



AMVETS LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

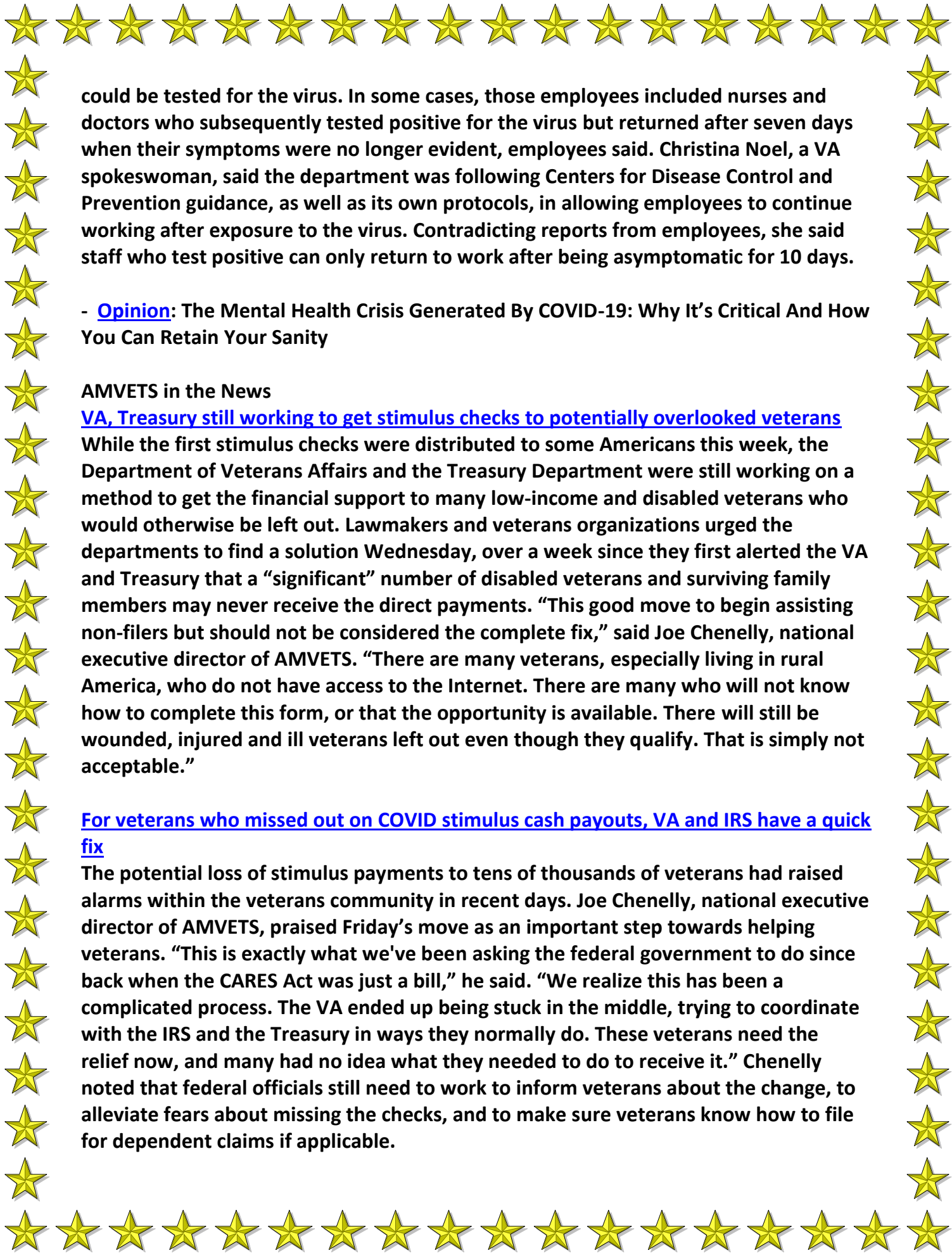
APRIL 20, 2020

News Driving the Week

- Congress and the Trump administration are quickly nearing a more than [\\$400 billion deal on emergency funding](#) for small businesses hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic, with passage expected in the coming days. On a conference call with President Donald Trump and Republican senators on Sunday afternoon, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell told Republicans that the only portion of the package not agreed to focused on coronavirus testing. McConnell did say the Senate would work to pass the agreement as soon as possible; a pro forma session is scheduled for Monday afternoon. House Democrats predict the earliest they could call a vote would be Wednesday. Senior Democrats currently expect at least one Republican to object to passing the relief package via voice vote and are preparing to alert members that they may need to fly back to Washington. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy said Republicans would probably demand a roll call vote, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer told Democrats on the leadership call on Sunday.

- Following calls from Mark Takano, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and Richard Neal, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, VA, The Treasury Department, And Internal Revenue Service (IRS) announced [plans to automatically identify and distribute COVID-19 stimulus checks to veterans](#). This decision ensures these individuals-- Including homeless veterans and those relying primarily on VA benefits, who typically are not required to file a tax return, will not be left behind by bureaucratic red tape. "The removal of this hurdle is terrific news for our nation's veterans," said Chairman Neal. "These folks selflessly served our country and it's only right that they receive their COVID-19 economic impact payments automatically, just like other groups of Americans. I'm very glad our Committees' request led to this important change."

- [Employees at the Veterans Affairs Department](#) are feeling pressured to return to work even after they've been exposed to the novel coronavirus—a new VA policy requires them to continue showing up, and threatens discipline along with the possibility of losing pay for those who stay home. At some facilities, VA officials have instituted policies under which employees who worked with COVID-19 positive patients before their status was known—and therefore were not wearing the proper equipment—should continue to work until they develop symptoms, after which they



could be tested for the virus. In some cases, those employees included nurses and doctors who subsequently tested positive for the virus but returned after seven days when their symptoms were no longer evident, employees said. Christina Noel, a VA spokeswoman, said the department was following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance, as well as its own protocols, in allowing employees to continue working after exposure to the virus. Contradicting reports from employees, she said staff who test positive can only return to work after being asymptomatic for 10 days.

- [Opinion](#): The Mental Health Crisis Generated By COVID-19: Why It's Critical And How You Can Retain Your Sanity

AMVETS in the News

[VA, Treasury still working to get stimulus checks to potentially overlooked veterans](#)

While the first stimulus checks were distributed to some Americans this week, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Treasury Department were still working on a method to get the financial support to many low-income and disabled veterans who would otherwise be left out. Lawmakers and veterans organizations urged the departments to find a solution Wednesday, over a week since they first alerted the VA and Treasury that a "significant" number of disabled veterans and surviving family members may never receive the direct payments. "This good move to begin assisting non-filers but should not be considered the complete fix," said Joe Chenelly, national executive director of AMVETS. "There are many veterans, especially living in rural America, who do not have access to the Internet. There are many who will not know how to complete this form, or that the opportunity is available. There will still be wounded, injured and ill veterans left out even though they qualify. That is simply not acceptable."

[For veterans who missed out on COVID stimulus cash payouts, VA and IRS have a quick fix](#)

The potential loss of stimulus payments to tens of thousands of veterans had raised alarms within the veterans community in recent days. Joe Chenelly, national executive director of AMVETS, praised Friday's move as an important step towards helping veterans. "This is exactly what we've been asking the federal government to do since back when the CARES Act was just a bill," he said. "We realize this has been a complicated process. The VA ended up being stuck in the middle, trying to coordinate with the IRS and the Treasury in ways they normally do. These veterans need the relief now, and many had no idea what they needed to do to receive it." Chenelly noted that federal officials still need to work to inform veterans about the change, to alleviate fears about missing the checks, and to make sure veterans know how to file for dependent claims if applicable.

Friends, advocates, Vietnam War veterans die days apart

Vietnam War veterans Charles Sharples and Craige Osborne were friends, neighbors and part of the gay community in California's Coachella Valley. They belonged to the same veterans organizations, volunteered and traveled together. Sharples, 76, died March 16 of complications from the coronavirus. Three days later, Osborne died too. The two were fierce advocates who represented AMVETS remarkably in California. On behalf of our entire organization, our hearts go out to their families and close friends. They will be deeply missed, and their continued service to veterans never forgotten.

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



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