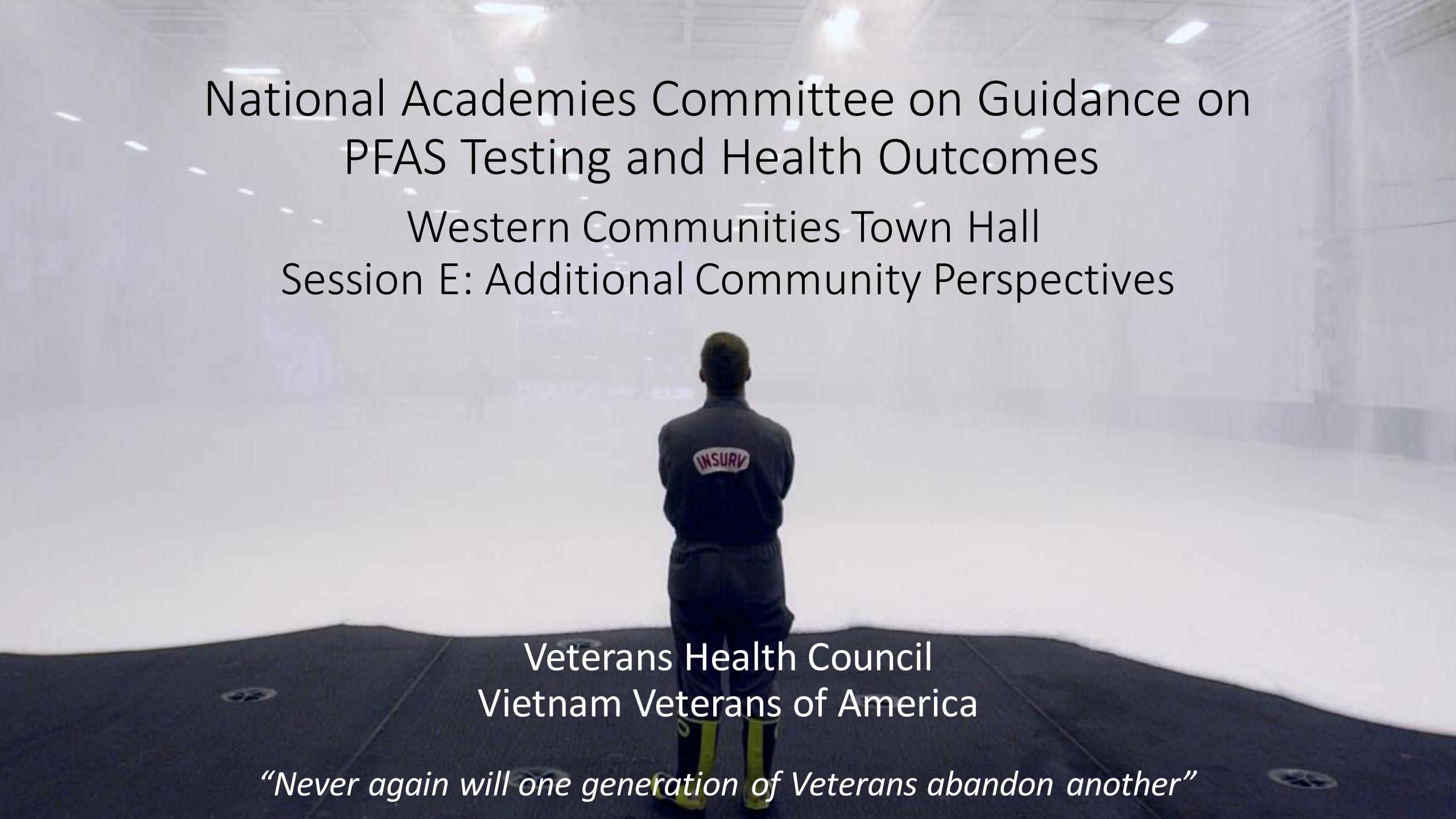


# National Academies Committee on Guidance on PFAS Testing and Health Outcomes

## Western Communities Town Hall Session E: Additional Community Perspectives



Veterans Health Council  
Vietnam Veterans of America

*“Never again will one generation of Veterans abandon another”*

# Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF)

- Used to fight class B (petroleum) fires since 1970
- “Legacy foams” contained PFOS and/or PFOA; links to health effects
- Attempts to destroy legacy stock releases PFAS into the atmosphere
- Current foams **still contain PFAS**
  - Which ones?

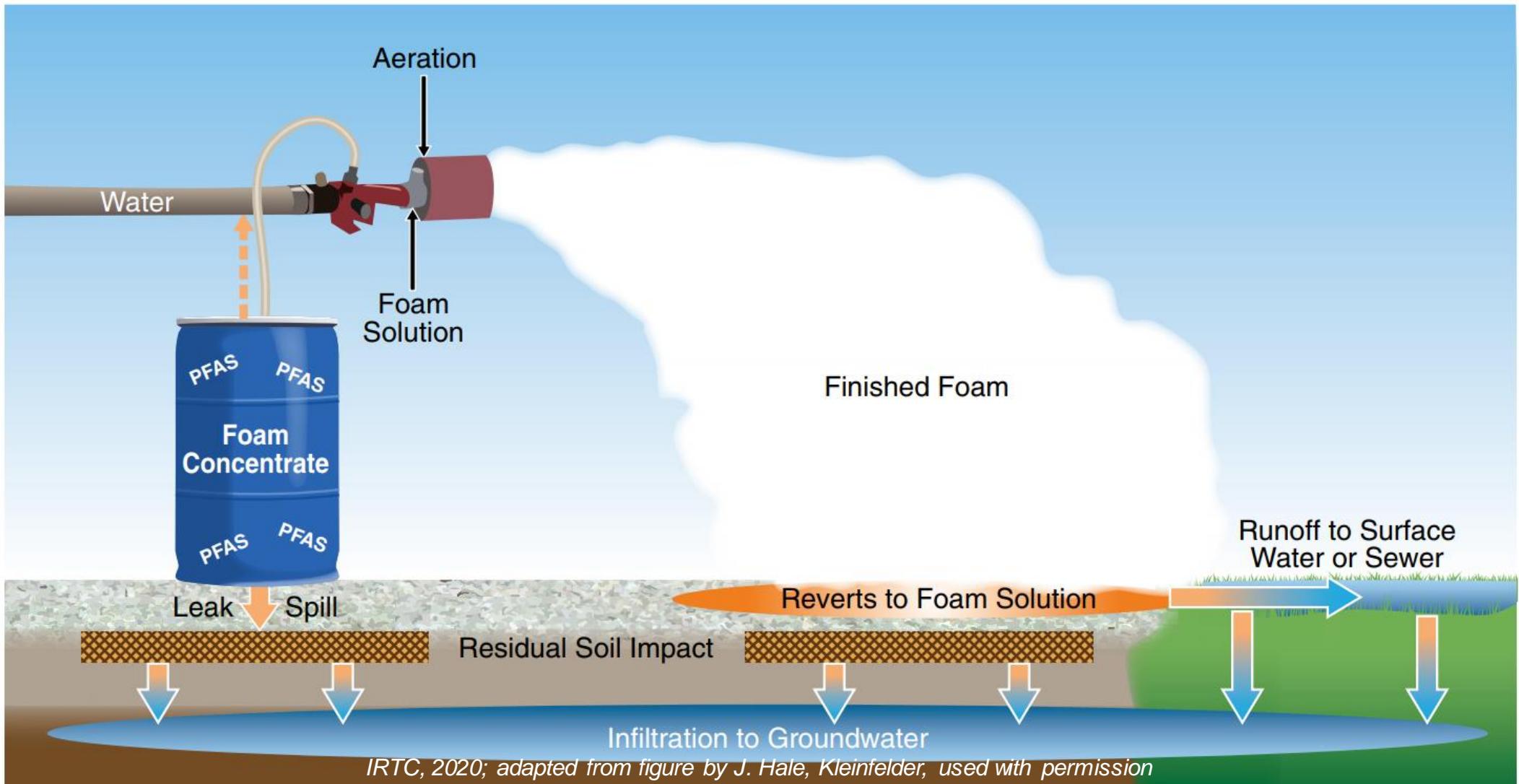


Decker, 2019

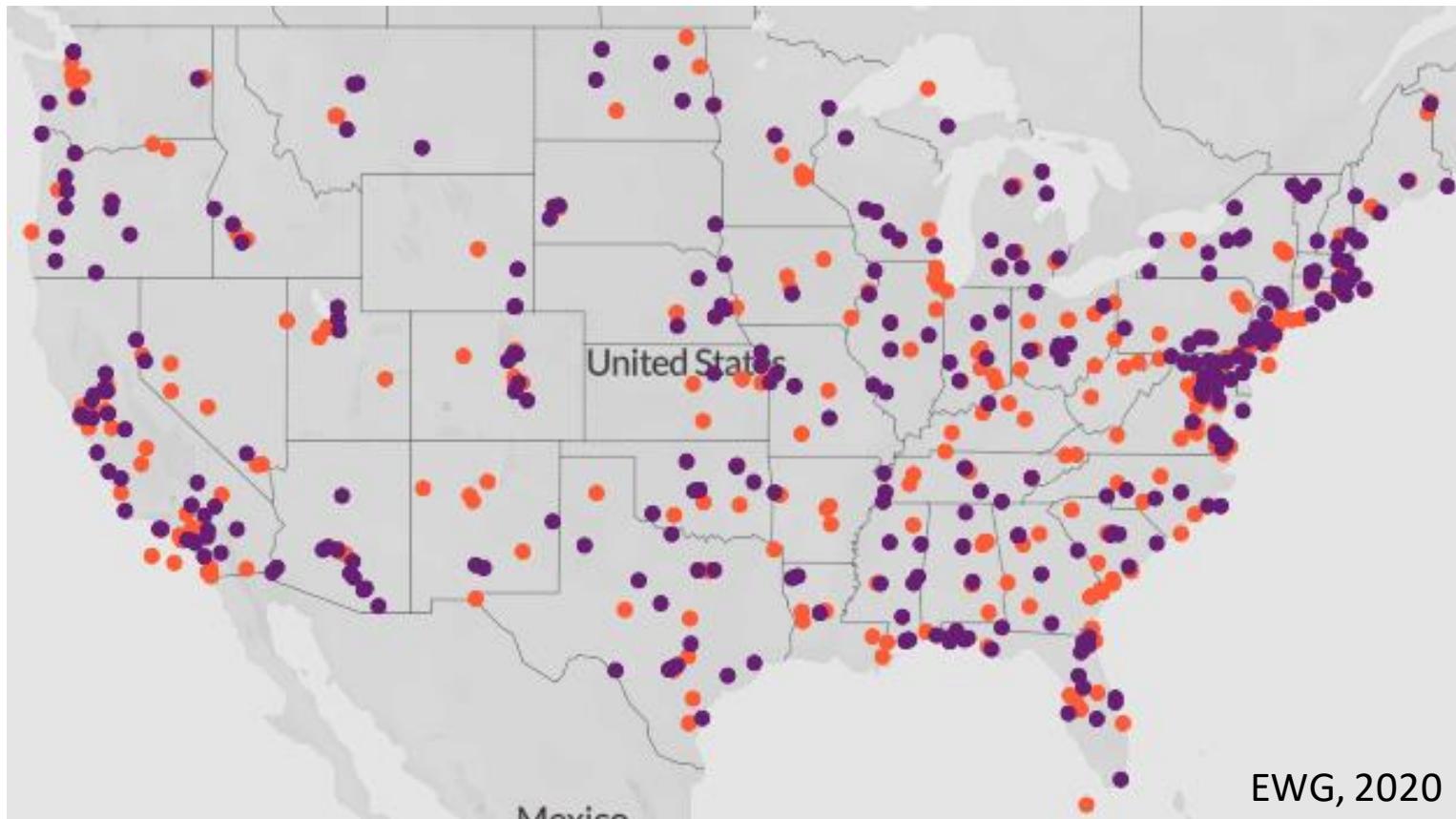


Polach, 2006

# AFFF Release



# PFAS Contamination



orange = suspected, purple = confirmed; Image used with permission

- confirmed or suspected at 678 military installations (image on left)
- confirmed in tap water or groundwater at 328 of the military installations

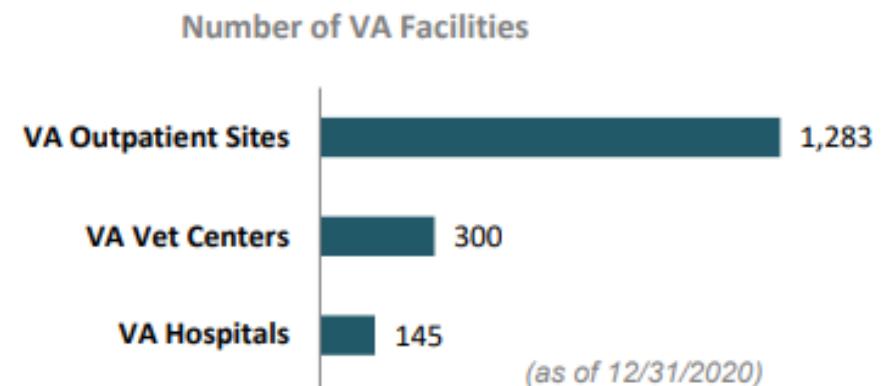
<https://bit.ly/2yOV6l3>

# Veterans Health Administration

Nation's largest integrated health care system, part of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

Four statutory missions:

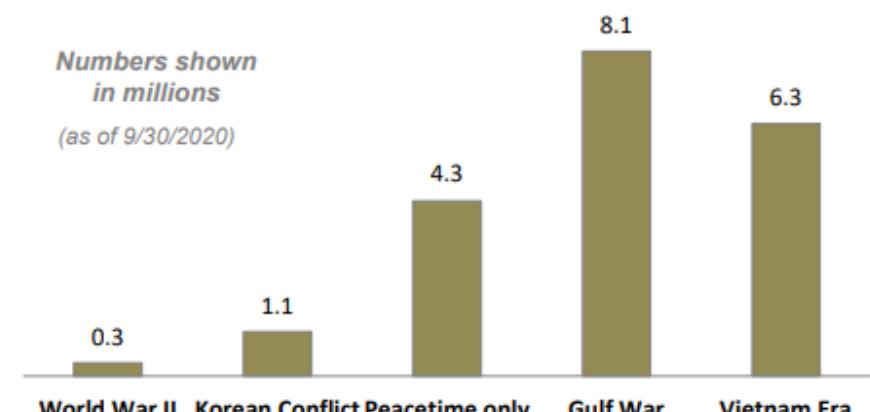
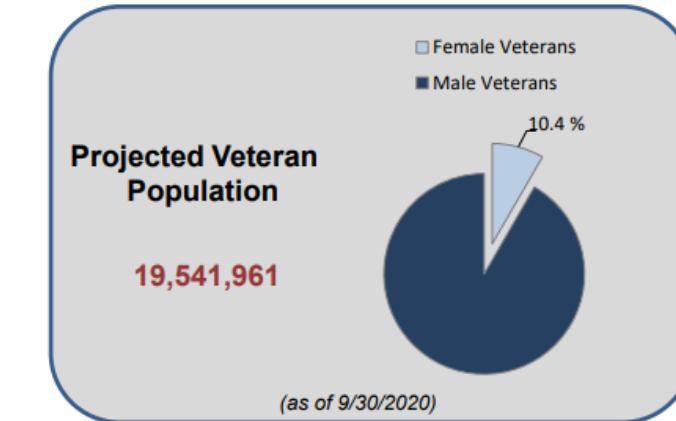
- develop, maintain, and operate a national health care delivery system **for eligible Veterans**
- administer a program of education and training for health care personnel
- conduct health care research
- provide contingency support for Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) during times of war or national emergency



# VA Health Care Eligibility

- Less than 20% of Veterans receive all their care from the Veterans Health Administration (VHA)
  - 9.2 million Veterans are enrolled in VA health care
  - 6.45 million Veterans seek care from VHA each year
  - Often health care providers may be serving Veterans without realizing it

**It is important to ask all patients “Have you ever served in the military?”**



# VA Health Care Eligibility

- After basic eligibility criteria met, enrollment depends on one or more of the following:
  - service-connected disability
  - income level
  - exposure to certain toxic substances and environmental hazards
  - other factors
    - former prisoner of war (POW) status
    - Medal of Honor recipient
    - Purple Heart recipient

# Service-Connected Disability

- A disability that is the result of a disease or injury incurred or aggravated during active military service
- Service-connection usually requires:
  - **a current condition:** typically a medical diagnosis of a disease or injury
  - **an in-service event:** injuries, illnesses, exposures
  - **a nexus:** a medical opinion stating it is "at least as likely as not" (50% medical probability) that the current condition was caused by military service

# Service-Connected Disability Benefits

- Rating
  - assigned 0% - 100% (10% increments) based on disease severity
- Compensation
  - tax-free monthly payment for service-connected disabilities based on rating
  - Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is also available to certain veterans' survivors.

VBA	VHA	
rating	priority group	copays
50%+	1	none
30%-40%	2	non service-connected conditions
10%-20%	3	

# Takeaways

- Access to health care and disability compensation can have a tremendous impact on a Veteran's quality of life
- Despite potential concerns of causing distress, blood testing can
  - provide a critical piece of evidence to help Veterans gain access to health care in the future
  - lead to earlier and more frequent health screenings and other preventative care for conditions that are associated with PFAS exposure (current associations and those yet to be discovered)