



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

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The VFW Promotes Advance Appropriations

VA healthcare was unaffected by the recent government shutdown because the VFW was able to get advance appropriations for the Veterans Health Administration signed into law in 2009, but the shutdown exposed a serious flaw in the VA's ability to properly care for those who depend on the programs and services provided by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). That's why the VFW strongly supports the *Putting Veterans Funding First Act* to provide advance appropriations for all VA accounts, which would protect VA and all its beneficiaries from future government shutdowns. The 16-day shutdown temporarily closed 56 VA Regional Offices, preventing veterans and survivors from contacting the VA about new or existing claims. It caused the furlough of more than 7,000 VA employees who had been working hard to reduce the claims backlog, and the shutdown threatened the November payment of benefits to more than 5 million disabled veterans, widows and student-veterans, among other impacts. Those VBA programs, services and operations make up only 14-percent of VA's total budget, but the impact of not having that funding—or not knowing when it will be received—had a potential life-altering impact on those veterans and dependents who rely on those services. [Contact](#) your legislators about advance appropriations.

Senate VA Committee Discusses Extensive List of Bills

This week, the VFW provided testimony to the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee on an array of bills that will improve services and fill existing gaps in the care and benefits for veterans. Out of more than 30 bills discussed, the VFW strongly supports the following and encourages the committee to take quick action before the congressional session concludes.

- **S. 1216, Improving Job Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2013**, will modify VA's on-the-job training (OJT) program in a manner that will encourage more companies to participate by lowering the out-of-pocket cost to the employer during the training program.
- **The SCRA Enhancement and Improvement Act of 2013** will offer much-needed expansion and enforcement mechanisms within SCRA, to include an additional year of

protection so transitioning service members can organize their affairs, and provides increased protections against being denied credit because of their military service.

- **Draft legislation** that will allow VA to provide a replacement automobile under the auto grant program. It also increases the maximum amount for certain severely disabled veterans from \$18,900 to \$30,000.
- **Draft legislation** which would expand eligibility for reimbursement for emergency medical treatment and remove the 24-month requirement for recently discharged veterans who are awaiting appointment at VA facilities.

For more on the bills, our testimony and the hearing, visit the Senate VA [website](#).

The VFW to Testify on National Cemeteries

On Wednesday, the VFW testified before the House VA Subcommittee on Disability and Memorial Affairs on pending initiatives within the National Cemetery Administration (NCA). NCA currently manages 131 national cemeteries in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. The VFW testified that NCA must be flexible enough in their policies to recognize locations where, under current policy, no new national cemetery will be developed, but factors like geographic barriers or states that have invested in state cemeteries must be considered. We also commented on the confusion in VA's current marker or medallion benefit, and applauded the leadership at Arlington National Cemetery who have made vast improvements in their overall operations. Extensive work has been done to ensure each plot is marked correctly, and all burial information has been moved from the old three-by-five cards to a computer database. [Learn more](#) about the hearing and view an archived webcast.

House Clears Vet Bills

Earlier this week, the House cleared four veterans' bills. They included the following:

- **H.R. 2189**, which would establish a commission or task force charged with examining the root causes of the VA disability claims backlog and providing solutions for ending it by 2015.
- **H.R. 2481**, *the Veterans Economic Opportunity Act of 2013* would establish an Economic Opportunity Administration within VA, enabling the department to better focus on veterans as they transition to civilian life.
- **H.R. 1405** requiring VA to include an appeals form along with any benefits-denial notification, institute key reforms to VA's fiduciary program and provide honorary veteran's status to members of the National Guard and Reserves.
- **H.R. 2011** extends through 2015 the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education and requires it to include a veteran's representative of the Post-9/11 operations.

The VFW Supports Working Wounded Games

Dozens of wounded warriors will once again converge on CrossFit Rubicon in Vienna, Va., this Saturday for the second-annual Working Wounded Games. Hosted in conjunction with CrossFit Walter Reed and volunteers from other DC metro area CrossFit affiliates, the Working Wounded Games brings together veterans with combat-related disabilities and other adaptive athletes to compete in an open-style competition to benefit adaptive exercise programs through the Crossroads Adaptive Athletic Alliance. The VFW is proud to once again serve as a sponsor for the event, which kicks off Saturday at 8 a.m. The event is open to the public and donations are appreciated. [Learn more](#).

Tour the Korean War Memorial Online

Korean War veterans and families can now take a virtual tour of their national memorial from their home computers, as well as other mobile devices. Also

included on the 60th Anniversary site is a Korean War Wiki-type encyclopedia, oral histories and other resource material. [Visit now.](#)

Overseas Holiday Mail

The Military Postal Service Agency has announced that packages being sent to service members overseas should be mailed by Nov. 12 for delivery by the holidays. Some express mail services could deliver before Christmas if sent by Dec. 17. [Read more.](#)

Thank You to Our Advocates

During the shutdown, the VFW mobilized thousands of advocates to call on national leaders to reopen the government before millions of veterans lost their benefits on Nov. 1. On behalf of the VFW Washington Office, THANK YOU for making your voices heard and for advocating for your fellow veterans. The VFW is only as strong as our advocates, and we sent a loud and clear message to Washington last month. During the shutdown, you may have noticed that we rarely posted to the blog. Instead, our work was heavily featured on www.vfw.org given the gravity of the situation. The blog returned to normal business this week. [Learn more.](#)

Congratulations to the following Departments that signed up more than 100 new advocates in October to join our team: Arizona, Florida, California, Illinois, Indiana, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas and Virginia. Many others are not far behind, so keep up the good work!

As always, we want to share your advocacy stories on the VFW Capitol Hill blog. To share your stories, [fill out our online form](#) or simply email photos and stories directly to vfwac@vfw.org.

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