



# ACTION CORPS WEEKLY



February 19, 2024



**GI Bill Stifled by Overregulation:** VFW National Legislative Deputy Director Kristina Keenan spoke on a legislative panel at the midwinter meeting of the National Association of State Approving Agencies. These agencies have responsibility to review, approve, and monitor all programs and schools to ensure quality education for those using VA benefits such as the GI Bill. Keenan presented the VFW's concern that overregulation has caused too many schools to stop participating in the GI Bill program due to increasingly burdensome requirements. She also stressed the need for student veterans who take some or all college courses online to receive a more realistic monthly housing allowance, currently set at half the national average. The VFW supports increasing this amount to ensure that veterans do not experience housing insecurity while pursuing an education.



**VA Focus on Pacific Areas:** The VFW National Veterans Service, in partnership with the Department of the Pacific Areas, hosted a virtual benefit forum for veterans living overseas. Andrew Szymczak, VA's program management officer, presented helpful information for how veterans can best navigate the [VA Foreign Medical Program](#), and fielded numerous questions from the audience. Should you have questions on this topic, please reach out to a [VFW accredited representative](#).



**Veteran Hearings in the House:** The House Committee on Veterans' Affairs held four hearings on various issues facing veterans and one on VA itself. The full committee held an oversight hearing on reports of sexual harassment at VA. Subcommittee hearings included a deep dive into the VA Home Loans program, use of artificial intelligence, the Electronic Health Record upgrade, and VA's spending in compensation and pension programs. [Watch the hearings.](#)



**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 the Korean War. Returning home for burial with full military honors are:

- **Marine Corps Sgt. Harold Hammett, 24**, of Avery, Mississippi, was a member of L Company, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force. He was among 1,000 marines and sailors killed in action at the Battle of Tarawa, and reportedly died on Nov. 20, 1943. He was buried in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, on Feb. 16, 2024. [Read about Hammett.](#)
- **Army Tech. 4th Grade Elmo F. Hartwick, 38**, of Onaga, Kansas, was assigned to Company C, 149th Engineer Combat Battalion. He was killed in action enroute to Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944. He will be buried in his hometown on a date to be determined. [Read about Hartwick.](#)
- **Army Air Force Staff Sgt. Jack W. Coy, 20**, of Toledo, Ohio, was assigned to the 703rd Bombardment Squadron, 445th Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force. He was killed in action on Feb. 24, 1944. He will be buried in Oregon, Ohio, on a date to be determined. [Read about Coy.](#)
- **Army Cpl. Charles R. Patten, 24**, of Lebanon, Missouri, was a member of Headquarters & Headquarters Company, 34th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. He went missing in action on July 20, 1950, and the Army issued a presumptive finding of death on Dec. 31, 1953. He will be buried in Lawson, Missouri, on a date to be determined. [Read about Patten.](#)

[Click here to view this week's edition.](#)

[Click here for past editions of the VFW Action Corps Weekly.](#)

[Click here to view VFW-supported bills in the 118th Congress.](#)

[Click here to sign up new veterans' advocates.](#)

As always, we want to hear your advocacy stories. To share your stories or photos with us, simply email them directly to [vfwac@vfw.org](mailto:vfwac@vfw.org).