

VFW Commends Senate for Reaching Deal on PACT Act

If passed, the toxic exposure bill could become law by summer

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WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) commended Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee leadership following today's [announcement](#) of reaching a bipartisan deal on the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022, known as the "PACT Act."

"Today's announcement from Senators Tester and Moran is a strong show of good faith to the veteran community," said VFW National Commander Matthew "Fritz" Mihelcic, the leader of the 1.5 million-member VFW and its Auxiliary. "I applaud them on their work on the bill and I am encouraged to see both Democrats and Republicans coming together to make good on the promise to care for our veterans, service members, and their families, dealing with the costs of war."

In a joint statement, Chairman of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and ranking member Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) announced their agreement on what they called "the most comprehensive toxic exposure package the Senate has ever delivered to veterans" in U.S. history. Among the priorities are expanded VA health care eligibility, expanded presumptions to include hypertension related to exposure to burn pits, Agent Orange and other toxics, and creating a framework for the establishment of future presumptions of service connection related to toxic exposure. The legislation also includes the name of Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson, an Ohio National Guard soldier who died in 2020 as a result of service-connected toxic exposure.

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The original [Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2021 or the Honoring our PACT Act of 2021](#), passed in the House of Representatives in March earlier this year. If the amended PACT Act passes in the Senate, it will head back to the House for lawmakers to vote again. House leadership [pledged](#) to immediately take up the amended legislation and deliver the bill to President Biden's desk for his signature.

“This is no time to ease up on our efforts to get the PACT Act passed in both houses of Congress,” Mihelcic said. “We will not rest until our nation’s promise to address toxic exposure is signed into law.”