



ACTION CORPUS WEEKLY



April 12, 2021



Complete the VFW's 2021 COVID-19 Health

Survey: Last April the VFW tallied responses to our COVID-19 survey and used that data to advocate for veterans with Congress and VA. The VFW has developed a follow-up survey to evaluate your health care experiences, how your health care may have changed in the last 6 months, and your perceptions of your overall physical and mental health over the past 30 days. Your feedback is vital to our advocacy efforts and to compile a report on this important topic. Help the VFW hold VA and Congress accountable by taking this short survey regarding your experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. [Take the survey.](#)



Joining Forces Initiative Relunched: Last week, First Lady Jill Biden announced the priorities of the recently relaunched Joining Forces initiative. The focus will be on military spouse unemployment and underemployment, increasing access to health care, particularly mental health, and strengthening education for military children. "We must understand and account for the lifelong impact of service on military-connected children and ensure that children in veteran families, caregiving families and surviving families will also be included in the initiative's work," Biden said. [Read more.](#)



New Rule Permits Expanded Use of Education Programs:

Effective April 1, 2021, VA will no longer count the use of Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) benefits against the 48-month limit on GI Bill benefits. Veterans who use VR&E benefits prior to any other VA education program may still use up to 48 months of other education assistance programs, including the Montgomery GI Bill or Post-9/11 GI Bill. VA will begin contacting current student veterans via mail whose entitlement has been impacted by this policy change. Learn more on [VA's website](#) or by calling the VA Education Call Center at 1.888.442.4551.



Sign Up For COVID-19 Vaccine at VA:

Veterans, spouses, caregivers, or CHAMPVA recipients need to [sign up](#) to let VA know you would like to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. Once signed up, you will be contacted by VA as soon as a vaccine is available for you. Be advised that availability will differ by location. VA encourages everyone to take the first opportunity you have to receive the vaccine.



DPAA Remembrance Ceremonies:

Last week, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency hosted three remembrance ceremonies in three locations across the globe. The ceremonies marked the 20th anniversary of the April 7, 2001, helicopter accident that killed seven U.S. service members and nine Vietnamese service members while on a DPAA recovery mission in Vietnam. The ceremonies were held in Vietnam at the memorial site for the accident, in the POW/MIA Corridor at the Pentagon, and on the Heroes' Green at the DPAA facility in Hawaii. DPAA's sacred mission is not without risk and the VFW honors these amazing people who do this important work. [Learn more.](#)



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

- **Navy Seaman 2nd Class Howard S. Magers, 18**, of Merry Oaks, 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 Magers. He will be buried on May 29, 2021, in Smith's Grove, Kentucky. [Read about Magers.](#)
- **Navy Mess Attendant 1st Class Octavius Mabine, 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 Mabine. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Mabine.](#)

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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.