



ACTION CORPS WEEKLY



March 15, 2021



Commander-In-Chief Virtual Joint Congressional Hearing: VFW National Commander Hal Roesch will testify via video teleconference on March 18 at 10 a.m. (EDT) before a special joint hearing of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs. "Now more than ever, Congress needs to hear the voice of our veteran community," Roesch said. "The pandemic has overwhelmed all of us and changed the way we do business. Regardless of the setting or format, the VFW will continue to press for the full support of Congress on our key priorities and look forward to the discussion on how to best address the issues affecting veterans and their families." [Watch the testimony](#). Follow #VFWDC2021 on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.



American Rescue Plan Becomes Law: On Thursday, President Biden signed into law [H.R. 1319](#), *The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021*. This legislative package addresses the economic and health issues facing America due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Included is specific funding for veteran state homes, veteran rapid retraining, and prohibition of VA copays and cost sharing for veterans during the emergency related to COVID-19. [Learn more](#).



Congress Removes "90/10 Loophole": This week Congress closed the "90/10 loophole" in the American Rescue Plan. The "90/10 loophole" allowed certain predatory schools to target service members and veterans without any regulation. "Closing this loophole has been a legislative priority and resolution of the VFW for many years. This loophole closure is a good step in the right direction to help prevent predatory schools from going after student veterans,"

said VFW National Legislative Director Patrick Murray.



Senate Holds Hearing on Toxic Exposures: On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a hearing highlighting the effects of toxic exposures in the military. Veterans groups called for legislation to create a permanent and comprehensive framework to address all toxic exposures, consistent with the VFW's legislative priority goals. The VFW looks forward to working with Congress on this very important issue. The [hearing](#) begins at the 22:34 minute mark.



VA VACCINE Act Passes the House: On Tuesday, the House passed VFW-supported [H.R. 1276](#), the *Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans' and Caregivers' COVID-19 Immunizations Now Expanded Act of 2021* (VA VACCINE Act of 2021). The bill would expand VA's authority to provide COVID-19 vaccines to all veterans, their caregivers, and overseas veterans. Vaccinations help protect individuals as well as their community. [Learn more.](#)



Pregnancy, Breastfeeding, and the COVID-19 Vaccine: VA released information about the COVID-19 vaccine specific to moms-to-be, and mothers who are breastfeeding. Following the CDC's recommendations, individuals who plan to be pregnant, are pregnant, or breastfeeding should receive the COVID-19 vaccine when available. Pregnant women who test positive for COVID-19 are at an increased risk of severe illness and/or complications such as preterm birth. [Read more.](#)



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced three new identifications for service members who have been missing and unaccounted-for from World War II and Korea. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:
-- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Michael Malek, 17**, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including

Malek. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Malek.](#)

-- **Navy Signalman 3rd Class Austin H. Hesler**, 21, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits, which caused it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Hesler. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Hesler.](#)

-- **Army Chaplain (Capt.) Emil J. Kapaun**, of Pilsen, Kansas, returned to active duty in the U.S. Army after serving during World War II and served in the Korean War with the 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. On Nov. 2, 1950, his unit was near Unsan when they came under heavy fire from Chinese forces and received orders to withdraw.

Approximately a quarter of the unit's soldiers made their way back to friendly lines. The others, including many wounded soldiers, became trapped. Kapaun volunteered to stay with the wounded and was soon captured and taken to a Chinese-run prison camp on the Yalu River's south bank known as Camp 5. Due to prolonged malnutrition, he died on May 23, 1951, after which the other POWs buried him in one of the camp's cemeteries. At a White House ceremony on April 11, 2013, President Barack Obama posthumously awarded Kapaun the Medal of Honor for extraordinary heroism and selflessness.

Interment Services are pending. [Read about Kapaun.](#)

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