



**NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.**

# WASHINGTON WEEKLY

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## **Veterans Benefit Package Sent to President**

Early this week, the House passed *H.R. 1627*, the *Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012*, a comprehensive benefits package containing several VFW-supported bills. The bill, cleared by the Senate last week, will provide VA healthcare to Camp Lejeune veterans and their families who have been diagnosed with a disease related to the water contamination that occurred at the base between 1957 and 1987. It also streamlines the disability claims process, ensures transparency in VA funding, protects veterans from sexual assault and transforms how VA does business in the 21st century. VFW worked with members and staff to ensure that the legislation agreed upon and passed will have immediate impact in the lives of veterans, their families and survivors. The President is expected to sign the bill during the August recess. For complete coverage and more about the bill, visit our [blog](#).

## **Senate Passes USERRA Protections for TSA**

This week, the Senate passed the final version of VFW-supported legislation, *H.R. 3670*, which will force the Transportation Security Administration to comply with the *Uniformed Servicemembers Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)*. The VFW played a lead role in mustering support for the common sense legislation in both the House and Senate, and applauded its final passage. The bill now awaits the President's signature. VFW will continue to keep tabs on *H.R. 3670* as it moves closer to becoming law. Check back regularly for updates. For complete coverage of the bill, visit our Capitol Hill [blog](#).

## **House VA Committee Discusses VA Prosthetic Care**

The House VA Subcommittee on Health held a follow-up hearing on the status of VA's prosthetic contracts. VA used the opportunity to inform the committee on their ongoing work to improve the oversight of prosthetic purchasing through reorganization. Specifically, VA intends to link prosthetics and rehabilitation services in order to ensure greater collaboration and coordination between clinical services at VA hospitals. During the previous hearing in May, the committee heard from veterans and veteran service organizations, many of whom voiced strong opposition to the changes VA has proposed for the prosthetic care program. For more on the hearing or to view

the recorded webcast, [click here](#).

### **House Discusses Veteran Contracting in VA**

This week, the House VA subcommittees on Economic Opportunity and Oversight & Investigations held a joint hearing on VA's contracting procedures with veteran-owned small businesses. The subcommittees sought to address concerns raised in a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on potential ongoing fraud within the approval process for contractors and inconsistencies in standards for VA's Center for Veterans Enterprise (CVE), when approving veteran entrepreneurs to do business with the government. CVE is the office within VA responsible for vetting veteran-owned small businesses, or VOSBs, and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSBs) who wish to secure VA contracts. Once approved by CVE, businesses can then bid on projects set aside for veterans. VFW has also consistently advocated to improve CVE business processes in an effort to strike the balance between detecting fraud and offering veterans timely access to government set-aside contracts. For more on the hearing, [click here](#).

### **Congress Agrees on Continuing Resolution**

House and Senate leaders reached an agreement to keep the federal government funded from October 1, 2012, to March 2013. The six-month continuing resolution, or CR, provides funding for government agencies when budget/appropriations bills have not been passed into law. VA funding remains at the current Fiscal Year 2013 levels. With the agreement, Congress avoids a possible government shut down but tables many issues, including the debt ceiling, deficit reduction and impending across-the-board spending cuts, until after the election.

### **Congress on August Recess**

Members of Congress left Washington for the August recess today and will be working and campaigning in their district and state offices until after Labor Day. We encourage all of you to set up appointments, attend town hall meetings and other campaign stops and ask the tough questions. View our current [legislative priority goals](#). Read and discuss our talking points on critical issues like mental and behavioral health, employment rights, education benefits and the VA claims process. We also track how your members vote on those issues when they reach the floor of the House and Senate. As we begin to wind down the 112th Congress, now is the time to take a look at what your members have done and ask them how they plan to improve the lives of veterans, our active duty and their families. To view our vote analysis, visit the [VFW website](#) and use the *Connect to Congress* box on the bottom right.

### **Military Medal Website a First Step**

Last week, the Defense Department launched a new post-9/11 medals website that lists the recipients of the top two valor medals that have been awarded since 2001—10 Medals of Honor and 68 service crosses—with plans to add the names of Silver Star recipients. To the VFW, it's a first step. What DOD needs to do now is enhance and expand on what's currently posted by:

- Adding hyperlinks to medal citations so that readers can learn the heroism behind the award.
- Indicate by asterisk if the medal was presented posthumously.
- Include all valor awards, to include the Purple Heart and any medal that can have a combat "V" device attached, as well as specialty badges, such as the Combat Infantryman Badge, that can only be earned under hostile fire.
- And to begin adding those who were so recognized from previous wars and conflicts.

The VFW was the only veterans' organization invited to testify before Congress earlier this year regarding the need for the Pentagon to create one searchable, online database to track the

medals it awards. For years, DOD was against creating such a site, but yielded after the Supreme Court overturned the Stolen Valor Act in late June. Visit the [new website](#).

### **Korean War MIA Identified**

The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office announced the identification of remains belonging to Army Sgt. Thomas J. Barksdale, 21, of Macon, Ga. In late November 1950, Barksdale was reported as missing in action after he and elements of the 2nd Infantry Division were attacked by Chinese forces north of Kujang, North Korea. In 2000, a joint U.S./North Korean recovery team found isolated human remains while excavating former fighting positions on a hilltop in Kujang County. Read his recovery story and those of others [here](#).

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