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The Voice for Chaplaincy - Chartered by Congress - Serving Since 1925

Weekly Newsgram - August 9th, 2017

Forever GI Bill

The House and Senate have passed the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance

Act of 2017 otherwise known as the Forever GI Bill. The bill's namesake was a member of the American Legion who wrote the initial GI Bill in the World War II era.



Several major improvements which will have provide more flexibility for future service-members as well as many who have served and continue to serve today.

Eliminates 15-year time limit on use of benefits for all who enlist on or after January 1, 2108. All currently serving or who now have benefits to include dependents are still limited to a 15 year use-it-or-lose-it rule.

Reserve and Guard members called to duty in federal responses to major disasters or in support of combatant commands are now eligible for the bill's benefits. This significantly expands the numbers of Guard and Reserve members eligible with benefits beginning after Aug 1, 2018.

All Purple Heart Recipients will now receive full bill benefits regardless of amount of time served on active duty.

More benefit changes will apply for Fry Scholarship recipients and those receiving benefits from their sponsors.

Though the bill passed Congress in three weeks by unanimous votes, it almost was left behind without ever making it to the floor. The legislation passed is a combination of 18 separate bills which had been advanced by various lawmakers. The negotiations to craft the new bill were halted in April

over funding issues.

Advocacy coalitions took up the fight and mobilized their members to press lawmakers to bring the legislation to the floor for a vote. [The Student Veterans of America](#) asked members of their 25 chapters in Kentucky to call the office of the Senate Majority Leader to press for an up or down vote. With this extra push, the bill now awaits the President's signature.

The Forever GI Bill recognizes the nation's commitment to the men and women who serve expanding coverage for those who sacrifice on the part of our nation. It removes arbitrary time limits on the use of benefits earned by veterans and establishes opportunities for expanded use of benefits as veterans consider the needs of their families. Another example of how advocacy coalitions make a positive difference in the lives of our people.

Lyman Smith
Executive Director

[Military.com Article](#)



Welcome New Members

Chaplain William T. Alford

Lieutenant Colonel, Civil Air Patrol
Episcopal Church
Etters, PA

Chaplain Steve Thomlison

Captain, United States Army National Guard
Roman Catholic Church
Exeter, NE

[Navy Corpsman](#) [Commissioned as Chaplain](#) [Candidate](#)



Navy Ensign Charles Wilton was a hospital corpsman first class before receiving his commission during a ceremony at Joint Base San Antonio on Aug 7, 2017. He worked in curriculum management for the academics directorate at Navy Medicine Education Training Logistics Command, but has long

known his true calling was in the ministry.

"I was deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan, in the summer of 2013 when I first felt the call to become a chaplain," Wilton said. "I had to wait at least two years since I had only recently converted to Catholicism. So, once I got back from my deployment, I used the next few years for reflection. I attended retreats, found a spiritual director to guide me, and became more involved with my parish."

Wilton became very involved with the church and community while stationed in Japan over the next couple years. He organized the volunteers' schedules, trained altar servers and readers, and became the assistant choir director.

Wilton said he feels his experience as an enlisted service member will benefit him as a chaplain and officer since he is already familiar with the culture and will be able to relate to both sides. He expressed great appreciation for the opportunity to fulfill his dream in becoming a Navy chaplain.

"This means a lot to me because after serving as a hospital corpsman for 13 years, I now have an opportunity to take my service to God, country and the Navy and Marine Corps team to the next level," he said. "I am putting down the stethoscope and picking up my cross."

After receiving his commission, the next step for Wilton is to earn his Masters of Divinity Degree through a six-year seminary. He will start school this month. Wilton will also attend Officer Development School, the Navy Chaplain School and receive on-the-job training as a chaplain candidate.



Arlington National Cemetery National Dialogue

Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) is at another crossroads in its history. In about twenty-five years, ANC will run out of space as an active cemetery to honor our Nation's veterans. In order to significantly extend ANC's capacity,

changes to either eligibility criteria and/or expansion of the cemetery's geographic footprint are required. Through Public Law 114-58, Congress directed the Secretary of the Army to provide this report to identify the current status and inform ways to extend the life expectancy of the cemetery well into the future.

ANC leaderships has developed a survey as they seek input from as many as possible in determining the future of the cemetery.

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey. You may access it [here](#).

If the link does not work, please go to this web location -

<http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/News/Post/4178/National-dialogue-begins-at-Arlington-National-Cemetery>

The full report on the future of Arlington is located [here](#).

WANTED: FULL-TIME PASTOR **St. John's Lutheran Church**

St. John's Lutheran Church, located in Ambridge, PA, is seeking a Pastor to replace our current Pastor who has announced his intent to retire. St. John's is a small, but very active conservative Lutheran congregation affiliated with the AFLC. The congregation has been in continuous existence for over 100 years.

The church is located in the Old Economy Village historic district, close to the Trinity School for Ministry, and is considered to be the finest example of Neo-Georgian church architecture in existence. The physical plant includes a large education building and a parsonage, and is well maintained and managed. The congregation has no debt.



ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH OF OLD ECONOMY
AMBRIDGE, PENNSYLVANIA

Pastors responding to our call must believe that the Bible is the "inspired, inerrant and infallible" word of God, and must be willing to attain membership on the roster of Pastors of the Association of Free Lutheran Churches.

Our immediate need is a Pastor who will help define our vision, and lead us to grow in numbers. We realize that this is a daunting task, and pray that God will send us a Good Shepherd to watch over his sheep in Ambridge.

Location: 1320 Church Street, Ambridge, PA 15003 Office Phone (724) 266-5618

Contact: Fred Kellinger
109 Priscilla Drive
Sewickley, PA 15143
(412) 741-7903
fred.kellinger@comcast.net

[Position Description](#)

Religion and Spirituality: The Impact on Chaplains

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