



# ACTION CORPS WEEKLY



May 17, 2021



**VFW and Give an Hour:** VFW partner, [Give an Hour](#), provides free mental health counseling for veterans and their families. VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch participated as a panelist on the “[Collective Impact: Communities Collaborating to Improve Mental Health](#)” webinar. The VFW calls on communities to reach out to veterans who may be experiencing mental health issues, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Give an Hour’s [Campaign to Change Direction](#) provides information such as the Five Signs of Emotional Suffering, which empowers people to recognize signs of emotional suffering and guides them to reach out for help. In addition, VA provides resources for veterans and those who are concerned for a veteran through its [Make the Connection](#) campaign.



**VFW Testifies Before Senate on VA Disability Claims:** On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Veterans’ Affairs held a hearing on the state of the VA disability claims process during the COVID-19 pandemic. VFW National Veterans Service Director Ryan Gallucci testified on how VFW Service Officers have adapted during the pandemic to continue to assist veterans with their claims using various IT resources. Gallucci stressed ongoing problems at VA that contribute to the ever-growing claims backlog, explaining that VA is measuring success by how quickly claims are processed rather than focusing on accuracy and timely access to benefits. Claims processed with speed, but which result in inaccurate ratings result in veterans filing appeals and waiting longer for their benefits. "Since Secretary Shinseki set the 125-day goal, VA has seemed obsessed with the benchmark to the detriment of the veteran

experience," said Gallucci. [Watch the hearing](#) or [read the testimony](#).



#### **VFW Testifies on Transition Assistance Program:**

On Wednesday, VFW National Legislative Director Patrick Murray testified before the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity regarding the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). Murray highlighted the efforts of VFW Service Officers who helped deliver benefits briefings on military installations while the VA instructors were furloughed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Murray stated, "We believe it is extremely important for TAP offices to integrate accredited VSOs into their operations, not as a third-party entity but as an integral part of the team." [Watch the hearing](#) or [read the testimony](#).



**VFW-Supported Legislation Passes House:** On Wednesday, the House passed VFW-supported, [H.R. 1448](#), *PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act*, and [H.R. 958](#), *Protecting Moms Who Served Act*. The *PAWS for Veterans Therapy Act* would provide a VA pilot grant program to cover the cost of pairing a service dog with an eligible veteran diagnosed with PTSD. Also, VA would maintain certain veterinary insurance coverage for each service dog provided the veteran continues to see their physician or mental health care provider every six months. The *Protecting Moms Who Served Act* would structure VA's maternity care coordination programs to provide community maternity care providers with training and support for veterans' unique pregnancy and postpartum needs. This legislation would also require a report on maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity among veterans, infant mortality rates, and racial and ethnic disparities in maternal health outcomes.



### **Walk-in COVID-19 Vaccines Available at**

**VA:** Eligible veterans, spouses, and caregivers nationwide can walk into their local VA facility's vaccine clinic to receive their COVID-19 vaccines. Veterans not enrolled in VA care should [pre-register](#) online at least one hour before arrival to save time. The expanded access to the COVID-19 vaccine at VA is a result of the [SAVE LIVES Act](#). See the VA's answers to frequently asked questions regarding the COVID-19 vaccine in [Part I](#) and [Part II](#) for more information.



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

-- **Navy Fire Controlman 2nd Class Harold F. Trapp, 24, and Navy Electrician's Mate 3rd Class William H. Trapp, 23,** of La Porte, Indiana, were 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 429 deaths, including the Trapp brothers. They will be buried on June 15, 2021, at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific. [Read about the Trapp brothers.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Eldert J. Beek, 20,** of Sibley, Iowa, was a member of Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported killed in action on Dec. 1, 1950, when his unit was attacked by enemy forces near the Chosin Reservoir, North Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Beek will be buried June 14, 2021, in George, Iowa. [Read about Beek.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Paul E. Saylor, 21,** of Johnson City, Tennessee, 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 Saylor. He will be buried on Aug. 20, 2021, in his hometown. [Read about Saylor.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. James W. White, 21**, of Chester, Ohio, was a member of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), also known as Merrill's Marauders. After taking the airfield in Myitkyina, Burma, from the Japanese on May 17, 1944, White's battalion was tasked with holding the airfield and taking part in the siege of Myitkyina. White was reported to have been killed during fighting on July 2, 1944. White will be buried June 12, 2021, in Long Bottom, Ohio. [Read about White.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Robert J. Harr, 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 Harr. Interment services are pending. [Read about Harr.](#)

-- **Navy Electrician's Mate 3rd Class Charles D. Brown, 22**, was assigned to the battleship USS West Virginia, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on Dec. 7, 1941. The USS West Virginia sustained multiple torpedo hits, but timely counter-flooding measures taken by the crew prevented it from capsizing, and it came to rest on the shallow harbor floor. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 106 crewmen, including Brown. Interment services are pending. [Read about Brown.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 2nd Class William K. Shafer, 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 Shafer. Interment services are pending. [Read about Shafer.](#)

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