



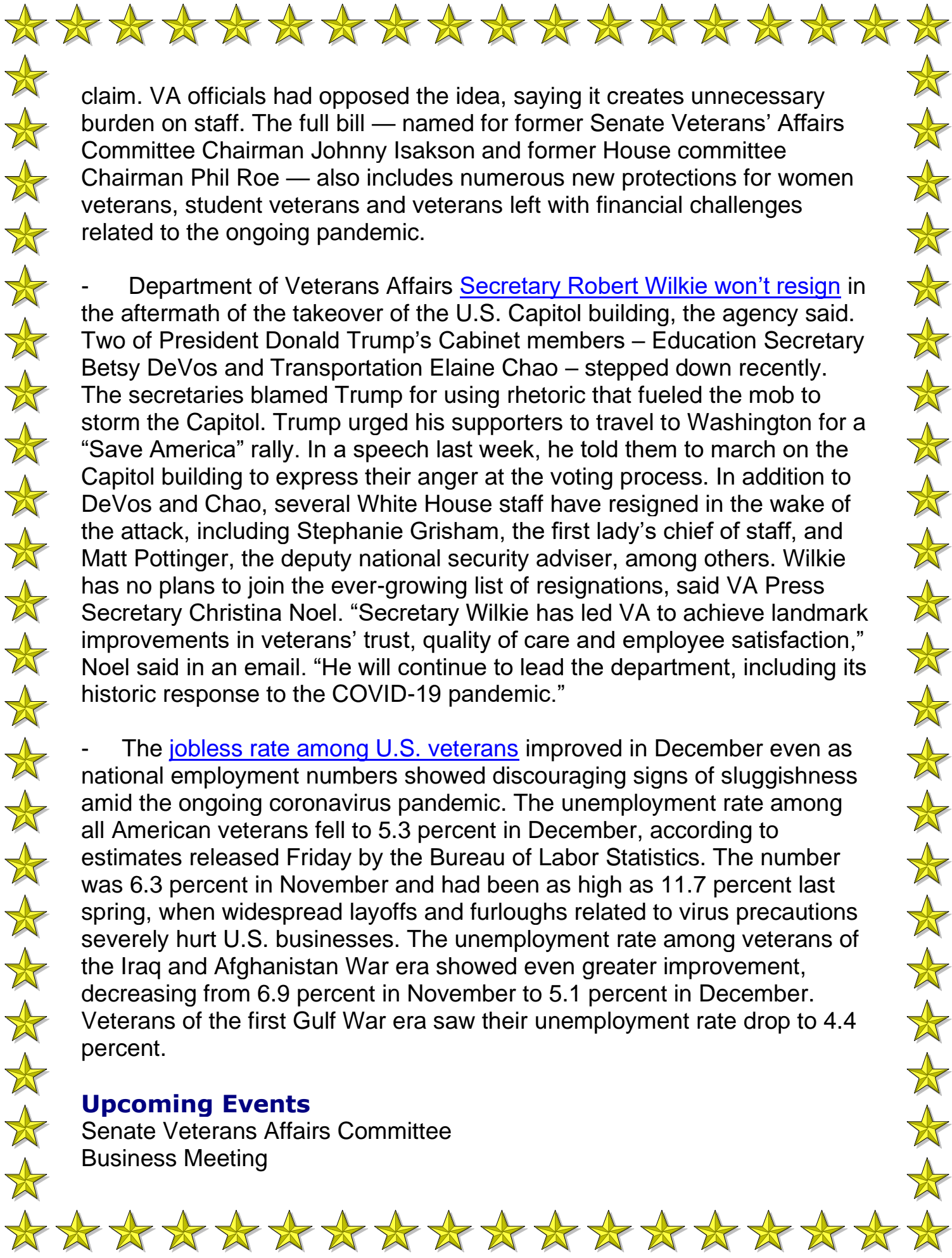
AMVETS LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

JANUARY 11, 2021

News Driving the Week

- After a lengthy wait, President Donald Trump signed into law a sweeping veterans policy measure that includes new protections for women veterans, student veterans and individuals struggling with the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The omnibus measure includes the [Deborah Sampson Act](#), legislation pending for four years which would enact a series of reforms at the Department of Veterans Affairs aimed at improving services for women veterans. That includes a mandate for VA leaders to create “an anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy” and designate officials to take responsibility for any related complaints. The bill also includes \$20 million for retrofitting health care facilities “to make it safer and easier for women veterans to get care” and a requirement that department officials make permanent an Office of Women’s Health within the Veterans Health Administration to oversee all women’s health programs. It also mandates that every VA facility have at least one women’s health primary care provider and authorize a new \$1 million annual program for a women veterans health care residency program. The measure would allow, for the first time, veterans filing military sexual trauma benefits claims to request a female medical provider for any related exams. And it would expand military sexual trauma counseling at VA to former members of the National Guard and reserves, who are eligible now only if they are currently serving.

- Veterans Affairs officials will have to provide basic legal advice to veterans who file medical malpractice claims and provide information on local staffing issues as part of new legislation signed into law. The provisions, dubbed the [Brian Tally VA Employment Transparency Act](#), were included in a massive veterans policy omnibus which passed without objection in both the House and Senate last month. President Donald Trump gave his final approval of the measure. The new legislation mandates that the department provide “notice of the importance of securing legal counsel” and clearly identify the employment status of any individuals involved in the case within a month of a veteran submitting a malpractice



claim. VA officials had opposed the idea, saying it creates unnecessary burden on staff. The full bill — named for former Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Johnny Isakson and former House committee Chairman Phil Roe — also includes numerous new protections for women veterans, student veterans and veterans left with financial challenges related to the ongoing pandemic.

- Department of Veterans Affairs [Secretary Robert Wilkie won't resign](#) in the aftermath of the takeover of the U.S. Capitol building, the agency said. Two of President Donald Trump's Cabinet members – Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and Transportation Elaine Chao – stepped down recently. The secretaries blamed Trump for using rhetoric that fueled the mob to storm the Capitol. Trump urged his supporters to travel to Washington for a “Save America” rally. In a speech last week, he told them to march on the Capitol building to express their anger at the voting process. In addition to DeVos and Chao, several White House staff have resigned in the wake of the attack, including Stephanie Grisham, the first lady's chief of staff, and Matt Pottinger, the deputy national security adviser, among others. Wilkie has no plans to join the ever-growing list of resignations, said VA Press Secretary Christina Noel. “Secretary Wilkie has led VA to achieve landmark improvements in veterans’ trust, quality of care and employee satisfaction,” Noel said in an email. “He will continue to lead the department, including its historic response to the COVID-19 pandemic.”

- The [jobless rate among U.S. veterans](#) improved in December even as national employment numbers showed discouraging signs of sluggishness amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The unemployment rate among all American veterans fell to 5.3 percent in December, according to estimates released Friday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The number was 6.3 percent in November and had been as high as 11.7 percent last spring, when widespread layoffs and furloughs related to virus precautions severely hurt U.S. businesses. The unemployment rate among veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan War era showed even greater improvement, decreasing from 6.9 percent in November to 5.1 percent in December. Veterans of the first Gulf War era saw their unemployment rate drop to 4.4 percent.

Upcoming Events

Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
Business Meeting

Wednesday, January 27 3:00 PM
Dirksen 106
Watch [here](#)

Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
Hearing to Consider Pending Nomination
Wednesday, January 27 3:01 PM
Dirksen 106
Watch [here](#)

AMVETS Legislative Priorities

[H.R. 1715](#) Charitable Equity for Veterans Act of 2019 introduced by Rep. Ron Kind of WI and Rep. Brad Wenstrup of OH

[H.R. 1997](#) Veterans Posttraumatic Growth Act introduced by Rep. Tim Ryan of OH

[S. 1906](#) Improve Well-Being for Veterans Act introduced by Rep. John Boozman of AR

[S. 785](#) Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019 introduced by Sen. Jon Tester of MT

[H.R. 4154](#) Leave No Veteran Behind Act introduced by Rep. Susie Lee of NV and Rep. Steve Watkins of KS

[H.R. 3025](#) You Are Not Forgotten Act introduced by Rep. Mark Meadows of NC and Rep. Susie Lee of NV

Continued News

- [Opinion](#): Veteran suicides — here's how we help

