



GEN. WILLIAM STARK ROSECRANS
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MARCH 2023
 Volume 3, Issue 3

It's not the dues you paid to be a member, it's the price you paid to be eligible.

Commander's Comments

Post Commander James "Jimmy C" Carradine



The March edition of the VFW Magazine featured an article by Timothy Borland, the first VFW Commander-in-Chief who served in the Iraq War. I want to highlight some of the following noteworthy comments in the article, for those who may not have read it:

On March 29 this year, the nation will observe the 50th anniversary of our troops leaving that war zone. I, on behalf of all VFW members, thank them for their service in the war, the mentorship they provided to those of us who followed them and their devotion to our nation and their communities.

I am proud of the nation's Iraq War veterans...I lost two soldiers under my command in Iraq. To honor their service and ultimate sacrifice, I realize that I am here for a purpose: to re-energize and bolster the VFW's membership to serve not only the veterans of the Iraq War, but all conflicts in which American men and women in uniform have fought and died...and that includes the Vietnam War.

It has been 20 years since the beginning of the Iraq War and more than 21 years since the beginning of the Afghanistan War. Most of those veterans are now in a position in their lives where they can devote more time to the VFW. We want and need them to fill leadership roles within our great organization.

The men and women I led and served with in the Iraq War zone represent the best of America's youth. Their commitment to the mission and stellar performance is something I look back on with pride.

(Go to VFW Magazine March Edition page 2 for the complete article)

This article reminds us that the Vietnam veterans who served over fifty years ago are now in their late 60's to early 80's. The future of our local VFW Post 3261 rests heavily on our ability to recruit young eligible members who can continue the tremendous work of the VFW.

As previously noted I wanted to recognize individuals that have contributed to VFW Post 3261. One of the individuals is **Chris Klunk owner and trainer of Innovative Inspection Training**. Chris' father and brother are both war veterans and I believe that is one of the reasons he feels strongly about supporting the VFW. Chris has provided printing services for our newsletter free of charge since September 2021. In addition, Chris can be depended upon when donations are needed for community projects—he doesn't hesitate. Thanks again Chris for your service.

CANTEEN
 Open Monday - Sunday
 2 – 10 p.m.

*Enjoy Trina's Sunday Cooking
 Every Sunday 2 - 9 PM
 (menu vary each week)*

TACO Tuesday 4-9 PM

Tacos \$1.50 (Asada & Chicken)
 Wet Burrito \$7.00 (Asada or Chicken)
 Nachos \$5.00 (Asada or Chicken)

BINGO Wednesday

Open @ 4:30 p.m. Starts at 6:30 p.m.

MENU

Hot Dogs / Hamburgers
 Cheese Toast / Patty Melt
 Taco Salad / French Fries
 Desserts: Brownies & Pineapple Up-
 side Down Cake

Monthly Membership Meeting
Second Tuesday at 7 p.m. at Post 3261. Meetings may also be available on ZOOM. Send your email address if you'd like to participate.

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(Capacity: 250 Persons)

**Security Deposit - \$500
 (Required to hold the date)**

**Friday & Saturday - \$2,000
 (Bar Closes at Midnight)**

**Veterans
 Crisis Line**



**DIAL 988 then
 PRESS 1**



VFW Commemorates Women’s History Month

The VFW takes the opportunity to recognize and celebrate women for their contributions throughout American history.

WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) is proud to celebrate our nation’s women service members, veterans and countless other selfless contributors to the United States throughout the month of March, Women’s History Month.

With women being integral to every facet of American life, it’s surprising the nation has only been officially celebrating women’s history for 41 years. In 1981, Congress passed a joint resolution Public Law 97-28, designating “Women’s History Week” beginning March 7, 1982, to recognize and celebrate “American women of every race, class and ethnic background” whose roles and contributions had been “consistently overlooked and undervalued in the body of American History.”

Authorized and requested by the law, President Jimmy Carter issued a presidential proclamation declaring Women’s History Week and called on the people of the United States to mark the observance with ceremonies and activities.

Within a few years, 14 states had already expanded the week-long commemoration to the entire month of March. Finally in 1987, President Ronald Reagan signed the newly passed Public Law 100-9 designating the month of March as Women’s History Month. Since then, every American president, Democrat and Republican, has issued

100 Years of Advancing Health Care for Women Veterans Milestones and Achievements for Women Veterans

This Women’s History Month, VA celebrates 100 years of advancing health care for women Veterans.



The milestones and achievements throughout the last 100 years are integral chapters in the story of VA. This recognition includes the work of many who advocated for women Veterans to receive the health care services they’ve earned and deserve.

How it began

Women have served in the U.S. military since the American Revolution. They served in combat, disguised as men during the American Revolution and Civil War. They served on the front lines during the World Wars. However, it took the advocacy of groups such as the Women’s Overseas Service League to fight for the right for women Veterans to be seen at Veterans’ hospitals and care homes.

On Sept. 14, 1923, VA’s predecessor, the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, approved the first hospital spaces for women Veterans who served as Army or Navy nurses during World War I. Throughout the [next 100 years](#), VA made significant achievements that improved health care services and care coordination for women Veterans.

VFW Commemorate Women's History Month (Cont.)

A brief history

In the 1940s, VA began hiring women physicians and leadership who specialized in women's health and opened the first medical facilities designated to treat women Veterans.

The 1980s saw a renewed focus on issues and barriers to care pertaining to women Veterans. Established in 1983, the National [Advisory Committee on Women Veterans](#) assessed the needs of women Veteran issues and recommended changes to help them receive care. One result was VA appointed the first Women Veterans Coordinators and established the Woman Veterans Health Program.



VA established the [Center for Women Veterans](#) to improve engagement with women Veterans. The center conducts outreach to women Veterans, increases site visits to VA facilities, provides briefings to Congress, and held the first "National Summit on Women Veterans Issues" in Washington, D.C. This summit was the first time women Veterans from across the nation had the opportunity to come together with policymakers and VA officials.

Women VA health care users doubled

Between 2000 and 2013, women Veteran VA health care users doubled, from 159,000 to 390,000. Due to the rapid increase in women Veterans using VA health care, in 2008 VA committed to hiring a full-time [Women Veteran Program Manager](#) at each medical center and in 2009 launched the [Women Veterans Call Center](#).

VA invested more than \$16.5 million in 86 studies on women Veterans' health in 2013 and also funded the Women's Health Collaborative Research to Enhance and Advance Transformation and Excellence (CREATE), a research initiative aimed at better meeting the needs of women Veterans.

The past decade in women Veterans' health care

Within the last decade, VA has focused on further enhancing health care services and providing a welcoming atmosphere at VA facilities.

With the support of Congress, Veteran advocates, and Veteran Service Organizations, VA improved offerings in the areas of fertility, newborn care, maternity care, childcare, sexual assault and trauma, and homelessness. They also support LGBTQ+ gender-affirming care, readjustment assistance, legal and supportive services and help with reproductive health.

VA launched the [White Ribbon](#) campaign and End Harassment programs aimed at improving women's experiences at VA medical centers.

How can I access care?

You belong at VA. To enroll in VA health care, call or text the [Women Veterans Call Center](#) at 855-829-6636. Representatives are available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET, and Saturday, 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. ET.

If you call after hours, we will return your call the next day we are open. For more information, you can download a [handout](#) on eligibility or visit the VA [Women Veterans Health Care website](#) (<https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/index.asp>.)

SOURCE: <https://news.va.gov/116323/100-years-of-advancing-health-care-for-women-veterans/>

Biden Awards Medal of Honor to Black Vietnam War Hero After paperwork Lost Twice



Army Special Forces vet Paris Davis has waited almost 60 years to be recognized. President Joe Biden stands with Vietnam War veteran, Retired US Army Colonel Paris Davis, before awarding him the Medal of Honor, in the East Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on March 3, 2023.

By [Matt Seyler](#), In an ABC NEWS Interview

President [Joe Biden](#) on Friday, March 3, 2023, awarded the Medal of Honor to a Black Army Special Forces hero from the Vietnam War who has waited close to 60 years to receive the nation's top award for valor after the Army said the paperwork couldn't be found.

Then a 26-year-old captain, Paris Davis, now 83, led a company tearing through a larger enemy force, pushing the attack despite being shot, absorbing shrapnel and another bullet to get wounded comrades to safety, refusing to join them on the evacuation helicopter, choosing rather to stay and continue destroying the remaining adversaries.

At a White House ceremony, Biden called Davis "an incredible man." Biden explained, "And although the men who were with him on that June day immediately nominated Captain Davis to receive the Medal of Honor, somehow the paper -- the paperwork was never processed, not just once, but twice. But, you know what Captain Davis said after learning that he would finally receive the Medal of Honor? Quote, 'America was behind me.'"



A colonel by the time he retired from the Army, Davis' first name "Paris" is inspired by the mythological figure featured in Homer's epic war poem "The Iliad."

In 1965, already having served in Korea and Vietnam, Davis was told by his company commander he was destined for the treacherous Binh Dinh province. "He said that it was overrun by the Viet Cong."

He thought through my training and the way that I handled myself

that I could handle being in a situation where there were more enemies than there were friends," Davis told ABC News during an interview.

In the summer, Davis led three other Green Berets and what the Army calls "an inexperienced company of the 883rd South Vietnamese Regional Force" on an audacious raid against a North Vietnamese base.

Davis personally captured two enemy combatants. "We caught the guards that were sleeping," Davis said. "They gave us some information -- exactly where the preponderance of the troops were."

According to the Army, "he learned [from the captives] that a vastly larger enemy force was operating in the area."

Not that Davis was surprised, he said. "We knew that we were going to run into a hornet's nest," he recalled.

Davis took this not as a warning to withdraw, but as an opportunity to attack. On the night of June 17, he readied his men for a surprise raid, and at dawn led them through what would stretch into a grinding 19-hour battle.



Capt. Paris Davis, Vietnam, 1965.



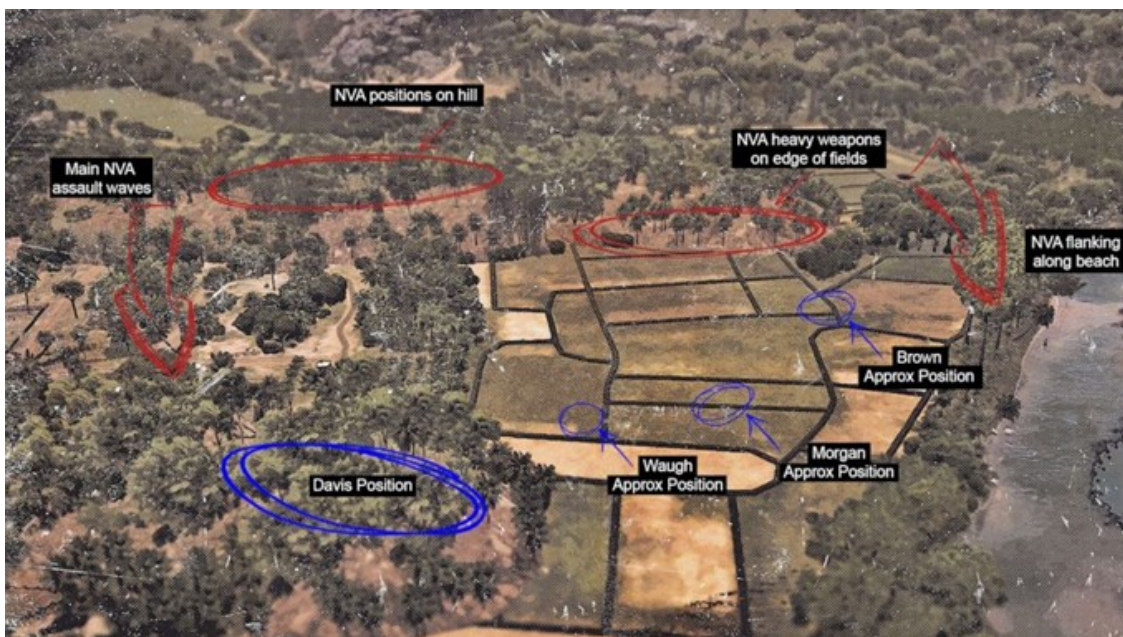
Davis leads assault in the early morning at Bong Song, clearing an enemy headquarters hut. He is wounded in the forearm.

Illustration by The Paris Davis Interactive Medal of Honor Story

"Davis was wounded leading the initial assault, but continued moving forward, personally engaging the enemy in hand-to-hand combat and killing several enemy soldiers," the Army said in a release.

When the noncompliant enemy rallied with a counteroffensive, a bleeding Davis led a small team onward, destroying gun emplacements and earning more captives, the Army said.

He then consolidated his men to pull back and, while calling for artillery and aircraft attacks against the defenders, was hit by automatic weapons fire.



Reconstructed battle map of the battle of Bong Song, Vietnam, June 18, 1965.

Davis was wounded again when an enemy soldier "engaged him at close range with his rifle," the Army said. Davis tackled the enemy and "defeated" him -- as the Army euphemistically puts it -- with his bare hands.

Now injured several times over, Davis saw two American comrades seriously hurt, but across enemy lanes of fire.

"Davis made it to the first soldier under a hail of enemy fire and was shot once again. Despite his grievous wounds and with no regard for his own safety, Davis saved the soldier and returned him to the company's perimeter. Davis again broke cover, braving enemy fire, to retrieve the second soldier. Crawling nearly 150 yards and wounded by enemy grenade fragments, he rescued the soldier and returned him to the company perimeter," according to the Army.

At one point during the battle, Davis said he recalled a general observing the fight from a helicopter ordering him to leave before one of the wounded soldiers was flown out. He refused.

"He said, 'You know you're disobeying an order?' And I said, 'Yes, sir, I understand that. But I'm not leaving,'" Davis told ABC News.

As Billy Cole, Davis' commanding officer, arrives on the battlefield, Cole spots Davis carrying Waugh fireman-style.



Noting Davis' wounds, Cole tells Davis to leave with the wounded.

Davis described a war of words with the senior officer.

"The general said ... 'If I was down there, I'd probably kick your ass.' And I said, 'You know what, general, there's a lot of room down here.' And that was the end of the conversation. He never landed, and I never kicked his ass," Davis said.

Illustration by The Paris Davis Interactive Medal of Honor Story

ABC News asked Davis what would have happened had he obeyed.

"If we had obeyed that order, there would have been soldiers that would have been just mutilated, because there [were] no other friendly forces available," he said.

The Army credits Davis for having saved three men from enemy capture: Robert Brown, John Reinberg and Billy Waugh.



*Capt. Paris Davis poses for an official U.S. Army service photo circa early 1960s.
U.S. Army photo*

For his actions, he was awarded the nation's third-highest military decoration, the Silver Star. But according to Davis, requests for his award to be upgraded to a Medal of Honor were inexplicably lost by the Army twice over the years.

Davis has speculated his race could have played a factor.

"I wish I could say that this story of Paris' sacrifice on that day in 1965, was fully recognized and rewarded immediately," Biden said. "But sadly, we know they weren't. At the time Captain Davis returned from war, the country is still battling segregation. He returned from Vietnam to experience some of his fellow soldiers crossing to the other side of the street when they saw him in America."

Army officials said they cannot determine whether any records were lost, or under what circumstances.

"Due to lack of records, we cannot say for sure, but we are pleased that the president will soon bestow this overdue honor to Col. Paris Davis and his family," Army spokeswoman Madison Bonzo told ABC News on Wednesday.

Davis credits a group of friends and comrades for refusing to let the Army forget his case.

Davis, with his first name inspired by the ancients, alluded to Greek tragedy when explaining the resolution to his decades-long case.

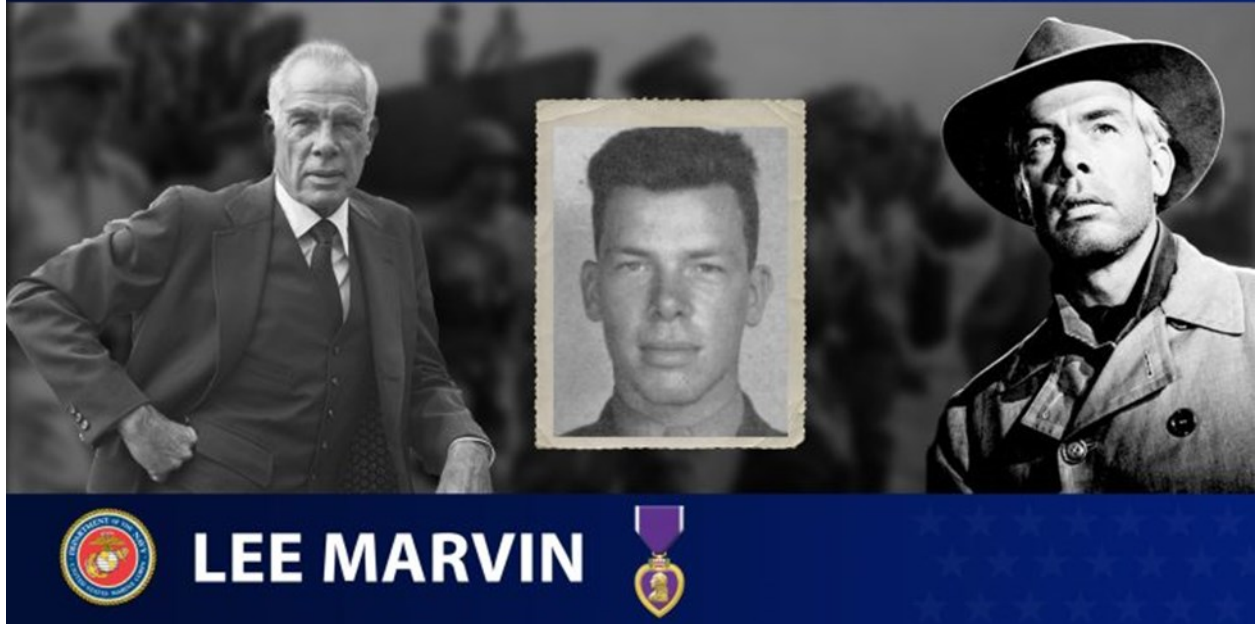
"The soldiers that you served with, the soldiers you were in the war with, become that Greek chorus. They pick up the voice of saying 'We aren't gonna let this rest, we are going to keep after it until we get it done.'

And that's the saving grace I'm so thankful for," he said.



*Capt. Paris Davis poses for an official U.S. Army service photo circa early 1960s.
U.S. Army photo*

SOURCE: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/biden-award-medal-honor-vietnam-hero-after-60/story?>



Lee Marvin upheld a tough-guy persona on and off the screen—from the Pacific Theater to Hollywood. Born in February 1924 in New York, Marvin’s parents, Lamont and Courtenay, struggled to control the rebellious young man. He was kicked out of multiple boarding schools, once for throwing a roommate from a second-floor window. Ending up at St. Leo’s College Prep School in Florida, Marvin dropped out in 1942 before returning to graduate so he could join the Marine Corps.

Although his father disapproved of him joining the service, Marvin served as a scout sniper in the 4th Marine Division in the Pacific Theater during World War II. He served in the assaults on Eniwetok and Saipan-Tinian, and participated in 21 Japanese Island landings while serving as a member of the “I” Company, 3rd Battalion, 24th Marines, 4th Marine Division.

Most of his division was wiped out and he was wounded in action during the Battle of Saipan on Mount Tapochau. He sustained an injury below the spine [that severed his sciatic nerve](#) as well as a foot injury. These wounds resulted in 13 months in naval hospitals, rendering him invalid for further service. He received a Purple Heart and was medically discharged with the rank of private first class.

Following his discharge in July 1945, Marvin worked as a plumber’s assistant at an upstate New York community theater. After occasionally filling in for sick actors during rehearsals, he discovered a love for acting and proceeded to study at the American Theatre Wing while using the [G.I. Bill](#). He appeared in off-Broadway shows until moving to Hollywood in 1950 and [making his film debut](#) in “Teresa.” He proceeded to pursue tough-guy roles in movies such as “The Dirty Dozen,” “The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance” and “Sergeant Ryker.” Marvin eventually won an Oscar for his roles as both a drunken gun-fighter and his evil twin brother in the western comedy “Cat Ballou” in 1965.

Marvin’s acting earned him an Academy Award, while his [military service](#) earned him a Purple Heart Medal, a Navy Presidential Unit Citation, an American Campaign Medal, an Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, a World War II Victory Medal and a Combat Action Ribbon. Later, after experiencing abdominal pain, he suffered a fatal heart attack on Aug. 29, 1987. He was 63, and was interred in the Arlington National Cemetery.

We honor his service.

VA to award \$52.5 million in grants to local organizations working to prevent Veteran suicide.

WASHINGTON — Today, VA announced the availability of \$52.5 million in grants to community-based organizations that provide or coordinate suicide prevention services for Veterans and their families – including conducting Veteran mental health screenings, providing case management and peer support services, delivering emergency clinical services, reaching out to Veterans at risk of suicide and [more](#).

These grants will be awarded through VA's [Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program](#). The [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) provides information about the program, eligibility, and award process. Applications are due by 11:59 pm ET on May 19, 2023 and awards will be granted to eligible entities by Sept. 30, 2023. The funds will be used by the selected organizations in Fiscal Year 2024.

Preventing Veteran suicide is VA's top clinical priority and a top priority of the Biden-Harris Administration. This effort is a key part of VA's 10-year [National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#) (PDF) and the Biden-Harris Administration's plan for [Reducing Military and Veteran Suicide](#) (PDF). In September, VA released the [2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report](#), which showed that Veteran suicides decreased in 2020 for the second year in a row, and that fewer Veterans died by suicide in 2020 than in any year since 2006.

"Veterans at risk of suicide deserve quick and easy access to mental health screenings, peer support, emergency services, and more – both from VA and community-based organizations," said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. "There are countless great organizations across America that are providing Veterans with this type of local, on-the-ground support, and we at VA are proud to support their efforts."

This will be the second round of grants awarded as part of VA's [Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program](#). In September 2022, VA awarded grants for the program's first year, totaling \$52.5 million to [80 awardees](#) (PDF) in 43 states, Washington, D.C., and American Samoa. The grant program is named after Parker Gordon Fox, a sniper instructor who died by suicide at the age of 25.

Grant funding will be divided into two priorities. Under Priority 1, VA will provide opportunities for funding to those entities with existing SSG Fox SPGP awards. Under Priority 2, new organizations can apply for grants worth up to \$750,000. Following the selection of Priority 1 grantee applicants, any remaining funds will be awarded according to Priority 2. VA may prioritize the distribution of suicide prevention services grants under this priority to: (i) Rural communities; (ii) Tribal lands; (iii) Territories of the United States; (iv) Medically underserved areas; (v) Areas with a high number or percentage of minority Veterans or women Veterans; and (vi) Areas with a high number or percentage of calls to the Veterans Crisis Line.

Over the past two years, VA has announced or continued several additional efforts to end Veteran suicide. In January, VA [announced](#) that Veterans in acute suicidal crisis can go to any VA or non-VA health care facility for emergency health care at no cost — including inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days and outpatient care for up to 90 days. VA has also [established 988 \(then press 1\) as a way for Veterans to quickly connect with caring, qualified crisis support 24/7](#); launched [Mission Daybreak](#), a [\\$20 million grand challenge aimed at developing innovations to reduce Veteran suicides](#); conducted an ongoing public outreach effort on [firearm suicide prevention and lethal means safety](#); and leveraged a [national Veteran suicide prevention awareness campaign](#), "Don't Wait. Reach Out."

SOURCE: <https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-to-award-52-5-million-in-grants-to-local-organizations-working-to-prevent-veteran-suicide/>



Thanks to historic new legislation called the [PACT Act](#), VA is now able to provide generations of toxic-exposed Veterans and their survivors with the health care and benefits they deserve.

Since President Biden signed the [PACT Act](#) into law on August 10, 2022, more than 300,000 Veterans and survivors have applied for their earned benefits, more than 2 million Veterans have been screened for toxic exposures, and more than 161,000 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care.

All that information and more is now available in a new [VA PACT Act Performance Dashboard](https://news.va.gov/wpcontent/uploads/sites/3/2023/03/VA_PACT_Act_Dashboard_For_Release.3.2023_508.pdf). (https://news.va.gov/wpcontent/uploads/sites/3/2023/03/VA_PACT_Act_Dashboard_For_Release.3.2023_508.pdf)

Beginning today, VA will publish this dashboard every other Friday to measure the implementation of this legislation and showcase its impact on Veterans and survivors. As part of VA's commitment to transparency, we are sharing the same dashboard both internally and externally to maximize accountability to the Veterans,

families, caregivers, and survivors we serve.

Key aspects of the dashboard include:

- The # of Veterans who have applied for PACT Act-related benefits
- The # of Veterans who have received toxic exposure screenings, and the percentage of those Veterans who have concerns about exposure
- The # of Veterans who have enrolled in VA health care since August 10, 2022
- A Veteran story about the impact of PACT Act-related VA care and benefits
- An overview of upcoming events where Veterans and survivors can learn more about PACT Act-related care and benefits

VA will not rest until every Veteran gets the toxic exposure-related care and benefits they deserve. To apply today or learn more about what the PACT Act could mean for you, visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT) or call 1-800-MYVA411.

SOURCE: <https://news.va.gov/116652/va-releases-dashboard-measure-pact-act/>

'The Most Significant Piece of Veterans Legislation in History'

After years of advocacy by VFW, the Honoring Our PACT Act became law last August, VFW Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland represented the organization at the White House when President Joe Biden signed the PACT Act into law

With the Honoring Our PACT Act now law, VFW's VA-accredited veterans service officers around the world are helping veterans harmed by burn pit fumes or other toxins.

The legislation, considered by VFW to be the most significant piece of veterans legislation in history, focuses on providing veterans who served in countries such as Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq expanded access to VA health care and earned disability benefits.

Kenneth Deist, one of VFW's more than 2,000 VA-accredited service officers, is now actively working PACT Act claims. As the VFW Department Service Officer for Arizona since 2018, Deist sees between 15 and 20 veterans in person each week. The commander of VFW Post 7401 in Chandler, Arizona, splits his time between his offices at the VA Regional Office in Phoenix and the VFW Department Headquarters in Tempe.

VFW National Legislation Service Associate Director Kristina Keenan speaks in support of the Honoring Our PACT Act at a press conference on July 28, 2022, in Washington, D.C. Deist says that as soon as the PACT Act passed, his office was inundated with communication from veterans, particularly Vietnam War veterans.

"They were calling all day, every day," said Deist, who served in 2005 with the Air Force's 586th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron in the Iraq War. "Vietnam War veterans with hypertension [related to Agent Orange exposure] have waited a long time for this."



Deist's wife, Cristina, also is a member of Post 7401 in Chandler. The pair met while serving at Guantanamo Bay. Cristina is a VA service officer as well and is a veteran of both the Marine Corps and Army.

Deist, who also served in the Afghanistan War, said claims for respiratory issues also are on the rise.

"We see a lot of sleep apnea problems," Deist said. "The VA has not acknowledged sleep apnea as a presumptive condition, even though studies have shown a connection."

'FREE OF CHARGE — NO MATTER WHAT'

VFW Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland said one of the best services that the VFW offers is helping veterans file disability claims through VFW's network of accredited service officers.

"We'll guarantee service is done the right way," Borland said. "This ensures that we help veterans and family members of veterans."

VFW National Veterans Service Director Ryan Gallucci said that, overall, Vietnam War veterans have been the most active in filing PACT Act claims with VFW service officers. He said most of those claims are being filed for hypertension.

"One of the challenges VFW is having is making some veterans, especially Post-9/11 veterans, aware that the PACT Act applies to them, too," Gallucci said. "The simplest thing these veterans can do is talk to a VA-accredited veterans service officer about the PACT Act."

To make it easy to find help with a military service-related disability claim, VFW has a website, www.PACTActInfo.org, which creates a simple way for veterans to file claims. It is a simple screening that only requires a veteran to state his or her:

Name

Email address

State of residence

Location of military service

Time of military service

Suspected or diagnosed conditions

"A VFW VA-accredited service officer should contact these veterans within a week to have a conversation about what each needs to do," Gallucci said.

Gallucci added that veterans should trust VFW's accredited service officers because they are recognized by VA to represent veterans in the claims process.

"Being recognized by VA means that our veterans service officers need to meet certain standards and provide services to veterans free of charge — no matter what," Gallucci said. "By law, VFW is not entitled to any money the veteran may receive."

VFW service officers undergo up to 80 hours of training per year to maintain qualification to represent veterans who file disability claims. The VA requires veterans service officers to attend only 40 hours of training each year.

"In addition, VA authorizes our veterans service officers to have access to their veterans claim file," Gallucci said. "This access allows us to fix a veteran's claim before VA decides on the veteran's benefits. It allows our service officers to advocate for veterans, which goes far deeper than what non-accredited companies claim to provide."

‘EVERY VETERAN COUNTS’

The PACT Act was signed into law by President Joe Biden on Aug. 10, 2022. Borland was at the White House when the PACT Act was signed into law.

“As your Commander-in-Chief, I am proud that I was the one who represented all of us on stage with the President on Aug. 10 when he signed the Honoring Our PACT Act into law,” Borland said. “This shows that every veteran counts, because no one does more for veterans.”

VFW’s formal push to get help for veterans exposed to toxic substances was highlighted in 2021 when past VFW Commander-in-Chief Hal Roesch II testified before the House and Senate VA committees. He gave lawmakers an idea that would change the way veterans receive disability benefits from VA.

Roesch, who served in VFW’s top position from August 2020 to July 2021, told congressional members that they needed to address toxic exposure to save the lives of veterans who served from the Vietnam War to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Roesch added that through this past century, troops have returned home from war with unexplained health conditions and illnesses linked to toxic exposures and environmental hazards.

“Today is no different,” Roesch said. “Toxic exposure is synonymous with military service. For this reason, it is time for Congress to change the framework through which VA benefits are granted for individuals with conditions associated with toxic exposures and environmental hazards.”

This is when VFW’s work began to help create the PACT Act.

‘VFW TOOK THE LEAD’

VFW National Legislative Service Director Patrick Murray said VFW was the leader in lobbying efforts for the PACT Act. He said that because VFW’s Washington Office is on Capitol Hill, advocates from other organizations would attend meetings and planning sessions at VFW’s buildings.

“Through the years, there have been dozens of different types of toxic exposure bills cover a variety of different things,” Murray said. “But, in 2021, we started working toward getting legislation approved that would take care of all of it at once. The VFW took the lead when it came to the PACT Act’s advocacy efforts.”

Murray added that while getting the PACT Act approved only took about a year and a half, the law covers reforms that have been advocated for a generation.

“Things such as recognizing that troops were exposed to Agent Orange in Thailand, as well as reform for veterans suffering from Gulf War Illness and atomic veterans, have been worked on for decades,” Murray said. “This has all been in the works for a long time.”

Murray said representatives from VFW worked alongside congressional staff members to review drafts of the bill and add items that were crucial to the bill being a success.

“We had our hand in the bill the entire way through the end,” Murray said. “We were there to make sure there were no gaps in the bill that could have changed it entirely without it being fixed.”

MAKING THE PACT ACT ‘A REALITY’

Past-VFW Commander-in-Chief Matthew “Fritz” Mihelcic, who served in that position from August 2021 until July 2022, used his time as VFW’s Chief to advocate for the PACT Act. He stood side-by-side with the likes of comedian and activist Jon Stewart, leaders of many other veterans service organizations and Congress members to champion the bill.

During the final days of advocating for the PACT Act, even with the uncertainty that the PACT Act would not be approved by the Senate, Mihelcic and Stewart, via broadcast, asked VFW members at the 123rd VFW National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, to send messages to their representatives in Congress in support of the PACT Act. About 6,000 messages were sent during the convention.

Murray said that without VFW’s Action Corps and its grassroots advocacy network of VFW members, the PACT Act would not have been passed.

“Action Corps members through the past two years sent about 130,000 messages to Congress about toxic exposure reform alone,” Murray said. (Learn more about the Action Corps and its newsletter at <https://www.vfw.org/actioncorps>.)

After the conclusion of the 123rd VFW National Convention, Borland worked to make the signing of the PACT Act a reality.

IMPROVING VETERANS’ ‘QUALITY OF LIFE’

Borland said that every member of the organization counts when it comes to advocating for veterans in Washington. He added that members should use the news of the PACT Act to their advantage when recruiting new members.

Borland stressed that adding new members to VFW’s ranks is the “lifeblood” of the organization.

“Veterans are very excited about the PACT Act’s passage,” Borland said. “And, when they hear that we passed it last year, they want to become part of our membership base so that they can be a part of helping veterans in the future.”

Deist said that it is his and other accredited veterans service officers’ goal to do their best to “improve the quality of life” of veterans through educating them about their earned VA benefits.

“It does not matter whether you are a part of the VFW. We just want to take care of veterans,” Deist said. “If VFW did not exist, it would be a bad thing.”

This article is featured in the 2023 February issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Dave Spiva](#), associate editor for VFW magazine.

SOURCE: <https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2023/2/the-most-significant-piece-of-veterans-legislation-in-history>

**GEN. WILLIAM STARK ROSECRANS
VFW POST 3261**

OFFICERS

Commander – James "Jimmy C" Carradine

Senior Vice Commander – Noe Rubio

Junior Vice Commander - Anthony Dixon

Quartermaster – Norman "Norm" Chibana

Chaplain - Michael J. McArdle

1st Year Trustee – Elvin Carter

2nd Year Trustee – Horace Yonamine

3rd Year Trustee – Patrick F. Tubal

Adjutant – Norman "Norm" Chibana

Service Officer – Larry "Skip" Anglin

Judge Advocate – Michael McArdle

Surgeon— Roland "Tony" Zapata