



VFW VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

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VFW Members to Storm Capitol Hill

Almost 300 VFW leaders arrive in town this weekend to let lawmakers know their top legislative priorities. Foremost this year is to protect the VA budget from mandatory cuts if sequestration occurs, and to defeat the Defense Department's negative quality of life proposals that would restrict military pay, substantially increase Tricare costs on military dependents and retirees, and to civilianize the military retirement system. Other high-interest topics range from military transition and employment assistance programs to education, the proper care and treatment of wounded warriors, women veterans, the 1.7 million VA claims workload, and combating veteran suicides and homelessness, among others. Recognized with awards will be House Armed Services Committee Chairman "Buck" McKeon (R-Calif.) with the 2012 VFW Congressional Award, the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment with the VFW Gold Medal & Citation, and the winners of the VFW Voice of Democracy and Patriot's Pen competition. The week began with VFW National Commander Richard DeNoyer and his wife, Theresa, attending a White House dinner Wednesday evening to help salute Iraq veterans, and it will conclude next Wednesday, March 7, when he testifies before a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees. The VFW will stream live video of the Voice of Democracy Parade of Winners beginning at 6 p.m. (EST), Sunday, and post video Wednesday afternoon of the VFW national commander's testimony. More details at vfw.org.

Join the Fight Messages

Last week, more than **18,000** messages were sent to Congress in response to the VFW's campaign asking the entire military and veterans' community to "Join the Fight" to defeat any proposals that negatively impact our troops. **We still need your help!** With budget hearings coming up, we ask you to continue to contact both House and Senate members and urge them to defeat the proposals that the Defense Department has recommended to restrain future military pay raises, increase healthcare costs for military dependents and retirees, and to civilianize the military retirement system. Add your voice and help us save our all-volunteer force by not allowing the government to break faith with those who have already given so

much. [Take action today](#). [Read](#) the VFW press release.

Senate Committee Discusses VA Budget

The VFW testified Wednesday before the Senate VA Committee as part of an *Independent Budget* (IB) panel on the FY 2013 VA budget. Similar to testimony presented earlier in the House, the VFW spoke about concerns regarding the woefully underfunded construction accounts, noting that Congress projected some \$2.8 billion for projects, while the Administration only asked for \$725 million, more than \$2 billion short of what is needed. Committee Chairman Patty Murray (D-Wash.) and Ranking Member Richard Burr (R-N.C.) agreed with our concerns that, for the past two years, VA has requested only a fraction of the amount it needs to bring their facilities up to date. Other areas of concern brought up by committee members included mental health care funding and the growing backlog of disability claims. [Read](#) VFW's testimony. Watch a recorded [webcast](#) of the hearing.

Stolen Valor Hearing

The VFW also testified this week before the House Oversight Subcommittee on National Security about what the government can do to better track the awards it presents. Government witnesses were noncommittal as to whether a government-run, searchable military decorations database should be created, whereas the VFW insisted that it was absolutely necessary for the military services to take better ownership of military records, which will help deter Stolen Valor imposters as well as make it easier for veterans to correct errors and omissions in their own service records. [Click here](#) to view the recorded hearing and read submitted testimony.

Iraq War MIA Recovered

Last weekend, the Department of Defense announced the identification of remains belonging to Army Staff Sgt. Ahmed K. Altaie of Ann Arbor, Mich. At the time of his disappearance on Oct. 23, 2006, Altaie was assigned as an Arab linguist to the Provincial Reconstruction Team, Special Troops Battalion, the 4th Infantry Division. His recovery and identification closes a chapter on the Operation Iraqi Freedom (and subsequent Operation New Dawn) mission.

More VFW Advocates Discuss Coming to Washington

Last week, we brought you two stories from veterans set to "storm the hill" with the VFW next week. We posted two more stories to the VFW Capitol Hill blog this week, one from retired Navy Corpsman and Iraq veteran Joe Lumsden, and another from former Army infantry officer and Vietnam veteran George Creighton. [Read Lumsden's story](#). [Read Creighton's story](#).

VFW Blog Sets Monthly Traffic Record

In February, the shortest month of the year, the VFW's Capitol Hill blog shattered its monthly traffic record with more than 11,000 visitors reading stories and posting comments. We want to thank you for supporting our efforts to bring you timely, accurate information from your VFW Washington Office, and we encourage you to submit your own veterans' advocacy stories and photos to vfwac@vfw.org. Keep on reading at vfwonthehill.org.

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