



ACTION CORPUS WEEKLY



April 19, 2021



VFW Hosts Toxic Exposure Press Conference: On Tuesday, the VFW hosted a press conference in front of the VFW Memorial Building in Washington, D.C., for the introduction of the *Presumptive Benefits for War Fighters Exposed to Burn Pits and Other Toxins Act of 2021*. Speakers included the bill sponsors, Sens. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Marco Rubio (R-FL), Reps. Raul Ruiz (D-CA) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), as well as TV personality Jon Stewart, veterans service organizations, and veteran advocates. “The War Fighter Act is a great step in taking care of the millions of men and women exposed to toxic hazards during their military service overseas,” said VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Kristina Keenan. “Veterans like myself and others may never know what we were exposed to during our service. Without legislation like this, the burden of proof falls too heavily on veterans when they develop serious health conditions linked to their service.” [Watch the press conference.](#)



VFW Testifies on Pending EO Legislation: On Wednesday, VFW National Legislative Service Deputy Director Matthew Doyle testified before the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. The subcommittee considered 16 bills to strengthen VA education and training benefits, combat veteran homelessness, and improve the adaptive automobile grant program. Doyle stated “A one-time grant shifts the burden of purchasing a subsequent vehicle to the veteran. It would be analogous for VA to provide only the first prosthetic or assistive device to a service-disabled veteran, only to

make them purchase their next device out-of-pocket.”
[Watch the hearing](#) or [read the testimony](#).



House Hearing on Pending Health Legislation: On Thursday, the House Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee on Health conducted a hearing to discuss pending health care legislation. VA representatives responded to questions on VA’s policies and procedures regarding rural veterans, maternity care, use of video camera equipment, doula services, women-specific care for substance abuse programs and treatment, service dog training grants for veterans with PTSD, and use of commonly spoken languages for VA fact sheets. In a statement submitted for the record, VFW National Legislative Service Associate Director Tammy Barlet cited results from two VFW surveys regarding maternity care and rural veterans’ mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. [Watch the hearing](#) or [read the testimony](#).



New VFW Podcast Episode Available: Spring means tax time, bringing finances to the forefront for many veterans and military members. 2020 brought the COVID-19 pandemic, economic impact payments, job transitions, moves and home purchases, and unemployment for some, all of which can complicate filing taxes. During this episode of the [#StillServing: The VFW Podcast](#), host Rob Couture speaks with IRS spokesperson Karen Connelly about updates and information veterans need to know for filing 2020 taxes. Also, joining the show from Veterans Lending Group are National Director of VA Lending Brooke Villano, National Director of Education David Carter, and VA Home Loan Specialist Ron O’Ferrall. The team offers helpful home buying tips, do’s and don’ts when considering mortgage financing, and common misconceptions about the VA home loan benefit.



Inaugural Flag Raising Over New WWI Memorial:

On Friday, the American flag was raised for the first time over the new National WWI Memorial site in Washington, D.C., after having flown over nine American WWI battlefield cemeteries in Europe and at the U.S. Capitol. Actor Gary Sinise hosted a virtual 90-minute program that included performances by the U.S. Army Band “Pershing’s Own,” as well as the 369th Regiment “Hellfighters Band.” President Joe Biden and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Mark Milley were featured speakers. There was also a flyover by the 94th Aero Squadron established during WWI. [Learn more.](#)



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 six 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.](#)



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced two burial updates and two 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:

-- **Sgt. 1st Class Nicholas J. Valentine**, 22, of Cassville, Wisconsin, 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. Valentine will be buried in his hometown in May 2021. [Read about Valentine.](#)

-- **Navy Radioman 3rd Class Charles A. Montgomery**, 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 Montgomery. Interment services are pending. [Read about Montgomery.](#)

-- **Navy Patternmaker 1st Class Stanislaw F. Drwall**, 25, 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 Drwall. Interment services are pending. [Read about Drwall.](#)

-- **Navy Ship's Cook 3rd Class Robert Goodwin**, 20, of Wichita, Kansas, 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 Goodwin. Goodwin will be buried on May 14, 2021, in Topeka, Kansas. [Read about Goodwin.](#)

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