

Benefits

The VFW's Concerns:

Comprehensive toxic exposure reform is the VFW's top legislative priority. Veterans from all eras have experienced an array of health conditions and illnesses associated with the toxic exposures and environmental hazards they encountered in service. The denial rate for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims related to toxic exposures is far too high. Many serious health conditions are not considered presumptive, health care is available to only certain veterans, and there are locations both foreign and domestic that are not yet recognized as areas of exposure. A new framework is necessary for VA to provide health care and benefits to toxic exposed veterans from all eras, now, and in the future.

The rate of Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) paid to the survivors of service members who died in the line of duty or to veterans who died from service-related injuries or illnesses has only minimally increased since the benefit was created in 1993. The VFW supports an increase in DIC payments to survivors, reaching parity with payments made to surviving spouses of other federal employees.

Since September 11, 2001, more than 2.7 million Americans have served in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), which is the longest war fought by the nation's all-volunteer force. Accordingly, GWOT veterans deserve to be memorialized in our nation's capital with their comrades of previous generations. In 2003, Congress passed legislation that prohibited the placement of new commemorative works within the Reserve—an area that encompasses the cross-axis of the National Mall and the land between the White House and the Jefferson Memorial. Veterans of the current era deserve a war memorial located alongside the existing memorials for WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.

The VFW urges Congress to:

- Pass H.R. 3967, *Honoring our PACT Act of 2021*, and the Senate *COST of War Act*. These bills would help millions of veterans by establishing a framework to address any toxic exposure, foreign or domestic, past, present, and future. This legislation would help Atomic veterans and Vietnam veterans, including those who served in Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos, as well as in the Middle East, Afghanistan, K2, and beyond. They would add to VA's list of presumptive conditions and provide health care for all toxic exposed veterans.
- Pass H.R. 3402 / S. 976, the *Caring for Survivors Act of 2021*, to finally increase DIC payments to survivors, reaching parity with other federal agencies.
- Pass H.R. 1115 / S. 535, the *Global War on Terrorism Memorial Location Act*, to authorize the establishment of a GWOT Memorial on the National Mall.