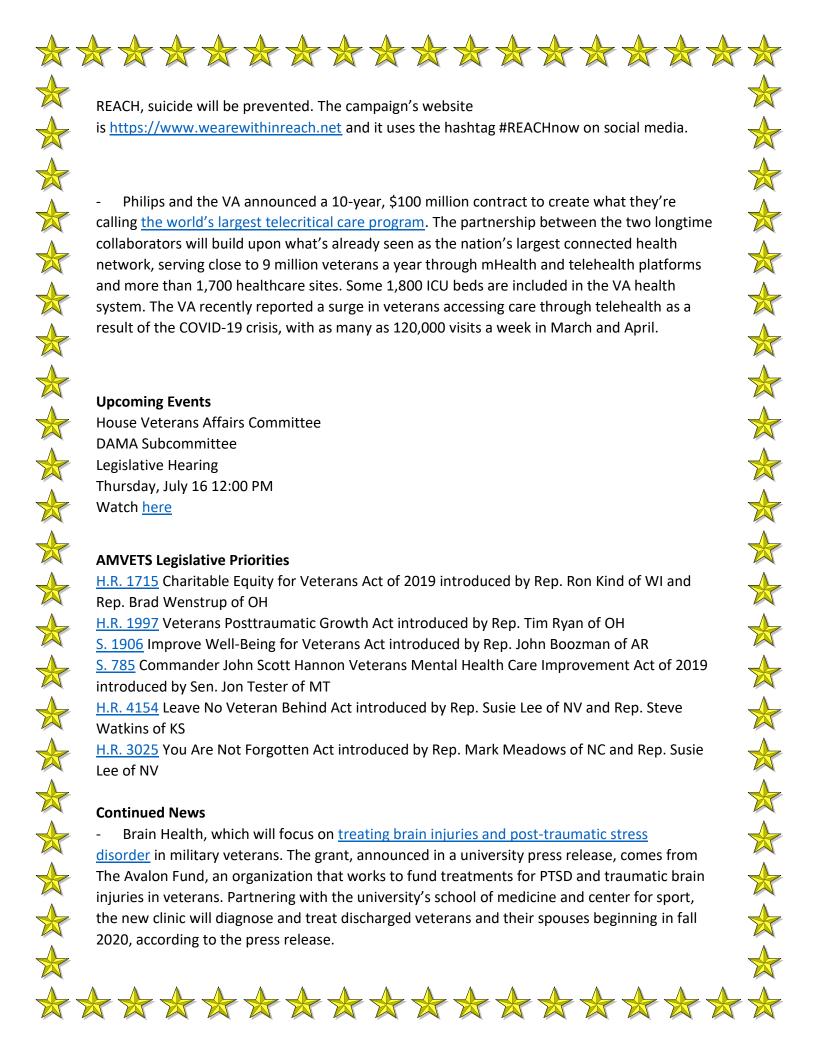
**** **AMVETS LEGISLATIVE UPDATE JULY 13, 2020 News Driving the Week** The Department of Veterans Affairs is one step closer to securing its largest budget in history at more than \$250 billion. House Appropriations subcommittee members on Monday forwarded a bill funding the VA at unprecedented levels to its full committee to send to the House floor for a vote. The bill gives more money to the VA than the \$243.3 billion requested by President Donald Trump in the proposed 2021 budget from the White House. The funding proposal boosts virtually all of the department's major services and priorities of VA Secretary Robert Wilkie and Capitol Hill: suicide prevention, women's health care and a \$1.1 billion boost to implement the agency's troubled health records system. VA is one of the only federal agencies not getting a budget cut and it is the only Cabinet department eyeing a double-digit budget boost — 14%, according to Trump's proposed budget. The budget proposes \$10.3 billion for mental health care, an increase of \$865 million from the 2020 enacted level and \$40 * million more than Trump's budget request, including \$313 million for suicide prevention outreach. Just days after lawmakers on Capitol Hill heard about the deadly struggles veterans with bad-paper discharges face, and how thousands are denied benefits annually, the Department of Veterans Affairs is floating a change to its policies. On July 10, VA published a proposal to "update and clarify regulatory bars to benefits based on character of discharge" in the Federal

- Just days after lawmakers on Capitol Hill heard about the deadly struggles <u>veterans with bad-paper discharges</u> face, and how thousands are denied benefits annually, the Department of Veterans Affairs is floating a change to its policies. On July 10, VA published a proposal to "update and clarify regulatory bars to benefits based on character of discharge" in the Federal Register. The policy amendment would change how VA decides whether or not a veteran with an other-than-honorable discharge qualifies for benefits including the GI Bill, health care and home loans. Specifically, VA proposed modifying its framework for discharges considered "dishonorable" for VA benefit purposes, including discharges due to: "willful and persistent misconduct," "an offense involving moral turpitude," and "homosexual acts involving aggravating circumstances or other factors affecting the performance of duty."

- Reducing national suicide, including for Veterans, is the goal of a new <u>REACH campaign</u>, unveiled at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The campaign's mission is to educate all Americans that suicide is preventable and to encourage them to REACH to those in need to provide hope. It also encourages people who are hurting to REACH to find help. When people





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