



ACTION CORPUS WEEKLY



March 14, 2022



Congress Passes Government Funding

Legislation with Veteran Provisions: The House and Senate passed a government funding omnibus package that includes 12 appropriations bills for fiscal year 2022, supplemental funding to support Ukraine, and three VFW-supported provisions that would affect veterans. The first provision would increase the maximum rate of basic pay for VA nurses and physician assistants, allowing VA to offer more competitive salaries. The second provision would permit VA's National Cemetery Administration to grant individual states the ability to decide who is interred in their state veterans cemeteries and to open their application process, ensuring all National Guard and Reserve members can be buried with fellow service members. The third provision would increase funding for VET TEC from \$45 million to \$125 million to meet the high demand for the program and enable its operation through the end of the fiscal year. The bill now heads to the president for signature. [Read more.](#)



Women's History Month: Two million women in the United States are veterans, comprising 10 percent of the overall veteran population. America's daughters have served and sacrificed alongside men in the fight to ensure our freedoms. The VFW and its Auxiliary salute these women for their unwavering courage, commitment, and contributions to a grateful nation.



Brain Injury Awareness Month: According to the Traumatic Brain Injury Center of Excellence, TBI has been diagnosed in more than 449,000 service members since 2000. VA has screened 1.5 million veterans for potential mild TBI in the last 14 years. The [Military Health System](#) and [VA](#) have events planned for the month of March to increase brain injury awareness and education. A *Brain Injury Awareness Day on Capitol Hill* virtual briefing will be held by the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force on March 16. [Register now.](#)



Public Service Loan Forgiveness Waiver: Many individuals with outstanding federal student loans may be eligible for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), including eligibility from time served on active duty. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of Education is offering a limited-time waiver to allow borrowers to receive credit for past periods of repayment on loans that would otherwise not qualify for PSLF. Individuals must have been working full time for a qualifying employer. This waiver is available through October 31, 2022. [Learn more and check your eligibility.](#)



VA Women Veterans Health Podcast: Women veterans have unique health care needs, which is the focus of VA's podcast [She Wears the Boots](#). Reproductive, pelvic, musculoskeletal, and mental health issues, as well as infertility and menopause are among the topics discussed. The podcast also provides information on VA resources and services for women veterans. [Read more.](#)



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. Returning home for burial with full military honors are: -- **Army Air Forces Pfc. Edward H. Benson Jr., 22**, of Roanoke, Virginia, was assigned to the 1562nd Army Air Force Base Unit on Biak Island, part of the modern-day Republic of Indonesia. On March 22, 1945, Benson and 39 other service members were killed during a Japanese air raid of Sorido Airstrip.

Three individuals, including Benson, could not be identified or accounted for after the attack. He will be buried on May 14, 2022, in his hometown. [Read about Benson.](#)

-- **Navy Water Tender 1st Class Oliver K. Burger, 26**, of San Pedro, California, 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 Burger. He will be buried on Aug. 31, 2022, at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) in Honolulu. [Read about Burger.](#)

-- **Army Pvt. Edward M. Ryan, 33**, of New York City, was a member of Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry Regiment, 27th Infantry Division, which occupied defensive positions along the northwest coast of Saipan as part of a larger operation to secure the Mariana Islands. On July 7, 1944, the commanding general of the Japanese forces ordered a mass suicide charge of his remaining soldiers into the 105th's line. Ryan was killed during the attack, and posthumously awarded the Bronze Star. Following the war, his remains were declared non-recoverable. He will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Ryan.](#)

-- **Army Staff Sgt. Casimir P. Lobacz, 25**, was assigned to Company E, 11th Infantry Regiment, 5th Infantry Division. On Sept. 27, 1944, Lobacz's unit was part of the ground attack on Fort Driant near Metz, France. He was reported to have been killed during the first wave of the assault and his body was unable to be recovered. [Read about Lobacz.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. Newell F. Mills Jr., 21**, was assigned to the 354th Fighter Squadron, 355th Fighter Group. On April 7, 1945, Mills was piloting a P-51D Mustang fighter escorting a formation of B-24 Liberator bombers to a target in Geesthacht, Germany. When the formation encountered German fighters near Bremen, he and the other escort pilots engaged the Germans. Following the mission, Mills and his wingman never returned to base or were reported as prisoners of war. The War Department issued an administrative Finding of Death on April 8, 1946. [Read about Mills.](#)

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