



ACTION CORPUS WEEKLY



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Senate Bill to Crack Down on Claim Sharks: Sens. John Boozman (R-AR), Jon Tester (D-MT), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Lindsey Graham (R-SC) have introduced the VFW-supported *Governing Unaccredited Representatives Defrauding VA Benefits Act*, known as the *GUARD VA Benefits Act*. Reintroduced in this Congress, the bipartisan legislation would reinstate criminal penalties for unaccredited claim representatives who charge unauthorized fees for helping veterans file claims for VA disability compensation benefits. These companies are incentivized to operate outside of the law due to the lack of penalties. Cracking down on Claim Sharks is one of the VFW's top legislative priorities for the 118th Congress. [Read the release.](#)



VA | U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

VA Budget Released: The president's budget request for fiscal year 2024 has been released and includes many increases for VA. Some notable inclusions are additional resources for health care, benefits, and national cemeteries. "The VFW is encouraged by the Administration's recently released budget as it seeks to provide the necessary resources for VA to provide earned essential care and benefits to millions of veterans across the country," said VFW Washington Office Executive Director Ryan Gallucci. "This includes commitments our nation has made to toxic-exposed veterans through the historic PACT Act. The VFW still has concerns about the under prioritization of certain elements within the budget such as infrastructure and the funding mechanism for toxic exposure care. But we look forward to working with our partners in Congress and the Administration to make sure these outliers are rectified to ensure the best possible outcomes for veterans." [Read the release.](#)



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Electronic Health Record Hearing: The Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs held an oversight hearing on the future path of VA's Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) system. Chairman Jon Tester stated, "All options are on the table except one. I'm not going to abandon the effort to modernize VA's records." The EHRM has had various challenges since it was first rolled out in 2020 at the Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center in Spokane, Washington. The VFW is aware and is working with the Administration and Congress to implement this much-needed health record upgrade. [Watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 25:00 minute mark.



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced six burial updates and one identification 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 Air Forces 2nd Lt. John F. Minogue, 24**, of Richfield, California, was assigned to the 328th Bombardment Squadron, 93rd Bombardment Group, 9th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator bomber on which Minogue was the co-pilot was hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire and crashed during Operation Tidal Wave north of Bucharest, Romania. His remains were not immediately identified following the war. He will be buried on April 20, 2023, in Fullerton, California. [Read about Minogue.](#)

-- **Navy Chief Machinist's Mate Ralph A. Derrington, 42**, of Columbus, Ohio, was assigned to the battleship USS Oklahoma, which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft on December 7, 1941. The USS Oklahoma sustained multiple torpedo hits causing it to quickly capsize. The attack on the ship resulted in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including Derrington. He will be buried on June 20, 2023, at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl) in Honolulu. [Read about Derrington.](#)

-- **Army Air Forces 1st Lt. William B. Montgomery, 24**, of Ford City, Pennsylvania, was assigned to the 844th Bombardment Squadron, 489th Bombardment Group, Eighth Air Force. On June 22, 1944, Montgomery was piloting a B-24H Liberator that was struck by anti-aircraft after a bombing raid on a German airfield in Saint-Cyr-l'École, near Versailles, France. He was able to pilot the damaged aircraft over the English coast, but then crashed in West Sussex, England. His remains were not immediately found, and he was declared non-recoverable on May 10, 1950. He will be buried at Arlington National

Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Montgomery.](#)

-- **Army Tech Sgt. Matthew L. McKeon, 25**, of Euclid, California, was assigned to Company K, 3rd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division. His unit was engaged in battle with German forces near Hürtgen, Germany, in the Hürtgen Forest, when he was reported killed in action on Nov. 9, 1944. He will be buried in San Diego, California, on date yet to be determined. [Read about McKeon.](#)

--**Army Pfc. Harry J. Hartmann Jr., 19**, of Mays Landing, New Jersey, was a member of E Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, when he was reported missing in action on Nov. 2, 1950, during fighting near Unsan, North Korea. Subsequent reports indicated he had been captured and held as a prisoner of war, and died on or around March 31, 1951. He will be buried in Mays Landing, New Jersey, on a date yet to be determined. [Read about Hartmann.](#)

--**Navy Aviation Ordnanceman First Class Anthony Di Petta 24**, of Nutley, New Jersey, was assigned to the Navy Torpedo Squadron 20, USS Enterprise. On Sept. 10, 1944, Di Petta and two other crew members took off on a mission to conduct air strikes against enemy targets in Malakal Naval District, Palau Islands. Their aircraft was struck by enemy anti-aircraft fire and crashed into water near Malakal. His remains were not immediately recovered. A burial date and location are pending. [Read about Di Petta.](#)

--**Navy Aviation Radioman First Class Wilbur A. Mitts, 24**, was the Aviation Radioman assigned to the Navy Torpedo Squadron 20, USS Enterprise. On Sept. 10, 1944, Mitts and two other crew members took off on a mission to conduct air strikes against enemy targets in Malakal Naval District, Palau Islands. Their aircraft was struck by enemy anti-aircraft fire and crashed into water near Malakal. His remains were not immediately recovered. [Read about Mitts.](#)

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