

VFW Applauds VA Recognizing Presumptive Conditions, Continues to Urge Passing of Toxic Exposure Bill

Addition of nine cancers significant, does not diminish need for ‘PACT Act’ to become law

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WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) National Commander applauded the Department of Veterans Affairs following its [announcement](#) of the addition of nine conditions to the list of presumed service-connected disabilities for certain veterans, today.

“This is a significant step toward getting our toxic-exposed veterans the care and benefits they deserve,” said VFW National Commander Matthew “Fritz” Mihelcic, commander-in-chief of the 1.5 million-member VFW and its Auxiliary. “Recognizing these conditions is a move in the right direction in solving this long standing issue of compensating presumptive claims of illnesses tied to service-connected toxic exposure.”

The list, to be published on April 26 through an Interim Final Rule in the Federal Register, will include nine rare respiratory cancers determined by VA to be linked to military environmental exposures to fine particulate matter. According to the announcement, any veteran who served any amount of time in Southwest Asia beginning Aug. 2, 1990, to the present, or Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Syria or Djibouti beginning Sept. 19, 2001, to the present, and who has or has had one of the listed cancers may be eligible for disability compensation benefits.

“Even though this is a big move on behalf of suffering veterans, we still need our government to acknowledge that every conflict exposes service members to toxic environments impacting their health,” said Mihelcic. “That is why we urge the Senate to pass the Honoring our PACT Act and deliver the bill to the president for signature by Memorial Day. Veterans continue to die while they debate and delay.”

The [Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2021 or the Honoring](#)

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[our PACT Act of 2021](#), is a comprehensive bill which addresses health care, presumption of service-connection, research, resources, and other matters related to veterans who were exposed to toxic substances during military service. The “PACT Act,” as its commonly known, passed in the House of Representatives in March and is currently awaiting a vote in U.S. Senate.

“We need for Senators to do their part by passing the PACT Act so the matter of presumptive conditions is settled once and for all,” Mihelcic said.