

Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) Positions on the POW/MIA Issue

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

From the DAV 2021-22 Legislative Program: RESOLUTION NO. 041: SUPPORT FOR DEFENSE PRISONER OF WAR/MISSING IN ACTION ACCOUNTING COMMAND

“WHEREAS, members of DAV have long been deeply committed to achieving the fullest possible accounting for United States personnel still captive, missing and otherwise unaccounted for from all of our nation’s wars; and

WHEREAS, personnel and funding for the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Accounting Agency (DPAA) have not been increased at a level commensurate with the expanded requirement to obtain answers on Americans unaccounted for from all of our country’s wars and conflicts; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of the United States government to account as fully as possible for America’s missing veterans, including—if confirmed deceased—the recovery and identification of their remains when possible; and

WHEREAS, DAV deeply appreciates Vietnam’s 2009 proposal to expand the pace and scope of POW/MIA accounting cooperation, including use of United States Navy vessels for underwater operations; and

WHEREAS, the DAV recognizes the contributions to successful investigative efforts made by the Defense Intelligence Agency’s Stony Beach Team of specialists; and WHEREAS, this accounting effort should not be considered complete until all reasonable actions have been taken to achieve the fullest possible accounting;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that DAV in National Convention assembled in Tampa, Florida, July 31–August 3, 2021, remains steadfast in its commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all United States military and designated civilian personnel missing from our nation’s wars; and be it further

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that DAV calls upon our government to support personnel increases and full funding for the efforts of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory, including specific authorization to augment assigned personnel when additional assets and resources are necessary.” (p. 235)

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)

From the VFW 2022 Priority Goals:

“To fully support service members, and protect our nation’s citizens and interests around the world, Congress and DOD must:

- Expand partnerships with host nations and private/public organizations to achieve the fullest possible accounting of U.S. military personnel missing from all wars.
- Preserve the all-volunteer force.
- Ensure DPAA is fully funded to perform its personnel recovery mission.”

(<https://www.vfw.org/advocacy/national-legislative-service>)

Jewish War Veterans of the USA

From the Jewish War Veterans of the USA’s 2021 Legislative Priorities: “For many years JWV has consistently sought the return of all POW’s, the fullest possible accounting for the missing, and repatriation of all recoverable remains. At every National Executive meeting, JWV displays the POW/MIA flag in front of the dais to show our continued support. JWV asks the Congress to provide the necessary personnel and funding to continue to make every effort to bring closure to the families of the missing...The Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America urges Congress to provide adequate funding to support the greatest possible accounting of missing service members and the repatriation of all recoverable remains. JWV remains a strong advocate for the return of all those missing in action and prisoners of war. It’s important that as many families as possible have closure.” (p. 4)

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA)

From the VVA 2021 Testimony before Joint Session of House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees:

“THE FULLEST POSSIBLE ACCOUNTING of America’s POW/MIAs has long been our solemn priority. VVA continues to press for answers regarding those Americans still listed as killed in action, body not recovered, in the Southeast Asia theatre of operations. We must insist that Congress fund the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) with what is required to investigate potential crash and burial sites, and to recover and identify remains. This is our 27th year of our Veterans Initiative Program. We continue to assist our former enemy in locating their unrecovered loved ones by providing fate-clarifying information such as maps of mass burial sites, ID cards, photos, and more. As we continue to work veteran-to veteran with our former enemy, we have strengthened the trust between American and Vietnamese veterans and have encouraged the continued cooperation by Vietnamese authorities with DOD search teams.” (p. 2)

American Veterans (AMVETS)

From AMVETS 2018-19 Legislative Agenda: RESOLUTION 19-12, SUPPORT FOR DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY (DPAA)

“WHEREAS, the Defense POW/Missing in Action (DPAA) provides policy oversight for the continuing mission to recover captured, missing or isolated men and women placed in harm’s way while serving their country; and WHEREAS, the efforts to recover fallen and missing service members from past and present conflicts serve the common interest of all Americans; and

WHEREAS, AMVETS remains fully committed to pursuing the critical issue of POWs and MIAs to our fullest capabilities until every single man or woman lost in battle is accounted for, including the crew of the U.S.S. Intrepid; and

WHEREAS, AMVETS will stand behind our service men and women and tirelessly work to account for those who have not returned; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that AMVETS petition Congress to provide adequate DPAA funding to ensure the release or rescue of our missing or captured men and women in uniform; and be it further RESOLVED, that AMVETS continues to work with DPAA to ensure full accounting and recovery of the missing from all conflicts and military operations worldwide.” (p. 34)

The American Legion

From the 99th National Convention of The American Legion in August, 2017, Resolution No. 22: POW/MIA Policies

WHEREAS, American service members and civilians remain missing or otherwise unaccounted for from America’s past wars and conflicts, and reports indicate that cases of Americans last known alive, information regarding their fates is still illusive; and

WHEREAS, The families of POW/MIAs suffer untold uncertainty due to the lack of information about and accounting for their missing loved one, often in spite of heroic efforts by U.S. specialists; and

WHEREAS, The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2010 called upon the secretary of defense to provide funds, personnel, and resources to significantly increase the capability and capacity of the Department of Defense (DOD) to account for missing persons so that, beginning with fiscal year 2015, at least 200 missing persons are accounted for annually under the program; and

WHEREAS, Improvements in foreign government cooperation have helped identify locations of incident sites that may enable remains of U.S. personnel to be recovered and identified by the U.S. Government; and

WHEREAS, Promising advances in scientific DNA capabilities and other identification techniques involving radiographic comparison and facial superimposition have dramatically increased the U.S. Government's ability to identify remains of unaccounted for servicemen and civilians for whom identification had not earlier been possible; and

WHEREAS, Each member of the DOD POW/MIA accounting community plays a vital role in the mission to account for missing and unaccounted for U.S. servicemen and civilians from our nation's past wars and conflicts; and

WHEREAS, The secretary of defense recently directed "complete reorganization" of the DOD POW/MIA accounting community, a consolidation encouraging to family members and veterans, though close scrutiny for viability will continue to be required; and

WHEREAS, The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency was formed as a result of the defense secretary's directive for "complete reorganization" and is responsible for policy control and operational implementation to achieve the fullest possible accounting for missing U.S. personnel; and

WHEREAS, The POW/MIA accounting effort should continue to be a matter of highest national priority until all reasonable actions have been taken to achieve the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. personnel; and

WHEREAS, The American Legion fully supports and advocates for the fullest possible accounting of missing Americans, in every country, on every continent; and 2 WHEREAS, The American Legion believes U.S. Government POW/MIA operations, though currently still inadequate, are achieving substantial progress; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, By The American Legion in National Convention assembled in Reno, Nevada, August 22, 23, 24, 2017, That The American Legion remains steadfast in our commitment to the goal of achieving the fullest possible accounting for all U.S. military personnel and designated civilian personnel missing and unaccounted for from our nation's past conflicts and current and present wars; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the president and members of Congress to speak out on every occasion on the need to expedite the return of U.S. personnel still missing and unaccounted for, regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion urges the president and Congress to support legislation and policies that will sustain use of all necessary resources to achieve the fullest possible accounting of missing American service members and designated civilians regardless of location or era of loss; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to provide full funding for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to meet requirements for personnel and operations to achieve accounting goals and to ensure these funds not be redirected by the Department of Defense for any other purpose; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the president and Congress to continue to declassify all POW/MIA information (except that revealing intelligence sources or methods) in a form readily available to the affected families and for public review; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon Congress to establish a joint standing congressional committee on POW/MIA affairs to oversee plans and policies to ensure continued priority by the executive branch in addressing requirements to achieve the POW/MIA accounting goals; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the president to strengthen the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, and to initiate similar such commissions with the People's Republic of China, and Democratic People's Republic of Korea to increase POW/MIA accounting and recovery efforts; and, be it further

RESOLVED, That The American Legion calls upon the president and Congress to continue taking favorable steps with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as Hanoi increases efforts to provide the fullest possible accounting for U.S. personnel still missing in Vietnam or in areas of Laos and Cambodia controlled by Vietnam during the Vietnam War; and, be it finally

RESOLVED, That "fullest possible accounting" is defined as releasing live prisoners, repatriating remains of those killed in action or who died in captivity, or providing convincing evidence as to why neither is possible.