



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.

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Attack on Pearl Harbor Remembrance

VFW Posts nationwide will be commemorating the 72nd Anniversary of the Attack on Pearl Harbor tomorrow. VFW National Commander Bill Thien and Ladies Auxiliary National President Sissy Borel will be at the Pearl Harbor ceremony, along with survivors, family members, and fellow comrades, and will present a VFW wreath at the USS Arizona Memorial. In Washington, D.C., another ceremony will be held at the National World War II Memorial at 1:53 p.m. According to the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, an estimated 84,000 servicemen and women survived the attack, of which less than 3,000 are still alive. The association disbanded in January 2012, but its [website](#) continues to be a treasure trove of first-hand survivor stories.

House VA Committee Discusses Complex Disability Claims

Earlier this week, the House VA Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs held a hearing to discuss complex VA disability claims. The three panels of witnesses included a veteran and a survivor, both affected by a lengthy claims process; as well as VSO and VA representatives. Subcommittee Chairman Jon Runyan (R-NJ) said that the hearing was just one of many the committee has held on VA's disability claims process since various initiatives have been instituted by VA to reach the secretary's goal on claims for 2015. The VSO representatives spoke about process, accountability and the continued need for VA employees to receive proper training. VA reported that they continue to experience an increase in the number and complexity of medical issues, with the average number of issues identified per original claim increasing by 31 percent, from 5.5 to 7.2 issues per claim. For more information about the hearing including the recorded webcast and all testimony, [click here](#).

The VFW Discusses Jobs With Iowa Governor

On Thursday, the VFW met with Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., to discuss the state's new initiative to recruit veterans into the Iowa workforce. The program, called Homebase Iowa, was announced by Branstad in November alongside leaders from the Iowa veterans' community, including the VFW, and the governor took his message to policymakers in

Washington this week. Currently, Iowa is a state rich with opportunities for skilled workers, and Branstad, who served as a military policeman in the Army, wants to encourage industries in his state to look to the veterans' community for those skilled workers. [Learn more](#) about the program and the VFW's meeting with the governor.

Busy End-of-Year Agenda for House/Senate

The Senate returns next week to join the House in what is shaping up to be a very hectic end-of-year schedule. The Senate will continue its debate on the *National Defense Authorization Act* (NDAA) with the likelihood that a slimmed-down version that contains no controversial amendments could pass. The Senate could also decide to use the House-passed bill with amendments agreed to by both chambers, thus avoiding conference negotiations that often prove timely. The VFW supported many of the provisions in the House-passed bill, including no increases in enrollment fees for Tricare healthcare or copayments for prescriptions; a 1.8 percent military pay raise; an amendment preventing service chiefs from ending Military Tuition Assistance programs; requiring DOD and VA to create a comprehensive plan regarding the care and treatment of service members with urotrauma; as well as several changes that would protect victims and enforce accountability with regard to sexual assaults in the military. The VFW will be monitoring the bill next week. Check back here for updates on final action as it moves through Congress. For more on the House-passed version of NDAA, [click here](#).

Military Commissary Survey

The Defense Department is now examining the potential closure of its 178 stateside commissaries in an ongoing effort to further reduce overall operating expenses. In an effort to measure customer feedback, the independent Military Times news organization is asking service members, retirees and their families to participate in a brief survey about this potential change to a significant military quality of life benefit. To receive a unique link with login and password to conduct the survey, contact survey@militarytimes.com. Participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept completely confidential. Military Times was the recipient of the 2010 VFW News Media Award.

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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