



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

WASHINGTON WEEKLY

December 21, 2012

Key Veteran Education Bill Passes

This week, the Senate passed VFW-supported legislation that will improve consumer protections for student-veterans who use their Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits. *H.R. 4057*, the *Improving Transparency in Education for Veterans Act* was legislation that the VFW worked diligently on over the past year, proposing the concept to legislators and bringing together veterans' groups and education advocates to ensure student-veterans are given quality consumer information and consumer protections when they use their earned GI Bill benefits. The VFW National Commander John Hamilton, a combat-wounded Vietnam veteran, added his thanks to the committees and bill Sponsor Gus Bilirakis (R-FL): "We're proud the Senate took this issue seriously by passing the *Improving Transparency in Education for Veterans Act*, and we thank Senate VA Committee Chairman Patty Murray and Ranking Member Richard Burr for their leadership, as well as their colleagues in the House, Chairman Jeff Miller and Ranking Member Bob Filner, for making sure this could get done before the end of the year." The House is expected to pass the bill next week when they return to D.C. For more on the bill and the VFW's involvement, [read our blog](#). For the VFW's official announcement, [click here](#).

Clark Cemetery Support Clears Senate

The Senate approved legislation to provide \$5 million to restore the Clark Veterans Cemetery in the Philippines, and to align it under the American Battle Monuments Commission. Though House approval and the President's signature is still required, such actions to honor our dead would fulfill VFW Resolution 431, which was approved at the 113th VFW National Convention. Introduced by Senator Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) and Senator Mark Begich (D-AK), the bill directs the U.S. Government to resume responsibility of the cemetery at the former Clark Air Base that the U.S. abandoned in 1991 when Mt. Pinatubo erupted. Beginning in 1994, local VFW Post 2485 took on the mission to keep the Clark Cemetery up to standards using their own resources. Approximately 8,600 American veterans dating back to the Spanish-American War and Philippine Insurrection, along with their dependents, U.S. Government-authorized civilians and Philippine Scouts are interred there. [Learn more](#). The Clark Cemetery provision was part of a larger veterans' package (S. 3203), which also included the VFW-supported provisions such as: affording religious protections for grieving families at national cemeteries, establishing a national Open Air Burn Pit

Registry for veterans exposed to toxins in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a pilot program offering transitional resources to service members and veterans outside of military installations. We will bring you more details next week on the [blog](#).

The VFW joins Senator Sanders at Press Conference

On Wednesday, the VFW joined Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and other veterans' advocates calling on the Senate to stop the proposed chained consumer price index, or chained CPI, for Social Security recipients and disabled veterans. Chained CPI would permanently cut annual increases to Social Security and programs like veterans' disability compensation, and it is currently being considered as part of a deficit-reduction deal to avoid mandatory cuts through budget sequestration on Jan. 1. The VFW is concerned that, as part of a deficit-reduction plan, the same chained CPI calculation would be applied to veterans' disability compensation and survivor's benefits, since these are both linked to increases in Social Security compensation each year. Congress adjourned this week without reaching a deficit-reduction deal, meaning there's still time to contact your legislators, asking them to approve a deal to avoid mandatory budget cuts and ensure veterans' benefits are protected. For highlights from this week's press conference and to contact your legislators, [click here](#).

Defense Bill Clears Congress

This week, the House and Senate quickly finalized the FY 2013 National Defense Authorization Act. The agreement blocks most of the administration's proposed healthcare increases on military dependents and retirees enrolled in the TRICARE healthcare program, but does increase pharmaceutical co-pays at a lower rate and ties future increases to annual COLA adjustments. To offset the lost revenue from capping copays at the lower rate, the conferees included a five-year pilot program to require TRICARE for Life recipients to refill routine maintenance prescriptions through the TRICARE mail order program or at Military Treatment Facilities. Other notable provisions include:

- A 1.7 percent across-the-board military pay increase
- Extension of special pay and bonuses for those in uniform
- A commission to study the military retirement system
- TRICARE beneficiary coverage for certain autism treatment disorders
- A comprehensive mental health and suicide prevention program within DOD
- New and enhanced regulations to address sexual assault in the military
- Fixes in Combat-Related Special Compensation for certain combat-disabled military retirees

For more details on the bill, [read](#) the House Armed Services press release.

Aloha Senator Inouye

The nation is saying "aloha" to Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI), who passed away Monday at age 88. A recipient of the Medal of Honor, the 1987 VFW Congressional Award and life member of VFW Post 1540 in Honolulu, he was the second longest serving senator and one of only five World War II veterans remaining in the 112th Congress. Inouye served with the famed 442nd Regimental Combat Team in Italy and was grievously wounded destroying three German machine gun nests in April 1945. Elected to Congress in 1959 as Hawaii's first member of the House, he moved on to the Senate in 1962, where he

would be elected to nine terms and champion the rights of veterans, service members and their families. Aloha, Senator Inouye, you have served our nation extremely well.

From the VFW Family to you and yours, Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Was this *Washington Weekly* forwarded to you by a friend? [Sign up](#) to get your own free issue each week.

—



[Find a Post](#) | [Contribute](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#)



[Unsubscribe](#) | [Tell A Friend](#)
© 2001 - 2012. All rights reserved.