



# ACTION CORPS WEEKLY



April 5, 2021



## VA Answers FAQs about the COVID-19

**Vaccine:** Thanks to the passage into law of the [SAVE LIVES Act](#), more and more veterans, caregivers, and spouses may receive the COVID-19 vaccine. VA released answers to frequently asked questions regarding the COVID-19 vaccine. [Part I](#) addresses questions about receiving the vaccine. [Part II](#) addresses post-vaccine questions submitted to VA.



**New VFW Podcast Host:** VFW Communications and Public Affairs Director Robert Couture released his first VFW podcast on Wednesday. Couture first talks with the former host and the new VA Press Secretary Terrence Hayes. The focus then shifts to recognizing Women's History Month with Military Women's Memorial President Phyllis Wilson and the VFW's first woman Department Commander of Idaho, Melanie Foster, by sharing their stories as trailblazers. You can stream the podcast on Deezer, Google, Apple, Pandora, Spotify, Stitcher or you can [listen here](#).



**COVID-19 Funeral Expense Reimbursement:** Due to the American Rescue Plan Act and other COVID-19-related legislation recently passed into law, FEMA will be able to provide financial assistance for COVID-19-related funeral expenses acquired after Jan. 20, 2020. Although applications are not yet being accepted FEMA anticipates beginning later this month and is working on establishing a toll-free phone number for applying for assistance. People who have incurred COVID-19-related funeral expenses are being advised to keep and gather documents, like an official death certificate that shows

the death is COVID-19 related and funeral expense documents. FEMA will also need proof of funds received from other sources such as VA, to determine the amount of your benefit. BEWARE of scammers – FEMA will not contact people prior to them registering for assistance. [Learn more.](#)



**VA Addresses Record Request Backlog by Offering Vaccines to NPRC Staff:** Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough addressed the growing backlog of service record requests at a hearing before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) closed their offices last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and since Mar. 8, 2021, have been operating at 20% capacity and are processing only emergency requests. This has led to a backlog of over 500,000 pending record requests of documents required for VA claims, burials, and other benefits. Secretary McDonough stated that VA would begin offering vaccines to NPRC staff at the Missouri and Maryland sites to get their personnel back to work. He also recognized the need to digitize the immense amount of paper records to avoid this situation in the future stating, "Let's get those records digitized so that we're not stuck in this place again." [Read more](#) for the latest information on NPRC service record requests.



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

- **Navy Signalman 1st Class Eugene M. Skaggs**, 33, 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 Skaggs. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Skaggs.](#)
- **Navy Water Tender 1st Class Milo E. Phillips**, 26, 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 Phillips. Interment Services are pending.

[Read about Phillips.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Raymond A. Smith**, 18, was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on Dec. 2, 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 Smith.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Neal K. Todd**, 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 Todd. Interment services are pending. [Read about Todd.](#)

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