



August 18, 2025



First Woman Veteran Elected to Lead

VFW: Career Army veteran Carol Whitmore was elected as the new national commander of the VFW at the 126th VFW National Convention held this year in Columbus, Ohio. “I may be the first veteran to have been elected VFW commander-in-chief while wearing a dress ... but I will NOT be the last! ... I am your comrade by mud, by blood, by dust, by dirt, by sand, by land, by sea, by air ... I am a veteran first!” said Whitmore. Initially enlisting in the Women’s Army Corps in 1977, she earned her VFW eligibility by serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Throughout her 36-year military career, she received the Legion of Merit Medal, Bronze Star Medal, Army Commendation Medal (six), Iraq Campaign Medal and the Combat Action Badge, among many others. She joined the VFW in 2012 at Post 9127 in Des Moines, Iowa, where she maintains her Gold Legacy Life membership. [Watch her speech](#), which begins at the 3:41:00 mark.



Action Alert to Keep VFW Priorities in the

NDAA: Congress is in recess, but staff are tracking what matters to constituents. Now is the time to act. Two key VFW priorities are included in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2026 and must stay in the final bill. The *Major Richard Star Act* (Senate Amendment 2968) ends the offset that denies combat-injured, medically retired veterans the full benefits they have earned. The *TAP Promotion Act* (Section 551 of the House NDAA) improves the transition process by giving service members direct access to accredited VA claims assistance. Your voice matters, so [take action now](#) and tell your congressional members to keep these priorities in the NDAA.



Apply Now for 2025-2026 VFW-SVA Legislative Fellowship: The application process for the 2025-2026 class of VFW-SVA legislative fellows is now open. VFW members who attend an accredited institute of higher learning will be chosen for the semester-long program that focuses on real policy issues faced by veterans, service members, and their families. The capstone of the program is participation in the 2026 VFW Washington Conference in our nation's capital. Alumni of the program have become more active at all levels of the VFW and SVA, and have been instrumental in changing laws to improve care and benefits for veterans. [Learn more](#) and [apply for the fellowship](#).



Community Care Authorizations Extension: VA has announced it is extending community care authorizations to one year for 30 standardized types of care, providing veterans with 12 months of uninterrupted treatment before requiring reauthorization. This change aims to improve continuity of care, reduce administrative burdens for both veterans and providers, and enhance health outcomes. The new policy applies to an array of specialty referrals for services including cardiology, dermatology, eye care, mental health outpatient, neurology, oncology, orthopedic and pulmonary. [Read more](#).



Update on Fort McClellan Study: The *Honoring Our PACT Act of 2022* (Public Law 117-168) authorized a comprehensive epidemiological study of veterans who served at the Fort McClellan Army base in Alabama, which operated from 1917 to 1999. Phase I of the study is complete, identifying and cataloging toxic substances at the installation, while also evaluating the feasibility of further research into the potential health effects. VA is now seeking a research partner to conduct Phase II to assess morbidity and mortality associated with the identified toxins. This next phase could yield critical scientific evidence to support future determinations regarding presumptive service connection for affected veterans. [Read more](#).



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced 10 identifications and three burial updates for service members who have been missing and unaccounted for from World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

Identifications:

- [World War II Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Gustave Secunda](#)
- [World War II Army Pvt. Alfred T. Langevin](#)
- [World War II Marine Corps Pfc. Edgar R. Norcross](#)
- [World War II Army Tech5 Edwin E. Ross](#)
- [World War II Army Pfc. John A. Walko](#)
- [World War II Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. James G. Pirtle](#)
- [World War II Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Joseph L. Burke](#)
- [Korean War Army Sgt. 1st Class Jack B. Baker](#)
- [Korean War Army Pfc. Walter P. Pytak](#)
- [Vietnam War Air Force Master Sgt. James H. Calfee](#)

Updates:

- [Korean War Army Pfc. Rodger E. Fields,](#)
Kentucky
- [World War II Army Air Forces Capt. Arthur M. Lingo,](#)
California
- [World War II Army Pvt. LeRoy B. Miller Jr.,](#)
Indiana

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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.