



Dear Colleagues and Leaders,

Happy New Year! Welcome to the latest installment of the “DVS DEI Weekly” e-newsletter, intended to share timely and relevant news, thoughts, and resources that can help with promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in our work. I hope you find this to be interesting and helpful.

#### NEW LEGISLATION

- [Women Veterans, Students Will See Expanded Services and Benefits Under New Law](#) – Great news! A 337-page omnibus bill containing a number of important new protections for women veterans, student veterans, and many more was signed into law last night by President Trump. A significant feature of the bill is the Deborah Sampson Act, the result of four years of focused advocacy, which mandates new upgrades for VA healthcare for women, as well as new protections and considerations for veterans who have experienced MST. Look for more detailed information coming soon!
- [Now Official: National Borinqueneers Day](#) – As part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that passed last week in an override vote is the official designation of April 13 as National Borinqueneers Day, celebrating the rich history of the 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. The 65<sup>th</sup>, comprised mostly of soldiers from Puerto Rico, has a distinguished record of service in both World Wars and Korea.
- [Women in the Military May Finally Get Body Armor That Actually Fits](#) – A disproportionate number of musculoskeletal injuries experienced by women serving over the last 20 years has been attributed to equipment that does not fit women’s bodies. A provision in the recently passed NDAA at last begins the process of addressing the problems of ill-fitted equipment for women servicemembers.
- [Pentagon Gets Diversity Watchdog in Bill Passed Over Trump Veto](#) – Also in the NDAA, a new deputy inspector general’s position was created by the bipartisan defense authorization bill to carry out audits, investigations and evaluations of military personnel policies, programs and systems to ensure they address diversity priorities, including efforts to combat white supremacy and extremist behavior within the U.S. military.

#### RECENT STUDIES

- [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Veterans Face Elevated Suicide Risks](#) – A new report examining 2017 data on lesbian, gay, and bisexual veteran suicide shows these individuals are at higher risk for suicide than the general veteran population. Among these veterans, suicide was the 5<sup>th</sup>-leading cause of death, while suicide was the 10<sup>th</sup>-leading cause of death among the general population.
- [VA Research Brief: Suicide Attempts and Homelessness](#) – A new VA study shows that recent homelessness appears to be associated with a substantially elevated risk of recent suicide attempts, suggesting that homelessness and suicidality strongly co-occur. However, among adults with recent homelessness, suicidal behavior also began decades ago and likely preceded homelessness for many adults. VA efforts to mitigate homelessness and suicide have not been directly connected in the past, and this research argues for more direct coordination.

**ALSO:**

- [Last Civil War Widow Receiving Pension Dies at 101](#) – Yesterday Helen Viola Jackson, the last widow who was receiving her husband’s pension from service in the Civil War, passed away yesterday in Missouri at age 101. Pension benefits certainly are long lasting!

**THANK YOU FOR READING!**

I appreciate you taking the time to read this newsletter. Is this information helpful? Are you participating in DEI-related events or initiatives in your area that we can help to promote as an agency? Do you have items to share for a future newsletter or to suggest for our social media? Let me know!

Wishing health and safety to you and yours,

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