioned lawmakers to fix the issue but added that "in order to prevent these problems from recurring in the future, we call on you to equally invest in modernizing and expanding VA's capacity to meet rising demand for care."

The groups noted that the Choice program was originally envisioned as a temporary fix for VA access issues, not an enduring initiative. They want more investment in VA infrastructure if Congress decides to make the program permanent.

"There are at least 27 VA health care facility leases awaiting funding in order to be activated," the veterans organizations wrote. "In addition, there are dozens of minor and major construction projects that require billions of dollars in funding to sustain and expand VA's capacity to provide timely care to enrolled veterans."

"Furthermore, VA has tens of thousands of vacant positions which will require not just funding, but innovative new programs to recruit and retain hard-to-fill clinical positions in many areas of the country."

In an appearance on FOX news Wednesday, Shulkin again reiterated that he believes President Donald Trump's VA budget request for fiscal 2018 — which totals \$186.5 billion — is sufficient for his department's needs, even though veterans groups have said they think more infrastructure investment is needed.

But he also said reforms are needed to improve veterans care. The physician-turned-secretary has made the Choice program one of his top priorities for the year, a theme also echoed by Trump.

He is expected to make that case again before the Senate next week. Congress has 15 legislative days left on their schedule before August.

*Leo Shane III, July 5, 2017 (Photo Credit: Michael Orrell/AP)*

## Independence Day ‘means a little bit more to veterans’

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Just 17 when he joined the U.S. Army, Thibodaux resident Dean Matherne said his military service taught him self-discipline, responsibility, timeliness, teamwork and selflessness.

Matherne served from 1985-2011.

“It’s not about you,” he said. “It’s about helping other people. It’s about being willing to be the one that says, ‘I’ll stand between evil and my family.’”

He works with the Thibodaux High School Junior ROTC, which co-sponsored the Let Freedom Ring Festival, held Tuesday at Peltier Park. The event included a flag-raising ceremony and 21-gun salute.

Matherne said the Fourth of July reminds him of the freedom U.S. citizens enjoy because of veterans.

“When you serve so much of your life in (the military), the flag is a part of you,” he said. “You think of it as a living, breathing being. And everybody that you knew, that you served with, that gave up their life – it’s almost like they’re a stitch in the flag. It’s just symbolic of what we believe in and what we fight for.”

MORE VIDEO:

[Let Freedom Ring Festival 2017](#)

Albert Lirette Sr., of Houma, served in the Army for the Vietnam War. At Tuesday’s festival, he was named an honorary Marine.

Lirette was on a Navy ship during the war, conducting search-and-destroy operations for two years. He was awarded four Purple Hearts.

“I got hit in my left arm with a hand grenade,” he said. “I got hit in my leg with the M79 grenade launcher. I got hit on the side of my back with a mortar attack, and then my last Purple Heart, I got hit right on my spine.”

Now, Lirette helps veterans obtain benefits, get help for post-traumatic stress disorder and join veterans’ organizations. He’s senior vice commander for the Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 825 in Houma and also belongs to the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, United Veterans League, Veterans of Foreign Wars and Vietnam Veterans of America.

Montegut resident Kevin Duplantis was 19 when he joined the Marine Corps in 1981. He was discharged in 1987 and now serves as commandant of Bayou Parish Detachment 905 in Raceland.

Duplantis and his fellow veterans saluted as Lirette helped raise the flag Tuesday.

“I really learned to appreciate the freedoms that we have in this country,” he said. “The love of my country, that really came after I was in the military. Before, I was just some teenager and didn’t know how the world really worked. ... When you have to take that oath – that you write a blank check for your life – yeah, it means a little bit more to veterans.”

-- Staff Writer Bridget Mire can be reached at 448-7639 or [bridget.mire@dailycomet.com](mailto:bridget.mire@dailycomet.com). Follow her on Twitter [@bridget\\_mire](https://twitter.com/bridget_mire).



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