

Legislative Actions Related to Veterans 2020

The Minnesota Legislature convened on 11 February 2020. The House and Senate committees on Veterans affairs have both met but no action has been taken. I will continue to monitor for updates to include in this column.

On the Federal level, several bills have been introduced. On 9 January 2020, a bill was introduced to require the VA to review Veterans suicides when the Veteran had used certain medications that have warnings of possible suicides. Another introduced the same day would authorize the VA to provide abortion counseling ‘... to a Veteran who has an unwanted pregnancy’.

Several bills were introduced in 2020 to affirm that Congress has ‘sole power to declare war’ under the Constitution. These are related to a possible invasion of Iran.

Late in 2019, a bill introduced would repeal the Selective Service act, effectively ending the requirement to register. Also introduced was a bill that would continue the VA program to transport Veterans to and from VA facilities for medical needs. This is important to our part of the county with many Veterans living miles from a VA hospital.

Also introduced is a bill to designate September 20 – 26, 2020 as Purple Star Families Week.

A bill introduced on 13 January 2020 would treat certain individuals who served in Vietnam as a member of the military of the Republic of Korea and later became a US citizen as eligible for VA services. In short, a ROK Vet and now US citizen could use VA health care. The Republic of Korea were very strong allies during the Vietnam War.

Personally, I received more information on Veterans in the Bakke family. My cousin Betty sent me information on two cousins who served. Bertil Larson joined the Army during WWII and served in Europe. He was wounded in the hip by an enemy pistol shot in April 1945, was treated at an aid station and discharged. After his discharge, he returned to Minnesota and married Hazel De Montigny in Trinity Church, Moorhead. The couple had two children, Jerry and David. During the Korean War, he again answered his nation’s call and fought in Korea. Bertil was killed in action in September 1950. He was buried near Newfolden, MN.

Bertil’s son, David Larson entered the Army on 20 January 1969. He married Brenda Barber from Texas in Dallas in May 1969 and shipped to Vietnam 9 July 1969. David was killed in action near Binh Dinh on 27 February 1970. If you check the dates, you’ll see that he was 20 years old when he entered the Army, met a woman from Texas, got married and shipped to Vietnam all in a little over five months! His grave is also in the cemetery near Newfolden. Newfolden is, of course where I spent the first 18 years of my life.