



ACTION CORPUS WEEKLY



March 4, 2024



Senate Committee Hearing on Burial Benefits:

VFW National Veterans Service Director Michael Figlioli testified at a Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing on the National Cemetery Administration's job performance and customer satisfaction rating. "The National Cemetery Administration has consistently rated in the high 90 percentile in every American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey since 2015. It most recently achieved a 97 percent rating in 2022, which was the highest score ever achieved by any organization rated by ACSI," said Figlioli. He also called attention to the importance of being precise when honoring veterans' legacies. "We all served. We all went obediently to where we were told to fulfill whatever duties we had been assigned. The issue is about accuracy, not self-importance." [Read the testimony](#) or [watch the hearing](#), which begins at the 21:09 mark.



Expanded VA Health Care: VA has announced that beginning on March 5, 2024, toxic-exposed veterans will be eligible to enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for VA benefits. Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, or any other combat zone after Sept. 11, 2001, are eligible, as well as veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty in the United States. This expansion comes after years of effort by Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Jon Tester and the passage of the PACT Act. In response to the announcement Tester said, "Generations of veterans answered the call to serve and came home changed, and it's our duty to ensure they have health care that meets their needs I'm glad to see VA announcing

they will honor this nation's promise by expanding health care eligibility for toxic-exposed veterans immediately, rather than waiting for a years-long phase-in. This is exactly why we fought to pass the *PACT Act*—to expand health care access for millions of veterans without the red tape that has turned too many folks away in the past.” Toxic-exposed veterans and survivors can apply today at va.gov/PACT or by calling 1-800-MYVA411.



VFW Washington Conference: The VFW conference in Washington, D.C., is taking place this year on March 3–7, during which hundreds of attendees will make sure veterans' voices are heard on Capitol Hill. Our National Legislative Committee members will lead their delegations, some including the 2024 VFW-SVA Fellows, to present our legislative priorities to members of Congress and their staffs. VFW National Commander Duane Sarmiento will testify before a joint hearing of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs on Wednesday, March 6, at 10:00 a.m. EST. [Watch the hearing.](#)



Claim Shark Victims: Predatory unaccredited companies referred to as “Claim Sharks” coach veterans in filing VA disability claims with promises of increasing their ratings, while charging fees and taking a portion of the veterans' compensation. This is an illegal practice. Accredited Veterans Service Organizations like the VFW have service officers who provide claims assistance to veterans free of charge, as is the law. If you or someone you know has been charged fees for VA claims assistance, please email us at vfw@vfw.org.



MIA Update: The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced one burial update for a service member who has been missing and unaccounted for from World War II. Returning home for burial with full military honors is:

-- **Army Technician Fifth Grade Clifford H. Strickland, 25**, of Fowler, Colorado, was a member of Company C, 803rd Engineer Battalion. He was among those captured in the surrender of the Bataan

peninsula on April 9, 1942. He died while a prisoner of war on July 29 that same year. He will be buried in Florence, Colorado, on June 29, 2024. [Read about Strickland.](#)

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