

**Vol.2, No.4**  
**April 2023**

# **Serving Those Who Served**

**The Official Newsletter of the Kentucky Department of  
Veterans Affairs**



## **In this month's issue...**

### **Commissioner Corner**

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#### **KDVA News and Events**

- Women Veterans Symposium Event--March 22
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- Recognize New Lexington VA Executive Director
- Did You Know?
- Veterans Benefits Updates

#### **Pact Act News**

- PACT Act Online Dashboard

**Much, much more...**

## Commissioner's Corner



### Commissioner's Corner

Team,

As we close out the first quarter of 2023, we look at March as a great success with our Women Veterans Event that was on March 22nd which had a great turn-out. We have big news about our Veteran Centers to look forward to in the middle of April, so keep an eye out for more information to come. KDVA, has had several new hires and promotions and we aim to recognize their accomplishments and introduce our new teammates.

Additionally, I want to recognize our State Commander's Conference Planning Team, Kirk Shepherd and Stephanie Belt, for their hard work on the State Conference. They received honorary Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence for their hard work.

Finally, we held our quarterly Trust Fund Meeting and were able to grant \$227,592 to seven grantees.

Our next major events include Memorial Day services at our five Kentucky Veteran Cemeteries and the Women Veterans Conference on June 6, 2023, anniversary of D-Day.

***Commissioner Whitney Allen***

## Latest VA News

### Online Programs

These online self-help programs and courses teach skills and offer tools to help you and your family cope with PTSD and related problems.

#### Self-Help Programs

- [PTSD Coach Online](#)  
The expanded desktop version of the mobile app, gives you 17 tools to choose from to help you manage stress. Learn to manage troubling symptoms following trauma, such as, sleep, trauma reminders and anger. [Mobile app](#) also available.
- [CRAFT-PTSD - Help with PTSD for You and Your Family](#)  
Community Reinforcement and Family Training - Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (CRAFT-PTSD) is a self-paced online course for family members of someone working to manage PTSD. Learn skills to encourage and support your loved one and find resources to support your own quality of life.

### Other VA Online Programs

These free online programs are available on the Veteran Training website. Some trainings have a related mobile app for additional support.

- [Anger and Irritability Management Skills](#)  
This course offers a wide range of practical skills and tools to manage your anger and develop self-control over your thoughts and actions.
- [Moving Forward](#)  
This course teaches skills to help you overcome stressful problems and meet your goals in managing stress, balancing school and family, relationships, coping with physical injuries, financial difficulties, and adjustment issues.
- [Path to Better Sleep](#)  
This course provides information and practical tools to manage sleep problems.
- [Parenting Course](#)  
This course provides parents with tools that strengthen parenting skills and helps them reconnect with their children, and deal with both everyday problems and family issues that are unique to the military lifestyle.

Suicide Prevention -VA's top clinical priority is preventing suicide among all Veterans — including those who do not, and may never, seek care within the VA health care system. As a Veteran, you can play a role in fulfilling this mission, and VA can equip you with tools to do your part. You can explore [suicide prevention resources](#) to build networks of support among community-based organizations, Veterans Service Organizations, health care providers, and other members of your community that strengthen protective factors for Veterans.

**If you are seeking answers following an attempted suicide or the loss of a loved one by suicide, please visit the [Coping & Support](#) on the main VA Webpage.**

**[https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/index.asp](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/index.asp) to find help as you navigate this process. Veteran Self-Help Resources**

### **[Make the Connection](#)**

Make the Connection features stories of hope and recovery from Veterans like you. Watch Veterans and their family members share real stories of strength and recovery, find useful information and local mental health resources and explore ways to show your support.

### **[Veteran Training](#)**

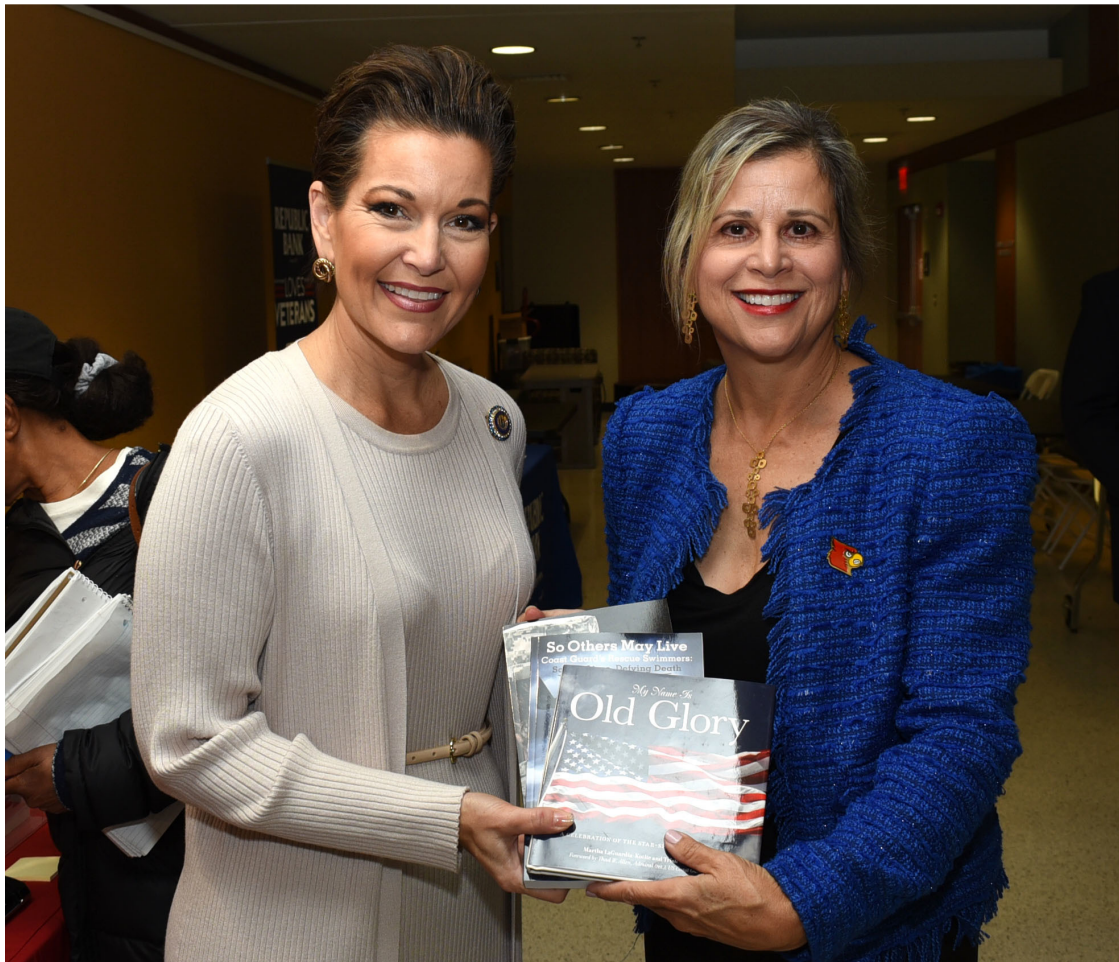
This self-help portal provides tools to help Veterans overcome everyday challenges in an entirely anonymous environment. Using the tools, Veterans can work on problem-solving, manage their anger, develop parenting skills, and more. The free tools are based on mental health practices that have proven successful with Veterans and their families.

**[Mobile Apps that support Mental Health and Wellness](#), visit [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention/index.asp](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/index.asp)**

## **What's New at KDVA?**

## **Women Veterans Event**

***Telling Their Stories: A Celebration of Women Veterans***



Heather French Henry (left) and Martha Kotite display books by Kotite at the Women Veterans Event at the University of Louisville, March 22, 2023. Henry introduced Kotite who was the guest speaker for the event. In her books and during the event she tells stories of women veterans who all experienced obstacles they had to overcome and achievements they have had.





Martha Kotite spoke during our Women Veterans Event at the University of Louisville, KY, March 22, 2023. Kotite is a retired U.S. Coast Guard Captain and spoke about her experiences of being a woman in units entirely and mostly comprised of men. She also told some of the stories she's written about on other women veterans.



Buffalo Trace Distillery donated a door prize for the Women Veterans Event at the University of Louisville, March 22, 2023. In addition to Buffalo Trace, the event was also sponsored by Kentucky Adult Education, Walther, Gay and Mack PLC, and Republic Bank.



## Shane LaGrone: KY Vet Cemetery Central Gets New Director

*By James Hensley, KDVA Public Information Officer*

After 30 years of serving in the military, Retired Command Chief Master Sergeant Shane LaGrone has committed himself to serving the Commonwealth of Kentucky as the new Director of Kentucky Veteran Cemetery Central.

He served 16 years Active Duty in the U.S. Air Force, 14 years active in the Kentucky Air National Guard and retired in May 2022.

"I've been to several military funerals. I've been in the military, you know, known people who were Killed in Action in country," LaGrone said. "So going to those [funerals], always had a little special place in my heart. Just the meaning behind it. It was always just amazingly professional, and it was hard to keep the eyes dry sometimes."

While in the military LaGrone served as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician. Part of such a profession required him to deploy often and he expressed some of his favorite memories are of coming home from those deployments.

"Everybody's going 90 miles an hour, you know, you're on one day off the next, you're running calls left and right," LaGrone said. "You have your downtime, but you're still not really down until you finally get on that plane and then just all of a sudden, all the emotions and the weight of the past six, seven or eight months hits you. Alright, let's shake that off. Everybody started sharing stories. Those are some of the best moments. I would say all those plane rides home or even when you're in between plane rides and you're in the airport bar having that first beer after six months of not drinking, you know."



LaGrone explained how EOD is a very small career field, the difficult/morbid cases which come with the job, and how this impacted him and his peers.

"Sharing stories, you'll cry, and everybody cries a little bit," LaGrone said. "Everybody's, 'hey, we miss so and so.' [We talk about] Whoever got a blown up that day or that tour. We were losing, in the height of it, six to ten [EOD friends and peers] a year. We're such small community we all knew somebody, or knew them through someone else, someone that we lost. It was our chance to unwind and let it out to share the good things we remembered about those guys."



The transition from

military to retiring and what to do next, LaGrone wanted something service oriented. Being no stranger to leadership as a former Chief he found the opening for the Director position for Kentucky Veteran Cemetery Central.

"I didn't need to work, but I wanted to," LaGrone said. "I wanted to do something I enjoyed and that was meaningful. Every day there's something new here whether it be I met somebody new that's got a different story, or whether we're facing a new problem to solve

for the cemetery. Figuring these things out to provide the best to our veterans."

Finally, his ultimate and ambitious goal for the cemetery going forward:

"I would love to see Kentucky Veteran Cemetery Central become Kentucky's version of Arlington Cemetery," LaGrone said.

For more information on Kentucky's State Cemeteries visit our website at [veterans.ky.gov](https://veterans.ky.gov) and check out the social media pages linked on our website for the latest ongoing for KDVA.



**Did you know...**



that there are **282,767** Veterans in the State of Kentucky as of 09/2022?

## **Kentucky State Veterans Benefits Update (March 22,2023)**

Thank you for your service. This is a summary of Kentucky's State Veteran Benefits: Kentucky allows a military retiree to exclude military retired pay income of up to \$31,110 from adjusted gross income when filing state income tax returns.

<https://revenue.ky.gov/Individual/Pages/Military-Tax-Issues.aspx>

We also authorize KY veterans with > 50% disability to hunt and fish with a special license. More information on this program can be found at

<http://fw.ky.gov/Licenses/Pages/Resident-Senior-and-Disabled-Licenses.aspx>

Additionally, KY has special military related license plates.

More details can be found at <http://drive.ky.gov/motor-vehicle-licensing/Pages/License-Plates.aspx>

There are two disabled veteran plates:

- For 50-90% disabled veterans  
<https://secure.kentucky.gov/kytc/plates/web/LicensePlate/Index/c25fba7c-1320-49d4-b086-697b2954792e#plateAnchor>
- For 100% disabled veterans  
<https://secure.kentucky.gov/kytc/plates/web/LicensePlate/Index/b8d8e2f5-017b-4313-8537-ec744058d390#plateAnchor>

The only adjustment to property taxes is for veterans who are 100% disabled. Application for the disability exemption is made through the county property valuation office. The value of the homestead exemption for the 2023-2024 assessment years is \$46,350.

<https://revenue.ky.gov/Property/Residential-Farm-Commercial-Property/Pages/Homestead-Exemption.aspx>

We also offer a tuition waiver for dependents of veterans who are 100% disabled. Details regarding that program may be found at

<https://veterans.ky.gov/Benefits/Pages/Education-for-Veterans-in-Kentucky.aspx>

Kentucky State Parks offer military and veteran discounts throughout the year and 3 free overnight stays per year for Kentucky veterans who are 100% permanently and totally service connected disabled. Restrictions apply so please visit their website at

<http://parks.ky.gov/deals/>

I invite you to visit the Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs (KDVA) website at

<https://veterans.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx> Our site contains information regarding benefits

claims assistance, state Veterans cemeteries, state Veterans nursing homes and general information of interest to Kentucky veterans.

KDVA also offer free assistance with VA claims and appeals. All of our Veteran Benefit Field Representatives (VBFR) are fully accredited with the federal Department of Veterans Affairs Office of General Counsel. You can find the closest VBFR to you at Your Benefits Representative - Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs

## Recognizing New Executive Director Lexington, KY Veterans Affairs

We'd like to congratulate Mr. Russell Armstead as the new Executive Director at the Lexington VA Health Care System.

Mr. Armstead joined VA in 2011 as an Administrative Officer for VISN 6 Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network after serving 21 years of active duty in the United States Army. Russell is a combat Veteran who was awarded two Bronze Star medals for exemplary achievements in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Prior to his appointment as the Executive Director, he served as Acting Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director at VA Connecticut Healthcare System. Mr. Armstead also served as Assistant Medical Center Director and Associate Medical Center Director at VA Maine Healthcare System.

Russell is a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives, a graduate of the VA Health Care Leadership Development Program, a Certified Government Financial Manager, and a Lean Six Sigma Black Belt.



## Latest PACT Act News



# VA PACT ACT

## PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD

MARCH 17, 2023

ISSUE TWO

Published Bi-weekly on Fridays



In this VA PACT Act Performance Dashboard, we are demonstrating our commitment to transparency by sharing with all stakeholders—internal to VA and externally—key performance metrics and data we are using to assess our success in implementing the PACT Act.

If you, a Veteran, family member, or survivor would like more information about the PACT Act and your VA benefits, please **start here**:



**VA.GOV**  
[VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT)  
[ask.va.gov](mailto:ask.va.gov)



**CALL**  
 1-800-MyVA411  
 24/7/365



**WALK-IN**  
[VA.gov/find/locations](https://va.gov/find/locations)



**VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION**  
[VA.gov/disability/get-help-filing-claim](https://va.gov/disability/get-help-filing-claim)



**NEW HEALTH CARE & BENEFITS MAP**  
[Download Map Here](#)

Help spread the word—download **PACT Act Outreach Materials!**



### Highlights

Veterans who filed a disability claim can now access the decision letter online using their VA.GOV sign in. This can save Veterans time by accessing information online instantly instead of waiting for a paper letter in the mail. [Read more here.](#)



### Making a Difference Through the PACT Act

In 2019, an Army reservist who deployed to Kuwait during Operation Iraqi Freedom went to urgent care for shortness of breath and a cough and was diagnosed with lung cancer. Years later, after hearing about President Biden's new toxic exposure law, she submitted her first claim ever with VA. Because of the new law, her lung cancer was presumed to be caused by her service, so her claim was granted, and she received benefits backdated to August 10, 2022, the day that the bill became law. This Veteran's condition has since improved, and she is thankful and relieved that her future health care will be covered by VA.

### VA IS EXPANDING CARE AND BENEFITS FOR VETERANS AND SURVIVORS



The PACT Act is perhaps the largest health care and benefits expansion in VA history. In this section, we are measuring the overall impact of the PACT Act in terms of its expansion of health care and benefits.

### Expanding Benefits



**151,843**

Total Veterans/Survivors with Completed PACT Act Related Claims (08/10/2022–03/04/2023)



**149,035**

Total Veterans with Completed PACT Act Related Claims

**2,810**

Total Survivors with Completed PACT Act Related Claims

### Expanding Care



**90.4%**  
 VA Health Care 90-Day Trust Score  
 (12/06/2022–03/06/2023)

Total New VHA Enrollees:



**UPCOMING OUTREACH CALENDAR**

**March 21**

VA PACT Act Webinar—Online Event

[VIEW EVENT](#)

**March 22**

Veteran and Survivors Claims Clinic—Manila, Philippines

[VIEW EVENT](#)

**March 25**

Women Veterans IMPACT Conference—Gaithersburg, MD

[VIEW EVENT](#)

**March 29**

Women Veterans PACT ACT Town Hall—Bozeman, MT

[VIEW EVENT](#)

**March 31**

Veteran and Survivors Claims Clinic—Greensburg, PA

[VIEW EVENT](#)

**April 05**

Understanding the PACT ACT—Online Event

[VIEW EVENT](#)

For more information on these and other events, please visit <https://www.va.gov/outreach-and-events/events/>

VETERANS AND SURVIVORS TRUST VA TO DELIVER AN EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Issue 2—March 17, 2023



VA is committed to providing world class and timely health care, benefits and services to Veterans and Survivors. In this section, we measure VA's success in delivering outstanding and timely support and in earning the Veteran's and Survivor's trust.



Care Experience



**2,174,087**  
Total Toxic Exposure Screenings  
(08/10/2022–03/10/2023)



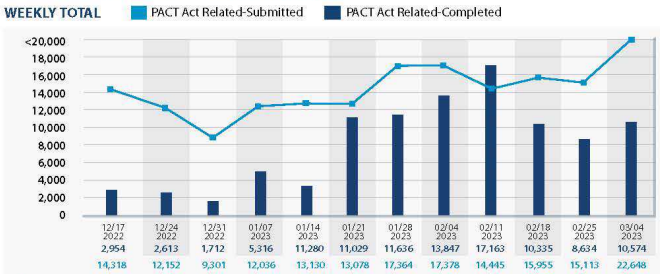
**41.5%**  
Toxic Exposure Screenings where Veterans Endorsed at least one Potential Exposure



Benefits Experience

The charts below show the past 12-weeks (a rolling 12-week view).  
For a historical look from the passage of the PACT Act onward, please see Issue 1 (March 03).

Claims Submitted and Completed—PACT Act-Related



**362,934**  
Cumulative Total PACT Related Claims Submitted  
(Since 08/10/2022)

**352,922**  
Total Veteran PACT Related Claims Submitted  
**10,012**  
Total Survivor PACT Related Claims Submitted



**157,854**  
Cumulative Total PACT Related Claims Completed  
(Since 08/10/2022)

**155,011**  
Total Veteran PACT Related Claims Completed  
**2,843**  
Total Survivor PACT Related Claims Completed

Claims Submitted and Completed—Non-PACT Act Related



**822,367**  
Cumulative Total Non-PACT Related Claims Submitted  
(Since 08/10/2022)

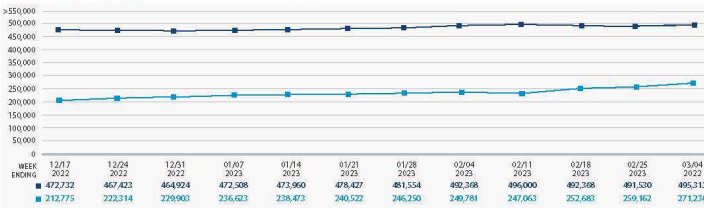


**863,170**  
Cumulative Total Non-PACT Related Claims Completed  
(Since 08/10/2022)



## Pending Claims—PACT Related and Non-PACT Related

## WEEKLY TOTAL



## Top 5 PACT Act Conditions Granted

- 1) Hypertensive Vascular Disease
- 2) Allergic Rhinitis
- 3) Maxillary Sinusitis
- 4) Bronchial Asthma
- 5) Malignant Growth of Genitourinary System



271,236

Total Pending PACT Act  
Related Claims  
(as of 03/04/2023)



495,313

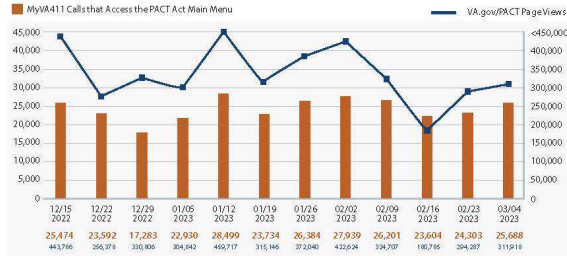
Total Pending Non-PACT  
Act Related Claims  
(as of 03/04/2023)



## Web Experience

## VA.gov/PACT Page Views &amp; 1-800-MyVA411 Calls that Access the PACT Act Main Menu (Press 8)

This metric has been refreshed with more current data, resulting in some differences in weekly counts from this chart and the chart featured in Issue 1 (March 03, 2023).



The PACT Act webpage has received to date:



8.9M+

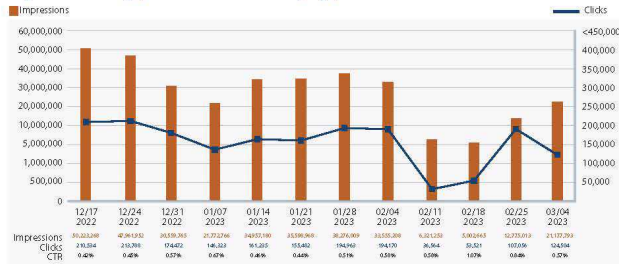
Total Page Views  
(08/10/2022–09/05/2023)



311,360

Total Clicks on Call  
to Action to File a  
Disability Claim Online  
(08/10/2022–09/05/2023)

## Digital Advertising (Choose VA PACT Act Campaign)



Cumulative Totals:

463,296,273

Total Impressions

2,653,496

Total Clicks

0.57%

Click Through Rate



## Phone Experience

## VA Call Centers



448,365

Total MyVA411 that  
Access the PACT Act  
Main Menu (Press 8)

(10/20/2022–03/04/2023)

MAIN MENU



86,762

Calls that Access  
Option 1 to Learn  
More about PACT  
Act and Health Care

(10/20/2022–03/04/2023)

OPTION 1



101,365

Calls that Access  
Option 2 to Learn  
More about PACT  
Act Benefits

(10/20/2022–03/04/2023)

OPTION 2



139,112

Calls that Access  
Option 3 to Learn  
More about the  
PACT Act Overall

(10/20/2022–03/04/2023)

OPTION 3

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Issue 2—March 17, 2023

Page One

Metric/Term	Definition
Total Veterans/Survivors with Completed PACT Act Claims	This metric identifies the unique number of Veterans and Survivors who have filed a PACT Act benefit claim which VBA processed to completion.
Total Veterans with Completed PACT Act Claims	This metric identifies the unique number of Veterans who filed a PACT Act benefit claim which VBA processed to completion.
Total Survivors with Completed PACT Act Claims	This metric identifies the unique number of Survivors who filed a PACT Act benefit claim which VBA processed to completion.
VHA Trust	This trust score reflects the percentage of Veterans who respond to the survey question, "I trust the VHA (facility name) for my health care needs" with a score of 4 or 5.
Total New VHA Enrollees	This statistic identifies the total new VHA enrollments (newly registered healthcare beneficiaries) for the periods of August 2022 End of Current Month 2023 and August 2021 End of month 2022, for comparative analysis purposes.
Increase in New Enrollees in VHA	This number identifies the change between 2023 and 2022 VHA enrollees during the same time period.
Upcoming Outreach Calendar	This calendar identifies key activities or outreach events occurring in the coming weeks.

Page Two

Metric/Term	Definition
Total Toxic Exposure Screenings	This statistic identifies the number of Veterans who have received a VHA Toxic Exposure Screening. Every Veteran enrolled in VA health care will receive an initial screening and a follow-up screening at least once every 5 years. Veterans who are not enrolled and who meet eligibility requirements will have an opportunity to enroll and receive the screening.
Toxic Exposure Screenings where Veterans Endorsed at least 1 Exposure	The screening will ask Veterans if they think they were exposed to any of these hazards while serving: Open burn pits and other airborne hazards, Gulf War-related exposures, Agent Orange Radiation, Camp Lejeune contaminated water exposure and/or Other Exposures. This statistic identifies the number of VHA Toxic Exposure Screenings where a Veteran identified at least one exposure to toxic substances. It includes the number of Veterans who received the screening, the number of Veterans who identified at least one potential concern related to a toxic substance exposure, and the percentage of responses in which Veterans identified at least one instance of toxic exposure during the screening.
Weekly Total PACT Act Related Claims Submitted	This metric identifies the total number of VBA benefit claims with at least one PACT Act-related claimed issue received each week.
Weekly Total PACT Act Related Claims Completed	This metric identifies the number of VBA benefit claims with at least one PACT Act-related condition completed each week.
Cumulative Total PACT Act Related Claims Submitted	This statistic identifies the total number of VBA benefit claims with at least one PACT Act-related condition received since August 10, 2022.
Cumulative Total PACT Act Related Claims Completed	This statistic identifies the total number of VBA benefit claims with at least one PACT Act-related condition completed since August 10, 2022.
Weekly Total Non-PACT Act Related Claims Submitted	This number identifies the total VBA benefit claims received each week not related to PACT Act.
Weekly Total Non-PACT Act Related Claims Completed	This number identifies the total VBA benefit claims completed each week not related to PACT Act.
Cumulative Total of Non-PACT Act Related Claims Submitted	This statistic identifies the cumulative total of VBA benefit claims received since August 10, 2022, which are not related to the PACT Act.
Cumulative Total of Non-PACT Act Related Claims Completed	This statistic identifies the cumulative total of VBA benefit claims completed since August 10, 2022, which are not related to the PACT Act.

Page Three

Metric/Term	Definition
Inventory Pending—PACT Related	This metric identifies the number of VBA claims with at least one PACT Act-related condition pending in the workload.
Inventory Pending—Non-PACT Related	This metric identifies the number of VBA claims which do not have any conditions related to the PACT Act pending in the workload.
Top 5 PACT Act Conditions Granted	This statistic identifies the five presumptive conditions related to the PACT Act which are most frequently granted on VBA disability compensation rating decisions.
Total Pending PACT Act Claims	This statistic identifies the current number of pending VBA benefit claims with one or more PACT Act-related conditions.
Total Pending Non-PACT Act Claims	This statistic identifies the current number of pending VBA benefit claims without any PACT Act-related conditions.
MyVA111 Calls that Access the PACT Act Main Menu (Press 8)	This statistic identifies the number of calls to 1-800-MyVA111 where callers selected the PACT Act Main Menu (Press 8).
VA.gov/PACT Page Views	This metric identifies the number of page views for the va.gov/PACT website.
Total Clicks on Call to Action to File a Disability Claim Online	This statistic identifies the number of times visitors to the VA.gov/PACT website clicked the "Apply for Benefits" link to file a disability compensation claim online.
Total Impressions	This statistic identifies the total number of PACT Act advertisements rendered (on user screens through digital marketing). The impression is not action-based but is the user potentially seeing the PACT Act advertisement for awareness.
Total MyVA111 Calls that Access the PACT Act Main Menu (Press 8)	This statistic identifies the total number of calls received to the automated MyVA111 line (option 8), which provides information about the PACT Act to callers.

Geographical Map

Reminder: the Geographical Analysis is included in every other issue of this dashboard publication. The next geographical analysis will be released on March 31, 2023.

Metric/Term	Definition
Veterans in State	This statistic identifies the number of Veterans in a particular location. This is a projection as of 09/30/2022. This projection is not subdivided for U.S. territories, Freely Associated States, and Philippines; this population is aggregated.
Total PACT Act Related Claims Received	This statistic identifies the total number of VBA benefit claims with at least one PACT Act-related condition separated by state of residence.
Percentage of Total PACT Act Related Claims Received	This statistic identifies the percentage of VBA benefit claims with at least one PACT Act-related condition received in a particular state, divided by the overall number of PACT Act-related claims received.
Veterans Currently Enrolled with VA for Care	This statistic identifies the number of Veterans enrolled in VHA healthcare who have a permanent address in a particular state. (This does not include those Veterans who do not have a permanent address or those with a permanent address outside the 50 states).
New Enrollees	This statistic identifies the number of Veterans newly enrolled in VHA healthcare who have a permanent address in a particular state. (This does not include those Veterans who do not have a permanent address or those with a permanent address outside the 50 states).
Percentage of New Enrollees	This statistic identifies the percentage of Veterans newly enrolled in VHA healthcare who have a permanent address in a particular state, divided by the overall Veteran population. (This does not include those Veterans who do not have a permanent address or those with a permanent address outside the 50 states).
Further Geographic Explanations	
Symbol –	Data is unavailable.
U.S. territories, Freely Associated States, and Philippines	U.S. territories, Freely Associated States, and Philippines group includes claims from Veterans and Survivors residing in the following locations: American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Marshall Islands, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, and U.S. Virgin Islands.
Philippines	The Unknown/Foreign group includes Veterans and Survivors with a foreign address or where state of residence information is currently unavailable.
Unknown/Foreign	To maintain Veteran and Survivor privacy, receipts and enrollments <10 cannot be publicly shared.
<10 Privacy Threshold	



## BE VIGILANT OF PACT ACT SCAMS

On August 10, President Biden signed the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act (PACT Act) into law. This law helps millions of Veterans and their survivors by:

- Extending VA health care eligibility for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and Post-9/11 (Post-September 11, 2001) eras
- Expanding benefits eligibility for Veterans exposed to toxic substances and their survivors



### Tips to Avoid PACT Act Scams

Scammers are taking advantage of new opportunities to commit fraud. There's been an increase in PACT Act-related [phishing \(email\)](#), vishing (phone), and [social media scams](#) targeting Veterans to access their PACT Act benefits or submit claims on their behalf.

Veterans should be cautious of anyone who guarantees a lucrative financial benefit or service.

#### Do's

- ✓ You may submit your application securely [online](#) via VA.GOV or in person at any Regional Office. You may file your claim directly with VA and then, VA will assist in gathering evidence necessary to support it. There are no costs or hidden fees to apply.
- ✓ Be cautious of companies who advertise VA benefits can only be obtained with their help. These companies may not be recognized by VA and may be attempting to charge illegal fees.
- ✓ Be cautious of aggressive companies who may try to pressure you to sign their contract through frequent communications or by insisting "you must act now or lose your chance for benefits."
- ✓ Be cautious of companies who claim to be contacting you on behalf of VA or to have a special relationship with VA. Contact VA at 1-800-827-1000 if you are unsure about the authenticity of any message received.
- ✓ Validate: If you are interested in working with a Veteran Service Organization (VSO), agent, or attorney, use the Office of General Counsel [Accreditation tool](#) to confirm and validate their credentials.

#### Don'ts

- ✗ Do not sign a contract agreeing to pay an unauthorized company a percentage of your benefit payment in exchange for their assistance with your VA claim. If you need help filing a claim, there are representatives of VSOs, agents, and attorneys who have been [accredited by VA](#) to assist you.
- ✗ Do not sign a blank form for someone else to complete later. Always review the completed form before signing and keep a copy for yourself.
- ✗ Do not be fooled by companies who advertise they have special relationships with medical professionals and can guarantee your benefits award. If they are defrauding the Federal government, you could be held responsible for paying those benefits back.
- ✗ Do not provide your social security number, medical records, or other personally identifiable information to anyone offering claims assistance before confirming their credentials using the Office of General Counsel [Accreditation tool](#).
- ✗ Do not sign forms that are not [VA generated](#) or third-party authorization for someone to provide "behind-the-scenes" claims assistance.

### [www.VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT) is the official source of PACT Act information.

We want Veterans and survivors to apply now for their PACT Act-related benefits.

To report suspected scams, please contact the VA Office of Inspector General ([OIG Hotline \(va.gov\)](#)). File a complaint with the [Federal Trade Commission](#). Visit the [Cybercrime Support Network](#) for additional [resources](#) to help Veterans, service members, and their families combat cybercrime.

VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

Learn more and sign up at [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT)  
Download the VA Health and Benefits App  
Call us at 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411)  
Find a VA at [VA.gov/find-locations/](https://www.va.gov/find-locations/)

### Useful VA Links

- **VA Housing Assistance Page** - Information about home loans, eligibility, interest rates reductions and other related topics: <https://www.va.gov/housing-assistance/>
- **National Center for PTSD** - Provides information and resources to veterans, care providers and organizations relating PTSD: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>



- **Covid-19 Vaccine Updates** - Latest updates on Covid-19 guidance and vaccinations: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/>
- **VA Life Insurance (VALife)** - <https://www.benefits.va.gov/insurance/valife.asp>
- **Veterans Readiness and Employment (VR&E)** - job training, education, employment coaching, etc.: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/vocrehab/index.asp>

## Upcoming Veterans Dates and Events

- Gold Star Spouses (**April 5**)
- National Former POW Recognition Day (**April 9**)
- Air Force Reserve Birthday (**April 14**)
- Epilepsy Walk in Lexington (**April 15**)
- Army Reserve Birthday (**April 23**)
- National Military Brats Day (**April 30**)
- Power Slap (Epilepsy Event) Greenfield, KY (**April 30**)
- 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Active Military, Veteran & First Responders Children's appreciation day 12:00 – 3:00 Jefferson KY (**April 30**)

## Resources for Veterans



### Flood Relief

Have you been affected by flooding in Eastern Kentucky? The Governor's Office has prepared a list of resources designed to help you make it through this challenging time.

Click here for more information:  
<https://governor.ky.gov/disaster-response/flood-resources>



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