

**Vol.2, No.2**  
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# **Serving Those Who Served**

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



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## Latest VA News and Updates

### New measure allows those exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune to file lawsuits

*By Veterans Experience Office*

*(Video discussing the information further available [here](#))*

On August 10, 2022, President Biden signed into law the [Honoring our PACT Act of 2022](#). Section 804 of [this law](#) is the Camp Lejeune Justice Act of 2022 (CLJA), which allows people exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune to file new lawsuits.

- [VA's Camp Lejeune exposure to hazardous materials site](#)
- [VA's Camp Lejeune Water Contamination FAQ](#) (download PDF)

You may have seen advertisements from lawyers, law firms or others seeking to represent you in litigation related to this new law. These lawyers, firms and private parties are not connected with VA benefits or services. Whether you decide to seek relief under the CLJA is entirely your decision and will not influence VA's decision to provide you benefits or health care based upon your exposure. It also will not affect the amount of benefits or health care VA can provide you.

It's important to know, however, that if you are awarded relief by a court in a lawsuit brought under the CLJA, the award must be offset by the amount of any disability award, payment or benefit VA provided to you or your legal representative relating to exposure to water at Camp Lejeune. This would reduce the amount of the award you receive from the court, but it would not affect your VA benefits.

Any award must also be offset by Medicare or Medicaid benefits. We recommend you contact the [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services](#) for information on how a court award under the CLJA could affect your benefits under those programs.

Additionally, please note that the U.S. Department of Justice has set up a phone number and email address that anyone can use for questions about the status of cases filed in federal court under the CLJA. The phone number is (202) 353-4426, and the email is [camplejeune.pactact@usdoj.gov](mailto:camplejeune.pactact@usdoj.gov).

#### Understand your options for health care, benefits

All Veterans and family members who believe they were exposed to contaminated water at Camp Lejeune between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, should contact VA to understand their options for health care and benefits. VA has established presumptions of service connection for several diseases for Veterans, reservists and National Guard members exposed to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune.

The [Camp Lejeune Family Member Program](#) covers out-of-pocket costs for 15 conditions for family members who lived at Camp Lejeune between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987.

Veterans who served on active duty in the U.S. armed forces at Camp Lejeune for not fewer than 30 days between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987, are eligible for hospital care and medical services for any of [15 illnesses or conditions](#). They are also eligible to enroll in VA health care for other health care services they may require. The family members of these Veterans who resided at Camp Lejeune for not fewer than 30 days during this period (or who were in utero during the period while their mother resided at that location) are eligible for hospital care and medical services furnished by VA for any of these 15 illnesses or conditions.

Learn more at [VA's Camp Lejeune exposure to hazardous materials](#) page, download VA's Camp Lejeune [water contamination FAQ](#) or call 1-800-MyVA411. Your local Veterans service organization may also be able to help. VA will not charge you for providing information related to these services.

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## **Virtual Minority Veteran Outreach Symposium**



Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)  
Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)  
Outreach, Transition & Economic Development (OTED)

will host a

### Virtual Minority Veteran Outreach Symposium

Thursday, February 9, 2023  
1:00 – 4:00 p.m. (EST)



In recognition of Black History Month, this symposium will celebrate African American service in military, as well as Veteran contributions to our Nation. The symposium will also provide information on current and future VA benefits, to include filing a VA disability claim online, fraud prevention and awareness and the Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act.

**Join on Your Computer or Mobile App via WebEx**  
[Click Here to Join the Symposium](#)

**Or Call-In (Audio Only)**  
Phone: 1-404-397-1596 Access Code: 2762 187 6496



## Veterans in Suicidal Crisis can receive Free Emergency Health Care

*From The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*

Starting Jan. 17, Veterans in acute suicidal crisis will be able to go to any VA or non-VA health care facility for emergency health care at no cost – including inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days and outpatient care for up to 90 days. Veterans do not need to be enrolled in the VA system to use this benefit.

This expansion of care will help prevent Veteran suicide by guaranteeing no cost, world-class care to Veterans in times of crisis. It will also increase access to acute suicide care for up to 9 million Veterans who are not currently enrolled in VA health care.

Preventing Veteran suicide is VA's top clinical priority and a top priority of the Biden-Harris Administration. This effort is a key part of VA's 10-year National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide and the Biden-Harris administration's plan for Reducing Military and Veteran Suicide. In September, VA released the 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, which showed that Veteran suicides decreased in 2020 for the second year in a row, and that fewer Veterans died by suicide in 2020 than in any year since 2006.

"Veterans in suicidal crisis can now receive the free, world-class emergency health care they deserve – no matter where they need it, when they need it, or whether they're enrolled in VA care," said VA Secretary for Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough. "This expansion of care will save Veterans' lives, and there's nothing more important than that." VA has submitted an interim final rule to the federal register to establish this authority under section 201 of the Veterans Comprehensive Prevention, Access to Care, and Treatment (COMPACT) Act of 2020. The final policy, which takes effect on Jan. 17, will allow VA to:

- Provide, pay for, or reimburse for treatment of eligible individuals' emergency suicide care, transportation costs, and follow-up care at a VA or non-VA facility for up to 30 days of inpatient care and 90 days of outpatient care.
- Make appropriate referrals for care following the period of emergency suicide care.
- Determine eligibility for other VA services and benefits.
- Refer eligible individuals for appropriate VA programs and benefits following the period of emergency suicide care.

Eligible individuals, regardless of VA enrollment status, are:

- Veterans who were discharged or released from active duty after more than 24 months of active service under conditions other than dishonorable.
- Former members of the armed forces, including reserve service members, who served more than 100 days under a combat exclusion or in support of a contingency operation either directly or by operating an unmanned aerial vehicle from another location who were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.
- Former members of the armed forces who were the victim of a physical assault of a sexual nature, a battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment while serving in the armed forces.

Over the past year, VA has announced or continued several additional efforts to end Veteran suicide, including establishing 988 (then press 1) as a way for Veterans to quickly connect with caring, qualified crisis support 24/7; proposing a new rule that would reduce or eliminate copayments for Veterans at risk of suicide; conducting an ongoing public outreach effort on firearm suicide prevention and lethal means safety; and leveraging a national Veteran suicide prevention awareness campaign, "Don't Wait. Reach Out."

Under the new  
2022 PACT Act

all enrolled Veterans will be able to  
receive a toxic exposure screening at VA

**TOXIC EXPOSURE DURING MILITARY SERVICE?**

Learn more at VA.gov  
1-800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411)

VA U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

## PACT Act News and Information

**The PACT Act and Your VA Benefits** The Department of Veterans Affairs has established a web portal titled "The PACT Act and Your VA Benefits" which can help answer your questions on what the PACT Act means for you or your loved ones. You can also call the VA hotline at 1-800-698-2411 for assistance. The following are key weblinks for PACT Act Information:

[File for disability compensation with VA Form 21-526EZ](#)

[Apply for VA health care](#)

[HOME - Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry \(va.gov\)](#)

[Camp Lejeune Water Contamination Health Issues | Veterans Affairs \(va.gov\)](#)

**KDVA Veterans Benefits Field Representatives (VBFR) Are Available to Assist**

**Veterans Understand PACT Act/File Claims** KDVA VBFRs are available to assist

veterans and families of veterans covered under the PACT Act. This include

veterans and family members who were initially denied claims related to the PACT

Act in the past. VBFRs can assist in providing information and filing claims **AT NO**

**COST** to the veteran or family member. VBFRs can also brief or educate Veterans

Service Organizations (VSO) on the latest information and presumptives under the

PACT ACT. Veterans (or family members) and VSOs can contact Mr. Stephen

Burford at (270) 576-3534 or [Stephen.Burford@ky.gov](mailto:Stephen.Burford@ky.gov) or go to KDVA Benefits

Representative portal for a VBFR in your area at [Your Benefits Representative -](#)

[Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

Key KDVA Benefits services weblinks:

[Veterans Benefits - Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

[Your Benefits Representative - Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

[Initial Appointment Checklist - Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

[About VA Form 21-22 | Veterans Affairs](#)



# 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](http://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](http://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/](http://VA.gov/find-locations/)

## What's New at KDVA?



To RSVP, send an email to [women.veterans@ky.gov](mailto:women.veterans@ky.gov)

## Joint Executive Council of Veteran Organizations Meeting Jan 4, 2023

The first Joint Executive Council of Veteran Organizations meeting for 2023 was held at VFW Post 4075 on January 4, 2023, in Frankfort, Kentucky. KDVA attended and provided clarification on House Bill-29 (HB-29), which outlines who can be interred/buried in the Commonwealth's five Veteran Cemeteries. A noteworthy provision of HB-29 is the residency requirement, which precludes veterans from other states from being interred in Kentucky's cemeteries. At the meeting, the leaders of the VSOs agreed to support KDVA's efforts in having the residency requirement removed from the regulation for cemetery interment.



Gen. (retired) Leslie Beavers, former KDVA Commissioner, speaks about the importance of House Bill-29 prior to the Joint Executive Council of Organized Veterans committee voted in support of the bill at the VFW in Frankfort, KY, Jan. 4, 2023.



Al Duncan, KDVA State Veterans Cemeteries Director (second from left), speaks with former KDVA commissioners and a former deputy commissioner prior to the Joint Executive Council of Veteran Organizations meeting at the VFW Post 4075 in Frankfort, Kentucky, on Jan 4, 2023.



Commissioner Whitney Allen, KDVA, speaks at the Joint Executive Council of Veteran Organizations meeting at the VFW Post 4075 in Frankfort, KY, Jan 4, 2023. Allen gave appreciation remarks to retired General Leslie Beavers, former KDVA Commissioner, JECVO leaders and members for voting to support House Bill-29.



From left to right, former KDVA deputy commissioner Dean Stoops, current KDVA Commissioner Whitney Allen, former KDVA commissioner Leslie Beavers, former KDVA commissioner Benjamin Adams, and former KDVA deputy commissioner Marty Pinkston attended the Joint Executive Council of Veteran Organizations meeting at the VFW Post 4075 in Frankfort, KY, Jan 4, 2023. There is approximately 20 years of experience helping veterans split amongst the individuals in this photo.

## KDVA New Hires and Promotees



New Deputy Commissioner,  
Juan Renaud



New Director of State Programs,  
William Nelson



New Executive Director, Office of Kentucky Veterans Services,  
Silas Session



New Budget Specialist,  
Laura Brown



New Public Information Officer,  
James Hensley



Promotion to Director of Benefits,  
Stephen Buford



Promotion to Program Administrator, KYVets Employment Resources, Jennifer Case

## Centennial Birthday at Thomson Hood Veterans Center



Born in 1922, Curtis Durham turned 101 years old this month. He received a letter from the Governor, a Certificate of Recognition from KDVA and a challenge coin in honor of being a member of the Greatest Generation.

**Leadership curriculum**, consisting of the following classes. The first class has been completed, allowing enrollment in the next class.

Leadership Foundation 1/4/2023

Leadership Roles 1/18/2023

Leadership Communication 2/1/2023

Attendees: John Ostroske – HR Branch Manager – KDVA

Mark Bowman – Executive Director - OKVC

Brandy Small – Administrative Branch Manager – Radcliff Veterans Center

**2023 Governor’s Minority Management Training Program**

Three KDVA Employees applied for 20 slots available statewide. Most likely, only two slots will be available for KDVA, which is part of the General Government Cabinet. There is a possibility of a third slot. Final notices will be sent on 1/18/2023. I will let you know who is selected.

Created in 1995, the Governor's Minority Management Trainee Program (GMMTP) is a twelve-month transformational leadership development program designed to provide guidance and leadership development opportunities for minority employees in the merit system. A flagship program, the GMMTP has garnered respect and attention as a model for retaining and promoting minorities within state government. The 2023 class of the GMMTP is serving as a pilot for the Personnel Cabinet's virtual leadership program.

#### **Mission**

The GMMTP was created to develop exceptional leaders by providing opportunities to continually learn, improve performance and excel in their department/agency. The GMMTP will help develop individual potential to solve emerging workforce issues as they pertain to state government. GMMTP participants strive to be:

- Ethical
- Accountable
- Driven
- Enthusiastic
- Respectful
- Service-Oriented
- Inclusive

#### **Program Benefits**

- Develop highly trained, experienced minority candidates to help meet the future leadership needs of state government. Provide value-added learning and development opportunities that will aid the Commonwealth of Kentucky in its quest to become an employer of choice.
- Provide opportunities for individual growth, professional development, and leadership training to better assure readiness and competency attainment necessary for management and executive level roles within our enterprise.
- Provide opportunities for mentoring and networking with participants currently in management positions to further develop personal and professional resources for continued development.

Nationally recognized program of choice that provides opportunities for minority employees to gain access, support, skills, and knowledge to strengthen their competitive edge in the workplace.

## **KDVA Supported Event**

### **James H. Bates Elementary School held a flag raising ceremony Jan. 20, 2023.**

James H. Bates Elementary School in Louisville, KY, was recognized as a Purple Star School and held a flag raising ceremony. The Purple Star Schools program is designed to help schools support military-connected kids when they move to a new school due to a military parent's permanent change of station.



BATES







For more information on the Purple Star School Program visit their website [here](#).

## Black History Month Story Contribution

**Anna Mac Clarke**

**1919-1944**

***By: John Trowbridge, Kentucky National Guard***

It was raining that April morning as the train rolled into the station at Lawrenceburg, Kentucky. It was one of those day-long rains that slows the world down and gives you time to reflect. They had been waiting to meet the train that was bringing her back home. Home to her final resting place, this young woman who had, in the short span of 24 years, accomplished so much, not only for herself but for her race and her gender.

A large group of childhood friends and family had assembled at the Lawrenceburg Train depot, Earl Guthrie, Will "Pappy," Chester Gill, Sr., and Dirk Bond (who had always been crazy about Anna, and would have done anything for her when she was growing up in Lawrenceburg) were waiting and remembering as the train came rolling into the station.

Sergeant Robert Franklin James, Anna's brother, stepped from the train; the Army had assigned him to be the escort officer, to bring his sister's body back home. It didn't seem

that long ago that he had been in the field with his unit at Fort Ord, California, when he was told to report to the orderly room. There was a message from the local Red Cross that stated his sister Lt. Anna M. Clarke was in the hospital at Douglas Army Airfield in Douglas, Arizona. Sergeant James immediately caught the next train for Douglas to be with his sister.

Anna Mac Clarke was born June 20, 1919, in Lawrenceburg, Kentucky. Anna Mac, as she was called, was always known by her neighborhood friends as a “tomboy” who liked to play football and take care of animals, specifically cats and her pet chameleon. While growing up in her small-town community, Clarke’s peers and elders knew that she was destined to do something great.



On May 28, 1937, less than one month before her 18th birthday, Clarke was awarded a diploma from Lawrenceburg High School, which at the time was referred to as the “Colored High School.” After graduating from high school, Anna Mac decided to pursue a college education. She considered many options, but in the end decided to attend Kentucky State College (now Kentucky State University), an historically Black college located in Frankfort, Kentucky which is less than 15 miles from where she grew up in Lawrenceburg. While at Kentucky State, Clarke was a very active student, participating in sports, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and the school’s newspaper, The Kentucky Thorobred. Clarke

graduated from Kentucky State College in 1941, earning a bachelor’s degree in both sociology and economics. However, Anna Mac had a hard time finding employment that was appropriate for her skills and was not extremely low paying. A fellow classmate and friend who would go on and to greater fame was Civil Rights leader and Executive Director of the National Urban League from 1961-1971, Whitney Young, Jr.

In 1942, Anna Mac Clarke joined the All-Volunteer Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps and left for Basic Training at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. After she completed Basic Training, Clarke went on to Officer Candidate School.

On November 30, 1942, the Officer Candidate School at Fort Des Moines in Iowa –where Clarke was stationed—was desegregated. Within two weeks of the desegregation, Clarke became a candidate in the 15th Officer Class, WAAC OCS Program. There were two other African Americans in her class, but she would be the only one to finish the course eight weeks later, on February 16, 1943. By the end of February, Clarke was reassigned to the Fourth Company, Third Regiment, as a Platoon Leader. Third Officer Anna Mac Clarke was the first African American WAAC assigned to command what was otherwise an all-White unit.

With First Officer Sara E. Murphy, Clarke led a unit of 144 African-American WAACs to serve in Wakeman General Hospital at Camp Atterbury in Indiana. This assignment lasted for only a month, and in June 1943, Clarke worked in the Classification and Assignment Department of WAAC headquarters in Washington, D.C. She enrolled in the Adjutant General’s School at Camp Meade, Maryland, and after having completed the training, she was assigned to Chicago’s WAAC recruiting program. Clarke was promoted to Second Officer on July 16, 1943, and she returned to Fort Des Moines. The Army transformed the auxiliary units of WAAC into the Regular Army, and Clarke became a member of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) in September 1943.

On February 7, 1944, Clarke led the first WAC unit onto the base at Douglas Army Air Field. Located in eastern Arizona, this Army Airfield was one of only four in the U.S. to have both African American soldiers and WACs. The theater on the post was segregated, and Clarke had been warned by the African American soldiers not to go there. However, Clarke and several women went to the theater, refusing to sit in the Colored section. She protested the enforced segregation to the theater management, her immediate supervisor



and then the Commanding Officer, Colonel Harvey E. Dyer. On February 21, 1944, Colonel Dyer issued the order to his officers "to educate properly all enlisted and civilian personnel in your respective departments to accept any colored WACs assigned as you would any white enlisted man or enlisted woman in the Army of the United States. Every consideration, respect, courtesy, and toleration will be afforded every colored WAC. No discrimination will be condoned."

In March 1944 Anna Mac was admitted to a hospital on the base with sharp pains in her side. Doctors diagnosed her with appendicitis and decided that she needed an appendectomy to save her life. At first it was believed to be a successful surgery and Clarke was expected to make a full recovery. Unfortunately, gangrene had entered her body due to the infection brought on by the surgery. Anna Mac Clarke died on April 19, 1944, at the age of 24.

Anna Mac's body was escorted back to Kentucky for burial by her brother, Robert Franklin James, who was serving in the Army at Fort Ord, California, at the time.

Sergeant James saw the crowded platform of family and friends waiting for him and his sister. The coffin containing Anna was taken to her childhood home, her grandmother's house on Lincoln Street where it lay in state until Monday, when it was moved to the Evergreen Baptist Church on College Street for memorial services. This was the same church where Anna Mac and her sister and brothers had been awarded a Gold Pin for fifteen years of perfect Sunday School attendance, not many years before. A military honor guard came from Fort Knox, and a minister from Lexington was called to preach the funeral. From the church Anna's coffin was taken to Woodlawn Cemetery (the local Blacks only cemetery) located just outside of Lawrenceburg in the little community of Stringtown. A solemn graveside service was conducted. The honor guard fired their salute, and the American flag was present on behalf of a grateful nation to Anna's grandmother. Lieutenant Anna Mac Clarke was finally home.

Anna Mac Clarke was a true military pioneer, part of a unique group of women who came together for one purpose, to help their country win a world war. She and her sister WAACs would also fight another war at home; that of racism, and they, as one unified force began to break down the barriers of her race and gender which would eventually lead to the civil rights movement of the late 1940s, up through the 1960s. Anna Mac would never know the full impact her efforts to right injustice would have on things that we take for granted today, not only in the military, but in the civilian world as well.

Sadly, when the local American Legion Post established the WWII veteran's monument in front of the courthouse, Anna's name was not listed, however, today, Anna Mac's achievements in life are told on Kentucky Highway Historical Marker #1970, located on the grounds of the Anderson County Courthouse. Below is the marker text:

"Anna Mack Mitchel was born on June 20, 1919, in Lawrenceburg, Kentucky. Her mother, Nora Mitchel, was a cook, and her father, Tom Clark, was a laborer. Her parents never married. Anna took her father's last name, adding an "e" to the end, and removed the "k" from the end of her middle name.

Clarke received her high school diploma from Lawrenceburg High School and continued her education at Kentucky State College in Frankfort (now known as Kentucky State University). She graduated in June 1941 with a bachelor's degree in sociology and economics with a Certificate of Sunday Training School.

Struggling to find a job in Kentucky, during the summer of 1941, Clarke first found employment at a Girl Scouts camp in New York State. In the fall of that year, she moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, to work at the Nash House Community Center as the recreation director.

In October 1942, Anna Mac Clarke joined the war effort through the All Volunteer Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). After completing her basic training, she enrolled in the WAAC Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Fort Des Moines. Including Clarke, only three African American women enlisted in her recently desegregated WAAC OCS course. Out of those women, Third Officer Anna Clarke was the only one to complete the course, which she did in February 1943.

Although the OSC course was integrated, Fort Des Moines remained racially segregated. The officers club there did not allow black officers to enter, and Clarke lived an isolated life while on the base.

In February 1943, she received orders to become the Fourth Company, Third Regiment's Platoon Leader. This title distinguished her as the first African American WAAC to command an all-white unit. In 1943, WAAC became the Women's Army Corps (WAC) as a part of the regular Army. The WAC appointed Clarke as a first lieutenant. Over the next year, Clarke commanded several black units in various places across the country including Indiana and California. Eventually, Clark moved to Douglas Army Airfield in southeastern Arizona. There, she commanded WAC Unit Section D, the first group of WACs on the base. The unit performed many duties previously held by men, including airplane maintenance.

Clarke and several other African American WACs caused a stir on the base when they refused to sit in the corner of the theater designated for blacks. News of this incident reached the commanding officer of Douglas Army Airfield, Colonel Harvey Dyer. He proceeded to release a statement in February 1944, which ended segregation and discriminatory practices on at the base.

Unfortunately, Clarke's career ended abruptly when she became sick in March 1944. Doctors diagnosed her with appendicitis, but the organ ruptured, and gangrene set in quickly. On April 19, 1944, Clark died on the base. Her body was sent back to Kentucky, where she was buried in Woodlawn Hill Cemetery.

In 2003, sixteen-year-old Haley S. Bowling, McKee, Kentucky, took on the role of Lt. Anna Mac Clarke as part of the Kentucky Chautauqua, sharing the story of Anna Mac to thousands of Kentuckians over a twelve-year period.

Additionally, a street in downtown Lawrenceburg bears her name, as well as mural painted for Lawrenceburg's bicentennial in 2020 has the image of Anna Mac with her historical marker as the backdrop in the upper left corner.

On July 26, 1946, a little over two years after the death of Lieutenant Clarke, President Harry Truman issued Executive Order 9981, which called for equal treatment and opportunity for Blacks in the military. Four years later, on March 1, 1950, the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity reported that beginning in April 1950 the Army's quota system for Blacks was out and that segregation



was over in the military.

As for the Women’s Army Corps, in 1947, members of the WAC were permitted to opt for service in either the Army or the newly organized Air Force. The Women’s Armed Forces Services Integration Act gave women permanent military status in the Regular Army or Reserves.

Finally, in 1978, the WAC itself was disestablished and its members were assigned or could enroll in various branches of the Army and Air Force.

Sources:

Anna Mac Clarke | Kentucky Center for African American Heritage (kcaah.org)

Anna Mac Clarke - Kentucky Commission on Human Rights

Anna Mac Clarke | ExploreKYHistory

Anna Mac Clarke - Wikipedia

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Trowbridge, John M. Anna Mac Clarke, a Pioneer in Military Leadership. Kentucky African American Commission, 1996.

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*By SFC (R) John Trowbridge. He’s a Kentucky Guardsman and former Command Historian. For more information, please contact Mr. Trowbridge at the following: john.m.trowbridge.nfg@army.mil or 502-607-1166*  
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### 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 Lisfe 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

- Black History Month (**February**)
- National Freedom Day (**Feb 1**)
- Army Nurse Corp Established (**Feb 2**)
- Marine Corps Women's Reserve Established (**Feb 13**)
- President's Day (**Feb 20**)
- Iwo Jima Flag Raising (**Feb 23**)
- Persian Gulf Cease-Fire Day (**Feb 28**)
- Women Veterans Symposium Event (**Mar 22**)

## 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>

## Commissioner's Corner



## Commissioner's Corner

Team,

It has been a busy first month of 2023 for KDVA. We have several events we're working on for the coming months including the Women Veterans Symposium Event on Mar. 22 and the KDVA State Conference Aug. 24 to 25 to name a couple. I hope to see our veterans out at these events as we are there for our vets in their post military life and careers.

Also, February is Black History Month and I'd like to recognize our African American brothers and sisters who served and are serving today. I hope you had a chance to read the article on Anna Mac Clarke in this newsletter as she was a phenomenal woman veteran who stood up for what is right during the time of segregation and inspired others to do the same.

Thank you for your continued support!

***Commissioner Whitney Allen***

*Kentucky Department of Veteran Affairs*

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