



ACTION CORPS WEEKLY



March 22, 2021



VFW Commander-In-Chief Testifies Virtually

Before Congress: VFW National Commander Hal Roesch testified via video teleconference before a special joint hearing of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs. The VFW delivered its top priority of toxic exposure reform, demanding Congress develop a comprehensive solution for veterans who were exposed to toxic chemicals during their time in service. Roesch cited examples of toxic exposure throughout history, countering the notion that the claim is a new phenomenon. "Toxic exposure for our troops has been synonymous with service for more than a hundred years, but every time we're faced with it, we act as if it's never happened before," Roesch said. The VFW recommends Congress establish an independent commission, free of DOD and VA oversight, as well as partner with the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine to identify toxic exposures and evaluate their association to certain diseases. [Watch the hearing.](#) [Read the testimony.](#)



House Hearing on Improving Women Veterans' Health:

On Thursday, the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Health and Women Veterans Task Force conducted a hearing to look beyond the Deborah Sampson Act to continue to improve women veterans' health care. VA representatives responded to questions concerning VA's policies and procedures regarding reproductive services and care, gender-specific in-patient substance abuse treatment, COVID-19 vaccination hesitancy, and research on the reproductive health of both men and women. In a statement submitted for the record, VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Tammy Barlet cited results from a VFW survey of women veterans

on gender-specific services, expanding interoperability of electronic health records between VA and Community Care Network providers, and ensuring VA prioritizes reproductive health. [Watch the hearing.](#) [Read the testimony.](#)



SAVE LIVES Act Passes the Senate: On Wednesday, the Senate passed VFW-supported [H.R. 1276](#), *Strengthening and Amplifying Vaccination Efforts to Locally Immunize All Veterans and Every Spouse Act (SAVE LIVES Act)*, previously titled the *Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans' and Caregivers' COVID-19 Immunizations Now Expanded Act of 2021 (VA VACCINE Act of 2021)*. The Senate version would expand on the VA VACCINE Act to include all veterans, their spouses, and caregivers when VA has the vaccine supply to do so. "Vaccines are our best shot at ending this pandemic," said Sen. Jon Tester, D-MT. "Unanimous passage of the Saves Lives Act brings us one step closer to our goal of providing free vaccination services to every veteran, spouse, child and caregiver at VA." [Read more.](#)



Legislation Introduced for Agent Orange Conditions: On Wednesday, the *Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act of 2021* was introduced by Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Jon Tester (D-MT) along with 16 senators. The VFW-supported bill would add hypertension and MGUS (monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance) to the list of presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange exposure. VA has yet to add these to the list even though science shows they meet a stronger evidentiary standard than some of the previously approved conditions. [Learn more.](#)



VA Releases New Coaching App: VA has released a new app called the R.E.A.C.H Coaching Tool, part of [REACH](#), which is the first national public health campaign focused on suicide prevention. This tool is designed to provide users with step-by-step guidance which when reaching out for help for yourself or others. Included are additional resources and suggested language to start what can be a difficult conversation. [Download the How We R.E.A.C.H. Coaching Tool.](#)



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced eight new identifications and one burial update 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 Air Forces 1st Lt. Robert Parker**, 23, as a pilot assigned to the 35th Fighter Squadron, 8th Fighter Group. On Nov. 15, 1943, he was piloting a P-40N Warhawk fighter on a patrol mission with seven other P-40s over the Markham River Valley, New Guinea, when his formation encountered a swarm of enemy aircraft on the southern edge of the Finisterre Range. After shooting down one enemy aircraft, Parker collided with another, the impact shearing a wing off of each. The P-40 crashed near Sagarak, and it was reported that he did not eject. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Parker.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 2nd Class Carl M. Bradley**, 19, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. 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 Bradley. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Bradley.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Denis H. Hiskett**, 20, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. 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 Hiskett. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Hiskett.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas J. Valentine**, 22, was a member of Battery B, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 6, 1950, after his unit was attacked by enemy forces as they attempted to withdraw near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Valentine.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Walter A. Smead**, 24, was a member of Battery A, 57th Field Artillery Battalion, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 6, 1950, after his unit was attacked by enemy forces as they attempted to withdraw near the Chosin

Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Smead](#).

-- **Navy Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Leslie P. Delles**, 21, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. 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 Delles. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Delles](#).

-- **Navy Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Everett R. Stewart**, 22, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. 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 Stewart. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Stewart](#).

-- **U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Pfc. Jack E. Hill**, 21, was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the small island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands, to secure the island. Hill died on the third day of battle, Nov. 22, 1943. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Hill](#).

-- **Navy Gunner's Mate 3rd Class Shelby Treadway**, 25, of Manchester, Kentucky, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. 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 Treadway. He will be buried on June 2, 2021, at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. [Read about Treadway](#).

[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).