# VFW Celebrates as Landmark PACT Act is Signed into Law

## VFW's National Commander stood alongside other veteran advocate partners as the president signed the bill

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**WASHINGTON —** After years of persistent advocacy, National Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Tim Borland, families of loved ones affected by toxic exposures and other veteran service organizations, stood together behind President Joseph Biden at the White House as the *SFC Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022*, the landmark bill focused on assisting toxic-exposed veterans, was signed into law, Wednesday morning.

"What an honorable moment in history for veterans!" exclaimed Borland after the event. "The PACT Act becoming law is the largest expansion of veteran benefits since the creation of the VA. My sincerest thanks to the members of Congress, I am so proud of all the hard work VFW staff, our Action Corps and VFW members everywhere did to push Congress to pass this bill and was honored to represent our organization at the White House on this historic day."

The PACT Act, as it's commonly known, is named after Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson who passed away in 2020 from conditions related to toxic exposure during his service in the military. The comprehensive bill expands health care for generations of veterans who up until now had the arduous task of proving their conditions or illness a result of service-connected exposure to toxic substances or environments, such as the burn pits many Post-9/11 veterans were exposed to during deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. The bill enacts VA provisions for 23 presumptive conditions for rare respiratory diseases and cancers, and creates a framework for the establishment of future presumptions of service connection related to toxic exposure.

"Too many of our brothers and sisters have succumbed to illnesses connected to toxic exposure," said Borland. "That is why this bill has been the VFW's #1 priority for the past

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few years, and we weren't going to give up until it was passed."

Passed by the Senate on Aug. 2, the bill was in limbo for almost a month as procedural hurdles, amendment considerations, and shaky support among some Senators caused the bill to stall before it was passed overwhelmingly with a vote count of 86 – 11. For almost a week leading up to the final vote, VFW members, PACT Act advocates and other veterans held a fire watch on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol, holding a constant vigil for six straight days until it was announced the bill passed.

"With one voice, we told Congress 'every veteran counts' and they listened," said Borland. "I encourage every eligible veteran to join the VFW so we can continue to secure and improve the health and benefits for veterans, service members and their families. The veteran's voice has strength, and it is even stronger when we are all together."

The PACT Act is the latest achievement on the long list of legislative victories the VFW has fought for since its inception, part of the legacy of the VFW's veteran advocacy that continues to carry on into the future.

"After 123 years, the VFW continues to show we are alive and well, and that 'No One Does More For Veterans,' because for the VFW 'EVERY VETERAN COUNTS!'" said Borland.