



# ACTION CORPS WEEKLY



January 30, 2023



## Help VA Stop Education Benefits Fraud:

Scammers are taking advantage of new opportunities to commit fraud. There has been an increase in [VA education benefits fraud](#) by VA-approved schools that are billing veterans at a higher tuition rate than civilian students. Veterans and their family members need to be aware and should be cautious of anyone who advertises a lower tuition rate, offers exclusive benefits to civilian students, or bills 20 percent more than a non-VA approved school. To report suspected fraudulent activity, email [vaoighotline@va.gov](mailto:vaoighotline@va.gov) or call 800.488.8244. [Read more](#) for tips to protect yourself against these new scams.



**VA** | U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

## VA Closes Gap for Survivors of LGBTQ+

**Veterans:** VA will now allow certain survivors of LGBTQ+ veterans to apply for benefits, such as Survivors Pension or Dependency and Indemnity Compensation. Due to past bans on same-sex marriages and previous VA marriage requirements, many survivors of LGBTQ+ veterans were not eligible for benefits. Surviving spouses can now establish they had a “marriage-type” relationship by providing documents such as joint banking statements, joint purchase of a house, tax returns, insurance forms, lay statements, and more. These benefits are not retroactive, but those eligible who apply in the next year will receive benefits backdated to Oct. 11, 2022. Contact a [VFW Service Officer](#) for assistance filing for benefits. [Learn more](#).



### **VFV's "Sport Clips Help A Hero Scholarship"**

**Open Now:** Applications are being accepted now through April 30 for the fall 2023 semester. Veterans leaving active military duty need to prepare for civilian careers that often require additional college, graduate, and technical degrees or training. To ease the financial burden of going back to school, Sport Clips and the VFW have teamed up for the past eight years to provide up to \$5,000 of assistance per semester, per family, for service members and veterans in the rank of E-5 and below. [Learn more and apply.](#)



**MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced five burial updates and 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 Cmdr. Frederick R. Schrader, 31**, of Lawrenceville, Illinois, was the commander of Carrier Air Group Eleven on the USS Hornet. On Oct. 13, 1944, Schrader's F6F-5 Hellcat fighter was shot down during an attack on Toko Seaplane Base on Formosa, now known as Taiwan. There was no evidence he exited the aircraft before it crashed, and no rescue attempts were possible. Schrader will be buried at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) in Honolulu, on Apr. 13, 2023. [Read about Schrader.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Franklin H. Bennett, 20**, of Glendive, Montana, was assigned to the 54th Signal Maintenance Company, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands in December 1941. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan peninsula in April 1942. He was among those captured and held at the Cabanatuan POW Camp, where he reportedly died on July 19, 1942, and was buried. Bennett will be buried in Pensacola, Florida, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Bennett.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Ithiel E. Whatley, 19**, of Pensacola, Florida, was assigned to Company M, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. On July 12, 1950, he was reported missing in action after his unit was engaged in a fighting withdrawal south of Chochi'won, South Korea, toward the Kum River. Whatley was never reported as a prisoner of war and no remains were recovered. The Army issued a presumptive finding of death on Jan. 4, 1954. Whatley

will be buried in Pensacola, Florida, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Whatley.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. Charles Garrigus, 24**, of Terra Haute, Indiana, was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 1, 1950, during battle with enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the war, his remains could not be recovered, and there is no evidence that he was a prisoner of war. Garrigus will be buried in Greenwood, Indiana, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Garrigus.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Alton Christie, 18**, of Jasper, Florida, was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on July 5, 1950, after his unit had been engaged by the Korean People's Army near Osan, South Korea. The Army issued a presumptive finding of death on Dec. 31, 1953, and his remains were determined to be unrecoverable in January 1956. Christie will be buried in Jasper, Florida, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Christie.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. James A. Deeds, 23**, was assigned to the 345th Bombardment Squadron, 98th Bombardment Group, 9th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft Deeds was piloting crashed as a result of anti-aircraft fire during Operation Tidal Wave. His remains could not be identified following the war. Interment services are pending. [Read about Deeds.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. George J. Reuter, 25**, was assigned to the 328th Bombardment Squadron, 93rd Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft on which Reuter was serving as the navigator crashed as a result of anti-aircraft fire during Operation Tidal Wave. His remains could not be identified following the war. Interment services are pending. [Read about Reuter.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Daniel De Anda, 22**, was assigned to Company G, 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, 8th U.S. Army. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 30, 1950, after his unit's withdrawal from Kunu-ri, North Korea, following the battle of Ch'ongch'on. Later findings indicated that De Anda had been a prisoner of war and died at POW Camp #5 in March 1951. Interment services are pending. [Read about De Anda.](#)

[Click here to view this week's edition.](#)

[Click here for past editions of the VFW Action Corps Weekly.](#)

[Click here to sign up new veterans' advocates.](#)

As always, we want to hear your advocacy stories. To share your stories or photos with us, simply email them directly to [vfwac@vfw.org](mailto:vfwac@vfw.org).