



**NO ONE DOES MORE FOR VETERANS.**

# WASHINGTON WEEKLY

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## **The VFW Testifies before Senate VA Committee**

This week, the VFW testified before the Senate Veterans Affairs' Committee on more than 35 veterans' benefits bills that will improve or change employment, education, the VA disability claims backlog and other programs under VA. The VFW focused on bills designed to protect student-veterans and spoke in favor of COLA and relaxing evidentiary standards to make it easier for Military Sexual Assault (MST) survivors to receive VA benefits. We will continue to follow each of these bills closely, making recommendations to the committee prior to mark-up in the coming months. Check back regularly for updates. For our complete testimony and more information about the hearing, [visit our blog](#).

## **The VFW Attends SECDEF Meeting**

The VFW Washington Office attended a VSO/MSO conference with Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel yesterday. It was his second such conference with veterans and military service organization leadership since becoming SECDEF in February. The purpose was to update the VSO/MSO communities on DOD programs and policies that affect service members, veterans, retirees and their families, and to listen to our concerns regarding budget impacts on training and readiness, as well as military healthcare, Quality of Life programs, and the VFW's long-term goal of creating one DOD electronic medical record that is 100-percent interoperable between the three military medical commands and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The VFW again reiterated its support of a programmed 1.8-percent military pay increase—instead of the 1-percent requested raise—and our opposition to changing the current military retirement system, as well as any increases to Tricare premiums beyond what's mandated by law, which links enrollment increases to cost-of-living adjustments.

## **Senate Armed Services Clears Defense Bill**

Late yesterday, the Senate Armed Services Committee discussed over 100 amendments to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) before voting to send the bill to the Senate floor. As expected, the bill included language regarding sexual assault within the military as well as a

rejection of any increase in Tricare fees, deductible or copayments for military retirees and their families. Unfortunately, the Senate bill only provided for a 1-percent pay raise for service members, a 0.8-percent decrease from what the House has agreed to in their bill. The House is continuing to debate their bill today with over 172 amendments being offered, and the Senate is expected to hold floor votes sometime after the August recess. The differences within the two bills will then be ironed out in a Conference Committee sometime in the fall. The VFW will have more on both bills next week, so check back. In the meantime, for more information on the Senate bill or to view the recorded webcast from the mark-up, visit the Senate Armed Services Committee [website](#). For the House NDAA, [click here](#).

### **The VFW Joins Twitter Chat on Veterans Employment**

On Wednesday, the VFW joined Acting Department of Labor Secretary Seth Harris and a number of veterans' service organizations to host a Twitter Chat on veterans' employment issues. Some 361 tweets were sent by 158 contributors with questions about federal government resources, security clearances and expanding military job preference to include spouses of mobilized reservists. For more highlights, [click here](#).

### **The VFW at National League of Families Meeting**

The VFW Washington Office joined the National League of POW/MIA Families for their 44th annual meeting this week in nearby Arlington, Va. The League was founded in 1970 by family members of missing Americans who were frustrated at the U.S. Government's unwillingness to confirm who was alive, captured, dead or missing-in-action. It was because of the League's tenacity that the American government began formal recovery operations that would expand into a worldwide mission with more than 600 military and civilians assigned to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command and the Defense POW/MIA Office. It was the League that created and gifted the POW/MIA Flag to the nation, which is the only flag to have flown over the White House with the American Flag. The VFW is a longtime friend of the League and the nation's strongest supporter of the full accounting mission, having traveled annually into Southeast Asia since 1991, Russia since 2004, and now into the People's Republic of China, to help U.S. government researchers gain deeper access into their military archives.

### **Korean War 60th**

Plans continue to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Korean War armistice in Washington, D.C., on Saturday, July 27. Thousands of veterans from across the nation, as well as representatives from other UN nations, are expected to be present at the Korean War Memorial for the ceremony, which will broadcast live on several cable networks. VFW Posts nationwide are encouraged to share in the commemoration by hosting "Pancakes for Patriots"-type events to honor and help educate local communities about the service and sacrifices made by so many of our VFW members and their families. The current June/July issue of *VFW Magazine* is dedicated to Korean War veterans and highlights our \$600,000 donation towards building their national memorial—tops among all veterans' organizations. More information regarding how your Posts can help commemorate the day will be provided as the anniversary draws nearer.

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