



# ACTION CORPS WEEKLY



June 28, 2021



**Senate Hearing on Pending Legislation:** On Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs conducted a hearing on pending legislation. VA representatives responded to questions on VA's policies and procedures regarding rural veterans, maternity care, service dog training grants for veterans with PTSD, "Buddy Check" week, medical cannabis research, and in vitro fertilization. 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 the VFW resolution on medicinal cannabis research. [Watch the hearing](#), which starts at the 33:20 minute mark or [read the testimony](#).



**Rural Mental Health Bill Passes Senate:** On Thursday, the Senate passed VFW-supported [S.1468](#), the *Sgt. Ketchum Rural Veterans Mental Health Act of 2021*. This legislation would require VA to report an assessment of health needs for rural and highly rural veterans, provide an account of VA's outpatient mental health care and residential programs, and VA's Rural Access Network for Growth Enhancement (RANGE) program cost savings. The bill now heads to the president's desk for signature.



**Equal Access to Contraception for Veterans Act Passes House:** On Thursday, the House passed VFW-supported [H.R. 239](#), the *Equal Access to Contraception for Veterans Act*. This bill would provide women veterans access to the same no-cost contraceptive care as their non-veteran counterparts.



### **VA Secretary Wants to Keep Telehealth**

**Appointments:** This week while testifying before the Senate Committee on Appropriations, VA Secretary Denis McDonough stated that VA wants to maintain access to telehealth appointments. He noted that usage of online video appointments are about 18 times higher now than at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Health officials have predicted a sharp rise in the need for health care services as veterans who have delayed care during the pandemic will now need to catch up. McDonough said, “We want to maintain it, because it’s ease of access for vets who don’t need to be seen in person.” [Read more.](#)



**Learn Where the VFW Stands on Legislation:** The National Legislative Service staff regularly testifies before Congress on behalf of our VFW members. Our testimonies cover a wide array of issues that are critically important to veterans from all eras. While comprehensive toxic exposure legislation is currently our number one priority, we actively advocate on many varied issues concerning veterans’ earned benefits, care options, and delivery. The VFW currently supports 69 bills and opposes one bill pending before the 117th Congress. [View current legislation.](#)



**MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced two burial updates and five 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 Sgt. John E. Hurlburt, 26**, of Madison, Connecticut, was a member of the 105th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Division. He was killed July 7, 1944, during a massive Japanese attack against the 105th on the island of Saipan. His remains were not known to have been recovered. Hurlburt will be buried Aug. 14, 2021, in New Haven, Connecticut. [Read about Hurlburt.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Philip T. Hoogacker, 23**, of Detroit, was a member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 29th Infantry Regiment. He was reported missing in action on July 27, 1950, after his unit was attacked near Anui, South Korea. He was last seen after receiving

first aid for a minor shrapnel wound. DPAA historians believe Hoogacker was captured by the Korean People's Army and forcibly marched to Seoul and then on to Pyongyang, where he died as a prisoner of war. Hoogacker will be buried July 23, 2021, in Livonia, Michigan. [Read about Hoogacker.](#)

-- **Navy Seaman 1st Class Donald A. Stott, 19**, 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 Stott. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Stott.](#)

-- **Navy Chief Machinist's Mate Ralph A. Derrington, 42**, 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 Derrington. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Derrington.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. Bernard J. Sweeney, Jr., 22**, was assigned to Company I, 330th Infantry Regiment, 83rd Infantry Division. His unit had been engaged in battle with German forces near Strass, Germany, in the Hürtgen Forest, when he was reported missing in action on Dec. 16, 1944. His body was not recovered. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Sweeney.](#)

-- **Army Cpl. Charles E. Lee, 18**, was a member of 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. He was never found, nor were any remains recovered that could be identified as Lee. He was declared non-recoverable in January 1956. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Lee.](#)

-- **Navy Fireman 1st Class Walter S. Belt, Jr., 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 Belt. Interment Services are pending. [Read about Belt.](#)

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