

VETERANS AFFAIRS AND REHABILITATION

WEEKLY UPDATE

Week Ending — 03/28/2025

Division Operations

Meetings:

- March 24: Division Director attended a meeting with Sync.Md, a Secure Multidimensional data exchange platform to discuss Personal Health Record (PHR) technology for veterans and how The American Legion (TAL) can pilot the app with a targeted cohort of legionnaires to gather user feedback.
- March 25: Director attended the House Veterans Affairs Committee (HVAC) Subcommittee on Technology Modernization Oversight Hearing titled [“Closing the Data Gap: Improving Interoperability Between VA and Community Providers”](#)
- March 26: Director attended the VSO Quarterly Briefing with Vet Center Chief Officer, Michael Fisher designed to share knowledge and information about Vet Centers with the Veterans Service Organization community.
- March 26: Director attended the Pact Act (law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances) Quarterly VSO Briefing.
- March 26: Director attended a meeting with the National Association of VA Physicians and Dentists (NAVAPD) looking to coordinate with VSOs to protect Veteran Care from being damaged during attempts to reduce the federal workforce.
- March 27: Director attended the Senate Veteran Affairs Committee (SVAC) Majority/VSO Sync.

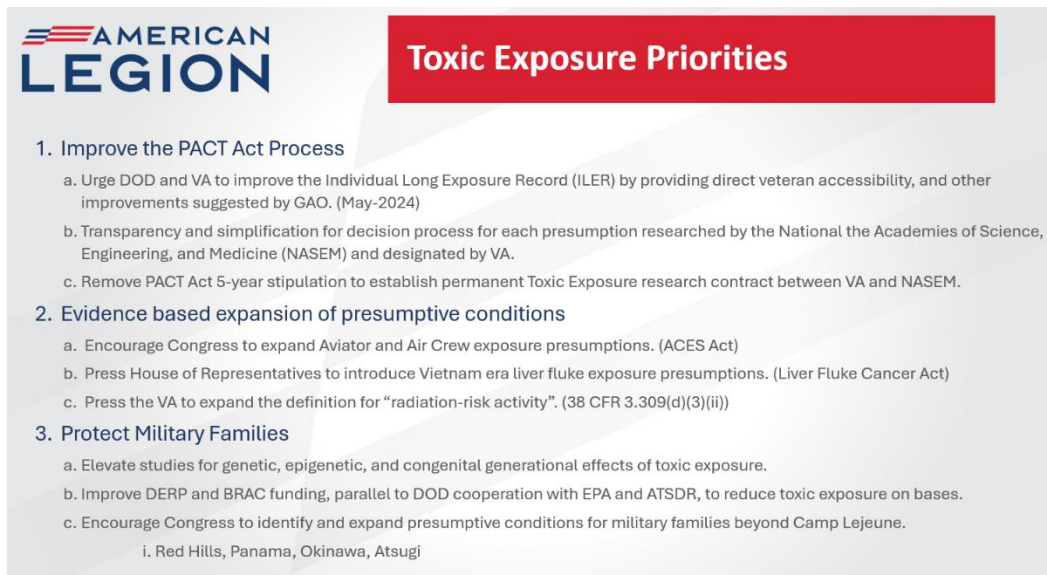
Health Policy Team (HPT) Operations

Meetings:

- March 25: The Health Policy Team (HPT) had a virtual meeting with VA/Red Duke team and the Office of Advanced Manufacturing Orthotics and Prosthetics (OAMOP) project. The team presented an initiative focused on 3-D printed prosthetics for transtibial amputees.
- March 25: HPT attended the PTSD Treatment Innovation Update to discuss recent developments in PTSD care and continuing efforts for individuals living with PTSD.
- March 26: HPT met with Veterans Affairs PA Association (VAPAA) to discuss the VA Physician Assistants scholarship program and current challenges.

Products:

- March 26: Health Policy Team presented The American Legion Toxic Exposure Priorities at the congressionally mandated VA PACT Act quarterly meeting:



The slide features the American Legion logo on the left and a red header box on the right containing the title "Toxic Exposure Priorities". The main content is a numbered list of three categories, each with sub-points.

AMERICAN LEGION

Toxic Exposure Priorities

1. Improve the PACT Act Process
 - a. Urge DOD and VA to improve the Individual Long Exposure Record (ILER) by providing direct veteran accessibility, and other improvements suggested by GAO. (May-2024)
 - b. Transparency and simplification for decision process for each presumption researched by the National the Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) and designated by VA.
 - c. Remove PACT Act 5-year stipulation to establish permanent Toxic Exposure research contract between VA and NASEM.
2. Evidence based expansion of presumptive conditions
 - a. Encourage Congress to expand Aviator and Air Crew exposure presumptions. (ACES Act)
 - b. Press House of Representatives to introduce Vietnam era liver fluke exposure presumptions. (Liver Fluke Cancer Act)
 - c. Press the VA to expand the definition for "radiation-risk activity". (38 CFR 3.309(d)(3)(iii))
3. Protect Military Families
 - a. Elevate studies for genetic, epigenetic, and congenital generational effects of toxic exposure.
 - b. Improve DERP and BRAC funding, parallel to DOD cooperation with EPA and ATSDR, to reduce toxic exposure on bases.
 - c. Encourage Congress to identify and expand presumptive conditions for military families beyond Camp Lejeune.
 - i. Red Hills, Panama, Okinawa, Atsugi

Legislative Bill Reviews:

- **H.R. X – Innovate Act**
 - To amend title 38, United States Code, to establish a mission of the Veterans Health Administration to innovate, and for other purposes

Position: **No Position**

- **H.R. X – Saving Our Lives Act**

- To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to establish a program to furnish to certain veteran's items used for the secure storage of firearms, and for other purposes.

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

- Resolution [No. 11](#): Lethal Means and Suicide Prevention
- **H.R. X – Helping Optimize Prevention and Engagement for Heroes (HOPE) Act of 2025**
 - To amend the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019 to modify and reauthorize the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

- Resolution [No. 364](#): Department of Veterans Affairs to Develop Outreach and Peer to Peer Program for Rehabilitation
- Resolution [No. 14](#): Department of Veterans Affairs Suicide Prevention Programs
- **H.R. 1364 – Automotive Support Services to Improve Safe Transportation Act of 2025**
 - To amend title 38, United States Code, to provide clarification regarding the inclusion of medically necessary automobile adaptations in Department of Veterans Affairs definition of “medical services”.

Position: **Support**

Supporting Resolutions:

- [Resolution No. 16](#): Department of Veterans Affairs Automobile Allowance Program

Claims & Appeals Team Operations

Accreditations

- Applications Received from TAL Departments	11
- Certifications Submitted by TAL Washington Office	28
- Certifications Approved by VA's Office of General Counsel	11

The American Legion Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) Unit

- AMA Appeals Pending (125+ Days)	0
- Informal Hearing Presentations (IHPs) Prepared	225
- Memos Generated	0
- Phone Inquiries	166
- Internal Quality Reviews	3
- Individual Training	1 hour
- Team Training	0 hours
- Hearings	0
- Board Dispositions	59
o Appeals Granted	11 (18.6%)
o Remanded	32 (54.2%)
o Denied	10(16.9%)
o Other	6(10.2%)
 Retroactive Awards Won for Veterans	 \$663,730

National Veterans Service Office

- Phone Calls	110
- Emails	31
- Referrals	3
- Discharge Upgrades	0
- Written Correspondence	0
- Claims Submitted	8
- Evidence Submitted	0
- POA Submitted	3
- Training Hours	0

Pension & Debt Management

- New Compensation Claims	5
- New Pension Claims	5
- Supporting Claims	0
- Sensitive Claims	7
- File Review	202
- Phone Contacts/E-Mails/Inquires	286
- Debt Notices Received	586
- Insurance Actions	0
- Waivers Requested	11
- Waivers Granted	41

- Walk-Ins	14
- Hearings	0
- Misc Notification Letters Processed	211
- Debt Waiver Granted	\$858,784

Benefits Policy Team (BPT) Operations

Meetings:

- March 25: Claims and Benefits Training team attended a partnership meeting with B&M, LLC for fall 2025 DSO Symposium planning.
- March 26: Policy team virtually observed attended HVAC/DAMA Hearing on pending legislation affecting VBA claims processing.
- March 26: Benefits and Health Policy teams virtually attended PACT Act VSO 2nd Quarterly meeting to submit input and receive latest status of VA toxic exposure studies commissioned for the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM).
- March 26: Benefits Policy team virtually met with the national team of Leidos QTC Health Services, so they could collect vendor insights on enhancing veterans' end-user examination experiences at Leidos QTC and ways on strengthening communication and support to American Legion service officers, veterans, and caregivers.

Projects

- Gained consensus from Departments of France and Latin America on approved language for two drafted Foreign Medical Program (FMP) resolutions. Routing up to the VA&R Screening Committee.
- Routing recent San Juan draft ROAR report through its editing process for final approval.
- Completed Bill Review for H.R. 1039, Clear Communication for Veterans Claims Act - To direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to enter into an agreement with a federally funded research and development center (FFRDC) for an assessment of notice letters that claimants receive when applying for VA benefits. - Support

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End of VA&R weekly update – 03/28/2025