



# ACTION CORPS WEEKLY



November 15, 2021



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

## **White House Announces VA Actions for Toxic Exposure Presumptive Conditions:**

On Veterans Day, the Biden Administration announced a series of actions, that has been years in the making, that VA will take to address the health conditions veterans experience due to burn pits and other toxic exposures. VA will pilot a new model to accelerate the process to establish presumptive conditions by reviewing the available science from the National Academies, analyzing VA data, and gathering evidence from other scientific sources. VA says it already used this model when it added sinusitis, rhinitis, and asthma as presumptive conditions related to particulate matter last May. Within 90 days, VA will use the model to assess rare cancers and constrictive bronchiolitis. Over the next few months VA will use this model to consider additional presumptives. Additionally, DOD plans to accelerate the implementation of the Individual Longitudinal Exposure Record (ILER), which the VFW supported in past legislation, that tracks service members' environmental and occupational exposures. The VFW thanks VA and the Biden Administration for taking these much-needed steps to address the urgent health needs of toxic exposed veterans. We will work with VA to monitor these developments while continuing to advocate for toxic exposure legislation.

[Read more.](#)



### **VFW Advocates for Toxic Exposure Legislation:**

VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Kristina Keenan joined activists Jon Stewart and John Feal at a press conference and a series of meetings with senators and staff to discuss [S. 3003](#), the *COST of War Act*. Comprehensive toxic exposure reform is the VFW's top legislative priority and our advocacy efforts are aimed at passing significant legislation in this Congress. [Watch the press conference.](#)



### **VFW Participates in Veterans Day Events:**

VFW Commander-in-Chief Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic took part in two ceremonies in the Washington, D.C. area on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2021. He represented the VFW in a scaled-down morning ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery where he laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Mihelcic and VFW Auxiliary National President Jean Hamil laid a wreath at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial following an afternoon ceremony.



### **Tomb of the Unknown Flower Laying Event:**

The VFW Washington Office participated in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Centennial Commemoration Public Flower Ceremony by laying flowers and handing out VFW Buddy Poppies to other visitors. This two-day event is the first time in nearly 100 years that the public was able to approach the tomb to lay flowers and pay their respects. "It felt incredibly special to walk where so few have walked and be able to honor the sacrifice of our unknown and missing service members in this way. Ahead of Veterans Day and as we have recently closed a significant chapter with our withdrawal from Afghanistan, I felt especially grateful to have this rare opportunity to reflect on service," stated VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Emily DeVito.



### House Subcommittee Hearing on Food Insecurity:

The House Agriculture Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations held a hearing to examine the issue of food insecurity among service members and veterans. In testimony submitted for the record, VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Brittany Dymond stated, “While it is not lost on us that working-age veterans are 7.4 percent more likely to reside in homes experiencing food insecurity, we want to take this opportunity to discuss the unconscionable issue of food scarcity within the active duty ranks.” Approximately 160,000 enlisted active duty troops and their families experience food insecurity, which negatively affects military readiness as well as recruitment and retention of our all-volunteer force. [Read the testimony.](#)



### House Committee Advances Several Veterans

**Bills:** Ahead of Veterans Day, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs passed 18 bills. This legislation includes five VFW-supported bills — [H.R. 3944](#), [H.R. 2916](#), [H.R. 5029](#), [H.R. 1596](#), [H.R. 3730](#) — that would ensure equal benefits for Guard and Reserve members, expand VA's research capabilities, increase access to mental health services for veteran families, study inequities faced by LGBTQ veterans, and establish a VA Advisory Committee on Pacific Areas. [Read more.](#)



**MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced four 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:

-- **Army Cpl. Kenneth R. Foreman, 19**, of Mount Orab, Ohio, was assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 1950, after a fighting withdrawal near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. He will be buried on Dec. 2, 2021, in his hometown. [Read about Foreman.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Juan F. Gutierrez, 26**, of Santa Fe, New Mexico, was a member of 200th Coast Artillery Regiment, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands in December 1941. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of Corregidor Island in

1942. Gutierrez was among those captured and held at the Cabanatuan POW Camp, where he reportedly died on Nov.19, 1942, and was buried. His remains were initially misidentified. He will be buried on Dec. 7, 2021, in Oakland, California. [Read about Gutierrez.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Archie V. Fleeman, 19**, of Bell, California, was assigned to Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Nov. 11, 1944, after his unit was part of the Hürtgen Forest offensive, near Hürtgen, Germany. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Fleeman will be buried in Oklahoma City. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Fleeman.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Charles E. Lee, 18, Cincinnati**, was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on July 20, 1950, after his unit was forced to retreat from the vicinity of Taejon, South Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Lee will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Lee.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Edward M. Ryan, 33**, was assigned to Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Division, which occupied defensive positions along the northwest coast of Saipan. He was reported killed in action on July 7, 1944. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Ryan.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Jimmy Rowland, 19**, was assigned to Heavy Mortar Company, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on July 16, 1950, while fighting North Korean forces along the Kum River north of Taejon, South Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Rowland.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Jack E. Lilley, 19**, was assigned to Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on July 20, 1950, after his unit was forced to retreat from the vicinity of Taejon, South Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Interment services are pending. [Read about Lilley.](#)

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