



NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.



November 14, 2014

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VFW's Congressional Charter Amendment

VFW Resolution 301 moves one step closer to passing. On Thursday, the House Judiciary Committee passed H.R. 5441, a bill to amend the VFW Congressional Charter to replace the word “men” with the word “veterans,” and the word “widow” with the words “surviving spouses.” This legislation could be voted on by the full House as early as next week. On the Senate side, there are currently 38 co-sponsors and it appears their version of the bill, S. 2782, will skip the Committee process and move straight to the Senate floor for a vote. [Take action now](#) to ensure quick passage of this legislation.

Veterans Groups Push for *Putting Veterans First Act*

In response to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid’s promise to schedule time for a vote on S. 932, the *Putting Veterans Funding First Act*, a coalition of Veterans and Military Service Organizations sent a letter thanking him for his commitment. This act would fund all VA budgetary accounts a year in advance. This continues to be a priority goal for the VFW, and we will be calling on you to take action once we know when the vote will be held. [Read](#) the letter to Senator Reid.

House Holds Hearing on VACAA Implementation

On Thursday, the House Veterans Affairs Committee held a hearing to assess the implementation of the *Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act (VACAA)*. After his opening remarks, VA Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson fielded questions regarding the 1,000 VA employees, including 42 senior executives, who are currently pending termination for poor job performance. Several committee members expressed frustration with the slow speed with which VA is acting to complete those removals. The other major topic was the rollout of the Choice Program, a VA authority that gives veterans who live more than 40 miles away from a VA facility or have been waiting longer than 30 days for an appointment the option to receive care from providers in their communities. Gibson announced that Choice cards went out to all “40 milers” last week, and those waiting 30 days or more are scheduled to receive theirs by the first week of December. All other enrollees will receive Choice cards by the end of January. The VFW strongly supported the VACAA and the establishment of the Choice Program. We will continue to work closely with VA to ensure that the program implementation continues as planned and that eligible veterans are provided the care they need. [Learn more](#) about the Choice Program. [Watch](#) the hearing.

The VFW Pledges to End Sequestration

After representing the national organization at Veterans Day ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, VFW National Commander John Stroud spent the rest of the week inside the Pentagon. He met with the Army Chief of Staff, the leadership of the Army Reserve, the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, and others. His message was simple: The VFW exists to support veterans, the troops and their families at home and abroad, and that the organization will work diligently with the new 114th Congress to eliminate sequestration. Now is not the time to force the Pentagon to reduce its spending by a trillion dollars. Not with the military still fighting a war in Afghanistan, against a new enemy in the Middle East. And not with the ongoing shift in defense commitments to Asia and worldwide humanitarian missions that only America's military is capable of providing upon demand. Congress created the sequester and only Congress can end it, he said, and the VFW will do its part to ensure that happens.

MyVA Reorganization Plans Announced

Bob McDonald, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, announced his plans to reorganize the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure veterans have a clear understanding of VA's structure and how to obtain needed care and benefits; to train and enable employees to solve problems and take action; and to integrate VA products and services. To achieve these goals, Secretary McDonald plans to establish a VA-wide customer service organization to understand and respond to the expectations of veterans; establish a single regional framework to simplify internal coordination, facilitate partnering and enhance customer service; establish Community Veteran Advisory Councils to better coordinate with local, state, and community partners; and develop a shared services model to improve efficiency, reduce costs and increase productivity across VA. Secretary McDonald asks that veterans submit their feedback, ideas and perspective through the MyVA Idea House. [Read more.](#)

Ohio Bonus Deadline for OIF Veterans Approaching

This New Year's Eve is the deadline for Ohioans to apply for a tax-free bonus of up to \$1,000 a year. To be eligible, veterans and Ohioans serving on active duty must have had "boots on the ground" in Iraq sometime between March 29, 2003, and Dec. 31, 2011. They must have been Ohio residents when they entered military service and current residents of the state today. The Ohio Veterans Bonus is not subject to federal or state taxes. It pays \$100 a month to veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan, up to a maximum of \$1,000. For veterans who served elsewhere, the payment is \$50 a month up to a maximum of \$500. Veterans medically discharged because of injuries sustained in-country can receive \$1,000 and up to \$500 for service elsewhere. For more details or to apply, go to www.veteransbonus.ohio.gov.

Three Korean War MIAs Identified

The Defense POW/MIA Office announced the identification of remains belonging to three soldiers who had been missing-in-action since the Korean War. Returned home are:

- **Army Master Sgt. Francis H. Stamer**, 35, of Hyde Park, N.Y. He was assigned to Company M, 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, lost on Nov. 2, 1950, in North Korea, and accounted for on Oct. 29, 2014. He will be buried with full military honors on a date, time and location yet to be determined. [Read more.](#)
- **Army Cpl. Richard L. Wing**, 19, of Toledo, Ohio. He was assigned to Company H, 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, lost on Nov. 28, 1950, in North Korea, and accounted for on Nov. 7, 2014. He will be buried with full military honors on a date, time and location yet to be determined. [Read more.](#)

- **Army Cpl. Leland F. Smith**, 18, from Indiana. He was assigned to Company K, 35th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, lost on Nov. 28, 1950, in North Korea, and accounted for on Nov. 8, 2014. He will be buried with full military honors on a date, time and location yet to be determined.

[Sign up](#) new veterans' advocates.

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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