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| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | Vietnam Veteran NewsPresident Joe Biden on Tuesday invoked his status as the father of a fallen soldier in a State of the Union promise to improve veterans health care and benefits, specifically focused on individuals suffering from the effects of toxic burn pit smoke from their time deployed overseas.    “I’m calling on Congress: pass a law to make sure veterans devastated by toxic exposures in Iraq and Afghanistan finally get the benefits and comprehensive health care they deserve,” Biden said in his national address, calling it part of “a sacred obligation to equip all those we send to war and care for them and their families when they come home.”    In recent months, VA officials have expanded the scientific and medical evidence used to determine service-connected disabilities in an effort to ease the burden on veterans seeking disability benefits.    For years, advocates have lamented the slow pace of VA officials to recognize illnesses caused by toxic smoke from military burn pits in Iraq, Afghanistan and other overseas bases. Biden highlighted the issue in his national speech, saying that the government is long overdue in responding to the issue.    Read more in [Military Times](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..rPLbkjBafIg-kBFERgfmDY6N_bZr4JfTTcdB-54lq4A/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l). VA may add rare cancers to presumed service-connected list The Department of Veterans Affairs intends to propose adding certain rare respiratory cancers to the list of [presumed service-connected disabilities](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..GZhoiVH0W1fxoeZF7vJlDXAhlG2hL7np92JEBQXQLU8/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l) in relation to military environmental exposure to particulate matter.    VA determined through a focused review of scientific and medical evidence there is biologic plausibility between airborne hazards, specifically particulate matter, and carcinogenesis of the respiratory tract, and that the unique circumstances of these rare cancers warrant a presumption of service connection.    Based on these findings, VA’s Secretary is proposing a rule that will add presumptive service connection for several rare respiratory cancers for certain Veterans. The cancers under consideration include:   * Squamous cell carcinoma of the larynx. * Squamous cell carcinoma of the trachea. * Adenocarcinoma of the trachea. * Salivary gland-type tumors of the trachea. * Adenosquamous carcinoma of the lung. * Large cell carcinoma of the lung. * Salivary gland-type tumors of the lung. * Sarcomatoid carcinoma of the lung. * Typical and atypical carcinoid of the lung.     Read more in VA's [VAntage Point blog](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..z2GYuo9GF1_kSHzVioCLrynrA2EJtwoI73OM779P2IA/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l). Resources available to veterans experiencing distress due to recent world events Veterans may be experiencing a range of challenging emotions related to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Veterans who served in U.S. military conflicts may be feeling emotional distress, reminded of their own deployment experiences.    VA Secretary Denis McDonough said the VA is here for veterans during this difficult time.    “I know that many of you, like me, have been deeply affected by the war in Ukraine,” McDonough said. “Whether you want to speak to another veteran, talk to a therapist, call our crisis line at 1-800-273-8255 (press 1) or text 838255, visit one of our vet centers, or access any of VA’s mental health services online at [www.MentalHealth.va.gov](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..iyLoIXSmEVtK9qXAlequrh_PiVzDH3RiBdpA-ggL4PI/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l), we are standing by and ready to help – today and every day.”   * If your distress is prolonged or you are unable to function well, consider seeking help. There are competent and caring professionals available who can help you with the most common responses, such as depression, anxiety, PTSD, moral injury and complicated grief. * Every VA facility has mental health specialists. Visit: [https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/get-help/local-care.asp](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..2vit6lJdeysI07_5ePiy4Ci_RV2mtQfhgQyzAwGSEGY/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l)to find a provider near you. * Talk about your reactions in community based VA Vet Centers, where over 70% of staff are veterans themselves. Call 1-800-WAR-VETS or find one [near you](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..yQxifLRf3VnyKn6qAT32WKayDkAOeM1npdwqmXl4W5M/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l). * Go to [www.maketheconnection.net](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..pL1FPz_w4tG2CZIwXriOfQDznijwxH_R9O3L5Ufk42w/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l), an online resource designed to connect veterans, their family members and friends, and other supporters with information, resources and solutions to issues affecting their lives – from challenging life events or experiences to mental health issues or challenges. * If you feel like you might hurt yourself or someone else, reach out now. The Veterans Crisis Line, online chat and text-messaging service are free to all veterans, even if you are not enrolled in VA health care. Confidential support is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year through the Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255 and Press 1).   Read more at VA’s [Vantage Point blog](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..RcU_73w6qOk27Gt36uZ6HB-rse_ObXVhxZ6lws9wq0Q/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l), including coping strategies.   Thousands of veterans may see disability deadline waived as Supreme Court takes up case The U.S. Supreme Court has accepted the case of a Navy veteran who believes his VA disability compensation should have been paid starting from the date he left the military rather than the day he submitted his paperwork, a decision that could mean some veterans who waited years to file claims would be eligible for substantial back pay.    The veteran, Adolfo Arellano, served from 1977 to 1981, during which he was assigned to an aircraft carrier that experienced a collision that "killed and injured several of his shipmates and nearly swept him overboard," according to court documents. Arellano developed PTSD and other mental health conditions; 30 years later, he applied for disability benefits, which were approved as service-connected by the VA and backdated to his 2011 filing date.    But Arellano appealed, saying he should have received payments retroactive to his discharge, since his service-connected mental health conditions prevented him from filing a claim sooner -- in particular, filing during the one-year grace period given to transitioning service members that expedites their cases.    Arellano said the statute of limitations should have been waived since he wasn't mentally able to file a claim before the time limit expired -- a legal concept known as "equitable tolling."    When the Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims denied Arellano's claim, he appealed. The Federal Circuit judges then split their decision on the case 6-6, with half saying the equitable tolling policy couldn't be changed, and the other half saying it should be eliminated. As a result of the split, Arellano's attorneys petitioned the Supreme Court.    A ruling in Arellano's favor has the potential to affect "thousands of current and future veterans," according to his attorney, James Barney, a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and partner in the D.C.-based firm Finnegan.  With the case, Arellano v. McDonough, now accepted, the federal government is required to file a response. Oral arguments have yet to be scheduled.    Read more in [Military.com](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..NdXbt6RThl3KZC26JCDjCbtMags4sHiGno71XJP3ZK4/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l). Michigan Veteran Connector initiative aims to connect veterans to benefits [Veteran Connector video](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMjAzMDIuNTQyNTA4MjEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy55b3V0dWJlLmNvbS93YXRjaD92PVZPS2hqZzNuc3NnIn0.gSu50c-ro_BZzApLDqt9Uba92HahXlE98mYD0uYiaI0/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l)   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | [Michigan Veteran Connector](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTEsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMjAzMDIuNTQyNTA4MjEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5taWNoaWdhbi5nb3YvbXZhYS9oZWFsdGgtYW5kLXdlbGZhcmUvdmV0LWNvbm5lY3RvciJ9.tivXvkvcmMC7ch81CfyPLnDI9_STLEh6IomKlwFASXk/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l) |  | You may soon see the Michigan Veteran Connector sticker in the window of your local hospital or health care facility. As Marine veteran Jennifer Lamb explains in this [video](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..SEmEjeWfSdGvOTNHVagx0MZa0GU5s7dNTw8hRm0p66s/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l), the initiative aims to get veterans and dependents connected to the benefits and resources they earned for their service.    Through the initiative, hospital staff simply ask whether patients have served in the military and, if so, offer them a referral to the MVAA at 1-800-MICH-VET (1-800-642-4838). The initiative may eventually expand to other organizations and businesses.    [Michigan Veteran Connector](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..mfsJanW9cMDGDPrgysc4CFySlfjuJyLBAOTVO9JXQVc/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l) is part of the SAMHSA Governor’s Challenge, which looks at ways reduce suicide in our service members, veterans and their families. Research has shown that the sooner we identify and connect our veterans to services and resources, the statistically lower the risk for self-harming behaviors including suicide.    If you want to help us spread the word about the Michigan Veteran Connector, call us at 1-800-MICH-VET. |  No GI Bill COVID emergency protection past this summer, VA says Veterans Affairs officials are not planning to extend [emergency GI Bill protections](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..PSq4MrUKsqIBUdJZk7pDlTBCEqJ5rCycmtXMV7uQCPc/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l) past this summer, an indication that they expect college campuses will return to pre-pandemic operations for the fall semester.    Since April 2020, VA leaders have been using various authorities granted by Congress to ensure that veterans and their family members attending classes through the Post-9/11 GI Bill don’t see any disruption in housing stipend payouts, work-study programs and other financial aid options.    Congress renewed those emergency provisions in December, with an expiration date of June 1. In a statement, VA press secretary Terrance Hayes said department officials are not pushing for another extension into the 2022-23 school year.    “The Veterans Benefits Administration’s Education Service does not believe an extension is needed,” he said. “Compared to when the protections were put into place, COVID conditions have substantially improved, resulting in the lifting of social distancing restrictions throughout the nation.”    The pandemic protections affected about 57,000 students using the GI Bill benefit this semester alone. Without them, those individuals faced a loss of thousands of dollars in housing support for the spring 2022 semester.  At issue is how post-9/11 GI Bill benefits are paid out to students who attend college classes remotely, rather than in-person.    Students using the veterans education benefit receive money for tuition plus a monthly housing stipend. Individuals enrolled in traditional in-person classes receive the full financial benefit, while students in online-only classes are granted just half of that housing stipend.    However, when the coronavirus pandemic forced college administrators to start moving classes online in spring 2020, it left students in a confusing financial situation. Under the law, their housing stipends should have been cut in half, since they were no longer considered in-person students.    Read more in [Military Times](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.militarytimes.com%2Feducation-transition%2F2022%2F02%2F23%2Fno-gi-bill-covid-emergency-protection-past-this-summer-va-says%2F%3Futm_source%3DSailthru%26utm_medium%3Demail%26utm_campaign%3DEBB%252002.24.2022%26utm_term%3DEditorial%2520-%2520Early%2520Bird%2520Brief&data=04%7C01%7Cheniona%40michigan.gov%7C6a95f401d14a494f70c008d9fba448d0%7Cd5fb7087377742ad966a892ef47225d1%7C0%7C0%7C637817505282217791%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sdata=blOVKVanChBm1SHeh8uxAsUJRzzTKwSp8nRhyZ4uFSw%3D&reserved=0). VA opens clinic serving Lenawee and surrounding counties VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System recently opened a new Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Adrian.    The 2,500-square-foot clinic serves veterans in Lenawee and surrounding counties. Services provided at the CBOC include primary care, mental health, social work, dietetics and blood draw services to more than 3,000 local veterans.    Read more about the new clinic [here](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..hvmmJFhbgo6tctYBDsXlkFTdtFWPy4c0W2USH0wz8Zw/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l), or find a VA clinic near you [here](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..b_t3b2uYbzm5wyEffGNb2rtuyCoU6_CCdx1ElLpJ0Tk/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l).    You can also call the MVAA at 1-800-MICH-VET (1-800-642-4838) to learn more about VA health care and other resources for veterans and dependents, including disability benefits and education and employment assistance. As a state agency, all of our services are confidential and complimentary.  [mvaa homepage](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMTcsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMjAzMDIuNTQyNTA4MjEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5taWNoaWdhbi5nb3YvbXZhYSJ9.F3mQzDWQIvufcMR-umytx02N2q3Mpma-K79DdHjlOKg/s/1018038920/br/127394071266-l) | |