



Veterans' legislative update

During the 118th Congress, several pieces of legislation have been introduced and moved through Congress that would affect NALC's veteran members. Below is a sampling of some of these bills as well as legislative news.

Enactment of the PACT Act

History was made earlier this year when President Biden signed the PACT Act into law. This is the first law to offer care and benefits through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for veterans exposed to toxic fumes through burn pits.

An estimated 3.5 million veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan have been exposed to toxic smoke from burn pits, which included the burning of medical and human waste, jet fuel, chemicals, metal, plastics and more. This exposure has been tied to the development of many diseases, including several types of cancer. The PACT Act expands what is classified as a presumptive condition and streamlines access to health care benefits for those who served in areas known for toxic exposure.

As part of the law's implementation, veterans who are now making an initial visit to a VA health facility will receive a toxic exposure screening. This check serves to identify any signs of illness and inform veterans of any benefits they may qualify for.

On Jan. 1, 2023, the VA will begin processing benefit claims filed under the law. When doing so, the agency will prioritize claims filed by veterans with cancer. Presumptive conditions under the law are listed below.

Presumptive cancers:

- Brain cancer
- Gastrointestinal cancer of any type
- Glioblastoma
- Head cancer of any type
- Kidney cancer

- Lymphatic cancer of any type
- Lymphoma of any type
- Melanoma
- Neck cancer of any type
- Pancreatic cancer
- Reproductive cancer of any type
- Respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type

Presumptive illnesses:

- Asthma diagnosed after service
- Chronic bronchitis
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Chronic rhinitis
- Chronic sinusitis
- Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis
- Emphysema
- Granulomatous disease
- Interstitial lung disease (ILD)
- Pleuritis
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Sarcoidosis

For more information on the PACT Act or to file a claim, visit va.gov/pact.

Bipartisan legislation supporting veterans reentering civilian workforce introduced in House

On Veterans Day, Reps. Troy Carter (D-LA) and Nancy Mace (R-SC) introduced the bipartisan Warrior Training Advancement Course of the Veterans Benefit Administration (WARTAC) Improvement Bill.

WARTAC is a program within the VA that aims to provide veterans returning to the civilian workforce with career opportunities that support other veterans. The program is underutilized and served only 373 veterans out of more than 200,000 who made the transition to civilian life last year.

The bill would help veterans receive their benefits more efficiently by increasing staffing at the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). It would also improve data records on the number of eligible participants, enrolled

participants, and participants who complete the program.

Looking ahead to 118th Congress

As this magazine was going to print, votes from the midterm elections were still being counted and the 117th Congress was wrapping up its time in Washington by completing work on the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and numerous individual pieces of legislation aimed at making improvements at the Department of Veterans Affairs. While many of the bills we have reported on have not been enacted into law, we can expect the 118th Congress to remain focused on advancing bills to support our veterans and their families.

Looking ahead to the 118th Congress, so far 81 veterans have won seats. Again, dozens of veterans will serve in Congress crafting the legislation that will affect their fellow veterans.

Since taking office, President Biden has signed more than 25 bills that address issues facing veterans.

In the House, both leaders of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Chairman Mark Takano (D-CA) and Ranking Member Mike Bost (R-IL), won reelection. Chairman Jon Tester (D-MT) is expected to lead the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee again. He has indicated that he wants to take up legislation focused on veterans' mental health, homelessness and education programs. Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS) is the current ranking member.

Stay tuned to the "Government Affairs" section of nalc.org for any future updates on NALC veterans issues.

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