



ACTION CORPUS WEEKLY



November 22, 2021



VFW Testifies Before Senate: VFW National Legislative Director Pat Murray testified before the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs on pending legislation. Twenty-one bills were discussed, including expansions for Guard and Reserve troops, student veteran protections, VA claims improvements, and provisions to improve the Office of Inspector General. Murray stated, "Knowing which specific veterans are and are not utilizing VA would help inform stakeholders about any and all gaps in veterans' care." Many of the bills discussed at this hearing were supported by the VFW and we are hopeful they will be swiftly passed into law. [Watch the hearing](#), which starts at the 15:40 mark or [read the testimony](#).



VFW Testifies Before House Subcommittees: The House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, and Subcommittee on Health, held a joint hearing on disability claims related to military sexual trauma (MST). VFW National Legislative Associate Director Kristina Keenan testified on the need for VA to improve the quality of mental health compensation and pension exams, carefully weigh all evidence for incidents of MST, and increase resources for MST coordinators. "It is imperative that the Department of Veterans Affairs provides support for MST survivors and delivers benefits and services with dignity and respect at the forefront," said Keenan. She also stressed the need for mental health examiners to receive MST-specific training, as well as training on military culture. [Watch the hearing](#), which starts at the 03:10 mark or [read the testimony](#).



Congress Passes Veterans Legislation: Congress passed four VFW-supported bills — [S. 796](#), [S. 894](#), [S. 1031](#), [S. 1095](#) — that would improve maternal health care, increase coordination for hiring veteran health professionals at VA, study racial and ethnic disparities in VA claims, and establish tuition fairness for those utilizing the Survivors' and Dependents' Education Assistance program. These bills were previously passed by the Senate and now head to the president's desk for signature.



House Passes Several Veterans Bills: The House passed nine veterans bills, including three supported by the VFW. [H.R. 147](#), [H.R. 4233](#), and [H.R. 4626](#) would ensure services and benefits for separating service members and veterans with respect to apprenticeship programs, require VA to furnish counseling including Vet Center access to those using specified DOD or VA educational assistance benefits, and require VA at least once every 10 years to enter into a contract for a private sector entity or entities to conduct an independent assessment of all medical services and care furnished by VA.



VA Women Veterans Survey: VA's Center for Women Veterans has released a women veterans' survey. It wants to hear from as many women who served as possible, regardless if they use or are enrolled for VA benefits and services. The survey takes less than five minutes. Spanish and Tagalog versions of the survey will be released in January. [Take the survey.](#)



Urgent Need for Blood Donations: The American Red Cross has issued an emergency shortage alert and strongly urges healthy, eligible individuals who are feeling well to give blood, platelets, or plasma to help maintain a sufficient supply for those battling COVID-19, cancers, other infections, or trauma victims. Those who donate Nov. 24-28 will receive an exclusive pair of Red Cross holiday socks, while supplies last. Please schedule an appointment by using the Red Cross Blood Donor app, visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.redcrossblood.org), or calling 1.800.RED.CROSS (1.800.733.2767).



Holiday Overseas Mail Deadlines Approaching:

The U.S. Postal Service is preparing for more gifts to be mailed this year than usual as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to force many families to spend holidays apart. In order to ensure overseas packages are delivered before Dec. 25, it has provided the following deadlines: **Dec. 9** for all Air/Army Post Office (APO), Fleet Post Office (FPO) and Diplomatic Post Office (DPO) addresses with AE Zip Codes using Priority Mail and First-Class Mail; and **Dec. 16** for APO/FPO/DPO addresses using USPS Priority Mail Express (excluding ZIP 093). The Postal Service offers a free “military care kit,” which consists of the items most often requested by military families. [Read more](#) details on holiday shipping deadlines.



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced three 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:

-- **Army Cpl. Leon E. Clevenger, 21**, of Durham, North Carolina, was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He was reported missing in action on July 11, 1950, while involved in combat operations against the North Korean People's Army in the vicinity of Chonui and Choch'iwon, South Korea. Following the battle, his remains could not be recovered. Clevenger will be buried on Dec. 11, 2021, in his hometown. [Read about Clevenger.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Charles McMackin, 26**, of Boston, was assigned to 68th Bombardment Squadron, 44th Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft on which McMackin was serving as a bombardier crashed as a result of enemy anti-aircraft fire. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. McMackin will be buried on April 14, 2022, in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. [Read about McMackin.](#)

-- **Army Sgt. Howard R. Belden, 19**, of Hague, New York, was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. He was reported missing 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. He will be buried at Arlington National

Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia. The date has yet to be determined. [Read about Belden.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. John J. Heffernan, Jr., 24**, was assigned to 490th Bomb Squadron, 341st Bomb Group, 10th Air Force. On Feb. 22, 1944, the B-25G Mitchell bomber on which Heffernan was serving as a navigator burst into flames and crashed near Letpadaung. Following the war, his remains could not be identified. Interment services are pending. [Read about Heffernan.](#)

-- **Army Tech. Sgt. Ross H. Thompson, 50**, was assigned to the Finance Department, U.S. Army Forces Far East, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands in December 1941. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan peninsula in 1942. Thompson was among those captured and held at the Cabanatuan POW Camp, where he reportedly died on Dec. 10, 1942, and was buried. Interment services are pending. [Read about Thompson.](#)

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