



# VFW VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

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## Join the Fight to Save All-Volunteer Military

VFW National Commander Richard DeNoyer is urging the entire military and veterans' community to "Join the Fight" to stop the Defense Department from penny-pinching service members to the point of dismantling the all-volunteer force. Along with plans to reduce the size of the active force by 100,000 over the next five years are scant military pay raises between 0.5 and 1.7 percent proposed for the next four years, plans to push more healthcare costs onto the backs of military families and retirees, and support to change the current military retirement system into a more corporate, contributory program.

"There is no military personnel issue more sacrosanct than pay and benefits," said DeNoyer, who now asks everyone to join the fight and send a united voice to Congress to defeat these negative Quality of Life proposals. "A secure America needs a strong military," he said, "and whether one serves honorably for four years or 40, messing with military pay and benefits is a clear signal to the troops and their families that the budget is more important than people. That is going to seriously hurt recruiting and retention, and potentially end the all-volunteer force." [Read more](#) about what you can do to "Join the Fight."

## Supreme Court Hears Stolen Valor Case

The U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments Wednesday on U.S. v. Xavier Alvarez, in which the VFW is lead co-signer of an amicus curiae brief to uphold the Stolen Valor Act of 2005. The principal issue is whether First Amendment free speech protections extend to lying. Xavier Alvarez was a local water board member in Pomona, Calif., who falsely claimed at a public meeting that he was a retired Marine and Medal of Honor recipient. He had never served in the military. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals overturned his guilty verdict by a 2-1 vote, whereas in a different Stolen Valor case, the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the lower court's guilty verdict by a 2-1 vote. The VFW is scheduled to testify before the House Oversight Subcommittee on National Defense next week on what the government can do to better track the awards it presents. [Click here](#) for a transcript of Wednesday's Supreme Court hearing.

## VFW Supports Closing GI Bill Payment Loophole

The VFW sent a letter of support this week to Rep. G.K. Butterfield (D-N.C.), whose bill, the Veterans Educational Equity Act of 2011 (H.R. 3483), would help student veterans who do not meet in-state residency requirements. As a result of recent policy changes, many student veterans who do not qualify for in-state tuitions face significant out-of-pocket costs to attend public schools of their choice, unlike their counterparts whose education at a private school may nearly be fully financed by the Post 9/11-GI Bill. By supporting the bill, the VFW hopes to ensure that student veterans have an equal opportunity to use their education benefits as intended. [Click here](#) to learn more about the bill and read the VFW's letter.

### **Physician Reimbursement Cuts Avoided**

On Wednesday, the President signed H.R. 3630 into law to extend current physician payment rates under Medicare and Tricare through the end of the year. In 1997, Congress instituted a plan known as the Sustainable Growth Rate to keep Medicare and Tricare reimbursement rates in line with inflation; however, the cuts envisioned have never been instituted. The bill signing averted an "all-at-once" cut of 27.4 percent in the amount reimbursed to doctors, which could have prompted more physicians to opt out of accepting Medicare and Tricare patients.

### **VFW Advocates Discuss Coming to DC**

On Saturday, March 3, VFW leaders from around the country and world will begin converging on the Nation's Capitol to meet with every congressional office prior to the VFW national commander's March 7 testimony before a special joint session of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees. In advance of the 2012 VFW Legislative Conference, we asked some of our advocates to explain why the annual Capitol Hill visits are important and why they chose to become involved in veterans' advocacy. The first two entries are posted on the VFW blog, with more to come next week. [Read](#) what the Department of Arizona's Jim Ellars had to say. To read the entry from Department of Connecticut's Bob Hunter, [click here](#).

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