



\* The next edition will be on Monday, December 5, 2022. We wish you a Happy Thanksgiving! \*

**November 21, 2022**



### **Senate Hearing on PACT Act Implementation:**

VFW National Legislative Assistant Director Kristina Keenan provided a statement for the record for a Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing on VA's implementation of the *Honoring our PACT Act of 2022*. She included observations made by VFW Service Officers who have been assisting veterans with their VA disability claims for toxic exposure conditions. "About one-third reported that they have already seen PACT-Act-related claims adjudicated and some being granted by VA, primarily for Vietnam War veterans with hypertension and for those who served in Thailand," said Keenan. She added that while VA has reported a large increase in claims since the passage of the PACT Act, VA is also processing claims faster at nearly the same rate as the increase. She stated that the VFW recommends that VA maintains its overtime staffing in order to continue managing the increased claims workload. [Watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 17:03 mark, or [read the testimony](#).



### **Women Veterans Task Force Holds Roundtable:**

Members of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Women Veterans Task Force, VA, women veterans, and veteran organizations discussed child care, sexual harassment and assault, and intimate partner violence, which are included in Title V - Deborah Sampson of the *Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020*. VFW National Legislative Deputy Director Tammy Barlet discussed VA's briefing on the Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program launch. VFW National Legislative Assistant Director Kristina Keenan noted the importance of VA

helping veterans obtain child care so they are able to schedule Compensation and Pension examinations and other VA benefit appointments.



**New Toxic Exposure Screening for Veterans:** If you are a veteran enrolled in VA health care, you can now receive the toxic exposure screening at VA medical centers and clinics across the country. If you are not enrolled in VA health care, you will be eligible for the screening once you complete the enrollment process. These screenings will become a regular part of your medical appointments and, if you believe that you experienced toxic exposure during your military service, you will be connected to support and resources. [Read more.](#)



**Holiday Overseas Mail Deadlines Approaching:** The U.S. Postal Service is preparing for the holiday season as many families spend holidays apart due to military service. 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.



**Men's Health Awareness Month:** According to VA, male veterans die five years earlier than most female veterans. Detection and proper attention to conditions such as [prostate](#) or testicular cancer, [mental health](#) issues, and [suicide prevention](#) factors may help to avert premature deaths. VA created a [recommendation chart](#) for preventive care that lists recommended screenings and immunizations. Veterans who are overdue for preventive care are encouraged to schedule appointments as soon as possible.



**Bring Christmas Joy Through Toys for Tots:** Since 1947, Marine Toys for Tots has been bringing the joy of Christmas to America's less-fortunate children and fostering community engagement. Every holiday season, new, unwrapped toys are distributed to children in need. Donated items may be dropped off at designated locations, or you may make a virtual donation. [Learn more.](#)



**MIA Update:** The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced four burial updates 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. Tommie T. Hanks, 27**, of Fort Worth, Texas, was assigned to Company E, 2nd Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division. On Nov. 26, 1950, he was reported missing in action while his unit was attempting to withdraw from east Ch'ongch'on River near Anju, North Korea. Following the war, his remains could not be recovered and there is no evidence that he was a prisoner of war. Hanks will be buried in Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Hanks.](#)

-- **Army Pfc. Francis P. Martin, 25**, of Scranton, Pennsylvania, was assigned to Company D, 1st Battalion, 157th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division. His unit was engaged in battle with German forces near Lichtenberg, France, when he was wounded and reported missing. With no body recovered and the Germans never reporting him as a prisoner of war, on Jan. 17, 1946, the War Department issued a finding of death. Martin will be buried in Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Martin.](#)

-- **Army Staff Sgt. James Rotunno, 27**, of Brooklyn, New York, was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 157th Infantry Regiment, 45th Infantry Division. His unit was engaged in the Battle of Reipertswiller in France when it was surrounded by German forces. On Jan. 20, 1945, his unit and four other companies attempted a break-out through German lines. Rotunno was among those killed the following day and his body could not be recovered. He will be buried in Rutherford, New Jersey, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Rotunno.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces Staff Sgt. Walter Nies, 23**, of Eureka, South Dakota, was assigned to 96th Bombardment Squadron, 2nd Bombardment Group, 15th Air Force. On Jan. 24, 1944, the B-17F Flying Fortress bomber on which he was serving as a tail gunner was shot down by enemy fighters. The crew was captured by Germans, and Nies was among those sent to Stalag Luft 6 prisoner of war camp. Nies died on May 28, 1944, after being shot. He will be buried in Eureka, South Dakota, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Nies.](#)

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