



ACTION CORPUS WEEKLY



June 1, 2021



VFW Testifies on VA Infrastructure Issues: This week, VFW National Legislative Service Director Patrick Murray testified before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs on behalf of VFW and our *The Independent Budget* partners, DAV (Disabled American Veterans) and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA). The hearing focused on President Biden's national infrastructure plan, which includes a proposed \$18 billion for VA capital infrastructure needs. Murray stated, "We are very appreciative of this proposal and given the gap in funding identified by VA's Strategic Capitol Investment Planning process, such an infusion is certainly justified." Murray also stressed the need to refocus hiring initiatives within VA along with retaining and expanding telehealth options for patients. [Watch the hearing.](#)



VFW Participates in Toxic Exposure Press Events: On Tuesday, VFW Department of Montana Adjutant Tim Peters represented the VFW on a call with Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jon Tester to pledge support for the *Comprehensive and Overdue Support for Troops (COST) of War Act of 2021*. This legislation would help millions of veterans access care and benefits for conditions associated with toxic exposures, now and in the future. On Wednesday, VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Kristina Keenan spoke at a press conference at the U.S. Capitol, along with members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, TV personality Jon Stewart, and fellow veterans service organizations to support the *Honoring our Promises to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act*. This bill would also address the VFW's top legislative priority of comprehensive toxic

exposure reform. Keenan stated, “Congress has the opportunity and the responsibility to ensure that vital care and benefits are provided for those who served and sacrificed for our nation.” [Watch the press conference.](#)



Senate Toxic Exposure Bill and Other VFW-Supported Legislation Advances:

On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs held a markup to consider pending legislation including the VFW-supported *Comprehensive and Overdue Support for Troops (COST) of War Act of 2021*. This legislation, which would take care of millions of veterans suffering from conditions due to toxic exposures, received unanimous support from the committee. Other VFW-supported bills that advanced included: S.89, the *Ensuring Survivor Benefits During COVID-19 Act of 2021*; S. 189, the *Veterans' Disability Compensation Automatic COLA Act of 2021*; S. 894, the *Hire Veteran Health Heroes Act of 2021*; S. 1095, the *Colonel John M. McHugh Tuition Fairness for Survivors Act of 2021*; S.1031, to conduct a study on disparities associated with race and ethnicity with respect to certain benefits administered by VA. [Read more](#) about these bills or [watch the markup](#).



VA Implementation of Most Recently Added Agent Orange Conditions:

VA announced Thursday that it will begin implementing the three presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure that were added in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2021: bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism. We encourage affected veterans and survivors to [contact their VFW Department Service Officer](#) with any questions or concerns they may have or if they may be interested in filing a claim.



House Holds Members Day Hearing: On Wednesday, members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs heard testimony from non-committee House members on issues specific to their constituents and proposed legislation. Comments focused on toxic exposure, burn pits, the backlog of requests at the National Personnel Records Center, suicide prevention, and mental health. [Watch now.](#)



COVID-19 Vaccine Available at VA for Eligible Adolescents: Recently, the CDC recommended that adolescents who are 12-18 years old may receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. CHAMPVA benefit recipients may be vaccinated at their local VA facility, provided the facility has the Pfizer vaccine in stock. Contact the VA facility to ensure they have the Pfizer vaccine in stock. Eligible veterans, spouses, caregivers, CHAMPVA beneficiaries nationwide can walk into their local VA facility's vaccine clinic to receive their COVID-19 vaccines. Veterans not enrolled in VA care should [pre-register](#) online at least one hour before arrival to save time. The expanded access to the COVID-19 vaccine at VA is a result of the [SAVE LIVES Act](#). See the VA's answers to frequently asked questions regarding the COVID-19 vaccine in [Part I](#) and [Part II](#) for more information.



New VFW Podcast Episode Available: On the [newest episode](#) of the #StillServing: VFW Podcast, host Rob Couture turns the conversation to Memorial Day. He spoke with Arlington National Cemetery Director of Operations Dr. Gerald Lowe, VA National Cemetery Administration Executive Director of the Office of Engagement and Memorial Innovation Danny Devine, and Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency Director Kelly McKeague for a conversation about the important work these organizations do to memorialize veterans.



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced two burial updates 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:

-- **Army Pvt. Wayne M. Evans, 21**, of Hamilton, Montana, was a member of Battery G, 59th Coast Artillery Regiment, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands in December. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan Peninsula on April 9, 1942, and of Corregidor Island on May 6, 1942. Evans was among those reported captured after the surrender of Corregidor and held at the Cabanatuan POW camp. More than 2,500 POWs perished in this camp during the war. According to prison camp and other historical records, Evans died July 19, 1942, and was buried along with other deceased prisoners in the local Cabanatuan Camp Cemetery. Evans will be buried in his hometown. The date has yet to be decided. [Read about Evans.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Burl Mullins, 23**, of Dorton, Kentucky, was a member of Heavy Mortar Company, 3rd Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 30, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. It was later learned he had been taken as a prisoner of war. Mullins will be buried in his hometown. The date has yet to be decided. [Read about Mullins.](#)

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