

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 21, 2024

VA has granted more than 26,034 benefits claims for Tennessee Veterans and their survivors under the PACT Act – and one million claims nationwide

From these PACT Act-related claims, VA has delivered more than \$146,576,074.99 in earned benefits to Tennessee Veterans and survivors

WASHINGTON – Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs expects to grant its 1 millionth PACT Act-related disability compensation claims to Veterans and survivors since President Biden signed the bill into law on Aug. 10, 2022 – including 26,034 claims to Veterans and survivors in Tennessee. The grant rate for these 1 million claims is 75% – a sharp increase from pre-PACT levels – and VA has delivered more than \$146,576,074.99 in earned benefits to Tennessee Veterans and survivors. Additionally, since the PACT Act was signed into law, more than 15,946 Tennessee Veterans have signed up for VA health care.

The PACT Act expanded VA health care and benefits to millions of Veterans, including adding “presumptive” service connection for hundreds of conditions linked to burn pits, agent orange, and other hazards while serving our country. Presumptions such as these lower the burden of proof required to receive disability benefits, helping Veterans get the benefits they deserve as quickly as possible. The average nationwide service connection rate for Veterans with these granted claims is 70%, meaning that they receive more than \$20,000 in earned benefits payments from VA each year.

VA and the entire Biden-Harris Administration has made supporting toxic-exposed Veterans and their survivors a top priority. VA encourages all Veterans to visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT) to learn more and apply for the care and benefits they deserve today.

“Thanks to President Biden, the Veterans who were exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other hazards while serving our country are now being taken care of for the conditions that followed them home from war,” said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “Whenever a Veteran gets a claim granted, it means life-changing monthly payments and access to no-cost VA health care for that condition. We’re proud that we’ve granted 1 million PACT Act-related claims for Veterans and survivors, but we won’t rest until every Veteran and every survivor gets the VA health care and benefits they deserve.”

“Thanks to the PACT Act, VA is delivering more benefits to more Veterans than ever before,” said **Under Secretary for Benefits Joshua Jacobs**. “We encourage all toxic-exposed Veterans and their survivors to apply today for care and benefits at [VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT). When you apply, we will stop at nothing to get you the benefits you’ve earned.”

Through the PACT Act, VA has been able to help millions of Veterans get the health care and benefits they deserve. Key impacts include:

- **More Veterans are enrolling in health care:** More than 400,000 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care over the past year, a 30% increase year-over-year. This is critical because Veterans who come to VA are proven to have [better or equal health outcomes](#), [higher satisfaction scores](#), and [trust VA outpatient care at 91.8%](#).
- **More than 5.4 million Veterans have been screened by VA for toxic exposures:** These screenings are a critical step to detecting, understanding, and treating potentially life-threatening health conditions. Of the 5.4 million Veterans who have received the screening, 44% reported at least one potential exposure.
- **Veterans are applying for benefits at all-time record rates:** Thanks to the largest outreach campaign in VA history, Veterans and survivors submitted 2,433,729 claims applications in 2023 – an all-time record and 39% more than in 2022. Veterans and survivors are on pace to break this record again in 2024.
- **Veterans exposed to toxins and other environmental hazards are now eligible for VA health care:** In March, as directed by President Biden, VA [announced](#) that all Veterans who meet eligibility requirements and were exposed to toxins and other hazards while serving in the military — at home or abroad — had become eligible to enroll directly in VA health care. This expansion eliminated the phased-in approach called for by the PACT Act — meaning that millions of Veterans are becoming eligible for VA health care up to eight years earlier than written into law.

The 1 million granted PACT Act-related claims are claims from more than 888,000 Veterans and survivors that included a PACT Act condition where at least one condition from the claim was granted, regardless of whether the granted condition is one of the PACT-specific conditions noted above. In total, VA has received 1.6 million PACT Act-related claims and completed more than 1.3 million since August 2022. More information and data on the impact of the PACT Act can be found in VA's biweekly [PACT Act Dashboard](#).

VA is currently processing Veteran benefits claims at the [fastest rate in history](#), delivering more benefits, more quickly, to more Veterans than ever before. As a result of this record pace, Veteran claims pending over 125 days – known as the backlog – has decreased by more than 100,000 claims since December.

Moving forward, VA will continue to aggressively reach out to Veterans to encourage them to come to VA. VA encourages all Veterans, family members, caregivers, and survivors to [learn more about VA](#) and apply for their world-class [health care](#) and [earned benefits](#) today.

###