



February 8, 2021



Independent Budget Released: The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), DAV (Disabled American Veterans), and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), have released two reports: [The Independent Budget: Veterans' Agenda for the 117th Congress, Critical Issues](#) and [The Independent Budget: FY 2022-2023 for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Budget Recommendations](#). “For over 30 years, the VFW has partnered with our colleagues at PVA and DAV to produce The Independent Budget, which recommends proper funding and staffing for all programs at the Department of Veterans Affairs,” said VFW National Commander Hal Roesch. “Ensuring that veterans receive proper health care and benefits during this tumultuous time has never been more important.” The reports list toxic substance exposures, VA infrastructure, minority veterans, and employment among many critical issues facing today’s veterans. The reports also provide estimates for funding the VA will require in order to provide health care, benefits, and transition services to more than ten million veterans, their families, and survivors.



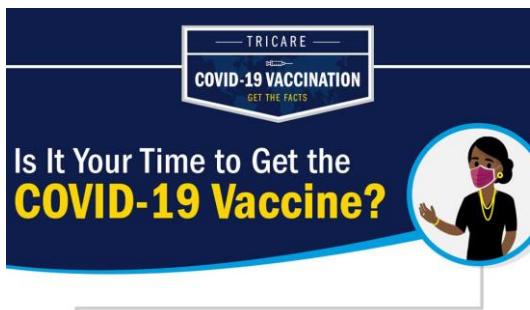
Veterans Rapid Retraining Bill Introduced in House: On Monday, Rep. Mike Bost (R-IL) introduced VFW-supported H.R. 637. A few days prior, Sens. Tester (D-MT) and Moran (R-KS) introduced the senate version of this legislation. This important legislation would provide 12 months of retraining benefits to certain veterans who became unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Veterans between the ages of 22 and 66 who are not eligible for other VA education benefits would qualify for retraining assistance in high-demand occupations. The VFW thanks our friends in Congress for this

effort to address veteran unemployment arising from the global pandemic. [Learn more.](#)



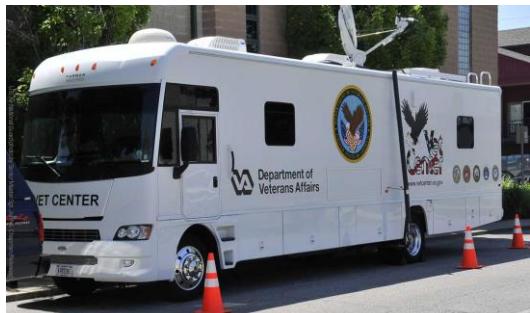
COVID-19 Vaccine Tool Finds High-risk

Veterans: VA has created a tool to identify high-risk veterans who would be eligible first for the COVID-19 vaccine according to CDC vaccine guidelines. VA's electronic medical records make it possible for the tool to sort veterans according to age and health conditions. To help the process, veterans and their caregivers can ensure their contact information is current, [sign up](#) for updates, and express their interest in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. [Read more.](#)



COVID-19 Vaccines Will Be Available Through TRICARE

TRICARE: The White House has announced that COVID-19 vaccines will be made available through the Federal Retail Pharmacy Program. TRICARE beneficiaries should [contact their local TRICARE network pharmacy](#) to determine if they can schedule an appointment to receive the vaccine once the vaccines are delivered to their area. [Learn more.](#)



Mobile Vet Centers Arrive on Capitol Hill: This week, VA deployed two Mobile Vet Centers to provide outreach, counseling, and referral services to the U.S. National Guard, U.S. Capitol Police, lawmakers, or congressional staffers. Mobile Vet Centers are often activated to support disaster-affected areas and serve as a component of VA's emergency response. When planning local or regional events a Mobile Vet Center to connect veterans with benefits, enrollment, and other VA services can be requested. [Learn more.](#)



Blood Donation Need Still Critical: With the severe winter weather and seasonal illness, the Red Cross strongly urges healthy, eligible individuals who are feeling well to give blood, platelets, or plasma to help maintain a sufficient supply for those battling COVID-19, cancers, other infections, or trauma victims. Those who donate in [February](#) will receive a \$5 Amazon.com gift card via email. Please schedule an appointment using the Red Cross Blood Donor app, visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](#), or calling 1.800.RED.CROSS (1.800.733.2767).



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one new identification for a service member who has been missing and unaccounted-for from World War II. Returning home for burial with full military honors is:

-- **U.S. Navy Seaman 2nd Class Howard S. Magers, 18**, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. 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 Magers. Interment services are pending. [Read about Magers.](#)

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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.