



**DEMOCRATS ABROAD**

**Veterans and Military Families Caucus**

# *Read White & Blue*

May 2022

NEWSLETTER

VOL. 2, NO. 2

To view on the website, click [here](#)

## **Letter from the Editor**

These days it seems like there are more than enough worries to wake us up in the middle of the night. Autocratic regimes around the world are growing and democratic institutions in America are being threatened. Many anxieties are interfering with our restorative cleansing from deep sleep.

One worry is that overturning *Roe v Wade* would be the culmination of a half-century-long legal campaign by the GOP singularly focussed on that outcome. However, although 19 states have proposed or passed abortion restriction bills, there are clear signs that overturning *Roe* and restricting abortions is far from being an end in itself for the GOP. If (when?) the Supreme Court overturns *Roe*, the GOP would launch even more ambitious agendas, namely getting fundamental moral issues out of the realm of federal constitutional rights and under the control of the states.

A common argument for overturning *Roe* is that it should be states who resolve the issue of abortion for themselves, rather than by having a federal resolution imposed on them.

If *Roe* is overturned, what other more ambitious agendas might the Republicans launch? There are a series of federal decisions currently held that prohibit states from banning contraceptives, from criminalizing gay sex, and from recognizing same-sex marriage. These cases are now controlled by federal laws, not under the control of states. The more impactful effect of *Roe* being overturned is that it would grant power to the states to make laws that affect some of the most intimate aspects of people's lives, and not be controlled by Federal laws passed by the Supreme Court.

In recent weeks, in anticipation of a Mississippi decision banning abortions, various Republican senators have questioned a law which struck down a state ban on contraceptives, a law which required states to recognize same-sex marriage, and a law which invalidated a state law which banned bi-racial marriages.

So beyond the GOP goal of overturning *Roe* is the goal of weakening the federal government's power and shifting the power to the states.

If Democrats acknowledge the long-term ambitions of the GOP, and the current 6-3 conservative Supreme Court, and are armed with the fact that 80% of Americans think that abortion should be legal in all or some circumstances, then Democrats should be able to motivate their base to get out and vote in the upcoming midterms. The GOP aggressive attack on Roe and their plan to grant states the power to rule on personal behaviors could backfire for the GOP, if we reach out and engage our base. This is how Democrats can maintain the House and the Senate in November.

Let's do everything we can to educate our family and friends on the GOP's long-term ambitions, and support and motivate Democrats and the politically non-aligned Independents to vote. Our sleep will depend on it.

Yours Democratically, Bob Gould (Editor, DA-UK)

---

## ADVOCACY

**Improve the Veterans Affairs** In the previous newsletter we asked you to make three suggestions to improve the VA. How could the VA be restructured to make life better for you as a veteran overseas? Email your suggestions [here](#). Thank you!

**Trouble Using Your GI Bill Benefits?** Please reach out to us if you or someone you know is having trouble using the GI Bill benefits at a foreign school or university. We are in contact with congressional offices, urging every senator and representative to immediately address this issue. GI Bill and/or VR&E educational benefits are EARNED and CONFIRMED benefits. We will not rest until the Dept. of Veterans Affairs' policies are changed to support veterans, servicemembers, and military family members - not work against them. [Here](#)

**Deportation of Veterans** remains a top priority issue for the Global VMF Caucus. Congress must address the issue of deported veterans. Fortunately, the **Veteran Deportation Prevention and Reform Act** can resolve many of the problems stemming from the present situation that allows for the deportation of our nation's veterans, rips American families apart, sends shockwaves throughout our communities, and belies promises made by the Federal Government. VMF urges all Americans to [contact their representative to cosponsor and support H.R. 1182 in the House](#), and [contact their senators to cosponsor and support S. 3212 in the Senate](#). The deportation of men and women who have served in the military must stop.

**Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson Is Confirmed!** Yes, history has been made. Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson will become the first Black woman in American history to serve as a Supreme Court justice. Judge Jackson will bring extraordinary qualifications, a wide breadth of experience, and a rigorous judicial record to the Supreme Court. **Show your support for Judge Jackson by sharing the historic moment on your social media.**



## Madeleine Albright, First Female Secretary of State, Died March 23



Madeleine Albright was born in Czechoslovakia in 1937 and fled to the United States with her family in 1948 after the communist takeover. She received a B.A. with honors from Wellesley College and went on to study law and government at Columbia University and graduated with a Ph.D.

Albright was a professor, author, diplomat and businesswoman, and was the first woman to serve as head of the U.S. State Department, the highest ranking female official in U.S. history. This distinction led some to declare that the “glass ceiling” preventing the ascension of women in government had been lifted. She earned a reputation as a tough, straight-talking negotiator with a personal touch.

During her tenure, Albright demonstrated a strong grasp on world issues and impressive language skills (she spoke Czech, Polish, French and Russian).

At her April 27 funeral at the Washington National Cathedral, President Joe Biden as well as former President Bill Clinton, former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Albright’s three daughters eulogized Albright.

---

## EVENTS & CALENDAR

### *MAY is National...*

#### *Military Appreciation Month* and *Month of the Military Caregiver*

May 1 *Loyalty Day, Silver Star Service Banner Day*

May 3 “Giving Tuesday” To donate to a veteran or military charity, you can click [here](#).

May 5 *National Day of Prayer*

May 6 *Military Spouse Appreciation Day*

May 7 *VMF Meeting (All DA Members are welcome.)*

May 8 *Victory in Europe Day (VE Day)*

May 8 *Mother’s Day*

May 13 *Children of Fallen Patriots Day*

May 15 *Peace Officers Memorial Day*

May 21 *Armed Forces Day*

May 22 *National Maritime Day*



May 30 [Memorial Day](#)



For National Military Appreciation Month, there are *countless military discounts!* To learn more, click [here](#).

---

### VOTING...IT IS WHAT WE ARE ALL ABOUT

- *Have you registered?*
- *Have you requested your absentee ballot?*
- *Can you get involved in GOTV in other ways, maybe learn how to phone bank? Go [here](#) for phone banking training.*



***What if everyone voted? The case for 100% democracy*** This is an important piece in the Washington Post about voting, by E.J. Dionne Jr. & Miles Rapoport. To access it, click [here](#).  
*“The first step toward ending our voting wars is to recognize that every citizen should play a role in shaping our nation’s destiny.”*

For more resources about *Primaries and Midterms* in your state, go [here](#).



---

WHAT'S CONGRESS UP TO?

**Congressional Democrats** have taken meaningful action on several issues and bills in recent weeks. Let's have a brief look at some of them. For a more detailed look and more information on congressional bills, [please click here](#).

**H.R. 7375** – important legislation for the overseas-based student veterans and military families community passed the House Veterans' Affairs Committee on April 6th. If passed into law, this bill would allow overseas student veterans, once again, to start, continue or complete their education programs.

**H.R. 3967**, the **Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act** (Honoring our PACT Act), passed the House of Representatives on March 3rd. If passed by the Senate, affected veterans will be able to claim the VA health care benefits they need to address medical needs created by exposure to toxins during service. Click [here](#) to see how your U.S. representative voted.

**We should be pleased about:**

- the investigation of veterans' involvement in extremist acts,
- holding VA accountable for short-changing veterans in its caregivers program,
- closely tracking VA's AIR Commission recommendations for restructuring medical facilities, etc.

**YES, much work is being done to address the needs of veterans and military families.**

**BUT the VMF Caucus needs you to help our legislative advocacy by:**

- [Contacting the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee](#) and [both of your U.S. senators](#) to urge them to SUPPORT H.R. 3967.
- [Contacting your U.S. representative](#) to urge her/him to SUPPORT H.R. 7375.
- **Contacting** the House Veterans' Affairs Committee to say thank you for passing H.R. 7375. Click [here](#) or call +1-202-225-9756
- **Contacting** the House Veterans' Affairs Committee to SUPPORT reforming VA's Foreign Medical Program. Click [here](#) or call +1-202-225-9756.

---

## DEMOCRATS ABROAD ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

You can check our **DA Activities** this month by clicking [here](#).

You can click the following link to attend our **May 7 Caucus Meeting**: [Here](#)

---

## VETERANS' ISSUES

Click the following link to go to the webpage on **VMF Health**: [here](#). To find out if you are eligible for VA health care as a veteran, click [here](#).

Here are two links to **Vantage Point**, an official website of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: [Here](#) and [here](#). And you can click [here](#) for 5 ways to access **VA care** virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic @ Vantage Point. There is also a mobile app that offers Veterans convenient access to VA health and benefits; to access, click [here](#).

**Changes to Earned Income Tax Credit**

This year's **tax law changes** in qualifications for the [Earned Income Tax Credit](#) could lessen your tax burden or increase your refund, especially if you are a service member with children thanks to two major child tax credits. To access information, click [here](#).

### Transitioning and Jobs

Click the following link for the webpage on **Transitioning and Veterans Jobs**: [here](#).

### Help Us Spread the Word

Encourage Veterans and their families residing abroad to join our Caucus and get news tailored for them! They can subscribe [here](#).

Veterans residing abroad can also subscribe to the US Department of Veterans Affairs newsletter, "Veterans Abroad" to receive bulletins and information specific to Veterans residing abroad. You can subscribe [here](#).

### Veterans Crisis Line (VCL)

Toll-free confidential support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year through the **Military Crisis Line** (1-800-273-8255 and Press 1), and online chat and text (838255). Veterans, Service members or their loved ones can reach VCL from Europe (00800 1273 8255 or DSN 118 (toll-free service may not be available through all carriers or in all countries) and Korea (0808 555 118 or DSN 118).

### Update: Overseas Military Service Coordinators

Due to COVID, Overseas Military Service Coordinators (OMSCs) will be extending virtual support operations to overseas Veterans, Service members, and their dependents through October 1, 2022. OMSCs will be responding to emails and arranging phone calls for those seeking assistance with all VA benefits. Simply send your contact information to the email address listed for your location to set up a virtual meeting with an OMSC:

For veterans residing in European countries, email: [OMSCGER1.VBAVACO@VA.GOV](mailto:OMSCGER1.VBAVACO@VA.GOV)

For veterans residing in Asian countries, email: [OMSCJAPANOK.VBAVACO@VA.GOV](mailto:OMSCJAPANOK.VBAVACO@VA.GOV)

**Free Things For Veterans**—all year round! **For the 31 Best Free Products and Services for Veterans**, click [here](#). **For info on free checked bags for flights**, listen to this: *Many of the major airlines are taking care of our veterans by offering free checked bags, even up to 100 pounds, or for personal travel. Delta Airlines, for example, allows vets to check up to five bags, up to 100 pounds each, on military travel. To get a breakdown of what each airline provides, you can read more [here](#).*

---

## ARTS AND EDUCATION



Click [here](#) for our Spotlight pieces about Deportation Remembrance Day, Memorial Day Wreath-Laying, and the Ghost Army

Click [here](#) for our Podcast & Social Media Recommendations

Click [here](#) for our Poetry Corner

Click [here](#) for our Film and Book Recommendations

Click [here](#) for our Brain-Zone Quiz

Click [here](#) for our Educational Resources

---

### UPCOMING GLOBAL VMF CAUCUS MEETINGS

The Global VMF Caucus Steering Committee meets once a month. All Democrats Abroad members are welcome to attend. The next VMF meeting will be May 7 as per Rotation A. The meeting will begin at 7am Eastern Daylight Savings Time on Saturday May 7.

Here is a [link](#) to the WebEx meeting, and to receive the agenda or minutes from our meetings, contact us by emailing us [here](#).

---

### SUGGESTION BOX

We welcome your input. What's important to you? What are we missing? Any VMF experts you would like us to interview in a live webinar? Please use this link to send us your comments, articles, poems, questions, and anything else that is VMF-related:

[VMF-Editors@democratsabroad.org](mailto:VMF-Editors@democratsabroad.org)



#### **Co-Editors:**

Bob Gould (UK, Military Family)

Terese Sarno (Germany)

#### **Editorial Staff:**

Kee Evans (Guatemala, Military Family)

Tilly Gaillard (France)

Isa Kocher (Turkey, Veteran)

Anthony "Mike" Nitz (Vietnam, Veteran)

Connect with us on



*I think that we all know what evil is.  
We have a sense of what's evil,  
and certainly, killing innocent people is evil.  
We're less sure about what is good.  
There's sort of good, good enough, could be better—  
but absolute good is a little harder to define.*

- - Madeleine Albright