



**WOUNDED WARRIOR
PROJECT®**

PROJECT ADVOCACY NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2022

Welcome to the Volume 3, Issue 4 of Wounded Warrior Project Advocacy News, a policy update from Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP). WWP's advocacy efforts connect you and your fellow warriors with your elected officials, providing you a voice in our nation's capital, and empowering you to discuss the issues that matter most to the post-9/11 veteran community.

IN THIS ISSUE:

**Wounded Warrior Project Pushes for
Legislation to Restore Retirement
Benefits for Disabled Veterans**

**Meet the Newest Veteran
Members of Congress**

**Wounded Warrior Project
Participates in Veterans Day
Commemorations**

LETTER FROM OUR VP

Happy Holidays to all, and welcome to Wounded Warrior Project's (WWP) *Project Advocacy* Newsletter.

While we are already busy preparing for the new year, we are excited to share the hard work our advocacy team has been focused on in 2022. It has been our privilege to work on behalf of our nation's veterans, and I am proud to say that we have had many accomplishments. These include:

★ Passage of comprehensive toxic exposure legislation, the *Honoring Our PACT Act*.

★ Passage of legislation to improve VA's mammography services, the *MAMMO for Veterans Act*.

★ Testifying before Congress during two hearings focused on legislative priorities and the Veteran Readiness and Employment program and providing four statements for the record.

★ Helping to bring about a pause on disenrollment within VA's Caregiver program.

★ Facilitating WWP's largest warrior fly-in, *Operation Advocacy*.

★ Launching WWP's first women veterans summit.

In addition to our policy successes, WWP was once again present at the **Association of the United States Army (AUSA) Annual Conference** this fall and sponsored the Military Family Forum Army Senior Leaders Town Hall. This event brought together high-ranking Army leadership to address questions from service members and veterans on topics including mental health, housing, inflation, health care, benefits programs, and spousal employment.



Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington and WWP teammates at the AUSA Annual Conference

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM OUR VP

WWP Government Affairs Update 1

THE MAJOR RICHARD STAR ACT

Wounded Warrior Project Pushes for Legislation to Restore Retirement Benefits for Disabled Veterans 3

GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY

Warrior Advocate Spotlight: Joshua Jordan 5

MIDTERM ELECTIONS

Meet the Newest Veteran Members of Congress 6

VETERANS DAY

Wounded Warrior Project Participates in Veterans Day Commemorations 10

“DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE NEW LAWS?”

Health Care for Veterans Exposed to Toxic Substances..... 12
Cost-of-Living Adjustment..... 12
Life Insurance Coverage 12

VA PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

The Solid Start Program 13
The Affordable Connectivity Program 13

LETTER FROM OUR VP (CONT.)

In September, I participated in the **2022 WWP Partner Convening** in Houston, where we brought together over 50 veterans services organizations. I shared an overview of WWP's advocacy work, programs, and services. We discussed how partners can lean on one another to advocate for service members and their families. I also led a session describing how WWP identifies legislative priorities through data collection, such as the Annual Warrior Survey, and through collaborations with partners on programs. We also talked about the fundamental steps and resources required to build a grassroots advocacy presence.

Then in October, I joined other WWP teammates at the **America's Warrior Partnership (AWP) Symposium** where I participated in a policy panel to discuss some of the pressing issues facing warriors heading into the 118th Congress. Our panel, entitled "A View from the Hill - Policy Related to Suicide Prevention," included prominent members of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and other prominent veteran service organizations. We had a meaningful conversation around the crisis of veteran suicide, potential congressional action to address veteran needs, and VA funding while recommitting the need to providing the mental health support for those who served.

Our team was also excited to be a part of bringing the **WWP Courage Awards & Benefits Dinner** to Washington, D.C. The Courage Awards & Benefits Dinner honors warriors and caregivers for their selfless service and sacrifice. By hosting this event in our nation's Capital, we were also able to recognize veteran leaders and public officials for their contributions and leadership in serving our Nations veterans. This year, WWP recognized Senators Jon Tester (D-MT) and Joni Ernst (R-IA), and Representatives Raul Ruiz (D-CA-36) and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-12), for their leadership on veteran issues and awarded them with WWP inaugural **Legislator of the Year Awards**.

In the new year, we look forward to working with the new Congress, officials at the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense, veteran service organizations, and other important stakeholders to advance our key priorities. As always, we humbly ask for your support to engage our nation's leaders on these critical issues.

To honor and empower, and with best wishes for a meaningful 2023,

Jose Ramos



Chief Program Officer Jen Silva, Warrior Care Network Director Erin Fletcher, and WWP Vice President of Physical Health and Wellness James Herrera speak at the 2022 WWP Partner Convening



Vice President of GCR Jose Ramos speaks at the America's Warrior Partnership (AWP) Symposium



Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington speaks at the Courage Awards and Benefits Dinner

THE MAJOR RICHARD STAR ACT

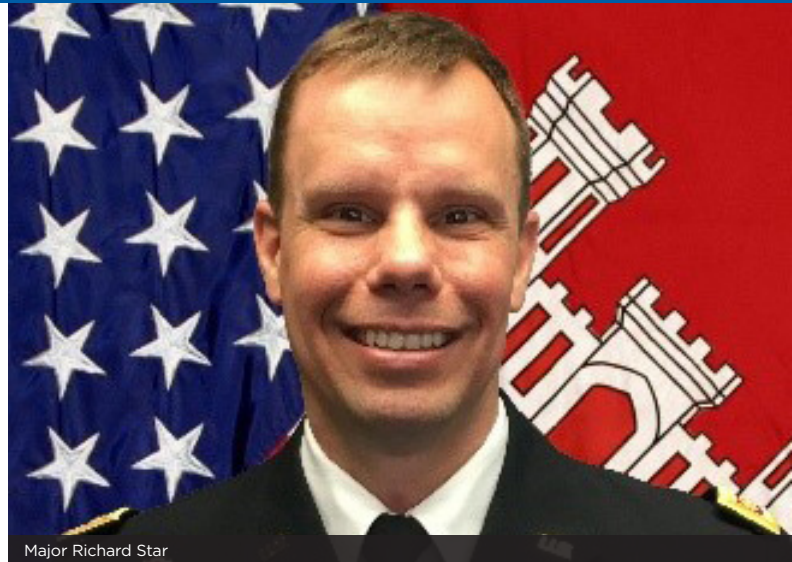
Wounded Warrior Project Pushes for Legislation to Restore Retirement Benefits for Disabled Veterans

Major Richard Star was a United States Army officer, a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, and a dedicated advocate for veterans' benefits. Over the course of multiple tours overseas, Major Star performed road construction and IED clearance operations. He was also exposed to burn pits, and in May 2018, learned that he had stage 4 metastatic lung cancer.

A decorated veteran, Major Star was medically retired due to his combat-related injuries prior to reaching 20 years of active service. While undergoing surgeries and chemotherapy at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Major Star learned that because he had not reached the 20-year benchmark, he was not eligible to receive both his Department of Defense (DoD) medical retirement pay and his Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disability pay. Although DoD retirement pay and VA disability compensation are two different benefits established by Congress for different reasons, current law requires that veterans who have earned both must forfeit a portion of their retirement pay to receive their VA disability benefits. Compounding this grim realization regarding the offset of his benefits, Major Star's wife, Tonya, had left her job to become his full-time caregiver and depended on his benefits for support.

Major Star became a vocal advocate of legislation to approve concurrent receipt of both benefits. Throughout his cancer treatment, he continued to meet with lawmakers and share his story. Finally, on February 13, 2021, after a long courageous fight with cancer, Major Star passed away.

The *Major Richard Star Act* ([H.R. 1282](#) / [S. 344](#)), which is sponsored in the U.S. Senate by Senate Veterans Affairs Committee (SVAC) Chairman Jon Tester (D-MT) and in the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL-12), has been introduced to honor Major Star and recognize that DoD retirement and VA disabilities are two distinct earned benefits. This bill would allow medically retired veterans eligible for combat related special compensation (CRSC) and who have less than 20 years of active-duty service to receive their retirement pay and disability benefits concurrently. According to DoD, there are over 50,300 veterans who would benefit from the *Major Richard Star Act*; these veterans would finally be allowed to collect hundreds of dollars per month that they have been denied up until now.



Major Richard Star

The *Major Richard Star Act* is a highly supported, bipartisan bill and a legislative priority for WWP. WWP has taken an active role in advancing this bill through

“The Major Richard Star Act is vital legislation for our medically retired veterans with less 20 years of service. When Rich was medically retired, he was shocked he would not receive his retirement benefits. He spent his last months advocating with members of Congress to pass the Major Richard Star Act. I promised him I would continue to pursue this legislation until it is passed and benefits are restored to over 50,000 veterans.”

– Tonya Star



Major Star advocates for legislation to approve concurrent receipt of DoD retirement pay and VA disability compensation

THE MAJOR RICHARD STAR ACT (CONT.)



Major Star's widow, Tonya, receives a folded flag during a September 13 internment ceremony



Major Star is interned at Arlington National Cemetery



Major Star's memorial service at Arlington National Cemetery

Congress, pressing the need for legislation to help our nation's combat-disabled. These advocacy efforts, both individually and in collaboration with a coalition of other veteran service organizations, have helped garner over 330 co-sponsors for the bill in the House and 66 in the Senate.

While members of Congress have shown support for this important bill, it has not been moved out of Committee. WWP has been working with the bill's sponsors to include an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that mirrors the *Major Richard Star Act* language. However, this has been unsuccessful despite receiving broad, bipartisan support.

WWP is grateful to the bill's sponsors, Chairman Tester and Rep. Bilirakis, who have played pivotal roles in introducing and championing this bill in the Senate and House and who have remained dedicated to getting this bill passed into law.

“You can be assured that I won't stop fighting until this issue is fixed for all Veterans. Continued advocacy on behalf of our nation's heroes will always be my top priority in Congress.”

– Rep. Bilirakis

“When it comes to our nation's disabled veterans, we've got to cut through the bureaucratic red tape that's prevented them from getting the full benefits they've earned. The Major Richard Star Act would fix the unfair offset that prevents thousands of veterans living with the wounds of war from accessing both their disability benefits and retired pay. And it honors the service and sacrifice of Major Richard Star, whose legacy lives on in our continued fight to ensure our men and women in uniform get the assistance they deserve.”

– Chairman Tester

WWP will continue to work alongside Chairman Tester, Rep. Bilirakis, and the bill's many cosponsors and supporters to honor Major Star's legacy by advocating for passage of the *Major Richard Star Act*.



U.S. Army veteran Major Richard Star

GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY

Warrior Advocate Spotlight



WWP Alumnus Joshua Jordan

Joshua Jordan

U.S. Marine Corps

Josh Jordan served in the U.S. Marine Corps as an Ammo Tech. Josh attained the rank of Sergeant and was medically retired after 8.5 years of service. He now resides in Northern Kentucky, where he continues to serve his fellow veterans through advocacy with local, state, and federal officials.



Joshua Jordan meets with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to advocate for the Major Richard Star Act

Q When and how did you first learn about the offset of your DoD retirement pay and VA disability compensation?

A: I discovered this a few years ago when I realized that my retirement pay is different than my VA disability compensation pay. After doing some research, I found out that Congress, a long time ago, considered disability pay and retirement pay as “double dipping,” therefore only allowing us to receive one or the other.

Q Why is passing the *Major Richard Star Act* important to you and to fellow veterans?

A: For one, the military gave us retirement benefits. We should be receiving those benefits instead of being penalized because we couldn't serve a full 20 years. To me, retired is retired, and anywhere else pay is associated with that. It's most important to those that were medically retired as, more than likely, the ability for them to earn an income is difficult and bringing in extra income would help tremendously.

Q How have you taken action to advocate for passage of the *Major Richard Star Act*?

A: I've had meetings with my Representatives on this very issue. I've also been to Washington, D.C. by way of WWP to advocate in person to members of Congress.

Q Why is it important for Congress to hear directly from veterans about this bill?

A: They won't know unless they hear from those that are affected the most. Otherwise, any issue you have will go unnoticed. That constant pressure on Members from veterans will make them understand just how important this bill is us.

Q When meeting with Members of Congress and staff about this legislation, what is the one message that you tried to leave them with?

A: My message is that this is needed to correct something that Congress itself has admitted is unjust. In 2004, Congress allowed veterans who served at least 20 years and had a 50% or more VA disability rating to receive both benefits. They've been quiet ever since, and it's time to get them to fix it.

Q What should fellow veterans know about the importance of taking part in advocacy efforts?

A: Congressional members have a full plate. Probably more than they can handle. If you don't advocate, they won't know about it. Advocacy is something you must keep doing; you can't just have one meeting and move on. They need to know how serious this is, and the more veterans advocate, the better chance we have of getting a bill passed.

MIDTERM ELECTIONS

Meet the Newest Veteran Members of Congress

Coming out of this year's November 8 midterm elections, the 118th Congress includes a new wave of young veterans who will bring their insight and experiences to Washington, DC, on behalf of their constituents. Representing many different corners of the country, the new class of 19 senators and representatives brings a unique perspective to policy and government, shaped by their experiences as post-9/11 veterans:



Arizona


Eli Crane (R-AZ-02)

Eli Crane, a WWP alumnus, served as U.S. Navy SEAL for five deployments prior to being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives this past November. After his service, Crane and his wife co-founded Bottle Breacher, a company that manufactures bottle openers made from .50 caliber shell casings, after receiving investments from members of Shark Tank.

Florida


Cory Mills (R-FL-07)

Cory Mills served in the U.S. Army from 1999 to 2004 as a member of the 82nd Airborne Division and Joint Special Operations Task Force in the Iraq War. Prior to joining the U.S. House of Representatives, Mills led multiple jobs in security management, advisory services, and other upper-level management positions at various defense companies.


Anna Paulina Luna (R-FL-13)

Anna Paulina Luna served in the U.S. Air Force as an airfield manager at Whiteman Air Force Base at the age of 19 before receiving an Air Force Achievement Medal prior to her honorable discharge in 2014. Since then, Luna has worked as the director of Hispanic engagement at Turning Point USA and Chairwoman of Hispanic Initiatives at PragerU.

Georgia


Rich McCormick (R-GA-06)

Rich McCormick served in the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps for over 20 years before being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives this past November. McCormick currently works as an emergency physician at the Gwint Medical Center in Lawrenceville, GA.

MIDTERM ELECTIONS (CONT.)


Iowa
**Zach Nunn (R-IA-03)**

Zach Nunn served as a member of the U.S. Air Force and National Guard before becoming a research staff member for Sir Peter Bottomley of the British House of Commons in 2002 and a legislative staff member for Senator Chuck Grassley in 2004. After holding several staff positions in various political offices, Nunn was a State Representative for Iowa's 30th district from 2015 to 2019 and State Senator for the 15th district since 2019.


Michigan
**John James (R-MI-10)**

John James served eight years in the U.S. Army and worked in his family's supply chain business before becoming the Representative-elect for Michigan's 10th congressional district. Prior to his newly elected position, James ran as the Republican nominee for U.S. Senate in 2018 and 2020.


Montana
**Ryan Zinke (R-MT-01)**

Ryan Zinke served in the Montana Senate from 2009 to 2013 and as the U.S. representative for Montana's at-large congressional district from 2015 to 2017. He was appointed United States Secretary of the Interior by President Donald Trump in 2017 and served until 2019. Zinke was a U.S. Navy SEAL from 1986 until 2008, retiring with the rank of commander. He was the first Navy SEAL and the first Montanan since statehood to occupy a cabinet position.


North Carolina
**Donald Davis (D-NC-01)**

Donald Davis is an alumnus of the U.S. Air Force Academy, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in social sciences. After obtaining a Doctor of Education degree from East Carolina University, Davis served as Mayor of Snow Hill, NC, Chairman of the Democratic Party in North Carolina's 1st Congressional district, and State Senator for the 5th district.

**Jeff Jackson (D-NC-14)**

Jeff Jackson served as a Major in the North Carolina National Guard, is a member of the U.S. Army Reserve, and represents the 37th district of North Carolina in the North Carolina General Assembly. Prior to being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, Jackson worked as business litigator at Womble Bond Dickinson.

MIDTERM ELECTIONS (CONT.)


New York
**Nicholas LaLota (R-NY-01)**

Nicholas LaLota graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 2000 and served in the Navy for eight years. LaLota has gained political experience working as chief of staff to Suffolk County Presiding Officer Kevin McCaffrey and served as a member on the Suffolk Board of Elections and as trustee for the village of Amityville, New York.

**Brandon Williams (R-NY-22)**

Brandon Williams served in the U.S. Navy from 1990 to 1996. During his military service, Williams served as a nuclear submarine officer for the Navy and as a Strategic Missile Officer. Williams is also a pioneer in innovation, founding a software company that now helps large industrial manufacturers modernize their production plants, cyber infrastructure, and artificial intelligence capabilities.


Ohio
**Max Miller (R-OH-07)**

Max Miller joined the U.S. Marine reserves in 2013 and transferred from the Selected Marine Corps Reserve to the Individual Ready Reserve in 2019. After serving in the Reserves, Miller became a political appointee in the Trump Administration, which included roles in the U.S. Department of Treasury, the Presidential Personnel Office, and the White House.

**J.D. Vance (R-OH)**

J.D. Vance enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps after graduating high school and served in the Iraq War as a combat correspondent with the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing. He is a venture capitalist and an author, who came to prominence with his 2016 memoir, *Hillbilly Elegy*.


Pennsylvania
**Christopher Deluzio (D-PA-17)**

Christopher Deluzio is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and served in Iraq from 2006 to 2012. Deluzio later worked as a litigation associate at Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz in New York City before being named a legal and policy scholar of the University of Pittsburgh Institute for Cyber Law, Policy, and Security, where he later served as policy director.

MIDTERM ELECTIONS (CONT.)


Texas
**Morgan Luttrell (R-TX-08)**

Morgan Luttrell, a WWP alumnus, served as a U.S. Navy SEAL for 14 years, including as a special warfare officer, until he was medically discharged in 2014. From 2017 to 2019, Luttrell was a senior advisor to Secretary Rick Perry in the U.S. Department of Energy. In 2019, Luttrell founded Trexxler Energy Solutions. He is also the founder of Stronos Industries, which provides recyclable and biodegradable campaign signs. Currently, Luttrell is an adjunct professor at Sam Houston State University and teaches law enforcement leadership.

**Wesley Hunt (R-TX-38)**

After attending the U.S. Military Academy, Wesley Hunt flew Apache helicopters in the U.S. Army. After being honorably discharged, Hunt attended Cornell University and obtained a Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration.

**Keith Self (R-TX-03)**

Keith Self served in the U.S. Army from 1975 to 1999 as a member of the Army Special Forces and Army Rangers in Qatar, Egypt, Germany, Afghanistan, and Belgium. After his military service, Self served as a judge in Collin County, Texas.


Virginia
**Jennifer Kiggans (R-VA-02)**

Jennifer Kiggans was a U.S. Navy pilot for ten years, flying H-46 and H-3 helicopters. After her service, she attended nursing school at Old Dominion University and Vanderbilt University School of Nursing. She is an adult geriatric nurse practitioner at Eastern Virginia Medical School and in private practice. Kiggans was elected to the Virginia State Senate in 2019 and represents parts of the cities of Virginia Beach and Norfolk.


Wisconsin
**Derrick Van Orden (R-WI-03)**

Derrick Van Orden served in the Navy SEALs from 1998 to 2014. He has worked as a private sector consultant and as an actor, and opened a restaurant in Butternut, Wisconsin in 2017.

Heading into the 2023 congressional session, Wounded Warrior Project will continue to engage with all Members to ensure that veterans, caregivers, and their communities have access to the benefits and opportunities they have earned through their years of service.

VETERANS DAY



Warriors Merci Mckinley and Aaron Brooks lay the WWP wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

Wounded Warrior Project Participates in Veterans Day Commemorations

On Nov. 11, WWP had the humbling opportunity to participate in Veterans Day commemorations with the nation's leaders and veterans' groups in Washington, D.C.



Warriors and WWP teammates attend the ceremony for the 69th annual National Veterans Day Observance at Arlington National Cemetery



VETERANS DAY (CONT.)

Leading up to Veterans Day, WWP participated in the 13th Wounded Warrior Experience panel, an annual program hosted by the American Veterans Center (AVC). The program highlights the importance of aiding service members during their transition from military to civilian life. The program was hosted by Jennifer Griffin, national security correspondent of Fox News, and nationally televised on Fox Business Network on Nov. 19. Government Affairs Deputy Director Aleks Morosky participated in a panel discussion on toxic exposure to highlight key improvements in the *Honoring our PACT Act* (P.L. 117-168), including a one-year window of open enrollment in VA health care for post-9/11 combat veterans that began on Oct. 1, 2022. WWP Vice President of Physical Health and Wellness James Herrera and Warrior Care Network Director Erin Fletcher also participated in panel discussions on the topics of adaptive sports and mental health, respectively.

On Veterans Day, WWP’s leadership team participated in a breakfast reception with President Joe Biden and veterans from across the country at the White House. Following the reception, five warriors and WWP teammates attended the ceremony for the 69th annual National Veterans Day Observance at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA. Warriors Merci Mckinley and Aaron Brooks laid the WWP wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Vice President Kamala Harris and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Denis McDonough, who also laid a wreath at the tomb, provided the following remarks:

“ Since 1789, American service members have sworn an oath, not to a person or to a party, but to the Constitution to defend liberty, equality, and justice, to preserve and protect our democracy.”
- Vice President Harris

“ Veterans Day is something more, a call to action to each of us, to serve vets as much as they’ve served us.”
- Veterans Affairs Secretary McDonough

Following the event, WWP joined the Veteran Day National Committee reception, hosted by Vietnam Veterans of America at the Military Women’s Memorial. WWP also engaged with members of the public on the National Mall, providing information about veterans’ services and the critical work that WWP is doing to support warriors across the country.

In New York City, NY, Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington participated in the 103rd Annual Veterans Day Parade. This annual parade is the largest Veterans Day event in the country. Linnington laid a wreath at the opening ceremony and marched down Fifth Avenue alongside hundreds of WWP warriors, families, and other Veteran Service Organizations.



“We come together as a nation to celebrate the brave men and women of our armed services – past, present, and future – who have served and sacrificed for us all. It is a day we recognize and honor their full experience as a service member – the highs and lows, the visible and invisible, the fleeting and the unforgettable.”

- WWP CEO Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington



DID YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE NEW LAWS?

DID YOU KNOW ?

Health Care for Veterans Exposed to Toxic Substances

On Aug. 10, the *Honoring our PACT Act* (P.L. 117-168) became law. This comprehensive new law regarding toxic exposure is the largest expansion of health care and benefits in VA history. It expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for veterans suffering from exposure to burn pits and other toxins during military deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan, and surrounding areas.

Veterans who were exposed to burn pits are an at-risk population, and it's critical that they have access to screening, early detection, and rapid treating in the event that an illness is diagnosed. Among the many improvements within the *Honoring Our PACT Act*, this new law grants access to VA care for all veterans who served in areas of known exposure, without the need to establish service-connection first.

The law also extends the period of time veterans have to enroll in VA health care from five to 10 years post-discharge. For veterans combat who were discharged over ten years ago, they, too, can enroll in VA health care without having to demonstrate a service-connected disability through a one-year open enrollment period. This one-year window began on Oct. 1, 2022, and will close on Oct. 1, 2023. If a veteran misses the one-year window, they may have to wait years to enroll in VA health care through a phased eligibility approach.

WWP strongly encourages veterans to take advantage of this earned benefit and get enrolled for care, even for those not experiencing any symptoms at this time. It is important to enroll now so that the care will be in place in the future, if it is needed.

To enroll in VA health care, please visit www.va.gov/health-care/apply/application/introduction or call the MyVA411 main information line at 800-698-2411 (TTY: 711).

If you have questions or need assistance, reach out to WWP's Resource Center team, available from 9 a.m. – 9 p.m. ET Monday through Friday, at 888.WWP.ALUM (997.2586).



Cost-of-Living Adjustment

On Oct. 10, a critical financial security measure was passed into law that will have a substantial impact over the course of the next year. The *Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act* (P.L. 117-191) increased the amounts payable for veterans' disability benefits and survivors' compensation. This 8.7% annual cost-of-living adjustment took effect on Dec. 1, 2022, and is the largest increase in 40 years.



SUPPORTING FAMILIES OF THE FALLEN ACT

Providing financial flexibility to military families

COACH TOMMY TUBERVILLE

Life Insurance Coverage

On Oct. 17, President Biden signed the *Supporting Families of the Fallen Act* into law; this new law will increase the maximum amount of a policy under the Veterans' Group Life Insurance and Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance to \$500,000.

Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) and Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) payments for the death of a Service member or veteran, respectively, had previously been capped at \$400,000; these coverage amounts have not been updated since 2005. During the past 17 years, rising inflation has resulted in a cumulative price increase of 52%. Therefore, the value of \$400,000 in 2005 would be approximately \$608,000 in 2022.

The *Supporting Families of the Fallen Act* increases the maximum amount of coverage to reflect inflation increases. This updated life insurance policy will help provide military and veteran families with greater financial security by allowing them to choose a policy coverage option that best matches their needs.

Click [here](#) to learn more about these fundamental elements of VA care.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

The Solid Start Program

On Oct. 17, the *Solid Start Act of 2021* officially became law, expanding crucial benefits for veterans navigating their first year returning to civilian life. The bill permanently authorizes and expands the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Solid Start Program, which proactively contacts service members to provide personalized recommendations and information tailored to their health care and benefit needs.

Under the program, VA will call veterans three times within the first year after leaving the Armed Forces, ensuring each of their needs are met via quality assurance testing. The calls will also permit VA to collect up-to-date information throughout the transition process so veterans receive support each step of the way.

The law also ensures women veterans will receive more detailed recommendations for their specific needs and all veterans will have increased access to state and local resources. Those who accessed mental health resources prior to separation from the Armed Forces will receive priority in the program.

Upon passage, Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH), one of the principal sponsors of the bill, noted, "This bipartisan bill becoming law is a win for veterans, and helps meet our commitment to ensuring that those who bravely served have the support that they have earned."

The Affordable Connectivity Program

For veterans who don't have internet service or an internet-connected device in their home or community, accessing telehealth, job opportunities, and other services can be difficult. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Bridging the Digital Divide campaign is working with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to subsidize internet connection for those experience financial struggles.

Launched in early 2022, the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) offers eligible households up to \$30 per month toward internet service, and up to \$75 per month if they reside on qualifying tribal lands. In some circumstances, the program also provides households up to \$100 for a one-time purchase of a computer or tablet.

In addition to the FCC's qualifications for participants, veterans are eligible for the ACP if their household



More than
200,000
Service members
transition to
civilian life each year

Military to Civilian
TRANSITION TALK

How does VA support
Veterans during their first
year as a civilian?

VA SOLID START

Wounded Warrior Project remains committed to helping veterans navigate their benefits programs with VA. If you need assistance, please reach out to our team through our [Benefits Services portal](#).



Affordable Connectivity Program
Helping Households Get
Access to Broadband

Find out if you qualify and how to participate. Visit: fcc.gov/ACP

income is at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines or if they participate in certain federal assistance programs.

To find out if you or your household qualify for the ACP program, please visit the [VA Bridging the Digital Divide site](#) to check eligibility requirements and connect to the VA care team.

CONTACT US

advocacy@woundedwarriorproject.org

RESOURCES

Jose Ramos

Vice President of Government and Community Relations

Shannon Walker

Administrative Assistant

Brian Dempsey

Government Affairs Director

Issues: Caregivers

Justin Beland

Grassroots and Constituent Affairs Director

State and district engagement, constituent resources, warrior fly-in

Coleman Brooks

Grassroots & Constituent Affairs Deputy Director

State and district engagement, constituent resources, warrior fly-in

Aleks Morosky

Government Affairs Deputy Director

Issues: Toxic exposure

Jeremy Villanueva

Government Affairs Associate Director

Issues: Veteran Benefits

Lindsey Stanford

Government Affairs Specialist

Issues: Mental health and brain health

Jen Burch

Government Affairs Specialist

Issues: Women veterans

Anne Marie McLean

Legislative & Policy Analyst

Roberto Velez

Legislative & Policy Analyst

Kimberly Powell

Legislative & Policy Analyst

SENATE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

veterans.senate.gov

202-224-9126

Twitter: [@SVACDems](https://twitter.com/SVACDems) ★ [@SVACGOP](https://twitter.com/SVACGOP)

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

veterans.house.gov

202-225-9756

Twitter:

[@VetAffairsDems](https://twitter.com/VetAffairsDems) ★ [@HouseVetAffairs](https://twitter.com/HouseVetAffairs)

HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

armedservices.house.gov

202-225-4151

Twitter: [@HASCDemocrats](https://twitter.com/HASCDemocrats) ★

[@HASCRepublicans](https://twitter.com/HASCRepublicans)

SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

armed-services.senate.gov

202-224-3871

Twitter: [@SASCDems](https://twitter.com/SASCDems) ★ [@SASCGOP](https://twitter.com/SASCGOP)

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

va.gov

844-698-2311

Twitter: [@DeptVetAffairs](https://twitter.com/DeptVetAffairs)

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

defense.gov

Twitter: [@DeptofDefense](https://twitter.com/DeptofDefense)

MEDIA INQUIRIES

Ed Frank, Senior Public Affairs Communications Specialist

efrank@woundedwarriorproject.org



**WWP
RESOURCE
CENTER**

resourcecenter@woundedwarriorproject.org

888.WWP.ALUM (997.2586) or 904.405.1213

Fax: 904.405.1301 ★ woundedwarriorproject.org

HOURS OF OPERATION

Monday - Friday 9 am - 9 pm EST



1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

**DIAL 988
PRESS 1**