



PRESS RELEASE

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2, 2023

No. 23-3
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VVA National President Jack McManus Testifies Before Joint House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committee

(Washington, D.C) – Vietnam Veterans of America National President Jack McManus presented VVA’s 2023 legislative priorities and policy initiatives on March 1, 2023, before the joint hearing of the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees. In his opening remarks, McManus addressed the origins of VVA, founded in response to the shameful treatment Vietnam veterans encountered on their homecoming, and called for equitable treatment of all veterans. He drew the applause of the whole room when he asserted: “An American Veteran is an American Veteran – regardless of how or when they served.”



[Jack McManus testimony begins at 2:19:08]

[Watch the Testimony Here](#)

In his testimony, McManus went on to highlight several of VVA’s top legislative priorities and policy initiatives:

- Assure full funding of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency so that the 1,581 unaccounted-for American servicemembers from VVA’s long-ago war and their survivors can finally find some peace.
- Address the issues of aging veterans in a VA system that still lacks a clear and comprehensive roadmap to address VA healthcare concerns, and in an environment in which, despite comparable access and quality of care, significant racial and ethnic disparities persist among older veterans.

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is the nation’s only congressionally chartered veterans service organization dedicated to the needs of Vietnam-era veterans and their families. VVA’s founding principle is “Never again will one generation of veterans abandon another.”

- Address the problems faced by rural veterans, who make up almost 5 million of the twenty million veterans in the U.S., and over 50 percent of whom are 65 years and older and affected by a service-related condition.
- Maintain close oversight of the implementation of the recently passed *PACT Act*, including a hearing on the VA's progress and challenges in reaching out to vulnerable veteran populations, many of whom do not use the VA healthcare system.
- Hold an oversight committee hearing on the *Toxic Exposure Research Act*, which calls for intergenerational research, with the VA Secretary as star witness, to investigate what metrics he used that empowered him to not follow the law.
- Must amend P.L. 116-23 to extend the arbitrary twelve-nautical mile limitation sufficient to include U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Vietnam veterans who were assigned to the Vietnam Theater of Combat Operations or received the Vietnam Service Medal.
- Work towards the equitable care and treatment of Gulf War veterans who were exposed to a long list of toxicants and are still waiting for answers as to their long-term effects.
- Address the failings of the Caregiver Support Program, which has been plagued by chaos and mismanagement since its inception. Earning trust continues to be a hallmark issue. Inequitable practices have led to unjust denials, discharges, and downgrades of countless participants and applicants since 2016.
- Provide funding for comprehensive, individualized assessments, and rehabilitation and treatment programs, using a continuum-of-care concept for homeless veterans. While the population of homeless veterans has been decreasing, the number of older homeless veterans has increased. The extreme shortage of affordable housing in the U.S. has helped create a homelessness crisis, but that alone does not explain why veterans are much more likely to experience homelessness than the average American.
- VVA asks Congress to request that all agencies receiving federal funding for homeless programs report on gender, race, age, and military service, on the number of veterans they house, as well as those that receive VBA and VHA benefits. This data will provide VA with the necessary resources to avoid duplication of services and to reconfigure their resources to better serve aging, homeless veterans who may not be suitable for a typical housing model.
- Work closely to help VA create a culture that proactively seeks out lonely, homeless, family-less, disenfranchised veterans and brings them in from the cold. Two out of three veteran suicides are over 55 years of age. Fourteen of 20 do not get care at a VA healthcare facility. Permitting vets to seek help from non-VA practitioners may help some.

VVA asks Congress to enact a law that will make mandatory the insertion of this single question on every death certificate: Did the decedent ever serve in the Armed Forces of the United States? This simple step will enable researchers to do a more thorough medical postmortem of anyone determined to have committed suicide, hopefully leading to improved intervention services.

[Read VVA's Full Legislative Agenda Here](#)

[Read VVA's Report on Aging Here](#)

[Read the Review of the VE-HEROeS Report Here](#)